

CHIASM IN MARK 7:24-31

by

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this assignment is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

ABSTRACT

My provisional identification of chiasm in Mark 7:24-31 initiated this multi-disciplinary study of the literary shape of this interesting text.

New Testament scholars tend to agree that the genre (form, content and function) of the Gospel of Mark exhibits the literary characteristics typical of ancient, first century AD, Greco-Roman biography thereby evidencing, in a broad sense, Greco-Roman form and function, and Jewish content. As a result, the New Testament Gospels have been described as a "*tertium quid*". However, until fairly recently, few scholars appear to have taken the possibility of finding Jewish rhetorical form, in the shape of chiasm, into account in their examination of New Testament texts and have almost exclusively tended to focus on classical Greek rhetorical forms.

As a result, this study opens itself to the possibility of finding both Jewish and Greco-Roman literary forms in the text, thereby attempting to obtain a greater presence of understanding of what the implied author was doing with the text. This study therefore endeavours to understand, not only what the implied author intended to communicate through the literary form of the text to the implied reader but also, at the level of discourse, the "how" of that communication within the literary context of the Gospel as a whole.

In the light of the foregoing, the research questions appear as follows.

(1) What, on a balance of probability, is the literary form or structure of Mark 7:24-31 within its literary context? If the form of the text is found, on a balance of probability, to exhibit the characteristics of chiasm: (2) What implied effect would this have on an implied reader when understood and interpreted within the context of Greco-Roman biography? And, (3) what effect would the answers to (1) and (2) above have on a modern (present) reader of the Gospel of Mark?

After a brief overview of the socio-historical and cultural setting to the Gospel of Mark that serves as essential background material necessary for an understanding of the text, this study proceeds to consider the ancient roots of chiasm with regard to the literature of the Ancient Near East and briefly traces its prevalence from the ancient past through to the period of the New Testament. Because chiasm is a particular form of parallelism, the importance of understanding Biblical parallelisms in the Hebrew literature in general and its significance with regard to the New Testament and Mark's Gospel in particular is considered. A discussion of various definitions of chiasm follows. After considering the Gospel of Mark and the literary context of the subject text, its literary form is examined in the light of known ancient literary conventions, including Biblical narrative and the various forms evidenced in the exchange of dialogue are considered and the text examined for further correspondences. Thereafter the text is reviewed within its literary context and, what follows, is an explanation of how the form of the text may function within its literary location.

OPSOMMING

My voorlopige identifisering van chiasme in Markus 7:24-31 inisier 'n multi-dimensionele studie van die literêre vorm van dié interessante teks.

Nuwe-Testamentici neig om saam te stem dat die genre (vorm, inhoud en funksie) van die evangelie volgens Markus die literêre kenmerke toon, tipies van antieke, eerste eeuse (AD) Grieks-Romeinse biografie en stel so, in 'n breë sin, Grieks-Romeinse vorm en funksie sowel as Joodse inhoud ten toon. As 'n resultaat is die Nuwe Testamentiese Evangelies beskryf as 'n "*tertium quid*." Tog, tot redelik onlangs het weinig Nuwe-Testamentici die moontlikheid in ag geneem om Joodse retoriese vorm, in die vorm van giasme, te vind in hulle ondersoek van Nuwe Testamentiese tekste en het geneig om bykans uitsluitlik te fokus op klassieke Griekse retoriese vorme.

As 'n gevolg open hierdie studie ditself tot die moontlikheid om Joodse, sowel as Grieks-Romeinse literêre vorme binne die teks te vind en sodoende 'n groter begrip mee te bring van wat die geïmpliseerde outeur met die teks gemaak het. Die studie onderneem dus om nie net aan te dui wat die geïmpliseerde outeur beoog het om te kommunikeer d.m.v. die literêre vorm van die teks aan die geïmpliseerde gehoor nie, maar ook op die vlak van diskoers, die "hoe" van die kommunikasie binne die literêre konteks van die evangelie as geheel.

In die lig van die voorafgaande kan die ondersoekvrae as volg geformuleer word.

(1) Wat is die literêre vorm of struktuur van Markus 7:24-31 binne die bepaalde literêre konteks? Indien die vorm van die teks die kenmerke van chiasme vertoon: (2) Watter geïmpliseerde effek sal dit hê op 'n geïmpliseerde gehoor indien die teks verstaan en geïnterpreteer word binne die konteks van Grieks-Romeinse biografie? En (3) watter effek sal die antwoorde tot vrae (1) en (2) hê op die moderne (eietydse) leser van die Evangelie volgens Markus?

Na 'n kort oorsig oor die sosio-historiese en kulturele plasing van die Evangelie volgens Markus wat dien as noodsaaklike agtergrond materiaal, noodsaaklik vir 'n verstaan van die teks, gaan die studie voort om die antieke wortels van chiasme te oorweeg, met inagneming die literatuur van die ou Nabye Ooste en gaan kortliks die belang hiervan na, vanaf die antieke tye tot en met die Nuwe Testamentiese tydperk. Aangesien chiasme 'n spesifieke vorm van parallelisme is, word die belang van die verstaan van Bybelse parallelisme binne die Hebreeuse literatuur in die algemeen en die belang daarvan rakende die Nuwe Testament en die Evangelie volgens Markus in besonder, oorweeg. 'n Bespreking van verskeie definisies van chiasme volg. Na 'n bespreking van die Evangelie volgens Markus, sowel as die literêre konteks van die bepaalde perikoop, word die literêre vorm ondersoek in die lig van bekende antieke literêre konvensies, insluitende Bybelse narratief en verskeie vorme wat, waarneembaar binne die uitruil van dialoog ondersoek, en word die teks ondersoek vir verdere ooreenstemminge. Om hiedie rede word die teks oorweeg binne die literêre konteks en wat daarop volg is 'n verduideliking van hoe die vorm van die teks kan funksioneer binne die literêre plasing daarvan.

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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

This study arose as a result of a rather surprising discovery made by me during this post-graduate programme in Bible Interpretation. Students were required, *inter alia*, to submit an assignment based on a question relating to Mark 7:24-30 - the text of which appears below and, for reasons that follow, includes verse 31.

Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit came and fell at his feet. The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. "First let the children eat all they want," he told her, "for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs." "Yes, Lord," she replied, "but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Then he told her, "For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter." She went home and found her daughter lying on the bed, and the demon gone. Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis (Mark 7:24-31, *New International Version*).

The question in the assignment required of students to write an essay as an example of our own exegesis of the text and to give a *theological* interpretation of it within a South African context.

During the course of examining the immediate literary context of the subject text I noticed that between verse 30 and verse 31 there was an editorial heading that interposed between this story and the next. I considered the possibility that this editorial heading may be an inadvertent editorial mistake because verse 31, while adequately serving as an introduction to the next story, appears to correspond with verse 24 thereby possibly indicating the classic literary figure of *inclusio*. After a further examination of the text for symmetry, I considered that it appeared to be structured substantially in the form of a chiasm and I proposed in my assignment (Rothon 2001) the following *prima facie* form:

A	Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre (v. 24)	<i>Inclusio</i>
B	a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit (v. 25)	
C	she begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter (v. 26)	
D	First let the children eat all they want, for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs (v. 27)	} Riddle
D'	but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs (v. 28)	
C'	For such a reply, you may go, the demon has left your daughter (v. 29)	
B'	she went home and found her child on the bed, and the demon gone (v. 30)	
A'	Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went ...(v. 31)	<i>Inclusio</i>

After examining a number of commentaries (see paragraph 4.2.1 below) I noticed that none of the commentators that I referred to even hinted at chiasm in this text and all but one had in fact delimited the text to Mark 7:24-30, thereby excluding any possible reference to the *inclusio* I thought I had identified in Mark 7:24, 31.

However, in order to do justice to the question raised by the assignment, the provisional or *prima facie* identification by me of chiasm in the text of Mark 7:24-31 could not, given the terms of reference of the question, be fully explored. My exegesis of that text at that time was necessarily accompanied by a number of other socio-cultural perspectives that, in my opinion, were necessary to adequately deal with the kind of issues raised by the question. Therefore, the *prima facie* identification of the chiastic form of the text was, in my view, exploratory and was tendered in good faith as a distinct possibility.

When I presented my proposed shape I had not been exposed to any previous study regarding the possibility of the existence of chiasm in this text and therefore my proposed structure was not influenced by any earlier suggestion as to how the text was constructed or how the author might have configured it. In a sense, the proposed structure was, in my view, simply a possible construct. I explained in my assignment that the centre (turning point) of the text exhibited simple chiasm (in the exchange of dialogue) and that this sub-genre may be structured in the form of a riddle.

While this was a distinct possibility, there remained with me a nagging feeling that even this explanation somehow fell short of recognizing the full potential of the text within its literary location. It did not explain what the author was *doing* with the text. In fact, I believed that there were many more questions that ought to be leveled at the text. But this could only be done during the course and scope of a full and adequate examination of the major literary and cultural influences that could possibly have impacted or influenced the text; more particularly in the light of the view held by renowned scholars that the Gospel of Mark exhibits the genre characteristics typical of ancient Greco-Roman biography (see paragraphs 1.3 and 4.1.9 below).

Therefore, in order to maintain the integrity of the study, the text would need to be interrogated and examined in the light of its typical genre classification. Was it possible that the text could exhibit, within its spatially small shape, the sophistication of both typical Jewish literary form and Greco-Roman rhetorical technique? My awareness of the broad literary potential of finding chiasm in the text was therefore heightened all the more. What if chiasm did characterise the text? And even if it didn't, was there any possibility that the narrative could be subjected to other literary tests; and what would they find? These questions begged a detailed examination of the

text; and then, I believed, could only be done with openness towards the text and with a far greater degree of attention to detail and methodological endeavour.

But as further questions were raised in my mind, so my puzzlement increased. The commentaries that I had consulted could take the matter no further. In fact, they raised another interesting question: if the text could be said to be characterised by chiasm as provisionally indicated, how is it that, by and large, scholars do not appear to have detected the *inclusio*, let alone a chiasmatic structure? Is it because ancient structure no longer accords with our present day literary genre expectations, with its apparent disdain for redundancy and our present day view that the latter is indicative of a lack of literary skill or sophistication? Perhaps this, combined with a present day preoccupation with linear sequencing (which indeed makes for coherence) that has perhaps sub-consciously precluded present day scholars from fully appreciating this ancient literary form?

Even my own endeavours up to this point were, I felt, lacking in some material way although I was not sure why or in what respect. If chiasm was present in the text, where did it come from? Which literary tradition was likely to contribute such a structure? – typically Hellenic or Jewish influence, or perhaps both?

Some other important questions that were racing through my mind were the following; and these, in no particular order. Is it possible that the real author of Mark could have resorted to the use of chiasm as a literary figure? From a literary point of view, was he competent enough to do so? Was the author's standard of education and knowledge of Greco-Roman as well as Jewish rhetorical and literary style (e.g. parallelisms, of which chiasm is but one type) adequate? Was the possible use of chiasm in this text consistent with our present understanding of the form, content and function of the Gospel of Mark as ancient Greco-Roman biography? And if so, would they have understood the full significance of such a sophisticated literary structure? And even if chiasm could be said to reside in the text, to what literary function and end? Very importantly, could the structure be explained at the level of discourse? For after all, the plot of the story accords somewhat with our understanding of the form of miracle stories. Why would the author structure the text so as to highlight the centre dialogue as provisionally indicated? Perhaps my proposed structure was a figment of my own imagination after all.

Thus, in my view, nothing less than a comprehensive approach would be required in order to satisfy my quest for a greater understanding of the text within its literary location. And then, it would need to be done within the framework of our understanding of the Greco-Roman and Jewish literary traditions; and I submit, some understanding of the literary background to both of

those tremendous cultures that have contributed to the early Christian literature, more particularly with regard to the Gospel of Mark and the subject text.

However, after having submitted my assignment and during my further research, I discovered that John Breck, Professor of New Testament at St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, applied to this text a chiasmic structure in such a way that the centre appears somewhat different to that which I had proposed (Breck 1994:150). Breck in no way discusses the form at all except for a brief reference to demonstrate *inclusio* (1994:32-33). This is not intended as a criticism, for it was not within the scope and compass of his work to analyse or discuss each of the micro-chiasmic structures that he identified in his book. In fact, in his preface, Breck (1994:3), in true scholarly fashion, allows for the possibility of raising "legitimate questions ... about the exact shape of any particular literary unit". He also stresses that a great deal of further study is necessary concerning this subject.

In the circumstances, I believe that the structure of the text needs to be explored with greater attention to detail and in order to do so thoroughly, the text needs to be subjected to a multi-disciplinary investigation with a special interest in chiasm. The process of such an examination would, I expect, go a long way to answering at least some of the questions raised and afford an opportunity to understand the text on its own terms while at the same time maintaining its literary integrity.

1.2 Context and relevance of the study

Thus, in the light of the aforesaid introduction, I submit that a detailed examination of this text is warranted. For many years now, scholars have commented on the sub-genre of Mark 7:24-30. The final (canonical) form of the text has been examined employing various approaches. More particularly, experts have examined the text and arrived at diverse conclusions with regard to its form. The varying "forms" that have been attributed to this text by scholars include the following: apophthegm or pronouncement story, teaching narrative, miracle story, apophthegmatic miracle story and even a "distance healing narrative" (Guelich 1989:382).

This research is therefore based upon my provisional identification of chiasm in the text of Mark 7:24-31 and explores and investigates the possibility of finding this literary form in this text and, if found to characterise the text, an attempt will be made to understand its function within its literary context. If meaning is conveyed through form, as it is (Beekman et al 1981:13), then the form of the text is an important factor in trying to understand the significance the implied author intended to convey through that form to his implied audience. However, the significance of the

form of the text must be seen within the literary context of the Gospel as a whole in order to try and understand what the author was doing with the text at the level of discourse.

1.3 Research Question

The genre of the Gospel of Mark is that of ancient Greco-Roman biography (Witherington 2001:8; Aune 1987:46; Burrige 1992:219; Carson, Moo & Morris 1992:47; Ferguson 1993:112). It is within this literary context that the sub-genre of Mark 7:24-31 must be considered.

The primary question is:

(1) *What, on a balance of probability, is the literary form or structure of Mark 7:24-31 within its literary context?*

If the form of the text is found, on a balance of probability, to exhibit the characteristics of chiasm:

(2) *What implied effect would this have on an implied audience when understood and interpreted within the context of Greco-Roman biography?*

(3) *What effect would the answers to (1) and (2) above have on modern (present) readers of the Gospel of Mark?*

1.4 Methodology

The method employed may be described as multi-disciplinary or multi-dimensional with an interest in chiasm as an ancient literary form. This approach is most suitable for a consideration of the literary form of this text within its ancient Greco-Roman culture because it takes into account the socio-rhetorical environment in which the implied author intended to communicate with his implied audience.

After a brief overview of the socio-historical setting to the Gospel of Mark that will serve as the essential cultural background necessary for an understanding of the New Testament literature, this study will proceed to consider the ancient roots of chiasm, a form of parallelism (concentric parallelism) in antiquity, more particularly with regard to the literature of the Ancient Near East and will briefly trace its prevalence from the ancient past through to the period of the New Testament. Although chiasm is a particular form of parallelism, the importance of understanding Biblical parallelisms in the Hebrew literature in general and the significance of this literary phenomenon with regard to the New Testament and Mark's Gospel in particular will be considered. I submit that a consideration of the form of this text within the context of its Jewish

and Greco-Roman roots is imperative in order to try and understand the text on its own implied terms.

A discussion of various definitions of chiasm will be considered and thereafter the literary form of the text will be examined with regard being had to the conventions of Biblical narrative, the exchange of dialogue evidenced in the text and any further correspondences within its literary structure will be considered. Once the form of the text has been considered, a brief review of the text within its literary context will follow with, in particular, an explanation of how the form of the text may function within its literary location.

1.5 Limitations and Assumptions

I do not claim to have any special skills in regard to this study. For instance, I am not a linguist nor do I have any formal knowledge of the Greek or Hebrew language. Neither have I received formal schooling in linguistics or rhetoric or for that matter even received more than a basic understanding of literary criticism (in the broad sense of the term). I am an “ordinary” reader of the Bible and therefore dependent on the skills of others who have specialist insights far beyond my own. It is therefore important for me to recognise, at the outset, my own limitations.

1.6 Delimitations

The study confines itself to the form or shape of the text of Mark 7:24-31 as possibly delimited by the author of that text by his utilisation of the literary device, *inclusio*. However, the form, content and function of the text must be seen within its literary context *viz.* the Gospel of Mark. Because of the assumed priority of Mark’s account, the version of this story evidenced in Matthew 15 (an assumed interpretation of Mark) is not considered relevant for the purpose of this study.

Chapter 2

2.1 Overview of the socio-historical background to the Gospel of Mark

This chapter is written with a view to orientate and raise the readers sensitivity to the ancient background to the New Testament and, in particular, the Gospel of Mark.

2.1.1 Greco-Roman culture

The Gospel of Mark is an ancient literary text that was written during the first century AD (Carson, Moo & Morris 1992:99). This first century period of history falls right in the middle of what historians refer to as the Greco-Roman period, a period extending from approximately 330 BC - 330 AD (Ferguson 1993:5. See also Johnson 1999:23). So named after the two successive world powers that governed the greater Mediterranean region, this first century period was a time in which Rome had secured and consolidated control militarily, politically and economically over the *oikumene* (Johnson 1999:26-27; Ferguson 1993:29). Roman policy towards the eastern Mediterranean region simply served to capitalise on and extend the advances previously made by the program of Hellenisation embarked upon, centuries before, by Alexander the Great, 356 BC - 323 BC (Ferguson 1993:5).

Alexander took advantage of an already extensive Grecian influence in the greater Mediterranean region and actively promoted a process of Hellenisation, whereby Greek culture, in its broadest sense, was assimilated into the culture of other people groups in that great region. The effects of this process cannot be overstated. It was, to a large extent, the colonisation of the *oikumene*. Native Greeks were encouraged to move to other cities in the empire. Engineers, lawyers, teachers, philosophers, poets, religious leaders were encouraged to do likewise (Ferguson 1993:13-14; Johnson 1999:24-25). Alexander even encouraged his soldiers to intermarry with other cultural groups within the empire (Johnson 1999:24).

This policy of social, religious and cultural integration was further advanced by the establishment of city-states (the *poleis*) that served as the new focus or hub of urban city life (Johnson 1999:24). This development replaced temple-cities and villages and encouraged a degree of centralisation in and around the *polis* (Ferguson 1993:14). There were in Palestine, at the time of Jesus, over thirty Hellenistic cities and twelve of them were within a twenty-five mile radius of Nazareth (Mack 1990:29). *Gymnasia* were established throughout the empire in order to promote the public life and served as the institutional base for the development of society (Ferguson 1993:14). All these changes were facilitated largely by the introduction and acceptance of *koine* Greek as the *lingua franca* of the empire (Johnson 1999:25; Ferguson 1993:124-125). This common acceptance of

koine Greek throughout the empire facilitated the command and control functions of the empire as well as commerce and industry. The introduction of a common language brought with it the exchange of ideas and a new way of thinking across the empire. Commercial trade was further facilitated by a single currency based upon the Attic standard that bound the world of trade and industry into a type of commonwealth (Ferguson 1993:13). This form of currency was used to pay soldiers and became the common means of exchange throughout the empire.

The eventual political accession of Rome to world power during the first century BC, and the later end to the frequent warring, enabled a consolidation of power under the reign of Augustus (ca. 31 BC – 14 AD) who ushered in an age of relative peace and progress throughout the empire that later came to be known as the *Pax Romana* (Ferguson 1993:28-29).

Palestine and its ports (Joppa, Caesarea, Tyre and Sidon) at this time were of strategic importance to Rome, just as they had been to earlier world powers on the world stage. This was because Palestine with its main highways, the *Via Maris* and *The King's Highway*, served as the land bridge between North Africa, Asia Minor and Europe as well as the East. Egypt, with its major port of Alexandria (built by Alexander) on the Egyptian coast of the Mediterranean served as the “breadbasket” of Rome (Johnson 1999:26). These highways were of strategic military importance to Rome’s strategy of defence, not least in respect of the Parthian threat to the east that was of particular concern to Rome (Johnson 1999:23). Rome’s ability to marshal its military forces was facilitated by a strategic network of roads engineered and built by Rome, of which, by at least 100 AD some 53 000 miles extended from as far as Scotland in the North to as far east as the Euphrates River and this contributed to the enormous traffic in written communication, such as official letters, personal letters, literary works as well as to the mobility of people throughout the empire while at the same time ensuring, through military prowess, relative peace and economic trade (Johnson 1999:27; Ferguson 1993:80).

Palestine during the first century AD was well and truly a Greco-Roman cultural centre of activity. Despite Jewish opposition in some quarters, the process of Hellenisation throughout the empire had by this time had a tremendous cultural impact on Jews. The Septuagint (LXX), i.e. the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, was translated at Alexandria during the course of the mid-second century BC (Johnson 1999:25). See also Ferguson (1993:407-410) for a summary of other views considering this important literary development. While the actual date and circumstances relating to the translation is the subject of scholarly debate, it was very much a part of the Jewish heritage by the first century AD (Ferguson 1993:408). In fact, according to Ferguson (1993:410), the translation of the Septuagint into Greek was the “most important literary event, perhaps the most important single development of any kind in the Hellenistic period, for

the background of Christianity”. The Alexandrian school of Jewish thought under Philo (ca. 30 BC-50 AD), a prolific writer with a thorough Greek education, had a major impact on the thinking at that time amongst Jewry. Ferguson (1993:450) states that he was a person who “apparently fully assimilated Hellenistic culture while remaining immovably loyal to his Jewish heritage.” The Alexandrian school of thought was largely responsible for the development of the very important allegorical school of interpretation that served to dominate interpretation in this region until it was later opposed by the school at Antioch, Syria, that promoted a literal, historical and typological form of interpretation.

On the whole however, a local factor of extreme importance to the Jewish perspective of history at that time was that Palestine was the Holy Land, given to them by God, and Jerusalem was quintessentially a city founded upon their traditional view of history, which was a “faith” history – a history of Israel seen through and recorded through the eyes of faith (Schmidt 1984:9). God was Holy, and so were his chosen people, the Jews. While the Second Temple was still standing in Jerusalem it followed *ipso facto*, that God was with them (Otzen 1990:101). They were a people separated by God unto Himself. Therefore to come under Gentile rule was no less than an abomination. The purity laws were of great importance and significance to them as it separated God’s people from the rest of the nations. The categories of clean and unclean, insiders and outsiders, Jews and gentiles were implicit in their perception of reality (Otzen 1990:107,117-118).

With this in mind, it was by no means so that Jewry spoke with one voice (Johnson 1999:41). On the contrary, they were split apart. With extreme asceticism evidenced in the establishment at Qumran of an ascetic apocalyptic Jewish community, the Essenes, that rejected Jerusalem and the Judaism practiced there, through to the Sadducees, drawn from the wealthy Priestly class who were, by and large, open to the process of Hellenisation and who maintained amiable relations with the upper ruling class (Ferguson 1993:486). Other groups, such as the middle class Pharisees and the Scribes were also important as were the Zealots: a guerilla movement, established in 6 AD, essentially to overthrow Roman authority by force (Ferguson 1993:497-498). While these groups were distinctive, they often overlapped and the divisions between them were by no means always clear and even divisions within their respective ranks were complex.

What has all this history to do with the Gospel of Mark? And more particularly, what has it to do with Mark 7:24-31? I would venture to suggest that the historical and therefore the broad social background is of paramount importance to a broad literary understanding of this ancient text and, as will become evident below, forms the cultural backdrop against which to try and understand the text and its author, and forms the basis for understanding the literary genre of the text, which

no doubt, exhibits the conventional and therefore the shared literary conventions necessary for an understanding of the text by the author's contemporary readers or audience.

As an illustration, take for example the opening sentence of Mark: "The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mk 1:1). "Son of god" was not only a Jewish title with a completely different connotation to that held by gentiles. It was, however, also a title that was bestowed upon Augustus (after 27 BC); a name that Ferguson (1993:26) says itself suggests "the numinous and something more than human". The implied author of Mark's Gospel had the Jewish connotation in mind when he wrote it down and was no doubt aware of the rhetorical significance that such a term would hold, let's say, for gentile readers in Rome. This term was also used of "holy men" in ancient Palestine and the surrounding regions (Aune 1987:34).

Without some understanding of the broader historical background of this ancient Greco-Roman text and its Jewish content, a present reader would not fully comprehend or understand the greater significance of the rhetorical, and in the example given above, the polemic effect this title would have had within the greater cultural milieu, more particularly for the new Christian sub-culture that was being forged.

The written texts produced by an ancient society, as specific instances of *parole* (i.e. as particular speech acts [Vanhoozer 1998:61]), reflect within their ancient framework, the system of *langue* (i.e. the system of language [Vanhoozer 1998:61]), which in itself is a social construct that serves to facilitate communication amongst members of that community (Vanhoozer 1998:244). This shared system is conventional. It has to be; otherwise no communication would be possible (Vanhoozer 1998:244).

This world of language symbolizes, at a certain time and place, the values of a specific community. It is not only used to communicate aspects of referential reality (brute facts) but it also serves, to a large extent, to encapsulate within its system, certain ideas or concepts that are assumed to form a part of the brute reality of life. The Greek language had a way of capturing abstract concepts in a way that was quite different to the Hebrew (Semitic) use of concrete (hard) images for the purpose of communicating, even emotive issues. Johnson (1999:25) says that the use of Greek led to a rapid diffusion of "new ideas and old".

Language may also be used to prop up "reality" by "naming". Briggs (2001:236) discusses Volf's explanation of how Jesus takes on social boundaries "by a mission of 're-naming'". Jesus does this by re-defining and thereby reconstituting "the institutional facts determinative of the social reality of the time." According to Volf (as related by Briggs), a typical example is when Jesus

declares all foods clean in Mark 7:14-23. In this way Jesus breaks down and re-defines categories. In so doing, he abolishes the “system of exclusion”.

This naming of “facts” that serves as much a part of the community’s reality as do brute facts has been referred to by speech act theorists as “institutional facts” (Vanhoozer 1998:244-245; Briggs 2001:58). These institutional facts are social constructs that masquerade as real – they pass themselves off as real as if they were part of the empirical real world of brute facts. Let me explain by using the same example as I used above.

Augustus Caesar was given a divine appellation. He was a “son of god”. This was an institutional fact that held certain political and religious significance and which was validated by the symbolic world of language as translated and mediated by culture. Certain perceived religious and political realities were given a certain impetus by labeling them. Labeling or naming made it conventional. This gave them a certain social recognition that implied the reality of their existence; even though they did not form part of the empirical referential world of brute facts. The public naming of a god, gave it a sense of communal reality without which it could not enjoy institutional recognition.

When the author of the Gospel of Mark refers to Jesus as the “Son of God” he is expressing, from his point of view, a reality which is only fully comprehended when one enters and understands the Jewish system of language (*langue*) as expressed in specific instances (*parole*) of speech such as the one just given. While both Gentiles and Jews would have been able to access the same common system of *langue* through the common language (*koine* Greek), it is clear that there were certain aspects that were completely foreign to one another, more particularly that part of their language that was “sacred” to them. For example, to Jewish thought, the very existence of the Temple in Jerusalem was indicative of the fact that God was with them, housed in the Temple. To a Gentile, not being able to put this to proof by entering the Holy of Holies, that is, not without risking his very life, it would not necessarily be part of his real brute world. At the same time, no ordinary Jew would enter the Holy of Holies for he “knew” he would be struck down dead. This was as much a part of his reality as the “real” referential world.

The Jewish purity laws were also a part of an institutional reality that Jesus began to undo (Briggs 2001:236). However, such crossing (more like breaching) boundaries were to the scribes and Pharisees, no less than absolutely shocking and blasphemous. Another example of institutional reality was the whole honour / shame culture that dominated the whole of the Mediterranean region and of which Judaism was but one sub-culture; the honour code was as much a part of their real world as were the hard brute facts.

In essence, while the Jews were busy maintaining that God was with them, living in the Temple, and the Gentiles believed that the Emperor, institutionally at least, was a “son of god”, to the implied author of Mark and some of the characters of the story, Jesus, the real Son of God was calling Jews and Gentiles everywhere to repent of their wicked ways and turn to God, of which he, Jesus, was the very image.

2.1.2 Education and Literacy in the First Century AD Greco-Roman World

The *Polis* was the centre of learning (*paideia*) and therefore education was at the hub of social activity. Ferguson (1993:100) notes that the system of education in both the Jewish and the Greco-Roman spheres of culture were essentially the same. They had three different classes of education ranging from the most elementary or primary stage through to the secondary and then the final or advanced class. While primary education was preoccupied with teaching children from the age of seven reading, writing and some elementary arithmetic, what is important for the purposes of this study is the emphasis throughout the teaching system on what Ferguson (1993:100-101) refers to as “memorization and copying. People are capable of enormous feats of memorization when this skill is cultivated.” David Rhoads has apparently demonstrated this ability with regard to the Gospel of Mark by reciting, from memory, the entire Gospel (Rhoads, Dewey & Michie 1999:161 n.12). Ferguson (1993:101) goes on to say that:

The ancients highly valued memory as an indication of intelligence and even morality, and had more confidence in memory than in writing, perhaps a survival of earlier times when this was the only or principal means of preserving and transmitting information.

This must be borne in mind in relation to the later discussion of chiasm in antiquity. One of the features of chiasm is that it serves a mnemonic function. According to Stock (1984:24), in his survey of the classical Hellenistic system of education, he says that

Children learned the twenty-four letters of the Greek alphabet, one after the other, not, as we do now, by their sounds, but by their names (alpha, beta, gamma, delta, etc.) and apparently without knowing what the letters looked like. ‘In Roman times it was not enough to know the alphabet from alpha to omega. It had to be learned backwards, from omega to alpha, and then both ways at once, alpha-omega, beta-psi...mu-nu, ...’ This exercise could not but contribute to chiastic awareness.

This explanation of the educational training and the fact that the same degree of attention was given to syllables, and the various combinations of syllables with vowels, until they were learnt off pat demonstrates the thoroughness of their learning; after this came the words starting with monosyllables, then “came words of two, three, four and then five syllables” (Stock 1984:25). And only then apparently, on to short passages. All of this of course, without punctuation. All learnt by chanting and singing together.

In speaking of the Roman system of learning, Stock (1984:25) tells us that “the Greek educational system was transferred whole and entire in a mechanical way. ‘It was not even a case of imitating; it was on the whole a pure and simple transfer...’” Stock (1984:25-26) citing Marrou, gives another example of education in this set-up parallel to the one above and which is also of significance for understanding the affinity between chiasm and the general educational training of students:

The children began with the alphabet and the names of the letters, of course, before they learned what they looked like; first in their right order, from A to X (Y and Z were looked upon as foreign because they were only used for Greek words), and then backwards from X to A; then in pairs – AX, BV, CT, DS, ER – then jumbled into different combinations. After the letters came the syllables with all their combinations, and then single names. These stages came one after the other, and there was no hurry to get on to the next.

Children in the eleven to twelve years of age group were given secondary education under a *grammaticus*, with an emphasis on “grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, and music” (Ferguson 1993:101). Recitations, reciting passages out loud and the use of figures of speech (use of words and metaphors) were encouraged, as were the skills of comprehension and composition. The advanced education was reserved for those who were from the wealthier classes and they studied rhetoric and philosophy at the *ephebeia*, a publicly supported institutional forum for learning which was associated with the *gymnasia* in the cities. Education at the *ephebeia* was probably essential as an entrance to public and social or civil office (Ferguson 1993:101). Those who took up a profession in law, medicine or philosophy underwent thorough training in rhetoric. Ferguson (1993:102) says “we can hardly exaggerate the influence of rhetorical education on ancient culture and literature.”

As far as the Greco-Roman and Jewish schools were concerned, the rhetorical training received by Jews was by and large the same as that of the Greco-Roman forms of instruction (Ferguson 1993:103). Once again, memorisation was important to both Greco-Roman and Jewish schooling.

The real author of Mark was likely to have received a typical Greco-Roman education. Suffice it to know that the general standard of education was demanding and that a tremendous emphasis was placed on memorization. One of the advantages of a chiasmic structure is that it has a mnemonic function. If one can remember the first part of the chiasm and the centre (i.e. A:B:C:D), the other half of the symmetrical form (C':B':A') follows from the first. One may conclude that the rhetorical form of *hysteron proteron* was a part of classical rhetoric and may loosely be regarded as a variegated form of chiasm (depending on one's definition. This aspect is dealt with later).

2.1.2.1 Classical and Jewish Rhetoric

It is not my intention here to dwell on the intricacies of formal ancient and/or modern rhetoric, save for those aspects that are relevant for the purpose of this discussion with a view to better understanding the literary environment insofar as it assists this enquiry. However some of the more specific rhetorical aspects will be held over for the discussion of the genre of Mark as ancient Greco-Roman biography.

According to Kennedy (1984:9) rhetoric "was a systematic academic discipline universally taught throughout the Roman empire." He makes the further point that neither Palestine nor Syria were "rhetorical backwaters" and cites the case of Theodorus, a leading rhetorician from first century BC Gedara who taught Tiberius; and Caecilius, a famous Sicilian Jewish rhetorician who practiced his art during the reign of Augustus (Kennedy 1984:9). Rhetoric was the most important feature governing all disciplines, including drama, history, law, philosophy and the like (Stock 1984:26). There was much in the oral presentation of speech that was carried over into the written text. Everything had to have a sense of rhetorical order and function.

But what was rhetoric to the ancient? According to Kennedy (1984:3) rhetoric "is that quality of discourse by which a speaker or writer seeks to accomplish his purposes." This includes the "choice and arrangement of words" and ultimately rhetoric served to "persuade an audience to believe it or to believe it more profoundly." As far as New Testament documents are concerned the important thing to remember is that most were written with a view to being read out aloud to a Christian community, a church. Kennedy (1984:5) identifies that in many instances the New Testament documents retain an "oral and linear quality for its audience." The reference here to linear quality is not particularly helpful because all communication appears to be structured on some such "linear" principle. Whether as to times, settings, actions, events, etc. these all have to be told or presented in a "linear" or progressive fashion to remain coherent.

But what about the rhetoric of the Jews? If early Christianity were a Jewish sect, as it was, would it not be expected to find within the New Testament material, evidences of Jewish rhetoric? Here I am using the term in its broadest sense to include literary figures and forms of a much larger scale. Kennedy (1984:8) states that: “The New Testament lies on the cusp between Jewish and Greek culture; the life and religious traditions it depicts are Jewish, its language is Greek.”

Kennedy also points out something of significance. In his reference to the apostle Paul he finds that even if Paul was not thoroughly schooled in rhetoric (and he is not saying that this is the case), that Paul nonetheless was “at home in the Greek idiom of his time and the conventions of the Greek epistle.” He goes on to make the point that because rhetoric was so much in the public domain that even if Paul was not given a Greek education (and thereby implying a formal training in rhetoric) that:

He [Paul] *and the evangelists as well* would, indeed, have been hard put to escape an awareness of rhetoric as practiced in the culture around them, for the rhetorical theory of the schools found its immediate application in almost every form of oral and written communication: in official documents and public letters, in private correspondence, in the law courts and assemblies, in speeches at festivals and commemorations, and in literary composition in both prose and verse (Kennedy 1984:10, my italics).

This makes the point that even the average person in society was confronted with the presence of rhetoric at every turn, whether or not they received formal schooling in it as a discipline. Mack (1990: 29) states that “Hellenistic culture was a culture of rhetoric and rhetoric was clearly a public affair”. Consistent with the view of Kennedy above, Mack (1990:31) also holds the view that early Christians were “not unskilled, either as critics of their cultures of context or as proponents of their own emerging persuasions.”

According to Aune (1987:12), the New Testament documents are a “*tertium quid*” i.e. a “third something”. In other words, something greater than that out of which they arose, *viz.* the Greco-Roman and Jewish literary traditions. He gives them this description because as to form and function they are, after a careful analysis by him of both Jewish and Greco-Roman literature, typical of the Greco-Roman genre. In fact Aune (1987:46) identifies the Gospel of Mark as typically, Greco-Roman biography (*Bios*). However, as to content, it is clearly Jewish (Aune 1987:46).

Burridge (1992) also analysed the canonical gospels and, after surveying a broad band of literature for that period came to the same conclusion as Aune, although his study included not just a comparison of the basic form, content and function of the gospel, but numerous other factors as well such as size, scale, prose or metre, etc. (Burridge 1992:191-219).

However, before discussing the Greco-Roman genre of *bios*, I want to point out that Kennedy (1984:11-12), who in his study focuses upon the formal characteristics of Greco-Roman rhetoric, appears to empathise with Lund's view concerning chiasm as a form of Jewish rhetoric. Lund, as cited by Kennedy (1984:11) had this to say concerning the place of chiasm as a form of rhetoric:

Whenever the purely classical standards are employed in appraising the New Testament, its style is found wanting. Modern classicists agree in this respect with the conclusion of the early Fathers of the Church ... The procedure was misleading, since it set up Greek rhetoric as the only standard by which these writings could be judged ... Whatever does not fall into its categories is either described as the natural eloquence of the heart or is dismissed as crude and unfinished.

Kennedy (1984:11-12) comments on this as follows:

Specifically, Lund was trying to explain the neglect of understanding of *chiasmus* (the reversal of the order in corresponding words or phrases) on the part of Biblical scholars, but there is some broader truth in his observation.

He goes on to say that:

The problem is not so much the utilization of classical rhetoric as the rather limited view of classical rhetoric taken by the Fathers and modern critics, an identification of rhetoric with style and especially with Attic diction and with the ornamentation provided by the figures of speech. *If rhetorical criticism is to be valid, it must be practiced with some awareness of the traditions of the Jewish speech, of which chiasmus is one, and if it is to be useful it must embrace more than style. If fundamental and universal features of rhetoric are kept in mind and if we seek to use them in describing the logical and structural features of the text before us, rather than simply quarrying a text for examples of classical figures, we can significantly enhance our appreciation of its meaning without violence to the author's intent* (my italics).

On this point and more recently, a Biblical scholar, Roland Meynet has taken up this argument. Meynet (1998:352) states,

The great merit of Lund was to give new impetus to research on the way to an empirical description, free from the false guide of Graeco-Roman rhetoric, in particular the stanza theory. Lund is the first to show clearly how biblical rhetoric is distinct from Greek rhetoric. He is also the first to attempt to establish a catalogue of proper organization of laws of the biblical texts. The current explosion of research certainly takes its origin with his efforts.

My understanding of Meynet is that he is zealous about his subject and therefore uses strong language in arguing for scholarly recognition of what he calls “Biblical rhetoric” which he distinguishes from classical Greco-Roman forms of rhetoric which appear to have preoccupied American rhetorical studies (Meynet 1998:37). All I want to say here is that it appears as though Meynet is overstating his case. The New Testament documents are products of both Jewish and Greco-Roman culture and therefore we ought to be sensitive to both of these forms in the analysis of any biblical text produced during the Greco-Roman period.

According to Talbert, as cited by Man (1984:146) “the use of chiasm infused the thought- and speech-patterns of the Semitic mind, and in this manner it found its way into the Old Testament and then into the New Testament.”

In the light of the foregoing discussion it becomes evident that an awareness of the socio-historical background to the Gospel of Mark is a *sine qua non* for understanding the text within the context of its first century AD social and cultural milieu. The tremendous value of knowing, within the bounds of reasonable enquiry, the tremendous impact that both Greco-Roman and Jewish culture had on the production of the Gospel of Mark is a timeous reminder that to ignore the contribution made by either one of them is to do a gross injustice to the text, its author and its implied audience.

Chapter 3

3.1 Biblical Parallelism

Underlying chiasmus of course is parallelism. In fact chiasm is concentric parallelism, just one of many parallelisms (and not only Biblical) as will be seen later. A short review of the examination of biblical parallelisms from the eighteenth century onwards, highlighting the more important parallel literary forms and figures, will be beneficial because all the conventions governing the use of parallelisms apply, on the whole, to an understanding of chiasm.

3.1.1 The Eighteenth Century

The function of parallelisms and their categorisation into some form of type classification was due to the seminal work (see paragraph 3.1.3 below) of Robert Lowth in the eighteenth century.

Robert Lowth was Professor of poetry at Oxford and later became Bishop of Oxford. The publication of Lowth's work appears to have given impetus to the previously held notion that parallelisms signaled the presence of poetry although Lowth may well have indicated the presence of parallelisms in prose as well (Petersen and Richards 1992:27). It is to these eighteenth century beginnings that we now turn our attention for they are still very useful categories for provisional consideration and are nearly always referred to in any work on parallelisms.

3.1.2 Johan-Albrecht Bengel

Meynet (1998:62) states that the German New Testament scholar, Johan-Albrecht Bengel, is considered by his successors as the "discoverer of concentric constructions". Nils Lund (1992:35) also credits Bengel as being the one who first grasped the significance of chiastic structure and its importance to the field of exegesis. Meynet (1998:62-63) however does acknowledge that this literary form was known to the Jewish world from at least the fourteenth century.

Bengel's discovery of concentric parallelism was published in his *Gnomon Novi Testamenti* (Tubingen: Io Henri Philippi Schranii, 1742). In a footnote Meynet (1998:61 n.28) directs our attention to the fact that Bengel uses the term "chiasm" for "symmetry" and therefore Bengel's use of the term "chiasm" (read symmetry) is a misnomer and a reference to what is in fact an example of direct parallelism.

Nonetheless, Bengel is indeed credited with “having first grasped the significance of chiastic forms in the writings of the New Testament and *of having applied the principle to exegesis* (Lund 1992:35-36, italics mine)

3.1.3 Robert Lowth

Our interest in Biblical parallelisms and this characteristic of the Hebrew writings commence with Robert Lowth. According to Petersen and Richards (1992:22) Lowth’s main interest was in prophecy and it was his examination and the publication of his findings in regard to the relationship and function of Hebrew poetry in the prophetic literature that became the standard classification of Hebrew poetry for some 250 years.

In 1753, Lowth published his *De sacra poesi Hebraeorum* (Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews) and in 1778 his later *Isaiah: A New Translation with a Preliminary Dissertation and Notes Critical, Philological and Explanatory* (Berlin [Online] 1997) in which he deals with certain categories of parallelisms. According to Berlin (Berlin [Online] 1997) it was Lowth’s definition in his introduction to *Isaiah* that “became the classic definition of parallelism” and which appears as follows and is well worth reading:

The correspondence of one Verse, or Line with another I call parallelism. When a proposition and a second is subjoined to it, or drawn under it, equivalent, or contrasted with it, in Sense; or similar to it in the form of Grammatical Construction; these I call Parallel Lines; and the words or phrases answering one to another in the corresponding Lines Parallel Terms.

In Lowth’s previous publication, *De sacra poesi Hebraeorum* he had already identified, in his nineteenth lecture, parallelism as:

The poetical conformation of sentences, which has been so often alluded to as characteristic of Hebrew poetry, consists chiefly in a certain equality, resemblance, or parallelism between the members of each period; so that in two lines (or members of the same period) things for the most part shall answer to things, and words to words, as if fitted to each other by a kind of rule or measure. This parallelism has much variety and many gradations; it is sometimes more accurate and manifest, sometimes more vague and obscure; it may however, on the whole be said to consist of three species (Meynet 1998:45-46).

The three “species” referred to here are those categories identified by Lowth as synonymous, antithetical, and synthetic and are discussed below.

While Lowth is speaking in general terms of the form taken by parallelisms it is often very difficult to be more precise and so, as time has gone by, scholars have refined and increased the different types or categories of parallelisms. Lowth however, went on to identify three species: synonymous, antithetical and synthetic as follows. I have quoted Lowth’s own words because they are extremely useful (notwithstanding the tremendous insights of modern scholarship) provisional categories for immediate consideration. However, the modern insights as to how they function cannot be overlooked (see below).

3.1.3.1 Synonymous Parallelism

The first species is the Synonymous Parallelism, when the same sentiment is repeated in different, but equivalent terms. This is the most frequent of all, and is often conducted with the utmost accuracy and neatness: examples are very numerous, nor will there be any great difficulty in the choice of them: on this account I shall select such as are most remarkable in other respects (Meynet 1998:46-49).

I include here just one of Lowth’s examples (as cited by Meynet) but have taken the liberty of highlighting the corresponding terms in each bi-colon:

“When **Israel** went out from Egypt;
The **house of Jacob** from a strange people

Judah was as *his* sacred heritage
Israel *his* dominion

The **sea** saw, and fled;
Jordan turned back:

The **mountains** leaped like rams;
The **hills** like the sons of the flock [...] Ps 114.1-6”

3.1.3.2 Antithetic Parallelism

The Antithetic Parallelism is the next that I shall specify, when a thing is illustrated by its contrary being opposed to it. This is not confined to any particular form: for sentiments are opposed to sentiments, words to words, singulars to singulars, plurals to plurals &c. [sic] of which the following are examples (Meynet 1998:49-50).

Once again I shall use just one of Lowth's illustrations (as cited by Meynet) with my own emphasis:

“The **blows of a friend** are faithful;
 But the **kisses of an enemy** are treacherous

The **cloyed** will trample upon the honeycomb;
 But to the **hungry** every bitter thing is sweet. Prov. 26.6-7 ”

3.1.3.3 Synthetic Parallelism

There is a third species of parallelism, in which the sentences answer to each other, not by the iteration of the same image or sentiment, or the opposition of their contrary, but merely by the form of construction. To this, which may be called Synthetic or Constructive Parallelism, may be referred all such as do not come within the former classes: I shall however produce a few of the most remarkable instances (Meynet 1998:50).

I have here chosen only one (as cited by Meynet) for illustration:

“The law of JEHOVAH is perfect, restoring the soul;
 The testimony of JEHOVAH is sure, making wise the simple:
 The precepts of JEHOVAH are right, rejoicing the heart;
 The commandment of JEHOVAH is clear, enlightening the eyes:
 The fear of JEHOVAH is pure, enduring for ever;
 The judgements of JEHOVAH are truth, they are just altogether.
 More desirable than gold, or than much fine gold;
 And sweeter than honey, or the dropping of honey-combs. Ps 19.8-11”

Because Lowth's main focus was the prophetic literature, he dealt with the issue of Hebrew parallelisms within the context of prophetic poetry. Interest in his identification and categorisation of these parallelisms into three main types *viz.* synonymous, antithetic and synthetic have since publication dominated discussion on the subject of Hebrew parallelisms in general. Lowth also found that parallelisms were “no less in the Prophetic poetry than in the Lyric and Didactic” (Meynet 1998:45).

This identification of parallelisms in the Hebrew Bible has had a profound effect on the study of Hebrew poetry in particular. According to Petersen and Richards (1992:21) the work of Lowth remains “seminal in virtually every discussion of Hebrew Poetry.” As these authors point out, some two hundred and fifty years later, virtually every book on the subject includes a reference to

Robert Lowth and the three main categories described by him which even today still influence our thinking.

While this understanding of how Hebrew poetry functions remained the dominant template for later studies on the subject, our present understanding has advanced somewhat in recent years, as we shall see below. Nonetheless, it is to the tremendous insights of Robert Lowth that we remain indebted.

However, insofar as chiasm is concerned, it appears that neither Lowth nor his students recognised the “full significance, nor the *extensive use of chiasmus*” (Lund 1992:33). Meynet (1998:60) points out that Lowth “manifestly missed” the concentric arrangement of Zech. 9:5 with its arrangement of place names: Askalon-Gaza-Ekron-Gaza-Askalon.

3.1.4 John Jebb

In 1820 John Jebb, described by Lund (1992:37) as an “English writer of note” and one who served as Bishop of Limerick. He published his work entitled: *Sacred Literature comprising a review of the principles of composition laid down by the late Robert Lowth, Lord Bishop of London in his Praelectiones and Isaiah: and an application of the principles so reviewed, to the illustrations of the New Testament in a series of critical observations in the style and structure of that sacred volume* (London: Cadell & Davis, 1820 as cited by Meynet 1998:65).

As may be gathered from the title, Jebb attempted first to understand and then apply the work of Lowth to the New Testament. In analysing the work of Lowth, he recognised that Lowth’s description of synonymous parallelisms was inaccurate in that it failed to take account of the gradual or perceptible and rather subtle change in meaning amongst members that appeared synonymous, but in fact were distinguishable. For example, and with reference to Psalm 21:2 (Psalm 21:1-2 in the NIV) Jebb explains:

The gradation of member above member, and line above line, in each couplet of this stanza, is undeniable: ‘salvation’ is an advance upon ‘strength’; and ‘how greatly shall he exult’, an advance upon ‘he shall rejoice’; again, ‘the request of the lips, is something beyond ‘the desire of the heart’, - it is desire brought into act (Meynet 1998:66).

Jebb then considers that the name given to “synonymous” parallelisms ought to be changed to “progressive parallelisms” in every case in which there is a central climax or anti-climax. He also

detected that certain parallelisms progressed from the general to the specific and to these he gave the name “Cognate Parallelisms” in all cases where there was no absolute identity amongst the members of the unit (Meynet 1998:67).

3.1.5 Thomas Boys

According to Lund (1992:38) the Rev. Thomas Boys was from London and “a soldier under the Duke of Wellington, in the Peninsula Wars and a translator of the Bible into Portuguese.” Boys, who followed the work of Jebb rather closely, went on to show that introverted parallelism or what he preferred to call “correspondence,” were evident throughout the Bible (Lund 1992:38-39). He applied his mind to the Psalms wherein he found chiasmic structures as well as in the New Testament texts. Meynet (1998:88-126) reproduces with comment excerpts from the work of Thomas Boys that is valuable to those who have no access to this rather scarce literature and want to get a closer understanding of the works of Boys.

These then may be regarded as the main contributors during the eighteenth century that have contributed positively to our understanding of Biblical parallelisms. Berlin ([Online] 1997) points out that over the years there were refinements to the various categories of parallelisms and of course, new names were given to them such as: staircase parallelism, emblematic parallelism, Janus parallelism, elliptical parallelism and so on.

According to Berlin ([Online] 1997), the main view that characterised the research into parallelisms in the past weighed heavily on the aspects of synonymity and redundancy and that it was not until the twentieth century and then the 1980’s that attention was given to the “other dimension: variation and continuity.” It was the tremendous insights of James Kugel and Robert Alter that managed to realign the importance and significance of these structures for literary works.

3.2 The Modern View of Parallelisms

This brings us to the modern era in which Kugel, Alter, Berlin and others have contributed much to our present understanding of parallelisms.

Kugel (as cited by Breck 1994:38) has highlighted the fact that there is no such thing as a synonymous parallelistic structure because on each occasion there almost always is, in the second half-line, a “what’s more” dimension to it. In other words, A, “what’s more, B”. According to

Breck (1994:38) this almost always “*represents an advancement in the form of heightening, intensifying, specifying, elevating or ‘seconding’*”.

To consider Kugel’s own words (as cited by Breck 1994:38) is elucidating:

The notion of parallelism with which we began conceived of it basically as an emphatic, elevating feature, ‘seconding’. Sometimes what B added to A was significantly different, a definite going-beyond in force or specificity; sometimes A and B were related in a manner best expressed by some subordination in English (‘when,’ ‘if,’ ‘just as’); sometimes B’s ‘what’s more’ was a reassertion of A via the most conventional pairs.

A contentious issue that was taken up by Robert Alter (1985:4) was the fact that Kugel perhaps had unwittingly suggested (at least in the opinion of Alter) that there was virtually no distinction between poetry and prose. However, in a later work, Kugel issued a statement to the effect that it had not been his intention to abandon the distinction between poetry and prose (Petersen and Richards 1992:102-103, n.23). Alter (1985:xi) nonetheless agreed in principle with the ideas of Kugel. Alter (1985:10-11) also laments the fact that scholarship neglected the work of Herder (who responded to Lowth’s work some two centuries ago) and says that Herder had then observed, “the two (parallel) members strengthen, heighten, empower each other.”

This summation of the present situation by Petersen and Richards (1992:35) is apposite:

We take a very broad understanding of parallelism. It occurs in the interaction of the semantic and grammatic equivalence and opposition. The juxtaposition of A and B provides the opportunity for an almost infinite number of correspondences. The equivalence or opposition within the correspondence may be furthered at grammatic and semantic levels. ‘A is so, and *what’s more*, B is so’ is too limiting a description of the correspondence. A is related to B at a multiplicity of grammatic and semantic levels. The correspondence of A and B is not merely $A + B$, nor $A > B$, nor $A < B$. As one recent contributor to the discussion has said ‘The whole [bicolon] is different from the sum of its parts because the parts influence and contaminate each other’ [n.42 - here the authors are citing D.J.A. Clines]. Parallelism is not something that is predictable, and no mechanical system or set of categories can confine it. Rather, we must carefully observe the individual words as well as their relationships at the level of the colon, multi-colon, and entire poem in order to comprehend the range of parallelisms utilised in the Hebrew Bible.

This entire statement is relevant to examining the dynamic in chiasmic structures on either a macro or micro-scale.

3.2.1 Parallelism, Poetry and Prose

As we have seen above, until the eighteenth century, parallelisms were relatively unknown to Biblical scholarship. However, from the eighteenth century until as recently as some twenty years ago the presence of parallelism (and meter) was considered to be a hallmark of Biblical poetry. (This view of course has a history of its own and for some, more especially with regard to the lack of demonstrable metrical characteristics in Hebrew Poetry, is a contentious issue). The fact that this view held sway for so long may have been because Lowth (see below) considered meter and parallelism to be integral to one another (Petersen and Richards 1992:22). However, as Petersen and Richards (1992:14) point out, neither parallelism, nor rhythm/meter, nor metaphors and figures of speech are to be found only in poetry. They are common to prose as well. Although each of these characteristics appear in prose, these authors contend that their appearance in poetry is in a more “intense, denser and compact way than they do in prose.” They (Petersen and Richards 1992:14) also say “neither rhythm/meter, parallelism nor other poetic techniques can, in and of themselves, serve as a hallmark for identifying poetic expression. Poetic expression constitutes a careful interplay of the rhythmic expression of carefully crafted human speech wrought with special attention to artistic effect. Hebrew poetry constitutes these features along with a perceptible elastic parallelism.”

The difficulty of finding a generally acceptable defining criteria for distinguishing between the two types of literature, prose and poetry, may be because, as Kugel (1981:69) points out, that while there are many different genre classifications in the Bible itself, there is no evidence of “typing” into larger “blocs corresponding to ‘poetry’ or ‘prose’.” He says “to speak of ‘poetry’ at all in the Bible will be in some measure to impose a concept foreign to the Biblical world.” It is for this reason that Kugel argues for a continuum between our (modern) attempts at distinguishing between the two literary concepts.

Another dynamic approach to analysing Biblical poetry was that taken by Adele Berlin. Berlin’s (1985:99) description of parallelism really captures the essence of what parallelisms are all about. Berlin characterises (rather than defines) parallelism as being

constituted by redundancy and polysemy, disambiguation and ambiguity, contrast within equivalence. Parallelism focuses the message on itself but its vision is

binocular. Like human vision it superimposes two slightly different views of the same object and from their convergence it produces a sense of depth.

We can therefore say with a degree of confidence that whereas in the past scholars relied more or less on the presence of parallelism and meter as an indication of poetry, this can, in the light of recent studies, no longer be considered to be the case. Parallelisms pervade the literature of the Old and New Testaments and an appreciation of what they are and how they function is fundamental to an understanding of chiasm, a specific type of parallelism (concentric parallelism).

3.3 Brief overview of Chiasm in Antiquity

This section serves to orientate the reader to the ancient origins of chiasm; and to establish the nexus between those ancient cultures and the literatures of the Hebrew people and the Greco-Roman world to which the Christian community owes a deep debt of gratitude. This survey also serves to sensitise us to the important functions of chiasm through the centuries and the important significance such literary devices hold for the exegesis of ancient texts in particular. Therefore an overview of the antiquity of chiasm as a literary (and therefore written) form will be surveyed very briefly. Although our interest lies in exploring the possibility of chiasm in a specific literary unit of the Gospel of Mark, a New Testament text, it is useful to be reminded that the ancient roots of chiasm and the way they functioned in those texts extends to a period in the history of the Ancient Near East that by far preceded the emergence of the great literary traditions of both the Hebrew people and the Greco-Roman world, vestiges of which were to later merge in the literature of the Old and New Testaments, and which serve as the Christian canon. Aune (1987:12) refers to the New Testament as “a creative combination of Jewish and Hellenistic traditions transformed into a *tertium quid* (‘a third something’): that is, a reality related to two known things but transcending them both.”

My interest in the literary (written) form in no way ought to imply that I have no interest in the probable oral pre-literary origins of chiasm. The features and characteristics of chiasm, e.g. repetition, circuitousness, parallelism, symmetry, balance, inversion (Welch 1981:12-13), as indeed all forms of repetition and parallelism evident in the ancient texts, all tend to point in this direction. It is simply not within the scope of this paper to speculate or theorise about the oral origins (or otherwise) of this literary form, except to say that it is indeed probable that the device served an essentially oral/aural world. “Oral”, in this sense, in no way precludes a contemporaneous literary tradition. What we can say is that this literary form appears to reflect a style and form that indicates that the scribes wrote essentially for such an oral/aural world. This view would be consistent with the view advanced by Susan Niditch (1997:4).

3.3.1 A Brief history of chiasm in writing

As far as the history of writing is concerned, archaeological evidence has been unable to go beyond, in time, the 3500 BC boundary, for want of evidence. This is because it is understood that the writing materials used at that time were naturally perishable (e.g. papyrus, vellum, parchment). All we can do is speculate that there may well have been a literary world that extended beyond 3500 BC to an earlier date. That there is no extant evidence to support such a view does not imply that writing (in its broadest sense) was not an earlier development. We simply have no way of knowing for certain. In any event this issue is best left to those experts most competent to pronounce on these issues. This paper makes the reasonable assumption that chiasm served both an oral/aural and a literary world. To the extent that the texts themselves express forms conducive to an oral/aural world, we do need to pay attention.

In this regard we need to take note of the statement made by Merrill F. Unger (as cited by Geisler and Nix 1986:332): “Those who first attempted to reduce human speech to writing did not at once perceive the chasm that separates the spoken words from the characters in which they are symbolised. They wrote as they spoke in unbroken succession, inscribing the letters in closest proximity to each other, without separating them into words, much less into sentences, paragraphs and chapters.”

According to Wilson (1997:36) this is the same type of experience encountered by Albert Lord when he was interviewing Serbo-Croats in the former Yugoslavia. According to Lord (as related by Wilson) the Serbo-Croats

could not grasp the concept of a ‘word’. Thought for them, was expressed in a stream of sound, and during composition the syllables had to be arranged in the very act of performance so as to conform to the conventional syllabic count of each line of epic verse. They composed in terms of thought units, or phrases, many of which were drawn from a huge catalogue of stock phrases in the memory, and this had to be done in the instant of being needed.

This is important to remember when we consider the characteristics of chiasm and the verbal markers in the text that signify breaks, pauses and other important textual indicators (Parunak 1981). Therefore, any evidence of an oral tradition must be inferred from what documentary evidence we may have available. Form criticism is, *par excellence*, the field of study that endeavors to trace, from the extant texts, the possible oral form and *Sitz im Leben* from which the written representation is thought to have originated.

3.3.1.1 Protoliterate period (3900 BC – 2900 BC)

According to Hoerth (1998:43), writing was the most important contribution made during the period known as the Protoliterate period, extending from around 3900 BC to 2900 BC and it was during this period that scholars believe writing appears to have emerged in its primary and therefore most elementary form. According to authorities, the earliest known writing emerges from southern Mesopotamia in the form of Sumerian cuneiform tablets ca. 3500 BC (Geisler and Nix 1986:333). Hoerth (1998:43) describes the writing for this period as pictographic i.e. the symbol represents a likeness of the thing it symbolised and as Hoerth says, “a jar represents a jar” and some 1500 separate symbols or signs from this period have been identified. We might mention here that Egyptian hieroglyphics, often commonly but mistakenly identified as the earliest of writings, appears to have emerged at a somewhat later stage, from ca. 3100 BC.

The development of writing may therefore be traced through this early pictographic stage through to the stages of ideograms and phonograms and, according to Geisler and Nix (1986:332), these latter two types were “intermingled with simple syllabic writing, and that with a more sophisticated system of cuneiform, wedge-shaped signs ...used by the Sumerians.”

3.3.1.2 Chiasm in antiquity (ca. 2100 BC)

Our interest commences around 2100 BC designated as the Ur III period. It is this period that has been examined and in which we have early evidence of the use of chiasm (Smith 1981:17). In a fascinating chapter evidencing chiasm during the late Sumerian-Akkadian period, Smith (1981:31) contends that: “most of the essential features of chiastic form and function were available to Mesopotamian authors from the late third millennium through the mid-first millennium BC and that chiastic usage in Ugaritic and Hebrew should not be considered unique – except insofar as local eccentricities are exhibited.” Furthermore, it would appear from Smith’s research, that the balancing of elements and parallelism of thought is not unique to the Hebrew type of poetry. In fact Smith (1981:21) cites Gordon as having “observed that biblical, Ugaritic, Phoenician, Mesopotamian, Anatolian, and Egyptian poetry all exhibit a similar poetic structure.”

An ancient example (among many not mentioned here) of chiasm has been found to exist in the Akkadian form of the *Descent of Inanna to the Netherworld* but not in the Sumerian version (Smith 1981:25). Smith (1981:18) clarifies for us the fact that Akkadian chiasms which developed during the 3rd millennium BC were introduced “into Canaanite and Hebrew usage” and draws our attention to the important functions, described by Andersen, that this literary device served in the

literature of that time and which of course is of great value to us today in examining these structures evident in ancient texts:

- a. *emphasis* on synonymy, contemporaneity, reciprocity, concomittance, or integration,
 - b. *diminution* of antithesis (dual aspects of event), or creation of merismus,
 - c. *delay* of action and maintenance of suspense or contemplation in epic rhetoric,
 - d. *intensification* - specific or climactic,
 - e. *reinforcement* of negation or prohibition,
 - f. *description* of symmetrical arrangements,
 - g. *synapsis*, correlation, or knitting of units, and
 - h. *framing* or inclusion.
- (Smith 1981.18-19)

3.3.1.3 Chiasm in Ugarit (1400 BC-1200 BC)

The discovery of the ancient tablets of Ras Shamra (Ugarit) in 1929 in Syria, and the later examination of such texts has indeed shed tremendous light on the literature of the Hebrew people. It is an interesting period because it coincides with the dates more or less accepted by scholarship for the occupation of the Promised Land by Joshua ca. 1250BC - 1000 BC (Hinson 1990:77).

Bullock (1988:44) points out that Proverbs in the Hebrew Bible contain “many words and word-parallels that also appear in the Ugarit texts.” Bullock also states that the “general literary form of the proverb and proverbial literature is well attested in the major cultures of the world of ancient Israel.” This confirms the view that the major genres that existed at the time were not unique to any one culture although there were, no doubt, as pointed out elsewhere in this paper, local eccentricities and types that were unique in the particularities. As far as the hymns in the Hebrew Bible are concerned, there is what Bullock (1988:42) refers to as a “common spirit” among the Egyptian, Babylonian literature and the penitential Psalms in the biblical literature.

Welch (1981:36), in his study of a representative sample of Ugaritic texts for evidence of chiasm, states that the linguistic roots of the Hebrew people are “evident in the literary record left by the people who occupied the site at Ugarit from 1400-1200 BC making the study of these texts significant to any understanding of the florescence of the civilisation which composed the Old Testament.” Welch says that although it is impossible to say what precisely the impact of one culture may have had on another, that there are nonetheless “very early precedents” in the libraries at Ugarit, which indicate a direct or very strong affinity to the “cultural strata out of which the Hebrew literature arose.” What is more, the chiasm evidenced in the Old Testament can no longer be considered unique unto itself, but a manifestation of a general literary genre understood and employed by the people of the time. For instance, the hymns and epics are all

characterised by parallelism and of course ample evidence of chiasm proliferates this ancient literature. The proximity of the Hebrew and Ugaritic cultures no doubt explain, at least to some extent, the tremendous sophistication and art of composition found in the Hebrew Bible.

It is therefore no longer startling to find such similarities with neighbouring cultures. Welch proceeds to analyse and draw literary comparisons between the Hebrew and Ugaritic literature and concludes that as far as simple chiasm is concerned that Ugaritic chiasm and Hebrew chiasm do in fact resemble one another. Another very important point for our purposes is the point made by Welch (1981:39) that the more sophisticated chiastic structures involve a placing of the central idea, thought, keywords or phrases around a centre point “in an order that ascends to a climax and then descends in the opposite order” and that this pattern is “fluently executed in the Ugaritic texts as well.” One of the distinct advantages to discovering an incomplete text that is structured according to chiastic convention is the ability to reconstruct “portions of a mutilated text” simply by interpolating from what went before (Welch 1981:40).

John Welch (1981:48) concludes that the literary arrangements and compositions evident in the Hebrew Bible clearly have their roots in Canaanite literature of the period and he is clearly expectant of further discoveries in Ugarit and Ebla.

3.3.1.4 Chiasm in the Old Testament

While much has been discovered in recent times about the nature and function of parallelisms in the Ancient Near Eastern cultures, it is quite extraordinary that so much about the effect of parallelisms on the literary structure of the Bible has only surfaced in the past couple of hundred years or so. Welch (1981:14) states that it is truly a wonder that such literary arrangements were lost to the world for a couple of thousand years. It is thanks to a few scholars, the most notable of whom have already been mentioned, that we now have an increasing appreciation for this ancient literary art.

Following on the above discussion of chiasm in the Ugaritic literature, chiasm proliferates throughout the literature of the Old Testament. David A. Dorsey (1999) clearly illustrates the extent to which each and every book of the Old Testament reflects, at least to some degree, chiastic structure at a macro-level. While it is possible to debate the precise configuration of each of the structures, there is no doubt that they proliferate throughout the Hebrew Bible. The implications of this for Bible interpretation and the theological significance of such ancient literary structures are absolutely staggering and I submit have barely been considered. While, as suggested above, the precise configuration may be debated and the various nuances that are no

doubt evident in each chiasm at different levels (semantic, grammatic, phonic, thought etc.), there is no doubt that they exist. Consistent with the view taken of the proliferation of parallelisms in both Hebrew prose and poetry, the same situation subsists with regard to chiasm. Chiasm is evident in both Hebrew prose narrative and Hebrew poetry and therefore this form requires serious consideration by exegetes attempting to interpret Old Testament texts (Radday 1981:50ff; Watson 1981:118).

Radday (1981:51) makes three claims for chiasm in the narrative of the Hebrew Bible that is important to take note of. Firstly, that there are many narratives of varying lengths in the Hebrew Bible that are chiastically structured and that such structures are more than artificial or aesthetic devices. Secondly, he states that the centre of the chiasm is “a key to meaning”. Furthermore that the centre “cannot be overestimated.” Thirdly, that the older the text the more likely it is to exhibit chiastic structure and goes so far as to suggest that the incidence of chiasm in a text may be useful in dating the text as to whether it is pre-exilic or post-exilic in its composition.

Watson (1981:118-168) in his essay deals extensively with this literary device in the poetry of the Hebrew people. Suffice to point out here the following pertinent functions of chiasm in the Hebrew poetry that were identified by him as follows (Watson 1981:145-146). Chiasm serves to break the monotony of direct parallelism. It may also serve *structural* purposes e.g. to open and close stanzas, link elements of a poem; indicate the mid-point of a poem etc. It also may serve an *expressive* function: e.g. *merismus*, reversals, assert negative assertions, contrast (antithesis) and other duties.

According to Wilson (1997:26), repetition is the first principle of Hebrew poetry. While this may be so, research shows that repetition plays an important role in the structure of all forms of literary expression in the literature of the Ancient Near East, including that form we moderns refer to as “prose”. The Hebrew Bible, being a product of the Ancient Near East, holds no monopoly on this incredible literary device but records and reflects the cross flow of cultural expression that pervaded the Ancient Near East (Welch 1981).

It may be trite to say that repetition is at the root of all parallelisms. But what is not commonly known to ordinary readers of the Bible is the thoroughly extraordinary significance such repetition, evidenced in ancient texts, can hold for the modern reader of these ancient literary artefacts. What may be a surprise to some, is that linguistic and structural studies of ancient texts have revealed a degree of structural sophistication that at times, far surpasses that of modern Western literature (Welch 1981:14). Thus, as moderns, we must rid ourselves of any notion of our

own literary superiority when considering any text of ancient origin. And that of course includes the Biblical literature.

In a sense, parallelism was for the ancient, a way of thinking, quite foreign to our modern linear approach that sees redundancy in language as a nuisance and perhaps, indicative of a lack of sophistication. This is not to say that a linear (i.e. the sequential placing of the events of a story such as is the case with narrative, or a chronological portrayal of an event, as in a report or historical record) structure was in any way neglected. It couldn't be, for this is what makes for coherence.

What is being promoted however, is the idea that over and above these conventional structures there was, at times, yet another that subsumed the story (or report) into an overarching parallel structure thereby purposefully affecting the meaning of the story and the subsequent significance to readers. In other words the implied author, in a particular and unmistakable way marked the text in a conventional way thereby giving greater significance to one part of the text rather than another. Radday (1981:51) in speaking of chiasm draws our attention in particular to this phenomenon and says: "The contemporary mind, nurtured on and believing in scientific publications, is disinclined to acknowledge that an artist should intentionally deviate from the 'logical' sequence of narration in order to follow another pattern of his own." Radday (1981:51) also makes the claim that "many narrative sections of Scripture are chiastically built. This proves to be equally true for entire libraries such as the Torah, for single books, for many pericopes and especially for those chapters that occupy positions in the text of paramount importance." As stated above, Dorsey (1999) demonstrates this in his examination of the macro-chiastic layout of the books of the Old Testament, from Genesis to Malachi.

Repetition of sounds, words, phrases, clauses, sentences etc. all abound in the textual world of the ancient and are not to be regarded as superfluous to textual meaning or only serving "simple" rhetorical purposes. While they do play a part in the establishment of symmetry and balance in the literature of the Ancient Near East and thereby serve to structurally accentuate certain aspects of a text, this style of presentation is not merely aesthetic, but appears to have a discrete and more immediate sense of purpose. According to Beekman et al (1981:33), repetition of the order of "Alliteration and rhyme are phonological devices which often serve for aesthetic purposes or to mark prominence." According to Niditch (1997:13), repetition must be seen primarily as serving a metonymic function and must therefore be interpreted as "emphasising key messages and moods in a work of literature as in a musical composition." If this is the case, then the form of repetition that is found in the Biblical text has more than a mnemonic function, although it may serve this purpose too (Wilson 1997:33). Different expressions of repetition may also serve as textual

markers of the “authors’ particular interests, messages and settings” (Niditch 1997:6). In fact, Niditch (1997:14) goes on to point out that the complexity inherent in the repetition of just a “single repeated word can also be a powerful source of immanent referentiality within a work, unifying and deepening the meanings of a composition in ways paradoxically more subtle than variation in language.” This must be borne in mind when we examine the keyword “bread” in Mark 7:24-31.

What must also be noted is that the identification of one form of parallelism in no way implies the exclusion of parallelism operating in the same literary work, at different levels at the same time. This may be evidenced in the thoughts, ideas, words, assonance, and so on (Welch 1981:11).

These are important observations that need to be considered in our understanding of parallelisms in general and of course to chiasm. This means that a superficial reading of any ancient text will not do. Particular attention must be given to every detail expressed in the text.

As we have seen, parallelism in the Ancient Near East was a form of repetition that is somewhat easier to describe than to define. It may be said that it manifests itself in a literary unit (on the macro or micro scale) when correspondences are found to exist between sounds, words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and even between or among whole literary units. Not only may parallels be found in a particular text in all manner of stylistic fashion, but there are also parallels on a larger scale among adjacent narratives. Wilson (1997:27-28) identifies whole episodes linked together in sequence. Some of these stories are linked “in series” (A:B:C:D - A’:B’:C’:D’) or “yoked” (AA’:BB’:CC’:DD’) and together he says, “they present a narrative stream”.

This kind of parallelism is not restricted to the Old Testament. Rhoads, Dewey and Michie (1999:52-54) have found this same principle at work in the Gospel of Mark where the authors note: “Mark occasionally arranges episodes in a concentric pattern, a common technique of ancient narration in which related episodes form rings around a central episode.” This literary structure is clearly evident in the Hebrew Bible, and on a large-scale and therefore Jewish origins for concentric patterns in the New Testament literature are probable. This may be substantiated by Kennedy’s (1984:28-29) claim that chiasm was “ignored by classical rhetoricians and literary critics alike”.

Chiasm may be used as an example *par excellence* of the pervasiveness of parallelisms throughout the Ancient Near East because it includes all forms of parallelisms within its structure. Chiasm, in its simplest form may be found in a half-line (colon) of poetry (aba’) or sentence (aba’) or it may govern the whole framework of literary units (ABA’; ABCB’A’; ABB’A’) of

different magnitudes in which case various forms of parallelisms may be included within its overarching framework. In fact it is possible to identify one form of parallelism in a text and miss an entire chiasmic structure.

3.3.1.5 Chiasm in Ancient Greek, and Latin

According to John Welch (1981:250) chiasm was already evident in Ancient Greece from the time of Homer (ca. 800 BC). An interesting question that may be asked is: where did the ancient Greeks derive their understanding of chiasm? According to Kosmala (as cited by Welch 1981:257) and in order to explain Homer's use of both chiasm and *hysteron proteron*, the Greeks were apparently not the originators of this form of symmetrical figure but, it was, in all probability, a "Semitic inheritance, like the alphabet." Welch also cites Bassett in support of this contention. Although Bassett, writing earlier on in the century, did not have at his disposal all the present information, he stated that Homer may have derived these forms from the Asiatic people, although he appeared at that stage, not to be too convinced. Welch (1981:258) holds the view that the usage of these forms cannot be seen as exclusively Hellenic in origin. According to Welch (1981:258), in the traditions following Homer, "chiasmus became a figure of syntax which served Greek and Latin authors in a variety of ways. In general chiasmus became a simpler figure in the later writers than *hysteron proteron* or symmetrical structure had been in Homer. It rarely functions as an element of structure, giving continuity to multi-termed passages."

In both the Greek and the Latin literature Welch identifies the following stylistic functions for chiasm: it aided metrical composition, added variety to expression, for emphasising certain words, contrasting words or terms, aesthetic appeal, and the unity of corresponding thoughts and ideas.

3.3.1.6 Chiasm in the New Testament

While there appears to be a nexus between Sumerian–Akkadian chiasm and the literary culture of the Canaanites and the Hebrews it is not difficult to see that the authors of the New Testament would have been directly influenced by this tradition. They were however also influenced by their own immediate Greco-Roman literary culture. In the light of this we might ask whether the expression of chiasm in the New Testament is predominantly a Hebrew or a Classical Greek rhetorical device or both i.e. *a tertium quid*? I raise this question merely to point out that this is the type of question that we need to ask of a New Testament text and whatever our answer may be, this will determine or at least influence our methodology and therefore our results. For if one approaches an ancient Greco-Roman text with a view to establishing the existence of classical rhetorical forms, that is what one will no doubt find. If however, no thought is given to the

possibility of chiasm, no chiasm will obviously be found. Exegetes of ancient texts ought to know what they are looking for and not exclude the possibility of other ancient forms within the text. Openness to the text is what is required. Not a restrictive method that excludes other possibilities. Hence a multidisciplinary approach has much to commend it when examining a text for structure. It is well known that linguists consider form as the means by which meaning is expressed. According to Beekman et al (1981:13) “it is the meaning that determines the form. It is the meaning that is the essence of all communication.” My understanding of the use of the reference here to “meaning” ought to be seen as a relational term and may be distinguished from the significance the text may hold for a reader or audience.

John Jebb, in the eighteenth century raised the question of the origins of inverted parallelism. The question that he raised and which is of some interest is the question of whether the form of inverted parallelism (chiasm) evidenced in the New Testament was of Classical or Hebrew origins. He had this to say “Some are disposed to maintain that it is purely classical; and it does *sometimes* occur in the Greek and Latin authors; but it is so prevalent, and so peculiarly marked, in the Sacred Volume, that it may be justly accounted a Hebraism; and, as I am disposed to believe, a feature of Hebrew poetry” (Meynet 1998:74). According to Meynet (1998:74) Jebb raises the question of whether such a device would come to an abrupt end in the New Testament and answers in the negative, citing in support of his view: (1) the unity of the scriptures; (2) that the New Testament authors were Jews (although this latter statement was made by Jebb, scholarship today recognizes that the author of Luke’s Gospel and the book of Acts was not a Jew but a Gentile) and (3) the observation of parallelisms in the New Testament. Kennedy (1984:28-29) states that: “this elaborated chiasmus can also be found as a compositional technique in Greek as early as Homer and again is very common in Latin poetry of the Augustan period, *but it is ignored by classical rhetoricians and literary critics alike*” (my italics).

We may say that neither the Hebrew people nor the Greeks were the originators of chiasm. It was common to the literature of the people of the Ancient Near East and no doubt the ancient Greeks and the Hebrew people derived their exposure to chiasm and parallelism from a number of various sources. Chiasm also served different literary functions in the differing cultures and therefore the different literary contexts in which it may be found. What we can say with certainty is that chiasm, as we understand it, was a universal literary form in the whole of the Ancient Near East and it cannot be said that it is in any way unique to the Hebrew people or the Biblical literature. The way it functioned in the literatures of the various culture groups may have varied somewhat, but, on the whole, it enjoyed widespread use from the earliest of times.

We can see from this brief overview of chiasm in antiquity that by the time we come to the period of the New Testament, chiasm had already enjoyed universal appeal in the Ancient Near East. Certainly each of the major contributing literary traditions that make up the Christian Bible had exposure to this literary form and expressed it in their own, typical ways. Therefore, when we consider the text of the New Testament, we must be aware of the different literary traditions that contributed to this incredible work and be sensitive, in the main, to the two contributing sources *viz.* Jewish and Greco-Roman literary traditions, both of which had their origins in other ancient literary traditions. We must also be aware that each of these traditions contributed in some way to each of the literary features of form, content and function. To say, as to genre, that the Gospel of Mark is typical of Greco-Roman biography (which will be discussed below) does not in any way preclude the possibility of finding chiasm, a known Jewish literary technique that pervades the Hebrew Bible, in the structure of Mark's Gospel. Furthermore, scholarship maintains that Mark collected oral and literary forms circulating separately at that time and chose to include these in his Gospel. Is it not also probable that others well versed in this technique may also have composed these texts separately?

I would venture to suggest that if there were no evidence of chiastic form in Mark or any other New Testament text, this would be no less than astounding. However, this is not the case. It was really not until Nils Lund first published his *Chiasmus in the New Testament* (1992) in 1942 that focus was brought to bear on the evidence for this literary figure in the New Testament. Thanks to Lund and his review of the main contributors and his examination of this form in the Old Testament Law, Prophets, Psalms, The Epistles of Paul, The Gospels and the Book of Revelation that the groundwork was laid for further research in this field. Lund also laid down certain characteristics of chiasm that he found were evident and signaled the presence of chiasm.

Since Lund, there have been in recent years, many studies of chiasm in many ancient texts and this is most comprehensively attested in the work of John Welch and contributing essays by scholars in *Chiasmus in Antiquity* (1981) referred to above. The Bibliography alone is an extensive catalogue of research that has been conducted, including a chapter on Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon (1981:198ff).

3.3.1.7 Mark, chiasm and his first century audience

While a claim may be made for the existence of chiasm in a New Testament text at either the micro or macro level, one may be forgiven for asking whether the educational and social environment of the time was conducive to an expression of sophisticated form. And if so, and in the light of Chapter 1 above, we may then ask whether the author of Mark's Gospel was so well

acquainted with chiasm as to enable him to construct the text (or texts) employing such a sophisticated structure. In response, Augustine Stock has answered these issues in the affirmative. It was Stock (1984:23-27) who investigated chiastic awareness and the educational system of the New Testament period with particular regard to Mark and his Gospel. In his paper entitled *Chiastic Awareness and Education in Antiquity*, Stock contends that “it was perfectly natural for a person of Mark’s background to use chiasmus and that most literate persons of his time would recognise its presence and appreciate it to a high degree.” As we saw earlier, Stock draws this conclusion after reviewing the evidence for chiasm and the educational systems and institutions in antiquity. The internal evidence of the Gospel itself corroborates this finding of the literary competence of the real author, about whom more will be said later.

3.4 Definition of chiasm

Chiasm, *epanodos*, envelope, inverted parallelism, introverted parallelism, ring composition, concentricism *et al* (Welch 1981:10); these are all synonyms for this well-known but, at times, largely ignored literary figure in the field of biblical hermeneutics.

Defining chiasm is not as simple as may at first appear, as will become evident during the course of this discussion. This is also borne out by D.N. Freedman (1981:7) in his Preface to John Welch’s *Chiasm in Antiquity* where he states: “On the one extreme the phenomenon itself can be described or defined rigorously, so that it is verifiable and often self evident; while in this sense it is part of a deliberate pattern of composition, it nevertheless leaves the wider world of symbolism and significance to others. At the other end of the spectrum, definitions and limits are hard to determine, and speculation is rife; but large issues of meaning and intention can be raised, and important questions about the nature and significance of extended literary pieces are considered.”

A definition may serve to bring a degree of objectivity into an analysis by serving as a minimum standard against which to test a text for the existence of chiasm. But there is also a degree of subjectivity that cannot be avoided and which will be illustrated below. Welch (1981:13) states, “objective criteria alone do not tell the whole story. Evidence of chiasmus is not entirely objective and quantifiable.” He goes on to say that determining the beginning and end of a literary unit is often a subjective matter. Furthermore, literary figures overlap one another and at times may be operating at different levels simultaneously.

It is therefore imperative that the figure of chiasm is defined lending some degree of objectivity to an analysis. But we need to recognise that at times it is essentially a subjective perspective that

may (even unwittingly) accommodate that objectivity in such a way as to compromise it entirely. As mentioned above, this aspect will be illustrated below.

In the light of the complexities alluded to above this discussion serves to sensitise the reader to the concept of chiasm as well as to illustrate some of the difficulties that may be experienced with some definitions, and then proceeds to adopt an adequate definition for the purpose of this research.

At the outset, what we need to recognise is that a definition, while serving as a useful and necessary guideline, cannot of itself adequately safeguard us against error. It merely serves as a necessary and useful criterion for determining the presence or otherwise of the essential attributes of chiasm in a text. In this case it will serve as the minimal acceptable criteria for determining the validity of a claim to the existence of chiasm in Mark 7:24-31. But, as we shall see below, while it may serve to guard against error it cannot ultimately safeguard us against that possibility. This is a rather uncomfortable fact that we need to accept in this sphere of literary endeavour. Diligence is therefore the keyword in any study involving chiasm, more particularly if the investigation is at the structural or compositional level of a text as is the case with this study.

The word “chiasm” is derived from the form of the Greek letter *chi* (X), which is generally accepted as an all-embracing term and reference to “inverted parallelism or sequence of words or ideas in a phrase, sentence, or any larger literary unit” (Lund 1992:vii). This is obviously a broad definition and one that was suitable at this early stage of investigation.

David N Freedman (1981:7) describes chiasm as a “basic figure” that “simply involves the reversal of the order of words in balancing clauses or phrases.”

Yelland's *Handbook of Literary Terms*, (as cited by Welch 1981:9), defines chiasmus as a “passage in which the second part is inverted and balanced against the first. Chiasmus is thus a type of antithesis.”

Another definition is offered by Man (1984:146) where he states: “Chiasm, also called chiasmus, may be defined as a ‘stylistic literary figure which consists of a series of two or more elements followed by a presentation of corresponding elements in reverse order.’ ” Man then affords us an illustration of this definition by referring to Matthew 7:6, describing it as “One of the most familiar examples of chiasm”:

A *Do not give what is holy to dogs,* (First*)
 B and do not throw your pearls before swine (First**)
 B' lest they trample them under their feet (Last**)

A' *and turn and tear you to pieces.* (Last*)
 (My emphasis)

Although Man refers to this as an example of a “chiastic” structure it is more fitting of the literary figure known in the ancient world as *hysteron proteron* ("last-first") which is a distinguishable literary figure of speech that was used extensively in the Greco-Roman world and has been traced back as far as the time of Homer (Welch 1981:251). It is closely related to chiasm, but for the reasons that follow, may be distinguished, depending on one’s definition.

Breck (1994:29), (without reference to Man’s illustration) states that the form *hysteron proteron*, present in this same text (Matt 7:6), was in fact misunderstood by the translators of the Revised Standard Version (RSV), and the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. The translators did not recognise this common pattern of rhetoric in usage in the Greco-Roman world and therefore rendered the last line (A' above) as “ ‘and turn to attack you’ (NRSV: ‘and turn and maul you’)” wrongly believing that this line was a reference to the swine and not the dogs (A), as is clearly (when pointed out) the case.

Unless the principle of last-first is recognised, this passage will in fact be misunderstood as indeed it was, leading to an emendation of the text. The correspondence is in fact between A:A’ and B:B’ as indicated above.

Another example of a parallel structure, this time exhibiting a form of inverted parallelism, with an (internal or *intra*-lineal) inversion of corresponding terms is found in Mk 2:27:

the (a) *sabbath* was made for (b) *man*,
 and not (b’) *man* for the (a’) *sabbath*.

We may ask at this juncture whether the above two examples (illustrated) in addition to displaying the characteristics of certain other literary figures (i.e. *hysteron proteron* and inverted parallelism respectively), are nevertheless, also examples of chiasm; or should they be defined and interpreted according to the literary figure or pattern they conform most to? For example, is Mk 2:27 a form of chiasm or simply a case of inverted parallelism? And secondly, are the two forms distinguishable? This is a matter for definition.

John Breck (1987:71) quite rightly states that the term “chiasm” has been used for “a variety of different patterns whose common denominator is symmetrical structure involving some form of inversion: the reversing of word order in parallel phrases.” As can be seen from the above brief examples the definition of chiasm appears to be rather broad and too imprecise to serve as a useful guideline for serious scholars. If the definition is too broad, as we have just seen, then all kinds of literary figures may be included that perhaps ought to be more properly considered according to their own literary characteristics. On the other hand, if too limited in its scope, it may artificially stifle further research.

The difficulty at this stage then is really a matter of framing a suitable definition for the purpose of this research. Reverting to the above illustration of Mark 2:27; it certainly is an example of inverted parallelism (inversion of corresponding terms – sabbath/man // man/sabbath) and, if one accepts the broad definitions of chiasm referred to above, it is also a form of chiasm that indicates that the corresponding terms have been ‘crossed’ or inverted in the form a:b:b’:a’ (although there is another way of perceiving this structure that I will refer to shortly). Provided that the structure involves some form of symmetry, balance and inversion, scholars have generally accepted the broad definitions alluded to above (Breck 1987:71).

These broad definitions are, I submit, unsatisfactory because they fail to encapsulate the very essence of chiasm and thereby serve to distinguish it from other forms of parallelism. A definition of chiasm, unless it can be employed to discriminate between different literary figures, is not very helpful. It is for this reason that I believe Breck (1987:71; 1994:18) is, at least to some extent, justified in calling for a more refined definition of this important literary device. He has proposed the following definition of what he has termed “authentic” (hereinafter referred to without inverted commas) chiasm: “Chiasmus: a rhetorical form in which key words and concepts are constructed in synonymous, antithetical or inverted parallelism about a **central theme**. The term ‘chiasmus’ should be restricted to strophes of at least three lines **arranged about a pivot or conceptual centre**, such as A:B:A’, A:B:C:B’:A’, A:B:C:C’:B’:A’, etc.” (Breck 1994:33, with my emphasis in bold).

According to Breck, the very essence of chiasm proper lies in the uniqueness of the central idea, or what may be termed the ‘turning point’ or ‘pivotal theme’ around which the entire literary structure revolves and about which more will be said later. This ‘centre’ is absent from the other broad definitions alluded to above and, because of this, confusion tends to reign at times.

However, Breck’s (1987:71) apparent exclusion of the following configurations: A:B:A’:B’ (direct parallelism), A:B:B’:A’ (in this case signifying inverted parallelism) and A:B:A’’:B’’ (with

the ["] signifying antithetical parallelism) is, I believe, an attempt on his part to distinguish between chiasm on the one hand and other different forms or patterns of parallelism (Breck 1987:71). As we have seen, for Breck, the hallmark of chiasm is the central pivot or turning point.

Unfortunately, Thomson (1995:26 n.73) appears to have misunderstood Breck when he says that Breck “suggests, without adequate argument, that the widely accepted ABBA pattern is not chiasmus but ‘inverted parallelism’. For him, ‘the uniqueness of the chiasmic structure lies in its focus upon a *pivotal theme*’. Breck’s argument does not appear to have found support” (my underlining).

In my understanding of the matter, all Breck is saying is that if a figure is indeed inverted parallelism, and the central units do not comprise a conceptual centre, then it ought to be excluded from his definition of authentic chiasm. Breck (1994:36) states clearly that the ABB’A’ pattern may constitute a chiasm if BB’ serves “as the conceptual centre of the passage.” It appears to me that all Breck (1987) was trying to do in his essay, was to distinguish between the various parallelisms and chiasm so as to avoid confusion. Therefore Breck is not saying that a simple recognition of the pattern A:B:B’:A’ excludes chiasm. If B:B’ together serve as a conceptual centre, then we have an authentic chiasmic structure, as defined. In fact Breck (1994:36) affords us the following typical example of this kind of pattern from 1 John 3:6:

A: Everyone who **abides** in him

B: **does not sin**

B' Everyone who **does sin**

A' has neither **seen him nor known** him.

The parallels lie in A:A’ and B:B’, the latter serving as the central pivot. As Breck explains, the focus of this text is on the consequences of sin, which constitute the central theme. Thus the text falls within Breck’s definition of authentic chiasm. There exists a conceptual centre.

Looking once again at Mark 2:27 from a different (subjective) perspective we can see that while it is an example of inverted parallelism, it can also be said to exhibit the essence of authentic chiasm. Structurally, a different emphasis may be detected. If we look at b:b’, with its centre emphasis on ‘man’ the structural configuration implies (and therefore means) that man (at the centre of the literary structure) is more important than the ‘sabbath’ which is strategically placed at the outer periphery (a:a’) of the chiasm. Therefore it may be argued that b:b’ reflects the authentic centre of a:b:b’:a’ and therefore on this basis, is a case of authentic chiasm in Mark. In other words, it is more than just inverted parallelism because the centre also serves as the

conceptual centre. It is therefore a form of inverted parallelism that, as soon as the conceptual centre is detected, may be said to exhibit the essential characteristic of authentic chiasm and therefore may be distinguished from “ordinary” inverted parallelism.

Breck, in distinguishing between inverted parallelism on the one hand and authentic chiasm on the other, appears to be supported by observations made earlier by John Welch (1981:10) who says “But *chiasmus* is also much more than simple inversion or repetition, an *A-B-B’-A’* pattern. As the structure expands in number of elements, the abrupt repetition by which the last elements of the first of the system become the first elements of the second half can *draw unusual attention to the central terms, which are repeated in close proximity to each other*” (my italics). See also Radday (1981:51) who says in regard to one of his claims regarding the Biblical authors or editors, that they “placed the main idea, the thesis, or turning point of each literary unit at its centre.”

What now follows is an illustration of the pattern A:B:B’A’ which in Breck’s opinion, constitutes an example of what does not constitute an authentic chiasm and which I believe, with the greatest of respect, may, at a different level, be interpreted differently. This illustration merely serves to highlight once again the fact that we cannot avoid subjectivity and that a definition of chiasm, while essential, cannot protect us against our own subjective sense of perception (including visual) of the structure of a text.

Breck (1987:71; 1994:17-18) cites 1 John 4:7-8 as an example of what he says, strictly speaking, does not constitute a chiasm:

A: for *love* is of *God*
 B: and everyone who **loves** (a) is born of God and **knows** (b) God.
 B’’: The one who does **not love** (a’’) does **not know** (b’’) God,
 A’: for *God* is *love*

Note that there is an inversion in A:A’ (love/God // God/love) but no inversion in B:B’’ (loves (a) /knows (b) // not love(a’’) / not know (b’’)). In B:B’’ there is simply a direct contrast (antithesis).

Breck (1987:71) says about this text: “Strictly speaking, however, this pattern represents inverted parallelism rather than chiasmus. For *authentic chiasmus produces balanced statements, in direct, inverted, or antithetical parallelism, constructed symmetrically about a central idea*” (author’s own emphasis) even though such configuration would, according to Breck, be broadly accepted by scholars as chiasmic (1987:71).

The reason why Breck (1987:71) sees this as an example of inverted parallelism, and not chiasm, is because he sees the propositions B”A’ as a reverse mirror image of propositions AB. He sees the division as being between AB and B”A’ and therefore without a centre. Perhaps his view of this structure could be represented thus AB/B”A’

Breck (1994:18) in his later book, in reference to this same example, identifies and denotes prime B thus (”) to indicate that that statement, is antithetical to B. And this is true. But I submit the word “antithetical” must not here be interpreted as “opposite” but as signifying a contrast. For the words “love” and “not love” are not opposites. “Hate” would be the opposite of “love”. But B” merely says “the one who does not love” which to my mind signifies disaffection. My understanding of what the text is saying is that if one merely does not love God, one cannot know him. You do not have to hate God, to not know him.

However, where Breck’s illustration may be inaccurate is at the more complex level of *idea*, or thought. B:B”, although an example of antithetical (contrasting) parallelism, it may also be argued that such contrasting statements are, at the level of idea, or thought, indeed a unity. This is not a novel idea. Freedman (1981:7) states, “Even more difficult and controversial issues arise when chiasm is defined in terms of thought and theme, rather than the more visible words and patterns”. Welch (1981:11) makes the same observation “Once it has been recognised, however, that chiasmus operates fluently in prose, it becomes evident that chiasmus may give order to thoughts as well as to sounds, and that it thus may give structure to the thought pattern and development of entire literary units ...”

Meynet (1998:207) has this to say on the function of symmetry: “Despite what one might think, the function of parallelism and chiasm, even at the most elementary level, is not only esthetic (sic); or even rhythmic. It is already rhetoric: the symmetry marks the unity of the two members; it indicates that they form a whole, and determines its limits. This is obvious in the case of antithetic, synthetic or complementary symmetries ...”

If Breck had recognised (perceived) this aspect he would, I am sure, agree with this submission because he states elsewhere that “the second verset of a couplet, in other words, never merely repeats the meaning of the first verset; it almost always *represents an advancement in the form of heightening, intensifying, specifying, elevating or seconding*” (Breck 1994:38).

If I am correct, 1 John 4:7-8 may, in order to make the point clear, be designated thus: A:B (b:b”):A’ with (b:b”) serving as the conceptual centre:

A: for *love* is of *God*

B (b) **and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.** } *Conceptual*
 (b'') **The one who does not love does not know God,** } *centre*

A': for *God* is *love*

If one accepts for the moment that b:b'' represents a single unity of idea, then it would qualify as a chiasm in terms of Breck's own definition. Miesner, (as cited by Man 1984:148) says that the centre "may be either a single or double unit."

From the above cursory introduction to the definition of chiasm we can identify a number of difficulties. A word of caution is therefore warranted.

As I have said before, I expect that a definition of chiasm, while essential, cannot of itself safeguard us against error. Only a broad awareness of the intricacies and nuances of chiasm, and openness to academic scrutiny will serve as an adequate safeguard. As has been demonstrated, even simple chiasm is not necessarily as simple as it may at first appear. For chiasm may reside not only in the words but may also be found in rhyme, meter (insofar as it may be detected), assonance, grammar, as well as other syntactical and semantic arrangements only evident in the original languages.

In this paper we will be focusing on those features of chiasm evident in the translated English text. I am also aware that many of the nuances in the original languages cannot be translated directly into other languages and therefore may, of necessity, be lost in the translation process. I therefore readily concede the limitations inherent in using a translation. However, if chiasm as defined below is found to be evident in a translation, how much more ought the form to be investigated in the original languages?

In the circumstances I believe that Breck's definition of authentic chiasm serves to qualify the already broadly accepted definition in such a way as to be a useful tool in discriminating, at different levels, between parallelisms in general, and chiasm in particular. It does so by identifying and incorporating the essence of chiasm, which is the conceptual centre, central pivot, or turning point. It is also a concise statement that encapsulates the essence of chiasm without confusing the multi-various literary conventions (including various repetition patterns, reversals, parallelisms etc.) that may accompany chiasm and which at times serve to amplify, this important literary figure in various literary contexts. To this extent, the definition captures the essence without falling into the trap of citing certain accompanying contextual traits or characteristics that would tend to 'strait-jacket' the concept beyond useful application.

Because the definition also serves to raise our levels of awareness of other literary forms it is of value. As we have just seen, it cannot however protect us against our own subjectivity in interpretation. Only openness to critical academic scrutiny and debate with others well versed in the subject matter will serve to advance the study of the ancient art and science of chiasm and safeguard us against our own subjective interpretations.

Breck's definition of what constitutes chiasm will be employed, for the purpose of this research, as an adequate expression of the essentials of that figure, both in terms of its usage as a literary figure on the micro level, as well as, as a figure of composition.

In conclusion, and in the light of the above discussion, the definition of chiasm accepted for the purpose of determining whether chiasm may be said to exist in the text of Mark 7:24-31, is the one proposed by Breck. The definition of authentic chiasm (repeated below) will be adopted for the purpose of this research. However, it will be necessary in the broad discussion of chiasm in this paper to have regard to the broader definition of chiasm that scholars have regarded as acceptable for the purpose of their research and on which their conclusions have been based. This does not signify any inconsistency in my approach. It is simply expedient because scholars have, as Thomson has said (alluded to above), not generally accepted a more discerning definition of chiasm and it would be impossible to compare definitions on each occasion an authority is referred to.

For ease of reference the definition of authentic criticism is here repeated: "Chiasmus: a rhetorical form in which key words and concepts are constructed in synonymous, antithetical or inverted parallelism about a central theme. The term 'chiasmus' should be restricted to strophes of at least three lines arranged about a pivot or conceptual centre, such as A:B:A', A:B:C:B':A', A:B:C:C':B':A', etc." (Breck 1994:33).

The general literary conventions that have been found to accompany chiasm will be considered later on in this paper and need to be distinguished from the definition, which I consider ought to serve as the minimum criteria for the determination of chiasm in Mark 7:24-31 at either the simple or complex structural level. The general literary conventions that may at times accompany chiasm are not always present, at least not all at the same time. These conventions are used with discretion by authors and are therefore more flexible and serve the chiasm in the literary context and occasion in which it functions.

In the light of the foregoing discussion I am sure that this overview has enhanced the reader's awareness of the tremendous importance of understanding the ancient cultural and literary context

in which the biblical material was produced, from whence it was derived and some insight into ancient technique.

I am also sure that the modern reader's attention has been drawn to a few of the important literary conventions that need to accompany the present reading and understanding of an ancient text, and the biblical text in particular. The degree of sophistication with which the ancient attended their literature is no less than astounding to present readers and quite foreign to our modern pre-occupation with linear sequencing as the only way in which ancient texts, prose or poetry, ought to be read.

Therefore, and at this stage, there is every reason to proceed with the investigation of the subject text and our attention is now directed to the Gospel of Mark in particular.

Chapter 4

4.1 The Gospel of Mark

The Gospel of Mark (hereinafter simply referred to as the “Gospel”) is an ancient text written by an anonymous author during the first century AD. This Gospel manifests within its literary framework a prose narrative account of the “life” of a Jewish Rabbi named Jesus, a holy man, miracle worker, a prophet and, if the author is to be believed, the long awaited Jewish Messiah, the Son of God (Mk 1:1). The formal aspects of this Gospel will be dealt with summarily below and thereafter attention will be given to those aspects of genre that have a bearing on this investigation.

4.1.1 Title

The title, *kata Markon*, “according to Mark” is not a part of the original text and appears to have been attributed to the text by the early church, presumably to distinguish it from other gospels which by this time were circulating amongst Christians and which were amongst their collection of writings (Witherington 2001:65). Professor Ben Witherington III is Professor of New Testament interpretation at Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky and is an important authority for a socio-rhetorical interpretation of New Testament literature in general and, of course, his socio-rhetorical commentary of Mark’s Gospel that is referred to in this paper is an invaluable resource.

4.1.2 Two Source Hypothesis

Consistent with the Two Source Hypothesis, the view taken here is that Mark originated prior to the other Synoptic Gospels of Matthew and Luke and therefore the subject text is considered independently of the Matthean version of this same story in Matthew 15:21-29. For a discussion on Markan priority see Carson, Moo & Morris (1992:32-36).

4.1.3 Language and Style

The Gospel is written in a popular style of *koine* “common” Greek, the *lingua franca* of the Greco-Roman world (Aune 1987:47). The Gospel has within its text “Latinisms” and Aramaic terms and phrases that the author has translated for the benefit of the intended audience. These factors together with the author’s penchant for explaining Jewish practices indicates that the text was written for the benefit of Gentile readers, although this is by no means certain. It may have

been written with a view to being read by a universal (or cosmopolitan) readership comprising Jewish and Gentile Christians. The level of Greek found in the Gospel is of a “popular literary style” (Aune 1987:47).

4.1.4 Date

The date of composition of the Gospel is unknown and this aspect is the subject of much scholarly debate. Dates ranging from the late thirties AD through to the destruction of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD have been proposed by an array of scholars. However, the weight of New Testament scholarship favors a date in the middle sixties AD (Witherington 2001:30-31; Carson, Moo & Morris 1992:97-99).

4.1.5 Provenance

It is not clear where Mark was when he wrote the Gospel. No less than three places have been suggested viz. Rome, Antioch and Jerusalem itself. The weight of scholarly opinion appears to favour Rome (Carson, Moo & Morris 1992:95).

4.1.6 Function

The purpose for which the Gospel was written is to a large extent a function of its form and content. According to Aune (1987:59) the purpose of ancient biography and the gospels in particular were to propagate faith. Mark does not make any explicit statement concerning his literary intentions (Aune 1987:59). The gospels were written to Christians and not to pagans (Aune 1987:59). In fact Aune (1987:59) states that prior to 125 AD no Christian literature was directed at pagans, although I suspect it may well have been used for that purpose from time to time.

4.1.7 Audience

Mark's intended audience can only be inferred from the text itself. The explanations of Jewish ritual practices and of Aramaic terms appear to suggest that Mark had a Gentile audience in mind, perhaps in Rome (Witherington 2001:21). The “Latinisms” (e.g. Mk 12:42,15:16) do not take the matter any further (Carson, Moo & Morris 1992:95-96). Mark's use of common Latin terms is not extraordinary. According to R. Bauckham (as cited by Witherington 2001:28) the Gospel was written for a wide audience of Christians in various parts of the empire. Just to once again make the point that Stock (1984:23) made i.e. that a “strong case can be made for the contention that it

was perfectly natural for a person of Mark's background to use chiasmus and that most literate persons of his time would recognize its presence and appreciate it to a high degree.”

4.1.8 Author

The external and internal evidence for the author of the Gospel of Mark and his literary competencies are considered hereunder.

4.1.8.1 External evidence

The earliest church records relating to the authorship of this Gospel hold to the view, without exception, that the real author was John Mark referred to elsewhere in the New Testament e.g. Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; and in Col. 4:10; Philem. 24; 2 Tim. 4:11; 1 Peter 5:13 (Carson, Moo & Morris 1992:93-95). While not wishing to enter into this debate here suffice it to say that Carson, Moo & Morris (1992:93) state: “no dissenting voice from the early church regarding the authorship of the second gospel is found.”

However, some scholars dispute one of the pieces of evidence that affords an insight into the manner in which Mark went about gathering (or sourcing) his information (Carson, Moo & Morris 1992:92-93). This evidence is somewhat removed in time from the original composition of the work and, for this reason, is viewed with some degree of skepticism by some. However there is no other *direct* evidence concerning the authorship of this text. As stated above, the text itself is anonymous. This external evidence referred to here is a record made by Eusebius around 325 AD and records what Papias, the bishop of Hierapolis during the period ca. 120 AD to 150 AD wrote down concerning what someone he refers to as “the elder” had told him. This record tells of the manner in which Mark went about recording the teaching of Peter. Therefore, the earliest known reference in any writings to the real author of Mark is the account by Eusebius in his *Church History* 3.39.15, (as cited and translated by Aune 1987:66) in which he, Eusebius, records Papias of Hierapolis thus:

Mark, who was Peter's interpreter, wrote down accurately, though not in order [*ou mentoi taxei*] what he remembered that the Lord said and did. For he had not heard the Lord or followed him but later, as I mentioned, had followed Peter, who formulated his teachings in the form of anecdotes [*chreiai*], but not as a finished composition [*syntaxis*] of the sayings of the Lord, so that Mark made no errors in writing them down individually as he remembered [*apomnemoneuein*] them.

The reference here to “not in order” may be a reference to the collections not being in any particular chronological order; but it may well have been in a form of narrative order. Alternatively it may well have been a presupposition of the commentator himself.

However, what I want to point out regarding this evidence is the following. The reference in the text to technical rhetorical terms signifies an awareness of basic Greco-Roman rhetorical terms and reinforces the view that rhetoric pervaded public life. The reference to *chreiai* will be raised in connection with the subject text.

Furthermore, the text (by Eusebius) tends to support the traditional view of authorship and, according to Carson, Moo and Morris (1992:92), the weight of available evidence supports the following claims.

Firstly that:

1. Mark is the name attributed to the author of the Gospel and this appears to have been accepted by the early church.
2. Mark was not an eyewitness to the events recorded;
3. Mark’s Gospel is “not in order”;
4. Mark was Peter’s interpreter.

Following Carson, Moo and Morris, there are no good reasons to reject this testimony, albeit somewhat removed from the domain of the real author. The authenticity of the text does not appear to have been challenged by the early church. It therefore ought to stand, at least provisionally, until there is at least some evidence available to discredit either the text or its source.

Secondly, that:

5. there is no direct evidence refuting the content of the text so recorded (Carson, Moo & Morris 1992:93);
6. the content appears to be arguing “against the charge that it lacked order” and not whether or not Mark was the author (Carson, Moo & Morris 1992:92);
7. the statement appears to be consistent with a close scrutiny of the form of the Gospel whereby the author, by stringing together in narrative form a number of recollections, anecdotes (*chreiai*) creates a new literary work;
8. the record appears to reflect a manner consistent with the way in which material was collected (collated) by ancient biographers;

9. even if the record were considered unreliable regarding the *authorship* it nonetheless *poses* as an authentic record and purports to reflect a *modus operandi* that may be considered consistent with our modern understanding of the way in which ancient biographers and historians sourced their material. The “elder’s” understanding no doubt reflected a conventional method by way of which ancient biographers went about collecting or collating their biographical material. This point is consistent with our understanding of ancient practice and I submit, not in dispute.

In the circumstances, this text (i.e. the record made by Eusebius) and its reference to certain rhetorical terms is assumed for the purpose of this study to serve as a reasonable source for understanding the way in which the Gospel material was sourced or collected by the author.

4.1.8.2 Internal evidence

While I am not aware of any other external information that may be available concerning the real author, much may be inferred from the text itself. This is a legitimate step provided that a certain amount of caution is applied *viz.* that any intention that may be attributed to the author must be consistent with our present understanding of the ancient, but very real genre of the text. In other words, simply classifying the genre of the text, as “story”, will not suffice. A more specific genre identification is of the utmost importance. Genre identification determines the “rules of the game” which both author and readers employ in order to communicate between them. Once this is understood, it is possible to interpret the document in the light of the genre.

The genre limits the interpretive possibilities and one cannot go beyond the form in attributing an intention to the implied author that may be at odds with the literary conventions evidenced in the text itself. For instance, if the function of ancient *bios* is to give an account of the life of a prominent religious leader or philosopher, then any intention attributed to the implied author must be consistent with this perspective within the rules of the real genre employed. For after all (going behind the text for a minute), the real author purposefully selected an appropriate genre (those shared literary conventions) that would best serve to communicate the type of message he had in mind, to his intended audience who would readily have understood that. It must be understood that the implied author cannot be said to have selected the genre, as the implied author is a textual construct, i.e. a “creation” of the real author.

Please note that for the purpose of this discussion, following the view of Robert Fowler (1991:33) - who was, at the time of his writing, Associate Professor of Religion at Baldwin Wallace College, Berea, Ohio and is a well renowned and respected exponent of reader-response criticism

- the implied author and implied audience are “virtually identical” to the narrator and narratee of Mark and, as Fowler says, the distance between them “is absolutely minimal.” Therefore I will continue to simply refer to the implied author and implied audience where necessary.

4.1.8.3 Literary competence of the author of Mark as evidenced by the literary structure

According to Rhoads, Dewey & Michie (1999:3) Mark’s narrative may be described as follows.

Our study reveals Mark’s narrative to be of remarkably whole cloth (n.9). The narrator’s point of view is consistent. The plot is coherent: Events that are anticipated come to pass; conflicts are resolved; prophecies are fulfilled. The characters are consistent from one scene to the next. Literary techniques of storytelling, recurring designs, overlapping patterns, and interwoven motifs interconnect the narrative throughout. There is also a consistent thematic depiction of the human condition, faith, God’s rule, ethical choices, and the possibilities for human change. The unity of this Gospel is apparent in the integrity of the story it tells, which give a powerful overall rhetorical impact. Mark’s complex artistry had been compared to an intricately composed ‘fugue’ or to an ‘interwoven tapestry’ (n.10).

According to Witherington (2001:20) the historical author is a “somewhat educated man, one who can read and write after a fashion in Greek. This would place him in the upper 10 to 20 percent of his whole culture in terms of education, but from a social point of view many such persons experienced considerable status inconsistency.” As to the author’s “Jewishness”, Witherington (2001:20) tells us that he is at very least a Christian and he is seeking to persuade others to become “partisans for Jesus”. He knows a lot about Jewish customs and practices as well as the various cultures and sects. He also appears to be conversant, (“well grounded” is the term Witherington uses), in the Hebrew Scriptures in the form of the Greek translation, the Septuagint (LXX) which he regards as God’s own truth. He is also well versed in Jewish prophecy as well as Jewish eschatology and the apocalyptic point of view. On the use of the author’s use of Aramaic, Hengel (as cited by Witherington 2001:20) states: “I do not know of any other work in Greek that has as many Aramaic or Hebrew words and formulae in so narrow a space as does the second gospel.”

The literary and rhetorical devices used by the author are extensive, and the common ones have been identified and classified by Rhoads, Dewey & Michie (1999:vii) under the heading “The Narrator’s Patterns of Repetition” and are identified as follows: verbal threads, foreshadowing and retrospection, two-step progressions, type-scenes, sandwiched episodes, framing episodes,

episodes in concentric pattern, progressive episodes in series of three. It is not my intention to discuss each of these but simply to raise awareness of the author's technical competency. The specific application of some of these will be discussed in regard to the subject text. There are of course other forms such as riddle, questions, prophecies and irony that also serve their respective rhetorical purposes.

It is clear from the above comments that the author of Mark, from a literary point of view, was competent. But what did Mark know about concentric parallelism? What we do know from the previous section on the background that the Old Testament and the New Testament abound with this literary device and therefore it may be expected to be found in Mark. An example of a simple chiasm has already been referred to above (Mk 2:27). That is a start. Secondly, from a narrative point of view, Rhoads, Dewey & Michie (1999:52-54) refer to Mark's use of concentric patterns and afford examples of A,B,C,B',A', and A,B,B',A' patterns. The authors (1999:52) comment as follows: "Mark occasionally arranges episodes in a concentric pattern, a common technique of ancient narration in which parallel episodes form rings around a central episode." While the authors here refer to episodes, there is no reason to exclude the possibility of finding evidence of concentric patterns (or concentric parallelism, chiasm) in single episodes. Indeed Dewey (1973) examined Mark 2:1-12, 13-17, 18-22, 23-28; 3:1-6 (A,B,C,B',A' respectively) and concludes that

Mark was a writer of considerable literary skill if not of elegant Greek; it is only by paying attention to the literary structure he created that we can hope to interpret his gospel properly. Moreover, since the literary structure has in part determined the shape of the individual pericopes, *it is also necessary to consider it when studying the form or tradition-history of an individual pericope* (Dewey 1973:401, my italics).

Since Dewey, D.J. Clark (1975:63-72) reviewed her work (referred to above) and supports her recognition of "a single literary unit with a tight and wellworked out concentric or chiastic structure" (Clark 1975:63) in Mark. M.Philip Scott (1985:17-26) examined the whole gospel for evidence of chiasm and discovered, *inter alia*, the following basic configuration:

A	Your are my Son (Mk 1:11)					
	B	...				
		C	...			
			D	...		
				E	This is my Son: listen to him	(Mk 9:7)
			D'	...		
		C'	...			
	B'	...				
A'	Truly, this man was the Son of God (Mk 15:39)					

(Wilson 1997:20)

This is a somewhat different structural centre to the one proposed by other scholars. See Wilson (1997:19-20) who comments on this structure.

Another example of concentric parallelism is given to us by Witherington (2001:202) who refers to a detailed analysis done by J.E. Phelan who is cited as having identified a concentric structure in Mk 6:30-44 to Mk 8:10 as follows:

- A Feeding of the five thousand (Mk 6:30-44)
- B Walking on water/Healing the sick (Mk 6:45-56)
- C Conflict on tradition (Mk 7:1-23)
- B' Syrophenician woman/ Healing of deaf and dumb man (Mk 7:24-37)
- A' Feeding of the four thousand (Mk 8:1-10)

The illustrations above are simply expressed to show that chiasm in Mark is not a novel idea and also that the internal evidence tends to support concentric parallelism in Mark.

4.1.9 Genre

It is my intention here to identify the formal classification of Mark as ancient Greco-Roman biography and, as this is a subject all on its own, to bring to light only those aspects that in general will later have a bearing on the text of Mark 7:24-31.

4.1.9.1 Defining the genre of Mark's Gospel

Aune (1987:29) defines ancient biography as "a discrete prose narrative devoted exclusively to the portrayal of the whole life of a particular individual perceived as historical. It never attained a fixed form but continued to develop from ancient to modern times." According to Aune (1987:28) "Ancient types of biographical literature, like many other narrative genres, tend to be complex or host genres, serving as literary frames for a variety of shorter forms (anecdotes, maxims, speeches and documents).

In Greco-Roman tradition, biography usually took the form of autonomous texts, while in the Jewish tradition biographical literature tended to be used as episodic insertions into more complex narrative texts." Another important aspect to pick up on here is that ancient biography was situated on a continuum of literature of which history was a part and that it was given a new frame of reference by the authors of the gospels, of which Mark is thought to have been the first to have been written.

As has been pointed out above, the Gospel of Mark was written during the first century Greco-Roman period and therefore the most appropriate ancient texts with which to compare it would be the extant literature from the same period, place and culture in which they were intended to serve as a means of communicating or transferring information, from one to another. Studies of the Gospels as ancient Greco-Roman literature have revealed that the Gospel of Mark is, as to form and function, typically Greco-Roman biography (Witherington 2001:8; Aune 1987:46; Burrige 1992:219; Carson, Moo & Morris 1992:47; Ferguson 1993:112). Burrige (1992:191) says that to hold otherwise is to hold an “inadequate literary theory and a lack of understanding of Graeco-Roman biography.” However, the content is clearly Jewish. It therefore may reasonably be expected that the literary traditions of both classical and Jewish rhetoric may be evident in the text.

At the same time the Gospel of Mark is indeed a story. It has a beginning, middle and end and it has all the essential elements of narrative within its literary framework *viz.* point of view, setting, characters and plot. But it is more than a story. It is a particular “type” of story, and the type of story it is, is crucial for understanding the text, or sub-text. The literary features that make for genre are a combination of form, content and function, each of which is inextricably linked to the other (Aune 1987:13). This is the case even for sub-genres (sometimes referred to as “forms”), which comprise literary units such as the oral and literary forms woven into the very fabric of the Gospel.

4.1.9.2 Fact or Fiction

Witherington (2001:56) states:

Mark is not a work of ancient or modern fiction, and this means that some things which apply especially to modern fiction do not apply to Mark. For example, there is no gap between the implied author and the real author in this work. This is not just because the implied author is a reliable narrator, but because the author is composing an ancient biography whose author would be known, as was the case with Plutarch's *Lives* and other such documents.

I would like to comment here at this point on what Witherington is saying. Biography is not simply story, it is a particular type of story and in this regard I agree with Witherington. As Aune (1987:29) says, the subject, in ancient biography, is portrayed as historical. Therefore, biography is referential insofar as it depicts a “real” person in a “real” world and a real author composes it. I believe that this is what Witherington is pointing to; but, if he is saying that there is no difference

between the real author and the implied author because the facts reported are essentially historical, I would be inclined to respectfully disagree for the following reason.

The “story world” is fictional insofar as the real author interprets that “real” world for the implied audience *via* the construct of the implied author. This is a complex combination. Let us go back to the real author and real audience for a moment and consider the following model briefly. If the “historical facts” or brute facts have no meaning in and of themselves but meaning is attributed to certain real facts by the intervention of a human mind (referential grid) and a certain “sequence of events” is interpreted through that mind (with all its presuppositions) and communicated to another, we have to do with interpretation. The real author mediates between the brute facts and the real readers to whom he intends to communicate a particular point of view. Thus the mediation of brute reality, through the filter of the real author’s particular point of view, gives meaning to that reality, which meaning he then conveys. What is more, parts of the real author’s brute reality comprise those institutional facts that were taken for granted or implicit in the culture or sub-culture. This is evident throughout Mark’s Gospel in the way society is portrayed as comprising institutional categories of insiders and outsiders. To the extent that others (like other members of the in-group) may corroborate that “version of events” enables one to test for a degree of “objectivity” in the report, but this only serves the purpose of the in-group. M. Philip Scott (1985:17) puts it this way in describing Mark’s Jesus:

Explaining and expounding the truth are, like the truth itself, functions of the mind. Of course if one has grasped the truth, one’s mind is isomorphic with the reality of which one tells ... and so by expressing one’s truth, one can lead others to the reality.” “Once a witness to an event has reached a true understanding of what really happened, it becomes difficult for him to describe and almost irrelevant that he should describe what happened exactly as it took place, exactly as perceived by eye and ear and as touched (cf. John 1:1-2). For his description will be a function not merely of memory but also and formally of his truth. That is not to say that an intelligent and veracious witness falsifies the facts; for the false is opposed to the true, and our witness – we are assuming – is telling his truth. But in communicating the truth of the event he makes the event to have, over and above its contingent factuality, the function of a *‘rhema,’* a word, an utterance, to which all that is accidental in the event taken strictly as meaningful, is as unimportant as a regional accent is to a speaker’s expression.

And then he states: “For his [Mark’s] true understanding, mediating between events as real and as described, guarantees the truth of the latter.”

So, a biographical “story” in this sense does not mean “fictional”, i.e. not true. It means a *bona fide* reflection of reality mediated through the eyes of a witness. However, we also know that narrative is essentially rhetorical and the implied author (a textual construct) is a rhetorical construct and a function of the text. Therefore in this sense there is a gap or hiatus between the implied author and the real author.

To illustrate: If the real author of Mark were writing to some audience other than the one he had in mind (and I don’t here want to get into the side issue of the intentional fallacy dispute), the implied author would be quite different because the rhetoric would be different. The real author and the essential “life” (brute and institutional facts) mediated would (essentially) be the same; the real author, to account for the presuppositions of different readers (let us say in a different social location) would adapt the message to his audience – in fact he may even have selected different *chreiai* than those we find present in the Gospel. This is of course speculative but not unreasonable and serves to make the point that there is a fundamental difference between the real author of Mark and the implied author. However, to the extent that the implied author is “created” by the real author, there is of course a nexus.

4.1.9.3 Characterisation in ancient Greco-Roman biography

Following on the above, the next thing to consider is that ancient biography was concerned with “types” and therefore did not portray the “historical particularity or individuality” of their subject (Aune 1987:28). This was not simply a characteristic of ancient biography but was implicit in the ancient conception of people in the greater Mediterranean world of which the Jewish people were just one sub-culture, as were the Syro-Phoenicians, Samaritans, gentiles and so on.

This impersonal view of a person is what Malina (1993:67) refers to as “dyadism”. This means that the person is “essentially a group-embedded and group-oriented person.” According to Malina (1993:66) people were “not interested in or concerned about psychological or personality information ... you might conclude that the first century Mediterranean person did not share or comprehend our idea of an ‘individual’ at all. And I believe you would be right.”

Another very important observation made by Malina (1993:81) more particularly with regard to the subject text is the view that expressions of individuality were not only uninteresting to the ancient but also unimportant.

Instead all motivations, motives, and attitudes derive from culturally shared stereotypes, from generalities perceived to inhere in certain groups, ranging from

one's family to one's village or city to one's nation. These stereotypes, too, derive not from psychological consideration of an individualistic type, but rather from obvious and apparent group traits and behavior (Malina 1993:81).

See also Aune (1987:28) on this same point. This is important in relation to the text that we will be examining regarding the portrayal of Jesus, the Syro-Phoenician woman, and their exchange of dialogue, all within the context of ancient cultural convention. Once again this overview highlights the importance of understanding the ancient world from a multi-disciplinary or what may be referred to as a broad literary approach.

So how did the ancient biographers characterize their subjects and other characters? Through their words and deeds. Aune (1987:30) makes this clear while distinguishing ancient biography from history where he says that although character depiction was important in both genres "in biography a person's achievements illustrate his [sic] character, while in history achievements are part of a broader historical framework." And then in relation to Plutarch and Nepos he says that the latter "did not want to write *complete* accounts of the deeds of their subjects (that would be history) but wished to selectively emphasise sayings that reveal character (which is biography)."

Burridge (1992:121) states that "Detailed character analysis and psychological assessment are lacking, not just in the gospels, but in the bulk of ancient literature. Instead character is revealed by the person's words and deeds, especially the latter: as Aristotle put it, 'actions are signs of character' ..." See also Burridge (1992:143,149).

In general it may be said that ancient biography "relates the significance of a famous person's career" (Aune 1987:27) and it does this by characterising them through their words and deeds. In other words their achievements are made manifest through their words and actions.

It is also important to note that the chronological order of events was used to structure the external events – but not as a means to explain behaviour (Aune 1987:28). This is because the ancient had no interest in the modern pre-occupation of personality development. We may summarise as follows.

1. That ancient biographers as a matter of course collected anecdotes (*chreiai*), sayings, memoirs, and other oral and literary forms for the purpose of serving their ancient biographical purposes.
2. That *chreiai*, were more often than not used by ancient biographers to characterize their subjects through their words and deeds, including maxims, crisp anecdotes and of course

rigorous debate or exchange through reported dialogue. As will be established next, following narrative theory, it is dialogue that often carries the weight of significance in a reported text.

3. That there is good reason to expect the text to exhibit both Jewish and Greco-Roman literary and rhetorical literary forms but that an examination of a text may not necessarily give credence to those expectations. The important thing is for an exegete to remain open minded on this issue.
4. That within the greater Mediterranean region, the culture had no interest in the modern pre-occupation with the psychological development of the personality as this was considered fixed from birth. Therefore a pre-occupation with modern sensitivities that may be offended by the content of a text or dialogue must be held in check and the same sensitivity ought not to be attributed to any character unless the context clearly and manifestly indicates that the context, tone, words or phrases used give rise to such suspicions given the first century context and at the same time can also be said to have effected the story character or first century readers in the same way.
5. That the form or shape of the story may point to a function of the text other than that considered by narrative analysis alone.

4.1.9.4 Overall structure of Mark

The narrative is structured in a seemingly chronological format. The literary competence of Mark has also been discussed above and there the view of Rhoads, Dewey & Michie (1999) regarding the overall narrative structure of the Gospel was noted. The impression of an overall chronological structure by the author (or the appearance of it) is consistent with the way ancient biography was treated (Aune 1987:48). The author has woven into his text various oral and literary forms in such a way as to create the impression of a single unified narrative. The various *oral* sub-genres that make up the Gospel are: sayings, miracle stories, pronouncements, parables, aphorisms, stories about Jesus (Aune 1987:50-52).

There were also a number of *literary* forms that were in circulation and these also appear to have been incorporated into the narrative. Some such that have been identified are: the passion narrative (Mk 14-16); the Temple dialogue (Mk 13) and a number of summary reports (Aune 1987:52-54).

Carson, Moo & Morris (1992:89-91) present an overview of the entire narrative of the Gospel as follows (with my emphasis in bold):

1. Preliminaries in the ministry (1:1-13)

2. First part of Galilean ministry (1:16-3:6)
3. Second part of Galilean ministry (3:13-5:43)
4. **The concluding phase of the Galilean ministry (6:7-8:26)**
5. The way of glory and suffering (8:27-10:52)
6. Final ministry in Jerusalem (11:1- 13:37)
7. The passion and empty tomb (15:1-16:8)

Following this outline, the story of Mark 7:24-31 is strategically placed by the author more or less towards the centre of the Gospel story but somewhat at the *end of a series of controversies* with people, most notably, the religious leaders.

Tate (1997:245) directs our attention to the type of people that Jesus had been ministering to by way of healing and the sequence of controversies he encountered. The author of Mark no doubt included these stories, in particular, to illustrate to the audience the character of Jesus through his words and more particularly through his actions to the poor, oppressed and in general the marginalized in that society. But in so doing, the author appears to emphasise a growing polemic between Jesus and the civil and especially the religious authorities.

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 1:29-31 | Jesus heals Simon's mother in law <u>on the Sabbath</u> |
| 1:40-43 | Jesus heals a <u>leper</u> |
| 3:1-6 | Jesus heals <u>on the Sabbath</u> |
| 5:25-34 | Jesus heals a <u>hemorrhaging woman</u> |
| 5:35-43 | Jesus raises a <u>dead girl</u> |
| 7:24-30 | Jesus heals the daughter of a <u>Syrophoenician woman, a Gentile</u> |
| 7:31-37 | Jesus heals a deaf mute <u>with spittle</u> |
| 8:22-26 | Jesus heals a <u>blind man</u> |

(Tate 1997:245, my emphasis)

This scheme of things positions the subject text and shows how the persistent and progressive conflict continues in such a way that the audience is being drawn expectantly towards a serious climax. Jesus breaks all the traditional rules. He communicates with and is in close proximity and touch with the marginalized and other social outcasts; for example, Jesus touches and permits of being touched by the unclean, the dead, sinners, and so thereby redefines boundaries, and as far as Mark is concerned, does so with God's approval and authority thereby bringing in God's Rule. This is not only a religious battle; it is essentially ideological.

The following formal features of the plot of Mark, based on some of the formal features of Greek tragedy, is identified as follows by Aune (1987:48-49):

1. Introduction (Mk 1:1-13)
2. **Rising action (Mk 1:14-8:21)**
3. Climax (Mk 8:22-10:52)
4. Falling action (Mk 11:1-13:37)

5. Catastrophe (Mk 14:1-15:39)
6. Denouement (Resolution) (Mk 15:40-16:8)

Another scheme of arrangement developed by Tate (1997:245) is as follows and from this scheme it is clearly evident that the conflict is reaching intolerable (for the religious authorities) proportions.

2:14	Jesus calls a <u>tax collector</u> as his <u>disciple</u>
2:15-17	Jesus <u>eats with sinners and tax collectors</u>
2:18-22	Jesus <u>rejects the whole socio-religious system</u> in his defence of not fasting.
2:23-28	The <u>role of the Sabbath is reversed</u> in Jesus' defence of his disciples plucking grain on the Sabbath. There are life situations that take priority over ceremonial norms.
3:31-35	Jesus <u>redefines the family</u>
7:1-23	Jesus <u>disagrees with the Pharisees over the tradition of the elders.</u> He <u>redefines cleanness in terms of morals rather than in terms of diet.</u>

(Tate 1997:245, my emphasis)

And thereafter, I might add,

7:24-31	Encounters the Syrophenician woman
7:31-37	Heals a deaf mute

By superimposing all of these schemes into a single table, a composite picture of the rising tension can be clearly seen as can the immediate narrative and literary context of Mark 7:24-31:

1. Introduction (Mk 1:1-13)

2. Rising action (Mk 1:14-8:21)

1:29-31	Jesus heals Simon's mother in law <u>on the Sabbath</u>
1:40-43	Jesus heals <u>a leper</u>
2:14	Jesus calls a <u>tax collector</u> as his disciple
2:15-17	Jesus eats with <u>sinners and tax collectors</u>
2:18-22	Jesus <u>rejects the whole socio-religious system</u>
2:23-28	The <u>role of the Sabbath is reversed</u> in Jesus' defence of his disciples plucking grain on the Sabbath. There are life situations which take priority over ceremonial norms.
3:1-6	Jesus heals <u>on the Sabbath</u>
3:31-35	Jesus <u>redefines the family</u>
5:25-34	Jesus heals a <u>hemorrhaging woman</u>
5:35-43	Jesus raises a <u>dead girl</u>
7:1-23	Jesus <u>disagrees with the Pharisees over the tradition of the elders.</u> He <u>redefines cleanness</u> in terms of morals rather than in terms of diet.
7:24-30	Jesus heals the daughter of a <u>Syrophenician woman, a Gentile</u>
7:31-37	Jesus heals a deaf mute <u>with spittle</u>

3. Climax (Mk 8:22-10:52)

8:22-26	Jesus heals a blind man.
10:46-52	Jesus heals a blind man.

4. **Falling action (Mk 11:1-13:37)**
5. **Catastrophe (Mk 14:1-15:39)**
6. **Denouement (Resolution) (Mk 15:40-16:8)**

As can be seen from the above overall structure, the story of the Syro-Phoenician woman falls within that part of the narrative described as rising action (2). In other words the classic development of the conflict within the narrative is gaining momentum until it reaches a climax (Mk 8:22-10:52). The story of Mark 7:24-31 comes immediately after Jesus has just declared all foods clean (Mk 7:1-23) and is followed by the healing of a deaf and dumb man by Jesus who uses, from a Jewish perspective, an unorthodox approach by using his spit and touching the man, thereby healing him. But look at the order – he first put “his fingers into the man’s ear. Then he spit and touched the man’s tongue” (Mk 7:33). That is to say, Jesus first spits and then puts his hand on the tongue of the unclean man thereby allowing the spit to intermingle. This is a profound breach of the Jewish purity rules by a Jewish Rabbi, who by this act (note by his deed, a classic method of characterization) repudiates the traditional interpretation of the purity laws. From an orthodox Jewish perspective, how unclean can you get? But ironically (irony being a Markan narrative strategy) the religious leaders see Jesus’ challenging of the religious order and their traditions as a repudiation of God’s own law; when in fact what he is doing, as the implied audience is aware, is instituting God’s Rule on earth.

4.1.9.5 The Literary context of Mark 7:24-31

Apart from what has already been broadly established with regard to the literary context of Mark 7:24-31, it will be necessary to return to this aspect much later when the full implications of the structure of the subject text has been examined and the full import that structure may have on the immediate literary context. The question of why the author of Mark would place this intriguing story where he did may be explained in a number of ways. What I intend to explore is the reason the author positioned this story where it is. I expect that it has a very definite rhetorical purpose. The rhetorical purpose or function of Mark 7:24-31 within its literary context, is partly determined by its textual location and partly by its own form or structure. In other words the placement of this text at its precise literary location and the very form of that literary unit within the overall structure of Mark are inextricably linked. I will now examine the text of Mark 7:24-31 for its overall micro-structure and later deal with the very important impact this has for

interpreting the text of the story itself and the implications for its location in the greater scheme of the Gospel of Mark.

4.2 Mark 7:24-31

A full examination and consideration of Mark 7:24-31 now follows.

4.2.1 Delimiting the Text of Mark 7:24-31

According to the following commentaries the literary unit may be identified as Mark 7:24-**30**: Guelich (1989:381); Juel (1990:107); Brooks (1991:119); Hooker (1991:181); Gundry (1993:371); Perkins (1995:609) and Pokorny (1995:321). In other words these commentaries indicate that the story of Mark 7:24 ends at verse 30 and the beginning of the next story (that of the healing of the deaf mute) begins with verse **31**. However Burkill (1966:32) includes verse 31 as part of his discussion of the story. This is important, because if verse 31 is part of an *inclusio*, as defined and established according to literary convention, the designation of Mark 7:30 as the end of the story is premature and, following the form of the text, formally inaccurate with certain interpretive consequences. For example, to miss verse 31 as an integral part of the text means missing the possible symmetry of the text and also fails to alert us to the possible existence of other parallelisms in the text. *Inclusio*, points to the distinct possibility of symmetry.

So the first order of business is to establish the boundaries of the text according to our understanding of *inclusio* indicated in the form of A:B:A', with at this stage, the rest of the text (B) sandwiched between the *inclusio* (A:A') Dorsey (1999:21-22); Tribble (1994:27, 102 citing Muilenberg). Tribble (1994:27) states that the following literary devices serve to limit a text in terms of form and content: climax, *inclusio*, and chiasm. An *inclusio* may be defined as "the framing of a literary unit by placing the same key terms or themes at the beginning and at the end" (Breck 1994:59; Kennedy 1984:34). Wilson (1997:38) describes an *inclusio* thus, "Inclusions act in pairs to bracket a text, usually signaling the *beginning, end, or transition to another section*" (my emphasis). Thus the literary unit may be delimited by identifying *inclusio* within the text itself. Inclusion then is a form of parallelism of the first and last elements of a literary unit. It may also be referred to as an "envelope effect" (Breck 1994:32). Breck also states that an inclusion may parallel "the first and last elements of a passage which is entirely structured according to the laws of parallelism, as in the pattern A:B:C:C':B':A' " (author's emphasis). Breck (1994:33) also identifies the use of *inclusio* in the gospels and states that it can "indicate that a given pericope originally stood as an independent element of an early oral tradition." In the Gospel of Mark he identifies the following examples of *inclusio*: Mk 7:1-23, **24-31** and 32-37

(Breck 1994:33). If he is correct then the literary unit may be demarcated accordingly. However in order to test his theory let us apply the criteria by looking for parallels in verse 24 and 31. In applying the text the actual words as translated (literally) must be used, but not paraphrases, for paraphrases constitute an interpretation remote from the text and may be misleading. Beekman et al (1981:120), as linguists, state: “Sandwich structures, also known as *inclusio*, occur when the beginning and end of a unit share enough information and/or surface structure form to make it very probable that such a structure is more than a coincidence.” They go on to explain that such structures serve to indicate the boundaries of a unit, “whether a paragraph or a larger combination of units.”

A **(24) “Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre.**

He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit came and fell at his feet. The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. “First let the children eat all they want,” he told her, “for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.” “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “but even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” Then he told her, “For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.” She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

A’ **(31) Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis.”**

This may be condensed as follows with the correspondences indicated by small letters (a,b,c,d ..)

A *Jesus (a) left (b) that place (c) and went (d) to the vicinity of Tyre (e).*

A’ *Jesus (a’) left (b’) the vicinity of Tyre (c’) and went (d’) through Sidon (e’)*

Summary: A: a, b, c, d, e

 A’: a’, b’, c’, d’, e’,

We note that there is a direct semantic parallel or correspondence between the elements of the two sentences.

Conclusion

I therefore submit that there are sufficient correspondences to warrant a claim that verse 24 and 31 correspond to each other and that verse (31) also serves as a transition to the next Markan story.

Kennedy (1984:34) affords Mark 5:20 as an illustration of closure which may serve as a useful, analogous illustration, of a typical statement used by the author: “And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him; and all men marveled.”

Now that the text has been delimited, but before proceeding with an examination of this text for further correspondences or parallelisms, I want to consider the text briefly in the light of its narrative structure, more particularly with regard to the marking of prominence through dialogue in contrast to the chronological sequence of the narrative as a miracle or hybrid story.

4.2.2 Narrative structure

It is not my intention here to analyse the basic narrative elements of this story *viz.* setting, point of view, characters, etc. Certain aspects of these narrative elements will fall for broad discussion in any event, and an informed understanding of the narrative elements of this literary unit by the reader are presumed. What is important for this study is to understand the primary function of the text and how the literary structure contributes to whatever that purpose is within the context of the overarching genre of ancient Greco-Roman biography. A brief analysis of the dialogue is considered below.

Following on the examination of the text for *inclusio* and the fact that the beginning and end have been validated by an application of the general principles governing *inclusio* the question that may be raised and ought to be answered is: why have exegetes arrived at a number of different conclusions regarding the nature and purpose of the story and its function within its literary context? For example, here are samples of headings for this story that commentators have given to this apparently ambiguous text.

1. The Syrophenician Woman (Guelich 1989:381).
2. A Gentile woman: **Crumbs from the Table** (Juel 1990:107).
3. The **Exorcising of a Demon** from the Daughter of a Syrophenician woman (Brooks 1991:119).
4. A Gentile **Girl is Healed** (Hooker 1991:181).
5. Jesus’ **exorcising a demon** at a Distance and without command (Gundry 1993:371).
6. The Syrophenician Woman (Perkins 1995:609).
7. From a **Puppy to the Child** (Pokorny 1995:321).

The various titles above indicate, at least to some extent, the main significance of the text for the author of the commentary, and this after careful study. The difference in emphasis evidenced in

the titles may be because of the method employed by the exegete or a host of other important considerations. But the main point that I want to make is the reason why the text may be described as, let's say, a miracle story. Aune (1987:50) also categorises it as a miracle story and it is not difficult to see why the story may be classified as such. I will, for the sake of the following illustration only, also refer to it as a miracle story (although it is more typical of a hybrid story because of the healing at a distance and there is no direct evidence of the woman expressing faith at all, this is a Matthean interpretation of the story. However these issues aside.)

According to Ryken (1992:381) the typical structure of a miracle story in the Gospels is as follows:

- (1) A need is established
- (2) Jesus' help is sought
- (3) The person in need expresses faith or obedience
- (4) Jesus performs a miracle
- (5) The characters respond to the miracle and/ or Jesus

The narrative sequence is linear and obviously makes for coherence. If one considers these typical events (1-5) in regard to Mark 7:24-31 it conforms substantially to the linear progression of the story. That is to say, we see the development of the story in a linear way, which is quite natural and may be presented as follows.

<u>Plot</u>	<u>Story</u>	
Introduction and rising tension:	1.	Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre (24) <i>Inclusio</i>
	2.	a Syrophoenician woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit approaches Jesus(25)
	3.	the woman begs Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter (26)
Exchange of dialogue and Climax	4.	Jesus responds: First let the children eat all they want, for it is not right take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs (27)
	5.	Woman's riposte: Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs (28)
Denouement: (Resolution)	6.	For such a reply, you may go, the demon has left your daughter (29)
Confirmation of healing (7)		she went home and found her child on the bed, and the demon gone (30)
Closure:	8.	Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went ...(31) <i>Inclusio</i>

If we correlate the structure of the typical miracle story with the events in the story of Mark 7:24-31 it is not difficult to see, by and large, that the narrative follows a linear progression and the rising tension or conflict ends when the child is healed and the final piece of information comes

with confirmation of that fact in (7) which has the effect of dispelling any reservations the implied audience might have concerning whether or not the child was healed. This may also be the reason why exegetes stopped at verse 30 and did not recognise the significance of the *inclusio*. The story, thus structured, meets with the modern real readers' basic (and possibly only) expectation of a linear presentation of events that follow the typical conventions relating to plot. Once the modern real reader is satisfied that the child has been healed, any remaining tension abates and the story closes.

But what if the author marked the text in such a way that the significance of the miracle story was to serve some other literary function or purpose recognizable to the implied audience and not yet detected by the modern reader? If modern exegetes have missed *inclusio* in the story, as they appear to have done, how much more an elaborate literary structure? What if the implied author intended to convey to the implied audience a more profound significance to this story, one quite different from the one that we moderns have found? Remember the point alluded to above regarding what Radday (1981:51) said in speaking of chiasm and the modern reader: "The contemporary mind, nurtured on and believing in scientific publications, is disinclined to acknowledge that an artist should intentionally deviate from the "logical" sequence of narration in order to follow another pattern of his own." Parunak (1981:154) says: "We cannot assume, though, that because ancient bookmakers do not use the same sort of signals to the reader that the modern printer does, they therefore do not use any. Our world is graphically oriented. Comparatively speaking, that of the ancients is oriented more toward the spoken word. Where we use signals specially tailored to the printed page, they employ a system of indicators that can function in either oral or written presentations." It now remains to consider whether, apart from *inclusio*, the implied author did mark the text for prominence or not.

I must also emphasise that there is no form without content and that meaning is conveyed through form. Form is very important. The outline of the narrative sequence of events may once again be presented here and for reasons that will follow, the dialogue at the centre has been highlighted for attention.

Please turn to the next page to see the illustration complete on one page.

Introduction: Rising tension: (Narrative form)	}	1. Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre (24) 2. a Syrophenician woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit approaches Jesus(25) 3. the woman begs Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter (26)
Dialogue: Exchange of ideas Climax:	}	4. Jesus responds: First let the children eat all they want, for it is not right to take the <u>children's bread</u> and toss it to their <u>dogs</u> (27) 5. Woman's riposte: Yes, Lord, but even the <u>dogs under the table</u> eat the <u>children's crumbs</u> (28)
Denouement: (Dialogue (6) and Narrative form	}	6. For such a reply, you may go, the demon has left your daughter (29) 7. she went home and found her child on the bed, and the demon gone (30)
Closure:	}	8. Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went ...(31)

4.2.2.1 Dialogue in Narrative

The basic symmetrical nature of this text is noted by the author's use of the two forms *viz.* narrative and dialogue, with the exchange of ideas at the centre (4, 5). The effect of this is to bring symmetry and balance to the narrative and to highlight or mark for prominence the central piece, the exchange of ideas at the centre. This must all be seen in the light of the following discussion.

Alter (1981:182) points out the following concerning dialogue in Biblical narrative; firstly, "Everything in the world of biblical narrative ultimately gravitates toward dialogue." He goes on to say:

This 'gravitation' often means that phrases or whole sentences first stated by the narrator do not reveal their full significance until they are repeated, whether faithfully or with distortions, in direct speech by one or more of the characters. It also means that, quantitatively, a remarkably large part of the narrative burden is carried by dialogue, the transactions between characters typically unfolding through the words they exchange, with only the most minimal intervention of the narrator (my italics).

In this pericope we find that the narrator only provides us with the bare facts and that the transition from narrative to dialogue is as soon as the essential information is given to the implied audience by the author. This narrative, briefly and without further elaboration, provides the scene for the direct exchange between the two characters. What must also be remembered is that the author would leave to the imagination those aspects that were part of the first century implied audiences' presuppositions (but not part of ours, like the structure of the text). Repetition is also a

feature of biblical narrative and the woman repeats, with some adaptation the keywords (“children’s bread” / “*crumbs*”; and “dogs” / “*dogs under the table*”) the words of Jesus.

Another important factor drawn to attention is that “when a narrative event in the Bible seems important, the writer will render it mainly through *dialogue*, so the *transitions from narration to dialogue provide in themselves some implicit measure of what is deemed essential, what is conceived to be ancillary or secondary to the main action*” (Alter 1981:182, my italics).

The symmetrical shape of the narrative and the centrality of the dialogue are important factors in interpreting the significance of this text, especially to the implied reader/audience, which as we have seen from a review of their education and literary training, would typically have understood these important factors. In fact, Alter (1981:182) states that it is important to try and understand how the character reveals him or herself through the “syntax, tone, imagery, brevity or lengthiness” and how this serves to “delineate the character and his relation to the other party to the dialogue ...”

In this text the relationship between the characters is portended by the introduction. The reference to an unaccompanied woman, a Geek, from “Syrian Phoenicia”, with a household bedeviled by a demon-possessed child, communicates directly with, not just a miracle worker, healer, holy man, but a Jewish Rabbi, who the implied audience knows (but the story character probably doesn’t) is the Messiah, Son of God (Mk 1:1). This is an instance of dramatic irony where the implied audience is privy to information that the story characters are not. This breaking down of institutional barriers is no less than shocking to the implied Jewish audience and no doubt unseemly to the implied Gentile audience who also probably would not have approved of her “shameless” behaviour. Shameless here mentioned insofar as she is unaccompanied by a male chaperon, more particularly her husband (for she had a child) or her *paterfamilias*, or some such male (Malina 1993:49-50). Malina (1993:51) says that the shameless person “does not recognise the rules of human interaction” and one “who does not recognise social boundaries.”

I would suggest that her behaviour did not fit in at all with the general honour / shame culture, including the view held by Gentiles. Therefore this episode must not only be seen through Jewish eyes. Remember both the Gentiles and the Jewish community were sub-cultures that adhered to the honour / shame culture. In the mind of the implied audience, steeped in an honour / shame culture, these shameless elements which may be attributed to her are an absolute scandal, apart from the fact that, over and above this, from the point of view of Jewish ritual purity regulations, this must be the ultimate breach of the laws pertaining to ritual purity. Here she was, an unaccompanied woman, a Gentile (a Greek from Syrian Phoenicia) whose household is unclean

because her daughter is possessed with an unclean demon, and she is seeking help from a ritually clean Jewish Rabbi. She also approaches him directly, without an escort. This is all implied in the text itself and part of the presupposed world of the implied audience (but not the modern).

What is also important to keep in mind is “the tendency of biblical writers to organize dialogue along contrastive principles – short versus long, simple versus elaborate, balanced versus asymmetrical, perceptive versus obtuse, and so forth” (Alter 1981:183). He also points out that “small alterations, the reversals of order, the elaborations ...” are important. This is typical of the exchange – it is contrastive and there is a reversal of terms, after a slight variation of the actual words.

Notice in the above illustration that prominence at the centre modifies the linear expectation from (7) in the previous outline to (4) and (5). I have highlighted the exchange of direct speech between the characters in the text as this is, following narrative theory, the key to understanding the text.

Relating these narrative conventions to the text, the following may be noted. (1) That the narrator affords only a minimal amount of information. (2) That the implied audience would have been aware of the cultural, social and literary conventions adverted to or implied in the text. (3) That spatially, the exchange of dialogue is at the centre of the story. (4) The reported exchange in dialogue between the characters is contrastive. (5) There are only two characters (very rarely are there more than two in biblical narrative (Kaiser 1995:76) and if there are, one will usually represent a group. (6) The story appears symmetrical, in terms of its division into two forms structured in such a way that the narrative form frames the exchange of dialogue at the centre. (7) That apart from the *inclusio*, the narrative frame or “sandwich” is a common Markan technique for framing episodes, and so to find the same technique in a pericope is not unusual and may be considered a variegated form of *inclusio*. (8) The dialogue evidences a reversal of terms (“children’s bread” / “dogs”; and “dogs under the table” / “children’s crumbs”) in the form of a simple chiasm. The exchange of dialogue at the centre will be examined once the text has been scrutinized for correspondences and parallelisms, for it would be more appropriate to consider the dialogue after such an analysis has been done, whatever the result.

Conclusion

That the content of the narrative and its form evidences that the author’s method of composition complies substantially with our present understanding of the conventions at work in Biblical narrative, a typically Jewish literary form. Incidentally, the foregoing discussion is compatible with our understanding of the form, content and function of Greco-Roman biography, even

though this latter form may have been given a new frame of reference. In fact it complements our understanding of characterization in Greco-Roman biography as modified by the author and applied in the New Testament literature in a fascinating new way. That the dialogue is the centrepiece of the story is established with regard having been had to Biblical narrative theory. This marking for prominence is an important departure from the modern pre-occupation with linear plot progression as the only mark of meaning within an ancient text.

I therefore simply want to make the point at this stage that by following the rules or conventions of Biblical narrative, the primary function of this text has less to do with a miraculous healing or the exorcising of a demon, (although it also has to do with these aspects) so much as to the function of the text within its literary setting. The point being that according to the investigation so far, the dialogue is the key to understanding the text.

Therefore a further consideration of the literary structure of the text, more particularly with regard to an examination of the text for evidence of chiasm is, I submit, justified. This is because the exchange of dialogue is central and the text is framed by *inclusio*. What is more, the prose narrative beginning and end frame the dialogue at the centre. This means that over and above the characteristics discovered above, the text needs to be examined in order to establish whether it contains further correspondences so as to consider whether chiasm may be said to characterise the form of the text as provisionally indicated by the previous analysis.

4.2.3 Greco-Roman rhetoric with regard to the dialogue of the text

It is important to consider what Greco-Roman forms may be said to characterise the text. In the New Testament literature, where two literary traditions merge into one, thereby creating the "*tertium quid*" referred to earlier, there is every reason to suppose that the text may evidence both forms of literary expression i.e. typical classical Greek form of rhetoric and typically Jewish forms. Bengel, Lowth, Jebb, Boys, Lund, Kennedy and Meynet are right in this regard. It just does not appear to have been taken up by scholarship, and we are the poorer for that omission. Therefore the examination of a New Testament text must, I submit, consider and examine the text for all possible forms of literary expression that may reasonably be expected to find their way into a text.

4.2.4 The text and Greco-Roman rhetoric

According to Mack (1990:35) Christian rhetoric was a multi-various "bag in which every form of rhetorical issue and strategy was frequently brought to bear simultaneously in an essentially

extravagant persuasion.” Thus it would appear that no single form of rhetorical strategy was employed. It would not be out of keeping, so to speak, to find evidence of a number of different rhetorical techniques. Thus I expect that one would find both classical and Jewish rhetorical devices in any New Testament text including biblical narrative technique (Jewish), chiasm (Jewish) and Greco-Roman rhetoric.

Recall what was referred to above in regard to what Papias recorded that “the elder” had reported; that Mark had collected *chreiai*. For ease of reference this is a part of what was recorded: “For he had not heard the Lord or followed him but later, as I mentioned, had followed Peter, who formulated his teachings in the form of anecdotes [*chreiai*], but not as a finished composition [*syntaxis*]”. What is the significance of this? Well, first of all we are told that Mark did not hear or follow Jesus but that he collected *chreiai*. Part of the method of Greco-Roman biography was to characterize the subject through words and deeds. According to Mack (1990:43-44)

Chreia was the term used by *rhetors* to refer to memorable sayings attributed to well known authorities. Both maxims and crisp rejoinders of the anecdotal variety counted as *chreiai*. Since *chreiai* frequently made clever use of figurative language to make their points, teachers of rhetoric saw them as a challenge to logical and argumentative reasoning and used them regularly as theses for the first exercises in rhetorical training (my underlining).

The basic rhetorical training in rhetoric in the Greco-Roman world was based upon the type found in the *progymnasmata*, a textbook on basic rhetorical technique produced by Hermogenes.

According to Witherington (2001:9), Mark’s rhetoric was of this kind, limited to the standard evidenced in basic textbooks on the subject, like the *progymnasmata*. More particularly, Witherington (2001:10) points to narrative, *chreiai*, and aphorism as the types of rhetoric found in Mark, which he claims is of a lower standard than that evidenced by the writings of Paul. In fact, Witherington (2001:11) says: “Mark’s Gospel is the textbook which has gathered up the memoirs or memoranda of recollections and presented them.” He also points out that Mark has rhetorical purpose and his method of rhetoric is narrative (Witherington 2001:11,15). Another important point that Witherington (2001:11-12) makes is that while it may have been the practice for *rhetors* to enter into exercises by taking *chreiai* and elaborating on them,

an actual study of how ancient biographers used *chreiai* and formed their material for their works will reveal it was more often a matter of editing source material down to *chreia* form, not creating material out of thin air.

In this Witherington enters into a polemic with Mack, who suggests that the evidence for *chreiai* in the Gospel is one comparable to the elaboration style of rhetorical development. I will not discuss this here except to say that Mack (1990:44) informs us that many of the rhetorical exercises involved the elaboration of *chreiai* as a rhetorical exercise and gives examples of how this was done. However, as far as Mark's Gospel is concerned, Witherington (2001:11-14) disputes this and suggests that there are very few instances of the form of elaboration that Mack refers to found in the Gospel. In fact he says that most exhibit a form of what he calls "boiling down."

What is also of significance is that according to Taylor, as referred to by Witherington (2001:12), a *chreia* was not simply a matter of "literary form, but essentially a historical statement - So-and-so, who was a known historical figure, actually said or did this....Actual fact was demanded." Witherington claims that the use of *chreiai* in the Gospel implies a historical claim to its authenticity.

Another Greco-Roman literary device that is evident is the *enthymeme*. A statement and a reason given in support of that statement by the speaker, which is introduced by the word "for", characterize an *enthymeme* (Kennedy 1984:7,16-17; Mack 1990:38-39). Jesus uses this form in his saying (see above). This is reported speech and so I would expect that it cannot be likened in any way to the Markan use of "for" in his narrative. See Fowler (1991:92-98) who identifies the author's use of "for" as the author's way of offering an "explanatory" or "parenthetical" comment on the story.

Where then does this take us? Well firstly, the story of Mark 7:24-31 gives us the barest minimum of information without compromising coherence, i.e. just enough relevant information. Secondly, it would appear that this is probably a typical example of the use of *chreiai* that have essentially been "boiled down" or edited to its bare essentials while at the same time maintaining coherence. A casual perusal of this same event reported in Matthew 15:21-29 shows more detail than Mark.

That the sayings of Jesus and the Syro-Phoenician woman are examples of *chreiai* support the view that the author was very much aware of and indeed employed Greco-Roman rhetorical techniques and, to some extent, it corroborates Papias' statement with regard to method.

4.3 Chiasm in Mark 7:24-31

Now that *inclusio* as a form has been confirmed to reside within the text thereby limiting the literary unit (A:A') the rest of the text falls for consideration. The definition of chiasm for the

purpose of this paper has already been established and is considered the minimum criterion by which chiasm in this text may be assessed.

The important thing to note is that over and above the definition, there are literary conventions that pertain to chiasmic structures and these will be considered in general discussion of the structure of the text. The reason for this is that there are many of them and a discussion of each may not be relevant to the consideration of this text. But, before proceeding any further, it is important to take note of what Dorsey (1999:33) identifies as the three most common methodological errors that are found in “forced chiasmuses and parallel schemes.” This will serve to heighten our sense of awareness so as not to fall into the same trap. These errors are as follows.

1. The first error would be what Dorsey refers to as “creative titling.” This means assuming that one word or phrase matches that of another, far removed from its literary context. He gives us the example of Psalm 1 “Yahweh cares for his people like tended trees; and Psalm 23 “Yahweh cares for his people like tended sheep.” He would call this “adroit titling” and an illegitimate drawing of “parallels”.
2. The second error would be to attribute a correspondence to words that are in common usage and bear no other contextual significance. In the Hebrew Bible he makes the point that there is a limited vocabulary, and therefore usage of words may be repeated without signifying correspondence.
3. The third error would be to link correspondence to two separate literary units just because they may share the same motif or theme.

In order to proceed from here it is important to establish the correspondences from the text itself.

MARK 7:24-31 (NIV)

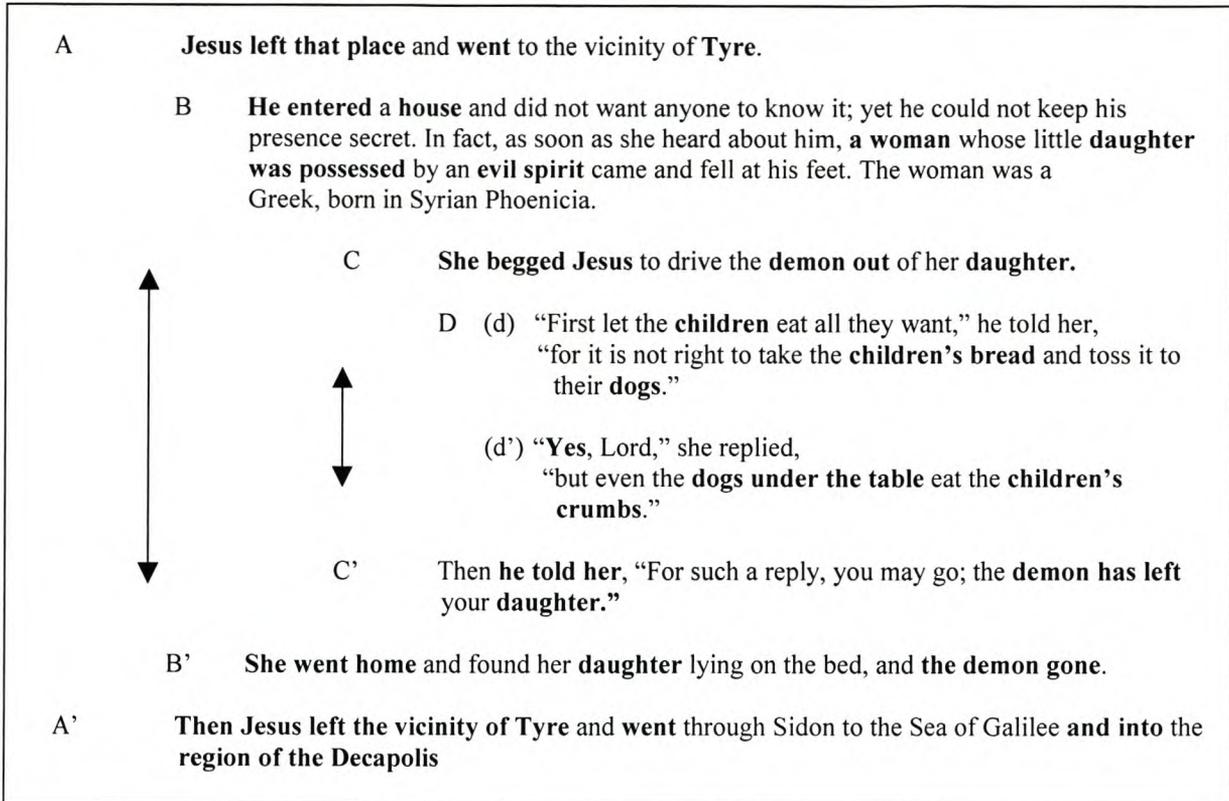
Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit came and fell at his feet. The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. “First let the children eat all they want,” he told her, “for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.” “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “but even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” Then he told her, “For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.” She went home and found her daughter lying on the bed, and the demon gone. Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis.

Using the actual words of the text, the following correspondences are identified starting with the inclusion A:A’ and working inwards. The idea is to consider the correspondences in this sequence as per Breck’s rhetorical helix (the “what’s more” factor, Breck 1994:38-58): A:A’; then B:B’;

C:C'; D: (d:d'); D: (d'd), C':C; B':B; A':A. Consider the following illustrations detailing the correspondences.

Please turn to the next page to see the illustrations complete on one page.

Figure 1.



This in turn may be summarized in the following two schemes:

Figure 2.

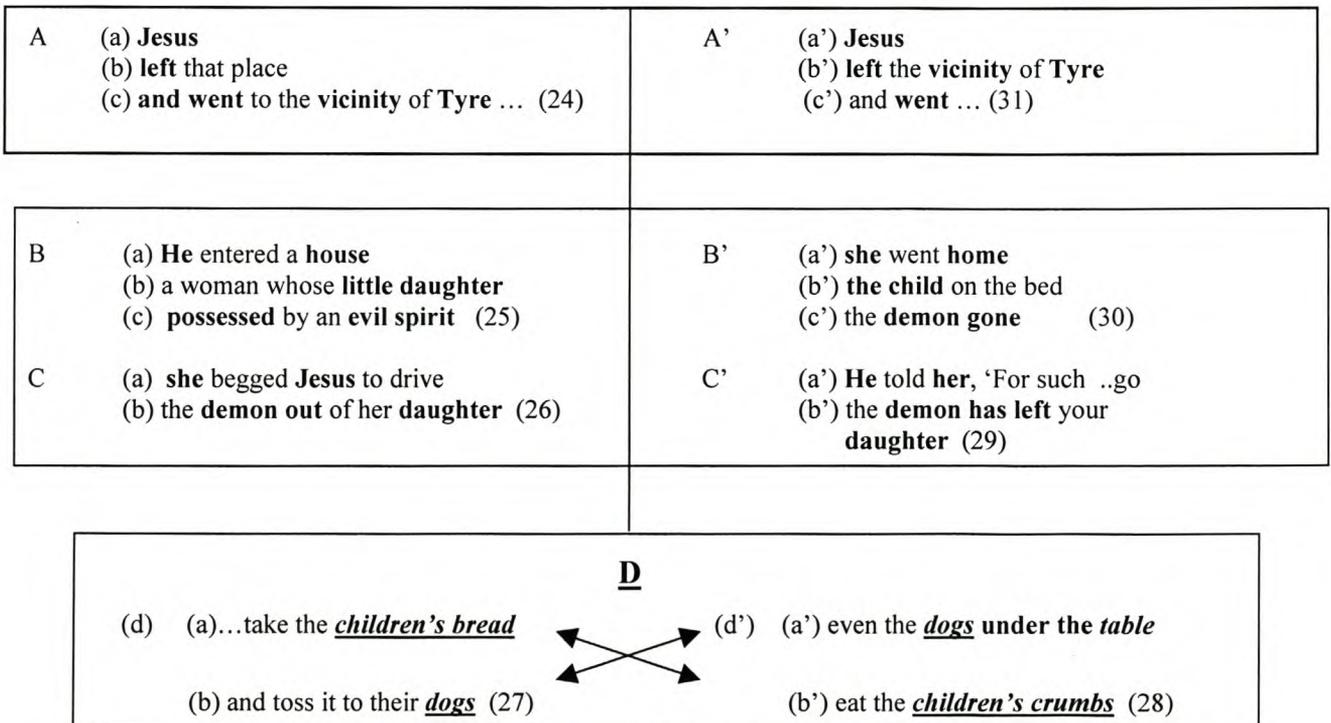


Figure 3.

A	Jesus left that place	and went to the	vicinity of Tyre ... (24)
A'	Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre	and went ...	through Sidon ... (31)

B	he entered a house (24) a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit (25)
B'	she went home, found the child on the bed, and the demon gone (30)

C	she begged Jesus	to drive the demon out of	her daughter (26)
C'	He told her 'for such ..	go, demon has left	your daughter (29)

D (d)	First let the children eat all they want, for it is not right to take the <u>children's bread</u> and toss it to the <u>dogs</u> (27)
(d')	even the <u>dogs</u> under the table eat the <u>children's crumbs</u> (28)

In order for the correspondences in the text to be considered chiasmic, evidence of the following literary conventions governing chiasm may be considered.

The Figures 1, 2 and 3 above facilitate a visual comparison of the various correspondences that are manifestly apparent. A discussion of the structure will now follow with reference to the literary conventions pertaining to chiasm. The ten "laws" provisionally identified by Nils Lund (1992) have been reduced to four by Breck (1994:335-339) and are as follows. Please note that the term "conventions" is used as a matter of convenience and in this context implies literary convention. The important sanction of ignoring them of course is possibly a misinterpretation and this is why I am employing them. Thus for sake of brevity I will simply refer to "convention (1 or 2/3/4)".

Breck's Conventions:

- (1) "*Chiasmic units are framed by inclusion*" (Breck 1994:335).
- (2) "*The central element (or pair of elements) serves as the pivot and/or thematic focus of the entire unit*" (Breck 1994:336).
- (3) "*A heightening effect occurs from the first parallel line or strophe to its prime complement*" (Breck 1994:338).
- (4) "*The resultant concentric or spiral parallelism, with progressive intensification from the extremities inward, produces a helical movement that draws the reader/ hearer toward the thematic centre*" (Breck 1994:339). In fact Breck says that a good example of this is Mark 9:14-29.

Correspondences A:A' and B:B'

The inclusio A:A' has already been established in the section on delimiting the text from its surrounds and therefore convention (1) has been satisfactorily attended to. However, before proceeding with an examination of the centrepiece, something needs to be said about my editing out of the narrative introduction certain portions of the text that serves to introduce the Syro-Phoenician woman. First of all there are no less than five terms in B corresponding to B' and these correspondences are reflected in each of the sentences comprising the whole of B except for the last one. Note the following:

B: Sentence (1)	He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret.
B':	She went home ...
B: Sentence (2)	In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit came and fell at his feet.
B':	and found her (the woman's) daughter (now not possessed) lying on the bed, and the demon gone .
B: Sentence (3)	The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia.

In the circumstances I would venture to suggest that the correspondences are sufficient to warrant a claim that B corresponds to B' as per Figure 2 above. However, for the skeptic, the following observation made by Man (1984:153) is apposite and ought to satisfy such a legitimate enquiry: "Chiasms can be 'lopsided' in form, that is, two or more concepts may be stated thematically in an introductory sentence(s), and then the concepts may each be expanded in reverse order."

I submit that there are sufficient correspondences in B to warrant a direct relation with the corresponding words in B'.

Correspondence C:C'

The correspondences in these two sentences are clearly evident and the import lies in the fact that prior to the climax and exchange in dialogue, the woman begged Jesus; her daughter was possessed by an evil spirit (C). On the other side of the dialogue, things have changed. Jesus speaks. He says she may go, the demon has left the daughter. There is obviously a radical change in circumstances in (C').

4.3.1. The Dialogue (D) as centrepiece (turning point) of the text

If the form of this text is chiasmic as provisionally indicated by having reference to the corresponding terms as evidenced above, then the centrepiece is very important in terms of chiasmic convention.

It has already been established that dialogue plays a pivotal role in the understanding of narrative, and that narrative theory, applied to the subject text, confirms that the dialogue is the central element in the text. But can having regard to the conventions governing chiasmic structures corroborate this? And if so, what according to these conventions is the most probable centre. Is it possible that it is only (d); or (d') or (d:d') together (see Figure 1).

A consideration of the nature of the centre is now discussed. The following discussion must be seen in the light of the preceding general discussion of Biblical parallelisms and chiasm in antiquity and the authorities cited there serve as an essential background to this discussion. However, this discussion is different in that it is a specific focus on the subject text.

According to Man (1984:147-148), the following characteristics are typical of chiasm. Firstly, that the existence at the centre of one central or “two complementary central elements in the structure which generally highlight the major thrust of the passage encompassed by the chiasm; and (2) the presence of complementary pairs or elements, in which each member of a pair can elucidate the other member and together form a composite meaning.”

This view is supported by Breck (1994:33) who, as was discussed on the section of the *Definition of chiasm* defines chiasmus thus: “a rhetorical form in **which key words and concepts are constructed in synonymous, antithetical or inverted parallelism about a central theme**. The term ‘chiasmus’ should be restricted to strophes of at least three lines arranged around a pivot or conceptual centre, such as A:B:A', A:B:C:B':A', A:B:C:C':B':A', etc.” (Breck 1994:33, my emphasis in bold).

Typical of parallelism, Baldwin (as referred to by Man 1984:148), states that a chiasm “is capable of expressing exact equivalents or startling contrasts.” Man goes on to point out that “The elements paired off with each other in a chiasmic structure may be parallel either in a synonymous or an antithetical way, and the placing of such elements opposite each other in the structure serves to strengthen the comparison or the contrast.” The reference Man here makes to “synonymous and antithetical” must however be seen in the light of recent developments in our understanding of parallelisms, as discussed above. Miesner, as referred to by Man (1984:148), says that “In respect to both form and sense, the rest of the structure pivots around the centre, which may be either a single or a double unit. Thus the exegete must attach a special importance to the centre of a

chiastic structure.” Miesner, as cited by Man (1984:148) also adds that “By centering the thought of a passage, the structure shows the emphasis of the whole.”

In the light of the above, the two sentences provisionally forming the conceptual centre may be considered. The terms “children”, “dogs”, and “bread/crumbs” are discussed further in paragraph 4.4.2 below.

D:

(d) Assertion: “First let the children eat all they want,

Reason : “**for (a)** it is not right to take the **children’s bread (b)** and toss it to their **dogs (c).**”

(d’) Affirmation: “Yes, Lord,

Exception: “**but (a’)** even the **dogs under the table (c’)** eat the **children’s crumbs (b’).**”

The word “for” is that part of the enthymeme that introduces the reason why Jesus says “First let the children eat all they want”. The woman responds by affirming the truth of his statement. “Yes, Lord” and then tenders an exception - a special plea - evidenced by the contrasting “but” which establishes from a literary point of view, a ground of justification on which she believes he can act. Please note that the use of “for” here is within the context of reported speech and I submit is not to be confused with the Markan use of the term in his narrative.

This form of speech is argument by analogy. That the woman enters the debate by advancing her argument by extending the metaphor also ties the two statements together. The statements together signify a meaning that together signifies something greater than when apart. In any event, her riposte is incoherent on its own i.e. without the previous statement.

At the centre of the text the keywords have been inverted to create a simple chiasm: for / children’s bread / dogs; and: but / dogs under the table / children’s crumbs and may be designated thus a:**b**:c: a’:**c’**:b’. According to Watson (1981:151), because chiasm is a form of parallelism “it is not surprising that word pairs can belong to its structure.” Adele Berlin (1985:6), citing Empson, states that in “parallelisms there is no doubt that ‘two statements are made as if they were connected’ so the reader cannot avoid considering their relationship.” This is another reason for considering the two statements as inextricably “locked” together. Here I restate or paraphrase what was said which indicates that the two statements are not opposed to one another but are in fact complementary.

First let the Jews eat all they want because it is not proper to throw the children's bread (the whole bread) to the dogs (class of gentiles in general). Yes Lord, you are right in what you say except that it is also true that the "dogs under the table" eat [present tense] the children's scraps (which is more specific than the "bread", i.e. a part of the bread itself).

This paraphrase implies a contemporaneous feeding. The reference to crumbs is significant and will be discussed more fully below in the discussion of the text within its literary context. In the meantime it may just be said that it appears to be a literary allusion to the two feedings of the five thousand and the four thousand that bracket the text somewhat. In each case there was an abundance left over; twelve baskets of scraps in the first feeding and seven baskets in the second. The implication is that in each of those two feedings, the disciples did not understand the point made here concerning the bread and the crumbs that the woman understands implicitly. Her answer, as will be seen below, casts her as a reliable witness together with the implied author, God, and the demons even though she is a Gentile of note, a Syrophenician, and as a story character does not know that he is the Messiah, the Son of God, as does the implied audience.

What is discovered here is also consistent with our understanding of Greco-Roman rhetoric. Mack (1990:46) points out that argument by analogy "were reminders of the way the world worked in general, especially in the spheres of the natural and human orders of activity." We are here in this text dealing with the human order. Furthermore, such type arguments were generally "non-specific in the sense that the figure indicated were representative and generic types. By referring to a class of persons or objects, or to a regular pattern of occurrences (such as what farmers, doctors or merchants do), the analogy pointed to a common phenomenon regarded as an instance of a universal principle. The effect of an apt analogy was the same as that implied in the familiar instances. If true of the analogy, then it would be true for the proposition as well."

This clearly demonstrates the Greco-Roman typical argument from analogy and I submit is appropriate to the form of dialogue evidenced in the text. Another aspect of great importance for our understanding of this text and how it fits into its Greco-Roman rhetorical world is the fact that debate was a common rhetorical tool. What is more, according to classical handbooks on rhetoric, the argument was often from " 'the opposite,' 'the same,' 'the greater,' 'the lesser,' (Mack 1990:40). Apparently Christian literature abounds with these examples. According to Mack the early Christian writings are "heavily weighted toward the use of analogies" and also that they were used particularly in regard to social class analogies such as soldiers, priests, and others (Mack 1990:41). Mack (1990:40) also points out that the difference between analogy and fable was that an "analogy captured a customary observation about types of people, normal events whereas the fable entertained the imaginative world created by fiction." It has already been

established that the *chreiai* used by ancient biographies were based on historical events, that the words and deeds were indeed actual events.

Another important point not to be missed. According to Aune (1987:57), “The primary vehicles for biographical characterization in the Gospels, as in Greco-Roman biography, are miracle stories, sayings and anecdotes (i.e. pronouncement stories and stories about Jesus) that support and demonstrate the appropriateness of the stereotypical role assigned to Jesus. While they do not primarily function as revelations of *character* (as in Greco-Roman biography), they are literary vehicles that legitimate the presentation of Jesus as Messiah, or Son of God.”

I therefore submit that the overall structure based upon the general principles governing Greco-Roman rhetoric, the Jewish literary form of chiasm, and Jewish Biblical narrative all point to the structure of the text being substantially in accordance with the following:

- A Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre ... (24)
- B he entered a house (24)...a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit (25)
- C she begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter (26)
- D **(d) First let the children eat all they want,**
for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs (27)
- (d’) Yes Lord but even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs (28)**
- C’ He told her ‘For such a reply, you may go, the demon has left your daughter (29)
- B’ she went home, found the child on the bed, and the demon gone (30)
- A’ Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went ... (31)

I also respectfully submit that the chiasmic structure complies with Breck’s definition of chiasm as adopted for the purpose of this investigation. However, the above structure does differ from that of John Breck’s with regard to the very important centre (1994:150):

Breck’s chiasmic structure of Mark 7:24-31 (Breck 1994:150)

- A (24a): Jesus goes to the region of Tyre and Sidon
- B (24bc): Jesus is found in a house.
- C(25): The daughter is possessed by an unclean spirit.
- D(26): The Syrophenician woman begs from Jesus.
- E(27): Jesus came to serve “children” (Jews), not “dogs” (Gentiles).**
- D’(28): “Dogs” (the woman) beg from “children” (Jesus).
- C’(29): The daughter is healed from demon-possession.
- B’(30): The woman finds her daughter in her house
- A’(31): Jesus returns from the region of Tyre and Sidon.

Breck (1994:3) in the preface to his book, in true scholarly fashion, allows for the possibility of raising “legitimate questions ... about the exact ‘shape’ of any particular literary unit”. But he does not discuss all the micro-chiasmic structures presented in his book. He also stresses that a

great deal of further study is necessary concerning this subject. However, Breck's centre misses the vital point. The centre is not (E) as he proposes i.e. just one part of the dialogue because it excludes the dynamic of the exchange in dialogue as one central unit as discussed above. It is also evident from Breck's structure that he is paraphrasing the story (see his D' especially) and thereby falls foul of the very important methodological criteria of using the very text itself. The consequences for interpretation based upon Breck's proposed structure will have the unintended effect of misleading the exegete.

In the light of the tremendous insights gleaned from this examination of the rhetoric employed by the author of Mark within the context of Greco-Roman and Jewish rhetorical technique, I submit that the more appropriate and authentic structure is the one proposed by me and presented above.

4.4 Returning to the literary context of Mark 7: 24-31

Fowler (1991:152) suggests that exegetes have tended to explain chiasm by having regard to the story level rather than at the level of discourse and says that: "If attention can be shifted from neat diagrams and architectural symmetry, visually apprehended, to the progressive, temporal encounter that every hearer and reader of the Gospel experiences, then we may better understand, not what chiasmic structures are visually but how they function temporally."

One of the difficulties with this statement is that if Fowler has the contemporary reader of the Gospel in mind, as I believe he has, he may have missed the boat. If chiasm is an ancient literary device that has, in the main, been glossed over (more probably missed completely) even by astute Bible scholars in their experience of reading the Gospel for some two thousand years, as appears to have been the case (see the discussion of chiasm and Biblical parallelisms above) then it is impossible to expect "every hearer and reader of the Gospel" (i.e. other than the implied readers) to benefit from a literary structure that is completely foreign to their genre expectations, driven primarily, by modern literary conventions. This is the whole point.

Secondly, if a text appears to exhibit within its literary structure, an ancient literary form such as chiasm, which is completely foreign to a contemporary reader's reading experience, it cannot for that reason be denied simply because an adequate theory of how it functions has not been fully appreciated and explained by and for a contemporary reader that is not persuaded of its possible existence in any event. This is indeed the challenge of it all. The first point of departure is to try and understand how the implied audience would have experienced the text. Not the modern reader. A failure to first identify and then appreciate how the literary conventions (genre)

functioned in the ancient society in which that text originated will no doubt baffle the modern reader who fails to explore the ancient text within the literary and social context of origin.

However, where I agree with Fowler is that perhaps exegetes ought to at least attempt to give some explanation of how the text functions at the level of discourse. That is to say, to try and explain how the genre (form, content and function) of the text contributes to the discourse of the narrative. Fowler (1991:2-3) places the emphasis on “the ways in which the language of the narrative attempts to weave its spell over the reader.” I would prefer to substitute for the word “language”, the words “literary structure” of the text because the form conveys meaning and thereby contributes to an understanding of the function of the text. Language must exhibit form (words, phrases, sentences, semantics, genre) to be understood.

Following on what has been said above I will endeavour to give a brief general explanation of how chiasm in Mark 7:24-31 serves to direct the implied audience’s attention to a very profound insight, that, I expect, would be difficult to fully appreciate without understanding the form of the text. An appreciation of the chiastic form of Mark 7:24-31 is central to the following discussion and its incredible contribution to understanding at least some of the more important motifs in the Gospel.

According to Rhoads, Dewey & Michie (1999:56-57) the author made extensive use of allegories, riddles and analogies. Indeed, foreshadowing, retrospection, repetition, irony and concentric parallelism are well known Markan devices as are a host of others as attested by Rhoads, Dewey & Michie (1999) and Fowler (1991). The repetitions of typical stories with important differences, such as the two feeding stories are apposite.

According to Elizabeth Struthers Malbon (1994:45) the first feeding of the five thousand takes place “on the west (Jewish) side of the sea;” and “the four thousand are fed somewhere on the east (Gentile) side of the sea.” Malbon then draws our attention to the fact that in the first feeding there were twelve baskets left over and in the second, seven baskets left over. In this regard she states:

As twelve is a number symbolic of the Jews, so seven is a number symbolic of “the nations,” the Gentiles. (In Acts 6, at the instigation of the “Hellenists,” seven deacons are chosen to assist the twelve apostles.

The differences in the two stories are therefore significant. Another important and very significant point is to identify what remains constant in the stories. Malbon states that “the

allusions – backward to the manna of the exodus and forward to the bread of the last supper and the Eucharist – remain constant between the two feeding stories.”

Following this, a further point that Malbon makes which is also of importance for our purposes is her statement that:

What is added is that such bread is for Gentiles as well as for Jews. Jesus heals and feeds his own; that would be story enough. But Jesus also heals and feeds outsiders. That action takes some explaining; it is harder to understand.

If Malbon is correct in her analysis then this is a critical piece of information that contributes significantly to developing an understanding of the subject text within its literary location. More particularly for my later discussion of the “bread” metaphor in paragraph 4.4.2 below and the whole schematic theme portrayed in Figure 5 which is discussed in that same section.

The themes that play themselves out throughout the Gospel are the ones that highlight the insider/outsider dichotomy, clean and unclean, Jews/Gentiles, crossing boundaries and bringing in God’s rule which is in conflict with the political and civil authorities. All these issues must be borne in mind.

4.4.1 Rhetoric behind the dialogue

In the dialogue itself, Jesus says: “First let the children eat all they want, for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs” (Mk 7:27). This I submit is a memorable saying attributed to an important character. So too is the woman’s response. These two sayings are *chreiai*. The Jesus saying may also be referred to as an enthymeme, i.e. a statement supported by a reason (Kennedy 1984:7). Mack (1990:38-39) says that for an enthymeme to work the major proposition must be incontrovertible.

In the case of the Jesus saying, he says that it is not right (proper) for him to do what she is proposing, (i.e. share himself [the children’s *bread*. Identifying Jesus as the “bread” in the metaphor is explained later and is a critical piece of information]) because there are two classes of people, the children (Jews) on the one hand and the dogs (gentiles) on the other; this was the institutional fact (reality) that was naturally incontrovertible in that culture, and she acknowledges this institutional fact: “Yes, Lord, but...” Jesus, as the *bread* in the metaphor, very cleverly associates with and distances himself somewhat from both the “children” (Jews) and the “dogs” (Gentiles) thus preparing the way for her assertion that she just wants to partake of a small portion

(crumbs, left-overs, scraps) of the bread (Jesus) perhaps alluding to the fact that he [Jesus] is now on the Gentile side [under the table where the dogs are] of the divide [between Jews and Gentiles] and therefore she is pleading an exception in her case thereby suggesting that she is entitled to scavenge for that part that is presently across the boundary. Whatever the nuances, what is the point of this dialogue for the implied audience?

A very important point made by Toulmin and Perelman (as cited and discussed by Lawrie 1998) is that because rhetoric functions by its appeal to the reader or audience to change their minds “*reasonability* rather than *rationality* is what counts” (Lawrie 1998:148). This coincides with what was said earlier, “Since *chreiai* frequently made clever use of figurative language to make their point, teachers of rhetoric saw them as a challenge to logical argumentative reasoning and used them regularly as theses for the first exercises in rhetorical training” (Mack 1990:44).

In Lawrie’s (1998) discussion of rhetoric he points out what I believe is a very important point for the purpose of understanding this text in a new light. Lawrie (1998:150) makes the point that

Perelman rightly says that the speaker who builds her argument on assumptions not acceptable to the audience is guilty of a form of question-begging. The speaker wishing to persuade an audience of the very thing of which they are not persuaded, which they do not accept (yet), would have to start with what the audience does accept and work from there. The ‘already accepted’ is made grounds upon which the ‘not yet accepted’ may also be accepted.

The implication of the view of Kenneth Burke (as referred to and discussed by Lawrie 1998:150) is that “the form of the rhetorical act ... cannot be ignored” because as he says, speakers use “these formal aspects to create *a basis of identification* (author’s own italics)” in which, as he explains,

That the appeal is often directed at the prejudices and feelings is typical of the rhetorical situation in which reason and feeling cannot be clearly separated ... Even the member of the audience who says ‘I do not agree with her, but she spoke well’, is on the way to being persuaded.

As Lawrie (1998:152) points out, rhetoric does not play itself out in neat Aristotelian categories of *logos* (reason), *ethos* (value), and *pathos* (feeling) but generally function simultaneously and “represent the whole field of the human.”

Lawrie goes on to say that Perelman identifies the following “rhetorical tools”. (1) That in order to persuade anyone the “key ideas or values” must be identified. (2) That rhetoric persuades “by forging or breaking links (liaisons) between ideas or attitudes.” And this is apparently done by employing

quasi-logical arguments (arguments showing formal resemblances to syllogisms), arguments *based on claims about the nature of reality* (*‘each result has a cause’*), *arguments based on illustrations, arguments based on analogy, arguments based on association and dissociation, and so on* (Lawrie 1998:152, my italics).

If these general insights are applied to the dialogue, then much can be gained in understanding what the implied author of Mark is doing with this text. For instance, if through the positioning of the dialogue (highlighted for prominence by placement at the centre of the chiasm) the author of the text is using both the Jesus saying and the woman’s response (*chreiai*) to shift the implied audience (typically Jewish or Gentile Christian) from his or her social location and prejudice, into a single new cultural group, this is a classic way of doing it.

First, the Jesus saying consolidates his social location with the implied Jewish audience and his distance from the woman’s social location by referring to her Gentile group as “dogs”, thereby consolidating his identification with the implied Jewish audience. This, I submit, would have appealed to the implied prejudiced Jewish Christian audience. The woman accepts the “reality” of her social location, an institutional fact, but responds, without contradicting him (and thereby running the risk of shaming him) in a very clever contrastive and complementary way thereby having an instant appeal and rhetorical effect on the implied Gentile Christian audience. Its over before you know it. The effect of both sayings *together*, serve to bring around both groups into a new relationship, thereby dissipating the social and ideological barriers keeping them apart and bringing both implied reader groups into a new relationship. This takes place the second Jesus affirms her saying, giving it the full weight of his authority which, the implied audience knows, is nothing less than that of the Messiah, the Son of God. This confirms for the implied audience Jesus’ attitude, contrary to the potential implied audience’s prejudiced expectations, more particularly if the implied audience happened to identify with the apparent prejudice evident in the Jesus’ saying which, in the implied audience’s experience appears ironic because it is inconsistent with the way his character is portrayed up to this point.

The words and actions of Jesus speak louder than any direct teaching and therefore the Greco-Roman biographical function of this anecdote is satisfactorily met; and in order to dispel any

doubt by any implied audience, Jesus confirms his authority by healing the woman's child. We know from character portrayal in Greco-Roman rhetoric, that deeds are more cogent than words. This woman, a rank outsider together with her demon-possessed daughter actually partook of the "bread" because he gave it to her. For the implied audience, Jesus' authority and blessing is given to this new Christian sub-cultural group that is being forged together, comprising both Jews and Gentiles thereby crossing all traditional and other cultural barriers. The rhetorical effect and the imagery used are extremely powerful and the implied Jewish and Gentile readers would not have missed the dynamic.

I submit that this story functions as more than just an exorcism or healing story. The greater miracle is the very powerful way the text functions rhetorically in the narrative and therefore on the mind of the implied audience, causing perhaps a "crises of loyalty" requiring a decision. Listen to what Camery-Hoggatt has to say in regard to tensive language and how a "shared joke" may create a "crisis of loyalties". I am not suggesting however that the exchange between the characters of this story was a shared joke but that the tensive language used may have had the same effect on an implied audience:

"A story is told in which the perspective of the characters is faulty in some way. The narrator takes care to inform the audience of the facets or implications of the story to which the characters are blind. Frequently the possibility of a second – better informed – vantage point is introduced with a literary device which hints that more is going on than meets the characters' eyes. In this way, a subtle tension is set up between the two perspectives, a tension mirrored by an internal dissonance within the consciousness of the audience itself. The natural reaction of the audience is to opt for the better informed perspective, and thereby to resolve its own internal tensions in a manner which is consistent with the story-tellers point of view. Thus competing stories may set one reality against another, and ironic stories may provide competing perspectives on the same reality. In doing so, they create 'crises of loyalty' between which their listeners are asked to choose. As the listeners do so – as they align themselves with this telling and not that, as they say to themselves, 'This (and not that) is what life is like' – they confirm and consolidate their commitments for and against particular social groups" (Camery-Hoggatt 1992:34).

I suggest that this is what, in principle, is also going on in this text. The implied audience has already experienced Jesus and his ministering to the marginalized, the social outcasts and misfits, the clean and unclean and indeed a Gentile (the Gerasene in Mk 5:1-20). The Jesus saying is ironic. It is inconsistent with the story character Jesus as portrayed by the author and received by

the implied audience. But the summation of prejudice evident in Jesus' saying creates a tension between the story character Jesus and the implied prejudiced audience. The tension in the irony dissipates when Jesus, in response to the heightened tension brought about by the Gentile woman's riposte, is suddenly released when he affirms her disposition. This is rhetoric in action. It also may create a crisis of loyalties among the implied readers. This crisis of loyalties is created by the author's call, through the characters in this story, on the implied audience to make a decision - either for Jesus, or to remain entrenched in his or her own social location. This is radical rhetoric. In the story world, both Jesus and the woman, both exemplars of their own representative groups, meet and ultimately are *ad idem*. Now the audience may ask, what about me?

Getting back to how this fits in with Greco-Roman rhetoric. Mack explains the principle of opposition in Greco-Roman rhetoric in regard to his discussion on the elaboration of *chreia*. I am not here interested in the elaboration, but it is the principle of opposition that is important: "The logic of the principle proposed is confirmed if the inverse also is true. In this case, a bit of dialectical reasoning was suggested in order to test the validity of the opposition" (Mack 1990:45). This principle of opposition in Greco-Roman rhetoric is not far removed from the Jewish concept of stating everything twice in a contrasting, equivalent or antithetical form, as is the case with Biblical parallelism. Also not unlike Mark's two step progressions. I am not saying this is the case with this text but that it is not inconceivable that conceptually, the rhetoric was modeled after a fashion of both Greco-Roman and typically Jewish style.

Nonetheless, if the type of rhetoric that the author of Mark is using is of the kind referred to above, then it is a powerful insight for understanding, at least in part, what the author was doing with the text. So through this form, the readers are given a new paradigm through which to view the world. By identifying with both sub-cultural groups at the same time the rhetorical effect would have had an enormous impact amongst a "dyadic" first century audience. If this is a plausible explanation, then the primary impetus of the dialogue has less to do with demons and exorcism as it has to do with its form of persuasion, more particularly for the implied readers who, unlike the woman in the story, knows that the one who affirms this new culture is none less than the Messiah, the Son of God.

The presence of enthymeme, *chreiai*, and narrative structure all point to a complex literary structure put together for rhetorical effect. Supervene on this the conventions relating to biblical narrative as we have seen above; it is surprising that such a small text can evidence so many complex layers of structural activity. Add to this the further correspondences in the form of

chiasm and it is all but staggering. And yet, there has been no attempt to manipulate the data; it is self-evident and totally coherent.

4.4.2 The “Bread” metaphor

To fully comprehend the author’s use of the word “bread/crumbs” in Mark 7:24-31 the entire Gospel must be examined in order to understand the narrative significance for the implied readers. This examination has been triggered by the identification of chiasm in the subject text that marks for prominence the dialogue at its centre.

The dialogue at the centre exhibits a simple chiasm that marks certain keywords for further consideration. The significance of two of these words, *viz.* “children” (Jews) and “dogs” (Gentiles) does not appear to be disputed (Guelich 1989:386-387); but the reference to the word “bread” appears to have been given a number of explanations. For example, Perkins (1995:609) has linked the bread metaphor to Jesus’ “teaching”. Gundry (1993:373) gives this explanation “to take the bread of the children [i.e. the time and effort needed to teach my disciples] and cast it to the little dogs.”

I believe that the Gospel text itself must have within its compass, the answer to such an enquiry. More particularly, for the benefit of the implied readers. I do not purport to have exhausted this study but there are sufficient indicators in the Gospel text that appear to point to the “bread” as signifying Jesus himself. I must stress however that the examination is from the rather limited point of view of tracing, within the context of the Gospel, the significance of the word “bread” within its immediate and broader literary context. Nonetheless, the exercise is, to say the least, elucidating. Unfortunately, the full implications of this examination will have to be left open for further consideration at some other occasion because space does not permit of a full investigation.

This examination simply illustrates the tremendous impact that the identification of chiasm in a micro-text can have for the interpretation of the Gospel as a whole, or in part. This is because, in this case, it highlights for the attention of the implied audience the central dialogue as confirmed by other literary tests and therefore moves the implied audience away from miracles and exorcisms etc. and to focus on the significance of the exchange of dialogue. What follows appears to be a profound insight given to the implied audience by the author, not to mention the tremendous theological and interpretive impact I hope it will have on the study of the Gospel in the future.

The first step is to examine the whole Gospel text for the use of the word “bread” or a simile. The results I have tabulated in Figure 5 and the content will be discussed briefly thereafter. Please note that Figure 5 is an integral part of this discussion and therefore every reference in that illustration is pertinent to understanding the significance and import of the author’s use of this term “bread” within the context of the Gospel. The main point is to try and understand the text on its own terms. As I said above, the examination of the form, content and function of the subject text within its overall context is critical to an understanding of each. In other words, analyzing the text in isolation from the context of the entire Gospel genre is fatal; this is an example where an approach that limits itself only to the immediately preceding and following literary units will not do. The centre of chiasm marking the exchange in dialogue has highlighted the “catchwords” or “key terms” for us.

Please turn to the next page to see Figure 5 complete on one page.

Figure 5.

		<u>Implication</u>
Mk 2:26	David and his companions (as outsiders) eat of the consecrated Bread of the Presence. 1 Sm 21:3-6; Lev 24:5-9	<u>Outsiders partake</u>
Mk 6:8	Take no bread	<i>No bread</i>
Mk 6:37	<i>Disciples:</i> Must we buy bread?	<i>No bread</i>
Mk 6:38	Jesus: How many loaves do you have?	<i>Five ..</i>
Mk 6:43	<i>Jesus feeds</i> - Five loaves (two fish) (Jewish feeding) <i>Disciples witness abundance of bread</i>	<i>Twelve baskets left over</i>
Mk 6:52	Had not understood concerning the loaves Their hearts were hard	<u>No understanding</u>

Mk 7:27	Jesus: “Not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs;	Insider <u>no bread for you</u>
Mk 7:28	Woman: “but even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.”	Outsider <u>abundant bread</u>

Mk 7:29 For such a reply you may go,		<u>Outsider partakes</u>
Mk 8:4	<i>Disciples:</i> “where... can anyone get bread?”	<i>No bread</i>
Mk 8:5	Jesus: “How many loaves do you have?”	<i>Seven ..</i>
Mk 8:6-8	<i>Jesus feeds</i> – Seven loaves (a few small fish) <i>disciples witness abundance of bread</i>	<i>Seven baskets left over</i>
Mk 8:14	<i>Disciples:</i> “forgotten to bring bread, except ...”	One loaf of <i>bread</i>
Mk 8:16	<i>Disciples:</i> “we have no bread”	<i>no bread</i>
Mk 8:17,21	Jesus: “why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not understand? ”	<u>No understanding</u>

<u>Recapitulation</u>		
Mk 8:19	How many loaves left over?	Twelve
Mk 8:20	How many loaves left over?	Seven
Mk 8:21	Do you still not understand	Don’t understand
Mk 14:1	Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread	Sacrifice of Passover Lamb
Mk 14:20	“It is one of the Twelve ... who dips bread”	Betrayal (Insider is an outsider)

Mk 14:22	Jesus took the bread: “This is my body”	Identification
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After perusing Figure 5, I expect the first concern is to explain the very first use of the word “bread” in the Gospel. Jesus is the first person in Mark’s Gospel to use the word “bread” and this is significant. Jesus, in Mark 2:26, when he answers the Pharisees who question the disciples’ picking of grain on the Sabbath says:

Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for the priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions.

Jesus cites this story with approval and as a precedent and ground of justification for the conduct of the disciples who *prima facie*, appear to transgress the Sabbath laws. This allusion, at this stage of the narrative, is part of the author’s narrative rhetoric. It is an allusion that the character Jesus makes to an Old Testament story that has a much greater significance for the rhetoric of Mark’s narrative than simply a moral teaching which in turn appears to point to that well-known Jesus saying: “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mk 2:27) which, as has already been pointed out, is a simple chiasm. Jesus uses chiasm.

4.4.2.1 Old Testament

Let us briefly consider the text of 1 Sm 21:3-6. (The reference in Mark’s Gospel to the high priest as Abiathar instead of Ahimelech is not canvassed here as it has no direct bearing on this discussion).

Now then, what do you have on hand? Give me **five loaves of bread, or whatever you can find [left-overs/scraps?].**” But the priest answered David “**I don’t have any ordinary bread** on hand; however there is some **consecrated bread** here – provided the men have kept themselves from women.” David says that they have. Verse 6: “**So the priest gave him the consecrated bread**, since there was **no bread** there except the **Bread of the Presence** that had been removed from before the Lord and replaced by hot bread on the day it was taken away.

The direct significance of this story for Mark’s Gospel as a whole is as follows.

1. The reference to five loaves of bread or scraps.
2. The difference between ordinary bread and consecrated bread
3. That there was “no bread” but the consecrated bread.

4. That David and his men were not of the priestly class and therefore “outsiders”.
5. That the high priest allowed them, as “outsiders” to partake of the consecrated bread in violation of Lev 24:5-9
6. That Jesus cites this story with authority and it is the first reference in the Gospel to the use of the term “bread”

The terms here used and which appear to parallel terms used in Mark’s Gospel are highlighted. However, the full significance of this story can only be seen in the light of an understanding of the symbolism underlying the Bread of the Presence.

According to Flesher (1997 [Online]) the Bread of the Presence is situated in the Temple sanctuary. It consists of twelve loaves of bread (representing the twelve tribes of Israel) resting on a rectangular table and is located near to the Holy of Holies with only a veil or curtain separating the two. According to Lev. 24:5-9 these loaves symbolize the covenant between God and the Israelites. As soon as the bread enters the sanctuary it becomes holy, and when replaced and disposed of, it can only be given to the priests and they are to eat it within the Temple precinct (Lev 24:5-9).

However, in Mark 2:25-26, Jesus cites with apparent approval this departure from the Law in the interest of human welfare. Even though as we have seen, under the Levitical law, David and his companions were not permitted to partake of this bread at all. Only the Priests could. David and his men were outside the ranks of the priestly class. It is safe to say that the story character Jesus and the implied audience are aware of this reference. However, it appears to go over the heads of the disciples. The principle adduced here is that Jesus, in the Markan story appears to approve of the exception made by the high priest at that time and used it as a precedent and ground of justification for the disciples’ departure from the Sabbath laws. But more than this, there is an allusion to the consecrated bread that is very important.

4.4.2.2 The Gospel of Mark

We already know the story of the Syro-Phoenician woman. However the connection between the story of 1Sm 21:3-6 alluded to by Jesus and the underlying symbolism of the Bread of the Presence in that story is of great significance to an understanding of the use of the term “bread” in Mark’s Gospel as well as for understanding the story of the Syro-Phoenician woman. Note the correlation between 1 Sm 21:3-6 and Mk 2:23-26; 7:24-31.

<u>Text</u>	<u>Bread of the Presence</u>	<u>Insiders</u>	<u>Barrier</u>	<u>Scraps/Left-overs</u>	<u>Outsiders</u>
1 Sm 21:3-6	Bread of the Presence	Priests	Law	Five loaves	David & men
Mk 2:23-26	Jesus "bread"	Pharisees	Law	Plucking grain	Disciples
Mk 7:24-31	Jesus "bread"	Jews	Tradition	Crumbs	Dogs (Gentiles)
Mk14:22 Jesus breaks bread and says, "This is my body"					

What the author means in the texts referred to in Figure 5 and immediately above is made explicit for the benefit of the implied audience in Jesus' own words in Mk 14:22: "While they were eating, Jesus took the bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to the disciples saying 'This is my body.' "

At last the secret is out. In the Old Testament the Bread of the Presence symbolized the covenant between God and the Israelites. In the Gospel of Mark, the author has Jesus make the very first reference to "bread" in the Gospel that, I submit, is a marked reference to the "consecrated bread" (Mk 2:25-26). This veiled allusion to Jesus being the "consecrated bread" in the Gospel explains the constant linkage that the author makes between the story character Jesus and the "bread", the two feeding stories, and the fact that the disciples are completely unaware of its significance and therefore they misunderstand concerning the bread or the loaves (Mk 6:52). That Jesus is the bread is made explicit by him in Mk 14:22 as a symbol of the New Covenant.

So virtually right from the beginning of the Gospel, the author signifies to the implied audience that Jesus is the Bread of the Presence incarnate, and this is only revealed explicitly to the implied audience, and of course the obtuse disciples, when Jesus breaks the bread and says: "This is my body." Until this point it is hidden from every character in the Gospel. This is part of the "messianic secret" that is so much a part of the author's strategy. It is consistent with the view that Mark uses foreshadowing. What is implicit in the allusion in 1 Sm 21:3-6, is finally made explicit. If you miss the first reference to "bread" you have missed a major part of the rhetorical strategy of the author of Mark's Gospel. And the chiasm in Mark 7:24-31, points directly to it.

Between Mark 2:25-26 and Mark 14:22, that Jesus is the bread alluded to is recognized by Jesus himself, and the implied audience. Those who don't know that Jesus is the consecrated Bread of the Presence have not understood. "Let the reader understand" (Mk 13:14). For the implied audience comes to understand through the process of reading and examining the lives of the characters, more particularly the disposition of the disciples who at every turn witness that Jesus is the "bread" but constantly find that they have "no bread" or not enough bread, or they forget the bread. When Jesus says that they must take "no bread" for their journey in Mark 6:8 he does

not appear to go with them. When the implied audience is told in Mark 8:14 that the disciples had “forgotten to bring bread, except for the one loaf they had with them in the boat” Jesus was with them. When Jesus demonstrates that he is the bread, right before their very eyes, he takes the five loaves and feeds five thousand – and there are still 12 baskets of scraps left. When Jesus takes seven loaves and feeds the four thousand Gentiles, there are seven baskets of scraps left. The five loaves and the seven loaves that are used to feed the crowds of five thousand and four thousand respectively, add up to twelve. I do not want to press the significance of this here. In the meantime the disciples are unable to comprehend the link between Jesus and the fact that he is the bread – and not ordinary bread, but the Bread of the Presence incarnate. But the implied audience does know. But what of the Syro-Phoenician woman?

4.4.3 The Syro-Phoenician woman

The Syro-Phoenician woman, does not know what the implied audience knows. But somehow she demonstrates deep insight and understanding, more particularly because, as story character she probably:

- (1) does not know that Jesus is the Messiah, Son of God. Only the implied author and implied audience know this;
- (2) is unaware of the obtuseness of the disciples, Jesus’ inner circle;
- (3) knows nothing about the other events except insofar as she may have heard (See Mk 3:8; Mk 7:25);
- (4) as a rank outsider, a Greek woman from Syrian Phoenicia, she probably knows nothing about the Jewish scriptures, at least not the story of 1 Sm 21:3-6 and even if she did, she is not privy to the significance of it within the context of the Gospel.

The question is, what is the author *doing*? It has been established that the fundamental form of rhetoric employed by the author is the rhetoric of narrative. It seems clear from the foregoing that part of the narrative rhetoric that the author employs is to use the character of the Syro-Phoenician woman, as a literary foil. Let me explain.

Jesus says that, “It is not right ...” This is verbal irony because the implied audience knows that this statement is inconsistent with the portrayal of Jesus’ character up to this point in this story. For the story has already portrayed Jesus as healing at least one Gentile, namely the Gerasene demoniac in Greek territory. The story character (the woman) may have heard this (Mk 3:8; 7:25). This may be the reason why she responds in the present tense; “but even the dogs under

the table eat the children's crumbs". She carries through with the metaphor by referring to "dogs" and "crumbs".

The rhetorical effect of the impact of the exchange of dialogue on the implied audience is profound. This is because the entire sum total of negative prejudice that may at this stage of the story be in the mind of the implied audience is summarized succinctly in the Jesus saying. This rhetorical strategy appears to coincide with the discussion on rhetoric above. We may recall that Toulmin and Perelman and Kenneth Burke (as discussed above by Lawrie 1998) consider that in order to persuade an audience, in this case the implied audience, who incidentally is the only apparent witness to this event, it is necessary to create a basis of identification in terms of which the appeal first identifies with the implied audience in order to swing them into a new paradigm.

This new paradigm is facilitated by the response of the Syro-Phoenician woman that is then endorsed by Jesus, perhaps contrary to the expectations of the implied audience at this stage thereby bringing upon the implied audience a completely new understanding. The effect of this in the mind of the implied audience is to bring him/her round to God's perspective. To all intent and purpose God's perspective is the same as that of the implied author/narrator. We must bear in mind at this stage that the disciples are unreliable witnesses and this story adequately remedies any thought in the mind of the implied audience that the disciples are in any way to serve as exemplars. The only reliable guide is the narrator who presents God's perspective (Rhoads, Dewey & Michie 1999:45).

In the circumstances I would regard the character of the Syro-Phoenician woman as portrayed in this brief episode, as a boundary breaker and a reliable witness and because of her deep insight and understanding (perhaps even unwittingly, but certainly spiritually) of the significance of the crumbs, she too is rewarded and her child is healed.

Consistent with the above explanation there is one last but very important factor raised by Mack (1990:96) which may also have a bearing on why the author positioned this text at this point.

Mack says that a characteristic "of early Christian speech is a high polemical quotient, bifocal address (to two audiences at once) and the prevalence of argument by negative contrast through entire argumentations. This reflects the process of self definition and contrast of surrounding cultures of difference."

The difficulty that Mack identifies is that: "the cultivation of a highly polemical stance and discourse can eventually come home to shape the mentality of a social formation." We will recall

that up until Mark 7:24-31 the religious and civil authorities have been portrayed in an extremely negative light. The clear antagonism between the religious leaders and Jesus is clearly apparent. Having said this, it is very important to recall that in the course of forging a new religious group it would require the establishment of a new social location for initiates.

It is also important to remember that within the first century Mediterranean culture, people identified themselves with the values of the group. The implied audience would be looking to the text for those unique and distinctive attributes evident within the pages of the Gospel. If the implied audience for one moment thought that entering into a polemic with the other sub-cultures was the way to go, as the story Jesus appears to have done, this could serve as a negative exemplar for the implied audience and would be “essentially inauthentic as workable, social discourse”. Mack identifies the pronouncement stories as an example of this cultivation of an inauthentic social discourse and explains,

In them, the semblance of debate with those who disagree is elaborated over and over again. But the terms of the debate are always unfair and fictitious, weighted in advance in favor of the Christian’s champion who must win in every round. In these stories the outsider, usually the Pharisees, becomes a straw man. If winning an argument against a straw man were to become a favorite imagination, models for conversation with those of different persuasions would be woefully inadequate, and in-house Christian discourse would be in danger of falling into self-deceptions.

If Mack is correct and if this was a consideration that passed through the mind of the implied author then this story of the Syro-Phoenician woman clearly serves to interrupt any such negative pattern in such a way as to put paid to any such thought in the mind of the implied audience. This may be one reason that the Syro-Phoenician woman, as an extreme example of one who was across the divide enters into constructive engagement with Jesus.

Chapter 5

5.1 Conclusion

After an application of a multi-disciplinary approach I believe it is now safe to conclude that the literary structure of Mark 7:24-31 is a text characterised by both Greco-Roman rhetorical form and that typical Jewish form known as chiasm. That the precise location of this text and its function I believe indicate a clear rhetorical purpose for this text and that it serves that purpose admirably even though the full significance of it may have been lost to us for so many years. Identifying chiasm in the text had the effect of highlighting, *inter alia* and in particular the keywords “bread/crums” which until now, has not been satisfactorily explained by Biblical exegetes. That tracing this term has brought about a paradigm shift, the implications of which I hope will impact the studies of this Gospel in a new and exciting way. If the submissions contained in this study are critically accepted, I expect they will contribute significantly to and give a new and exciting impetus to the study of God’s Word; that Word which He has entrusted to us, His Church. May we be faithful in every endeavour to seek out His Truth and His Glory, and do so unashamedly. May the reader understand.

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