

**Zeitschrift:** Theologische Zeitschrift  
**Herausgeber:** Theologische Fakultät der Universität Basel  
**Band:** 12 (1956)  
**Heft:** 6

**Artikel:** The Injunctions to Silence in St. Mark's Gospel  
**Autor:** Burkill, T. Alec  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-878996>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 14.12.2025

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

## The Injunctions to Silence in St. Mark's Gospel.

St. Mark holds that the miracles of Jesus disclose his messianic status and thus bear witness to the fundamental truth of the apostolic creed. The importance which the evangelist attaches to evidence of this kind is shown by the liberal use he makes of wonder-stories in his narrative, and especially by the way in which he emphasises that the demons recognise the real nature of their conqueror. Nevertheless, in spite of their evidential value, neither the miracles themselves nor the confessions of the demons exercise any discernible influence upon the insight of the people among whom Jesus works. For, in St. Mark's representation, the time has not yet come for the open proclamation of the gospel of the Messiahship, and so the miracles of Jesus are set forth not as public manifestations of the truth, but as esoteric indications of a secret fact.

Accordingly, in the first main section of the gospel (1, 14-8, 26) which covers the greater part of the ministry, the knowledge of the demons stands in unmistakable contrast to the ignorance of men. Being endowed with supernatural insight, the demons are able to apprehend the secret which cannot yet be made known to flesh and blood. Thus in the synagogue at Capernaum the man with an unclean spirit cries out:—

“What have we to do with you, Jesus of Nazareth? You have come to destroy us. <sup>1</sup> I know <sup>2</sup> you who you are, the Holy One of God» (1, 24).

This passage should be compared with 5, 6 f. where the Gerasene demoniac, seeking Jesus from afar, runs and does obeisance to him and cries out with a loud voice:—

---

<sup>1</sup> This clause does not seem to be a question. Since the demon knows who Jesus really is, we may presume that it also knows the purpose of his coming.

<sup>2</sup> The reading οἶδαμεν (S, Origen, Eusebius, etc.) is probably due to a copyist who wished to bring the original form of the verb into agreement with the plural ἡμεῖς. The demon apparently speaks on behalf of the whole kingdom of demons.

"What have I to do with you, Jesus Son of God the Most High? I adjure you by God, do not torment me."

Each of these addresses occurs as an incident in a particular case of exorcism, and perhaps St. Mark is in each instance simply transmitting traditional material. It is true that the first-mentioned address appears in a passage (1, 21-28) which seems to show signs of having been subjected to editorial treatment; but vv. 23-26, 27 a, 27 c (?) may well be remnants of a miracle-story which was already current before St. Mark undertook his work.

Nevertheless, it is made apparent in two passages of a different character, 1, 32-34; 3, 7-12, that St. Mark himself is anxious to draw the reader's attention to the secret knowledge of the demons. In the first of these passages we are informed that 'the whole city' gathers round the door of Simon's house and that Jesus cures many of their ills and expels many demons; the last clause (v. 34 c) reads:—

"And he did not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him."<sup>3</sup>

In the second passage Jesus and his disciples retire to the seaside; a large multitude of people, drawn from widely separated areas, is present, and a little boat is made ready for use in case the thronging of the crowd should become unbearable (cp. 4, 1); Jesus heals many and the sick press upon him in their eagerness to receive health-giving power by touching him (cp. 5, 25; 6, 56). The passage concludes with the words:—

"And the unclean spirits when they beheld him fell down before him and cried, saying, You are the Son of God. And he charged them much that they should not make him manifest."

Accordingly, in 1, 32-34 and 3, 7-12, as in 6, 54-56, we are presented with summary descriptions of the activities of Jesus. The evangelist is apparently seeking to give some idea of the success of the healing-ministry as a whole and, with this end in view, he generalises from the particular incidents related in current stories. Admittedly, specific occasions are described; thus in

---

<sup>3</sup> Some ancient authorities (including B) have 'to be Christ' after 'they knew him'. These additional words, though justifiable exegetically, were probably introduced into the Markan text by a scribe who had the Lukan parallel in mind (Lk. 4, 41).

1, 32-34 it is the end of the sabbath and a crowd has gathered before Simon's house and in 3, 7-12 Jesus withdraws to the sea-shore and a multitude follows him. But in each case the particularities of the specific situation described subserve the writer's purpose of conveying a general impression and provide an appropriate setting for a summary statement. It seems, therefore, that the imperfect tenses in 1, 34 c and 3, 11 f. should be taken seriously and that we should translate as follows:—

“And he would not permit (that is, habitually) the demons to speak, because they knew him.”

“And the unclean spirits whenever they beheld him used to fall down before him and would cry, saying, You are the Son of God. But he would charge them much that they should not make him manifest.”

Two objections to this interpretation may be made on grounds of style. In the first place, it may be pointed out that *ὅταν* in St. Mark's gospel usually means ‘when’ (not ‘whenever’). Thus C. H. Turner observes<sup>4</sup> that in fourteen instances out of twenty repeated action is quite excluded, and he cites 9, 9; 13, 14; 14, 25 as containing good examples. In each of these three passages, however, the accompanying verb is in the subjunctive mood and the reference is to a future event—the resurrection of the Son of Man in 9, 9, the abomination of desolation in 13, 14, and the drinking of the fruit of the vine in the kingdom of God in 14, 25. On the other hand, apart from 3, 11, *ὅταν* does not occur in the gospel with a verb in the imperfect tense of the indicative mood, though in 11, 19 and in 11, 25 (reading *στήκετε*, not *στήκητε* [B] or *στήτε* [X]) it appears with an aorist indicative and with a present indicative respectively. Its meaning in 11, 19 may be, and in 11, 25 must be ‘whenever’. Hence one may reasonably suppose that its meaning is ‘whenever’ in 3, 11. In the second place, it may be objected that St. Mark uses imperfect and aorist tenses indifferently. Thus in 6, 54-56 there are eight finite verbs in the indicative mood, of which four are in the aorist and four in the imperfect tense; they occur as follows:—aorist (*περιέδραμον*), aorist (*ἤρξαντο*), imperfect (*ἤκουον*), imperfect (*εἰσεπορεύετο*), aorist (*ἐτίθεσαν*), imperfect (*παρεκάλουν*), aorist (*ἤψαντο*), imperfect

<sup>4</sup> C. H. Turner in *A New Commentary on Holy Scripture*, ed. by C. Gore and others, 3 (1929), p. 60.



(ἐσώζοντο). Nevertheless, it seems significant that in 1, 34 and in 3, 7-12 St. Mark should cease to put the main verbs in the aorist tense when he comes to refer to the injunctions to silence. Thus the verb of 1, 34 a (ἐθεράπευσεν) and the verb of 1, 34 b (ἐξέβαλεν) are in the aorist indicative, whereas the introductory verb of 1, 34 c (ἥφειεν) is in the imperfect indicative; and in 3, 7-12 the main verbs of vv. 7-10 are all in the aorist indicative (ἀνεχώρησεν—ἠκολούθησεν—ἦλθον—εἶπεν—ἐθεράπευσεν), whereas in 3, 11 f. the main verbs are all in the imperfect indicative (ἐθεώρουν—προσέπιπτον—ἔκραζον—ἐπετίμα). This parallelism, we suggest, is not fortuitous but rather is due to the design of the evangelist, who feels that the imperfect tense is more appropriate than the aorist in a statement whose general import he wishes to emphasise. For, while he does not employ the tenses with the precision of a writer in classical Greek, it would be rash to assume that the original distinction between the aorist and the imperfect in no wise affects his manner of writing. And even with respect to 6, 54-56, it is not impossible that he introduces the imperfects partly because he desires to use a particular situation as the basis for a characterisation of the success of the healing-ministry in general.

The demons, then, are aware of the real nature of Jesus, and in virtue of their knowledge they are able to perform a function in the first main section of the gospel which corresponds to that performed by the heavenly voice in the preface. They can give articulate expression to the truth and thus provide a mode of supernatural testimony to the reality of the Messiahship. Their confessions are made all the more impressive through being set on the background of man's failure to perceive the truth. On being confronted by Jesus the demons at once acknowledge his Messiahship, whereas the human beings who witness his words and works are moved only to amazement or to surprised questionings among themselves. The typical reaction of the public finds illustration in such passages as the following:—

“And they were all amazed insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him. And the report of him went out immediately everywhere into all the region of Galilee round about” (1, 27 f.).

"And he arose and immediately took up his bed and went out before them all, insomuch that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, We never saw the like of it!" (2, 12).

The response of the disciples betrays no deeper insight than that of the multitude, and is characterised in the following passages from the stories of the stilling of the storm and of the raising of the little girl:—

"And they feared exceedingly and said one to another, Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (4, 41).

"And immediately the little girl arose... And they were amazed immediately with great amazement" (5, 42).

Thus even a demonstration of the Master's power to restore the dead to life is not sufficient to bring even his most intimate disciples to an acknowledgement of the secret of his person.

This contrast between the knowledge of the demons and the ignorance of human beings is maintained until the occasion of Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi (8, 29). After this event, apart from a passing reference in 9, 20 to the agitation of a demon which indicates that it senses its conqueror, St. Mark makes no further mention of the knowledge of the demons. Henceforth, the contrast is rather between the disciples, who now enjoy divine<sup>5</sup> knowledge of their Master's Messiahship, and the uninitiated multitude who remain in a state of ignorance. Thus, from 8, 29 onwards, St. Mark comes to adopt a point of view which is more analogous to that of the fourth evangelist. For, in St. John's gospel, the demons do not appear at all; there is only one evil power, Satan or the prince of this world, and only the disciples confess that Jesus is the Messiah and they, as representatives of believers, stand in contrast to the Jews, the typical opponents of Jesus, who are blind to the truth.<sup>6</sup> It must be noticed, however, that the disciples in the second gospel are never so truly representative of the elect as they are in the fourth gospel. In St. Mark's view, the disciples to the end of the ministry

<sup>5</sup> Cp. 1 Cor. 12, 3 ('No man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit').

<sup>6</sup> Cp. Jn. 6, 68 f. (the confession of Simon Peter); Jn. 20, 28 (the confession of Thomas which, however, takes place in the presence of the *risen* Jesus). In Jn. 8, 44 it is stated that it is the will of the Jews to act according to the desires of their father, the devil, who has no truth in him.

are incapable of comprehending the essential significance of their Master's Messiahship.

But the manifest failure of men to recognise the truth is not to be understood as a frustration of the purpose of Jesus. On the contrary, according to St. Mark's interpretation, it is actually a fulfilment of that purpose. The Lord deliberately intends that men should not discover his divine status and accept him for what he really is—the Messiah, the Son of God. Hence he takes precautions to prevent the knowledge of the demons from being disseminated among the people to whom he ministers. He enjoins the demons to silence; and, similarly, immediately after Peter's confession, he imposes the same injunction to silence upon his disciples:—

“And he charged them that they should tell no man of him” (8, 30).

The charge is reiterated a week later (9, 2) while Jesus, accompanied by Peter, James and John, is descending the mountain on which the transfiguration has just taken place; but on this occasion it is indicated that they are to guard the secret only for a limited period of time:—

“And as they were coming down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, save when the Son of Man should have risen from the dead” (9, 9).

Thus it is apparent that, according to the evangelist's interpretation, it was the will of Jesus that the saving truth of his Messiahship should not be openly proclaimed to the world prior to his resurrection.

This conception of the messianic secret would follow as a natural consequence from St. Mark's fundamental conviction that the whole career of Jesus is a fulfilment of the saving purpose of God. On the one hand, he upholds the apostolic belief that Jesus is the Messiah whose coming was foretold in the scriptures and whose divine status was revealed in all his words and works. On the other hand, he knows as a matter of historical fact that Jesus was not recognised as the Messiah by his own nation, but was rejected and even handed over to the Gentiles to be crucified. Hence, by resorting to the conception of the secret St. Mark is able to maintain the apostolic belief in the Messiahship without denying the plain facts of the historical traditions.

Jesus, the Messiah of the church's gospel, was not accepted as such by his own people because his messianic nature was a divinely appointed secret, that is, something concealed from the multitude as a direct result of the Lord's deliberate intention. Thus, so far from being a contravention of the divine purpose, the non-acceptance of Jesus is seen to be a requirement of God's predetermined plan of salvation.

But it would be erroneous to suppose that St. Mark carries out the doctrine of the secret with perfect logical consistency. We notice, for example, that there is considerable strain on the secret in the story of the triumphal entry, 11, 7-10, while in 14, 62 Jesus even acknowledges before the sanhedrin that he is the Son of Man who is destined to appear at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven. Other passages which may be mentioned in this connection are:—2, 1-12 and 2, 23-28, where Jesus publicly refers to himself as the Son of Man; 10, 46-52, where blind Bartimaeus addresses Jesus as the Son of David; 12, 1-12, where the enemies of Jesus realise that the parable of the wicked husbandmen is spoken against them. In these passages the public are to a greater or less extent allowed to receive a revelation which, according to the requirement of secrecy, should be reserved for the chosen disciples. With respect to 14, 62, we may assume that Jesus is represented as making an open confession to his Messiahship partly because the evangelist wishes to show that it is the Jewish leaders who carry the burden of guilt for the crime of the crucifixion; they condemn Jesus not in ignorance, but with a full knowledge of his claims. The same kind of motive may also be involved in 12, 12. But, taken as a whole, the six passages we have mentioned suggest that a deeper tendency is at work. It is as though the evangelist's confidence in the eschatological manifestation of the Messiah were pressing for characterisation (with varying degrees of success) in his portrayal of the incarnate life. A similar impression is conveyed by the story of the transfiguration, although in this case the objective sphere of divine revelation is not permitted to extend beyond the circle of the elect. According to the doctrine of the secret, complete manifestation of the Messiah's heavenly glory belongs to the future, so that the lowliness and the sufferings of the Lord's earthly career are of

the nature of a prelude to his parousia in triumph as the Son of Man. And such, so it seems, is the point of view which St. Mark usually takes. But in the particular passages under consideration the revelation of the fact of the Messiahship is in some measure de-reserved, so that once again, though this time in a more general sense, it may be said that to a greater or less extent St. Mark comes to adopt a position which is more analogous to that of the fourth evangelist. For, according to St. John, the incarnation is not a concealment but an open revelation of the Messiah's true nature (to which, however, the enemies of Jesus are blind), and even the hour of the passion may be referred to in terms of exaltation or glorification.<sup>7</sup>

It appears, then, that in the first main section of St. Mark's gospel the demons, unlike human beings, are aware of the fact of the Messiahship and that Jesus enjoins the demons to silence in order to prevent their supernatural knowledge from being disseminated among the people to whom he ministers. That the evangelist understands 1, 24 f. in this fashion would seem to be shown by his comments in 1, 34 c and 3, 11 f., especially when these passages are considered in the light of 8, 30 and 9, 9. Accordingly, as Wrede maintained<sup>8</sup>, the idea of the secret in St. Mark's gospel is essentially a theological mode of representation, and hence it is not to be adjudged by the application of biographical standards. Thus the scene of 1, 23 ff. is set in the synagogue at Capernaum on a sabbath day; a congregation has apparently assembled for divine service; suddenly a man with an unclean spirit appears, and addressing Jesus cries out that he is the Holy One of God, whereupon Jesus utters a potent command; to the amazement of all who are present, the demon is at once expelled from the man. Now, if the question were raised, one would naturally say that the members of the congregation could hardly fail to hear the demon's address; for the possessed is in the synagogue and cries out aloud. Nevertheless, St. Mark

---

<sup>7</sup> Cp. Jn. 1, 14; 12, 23; 12, 32. Another group of passages which causes difficulty in relation to St. Mark's doctrine of the secret includes:—Mk. 1, 15 b; 4, 13; 4, 40; 7, 18; 8, 14-21 where the evangelist evidently expects the disciples or the public to make the same kind of response to Jesus as that which he himself makes.

<sup>8</sup> W. Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis* (1901), p. 66.

himself construes the injunction to silence in the sense of a command to secrecy, and therefore takes it for granted that the congregation does not hear what the demon says to Jesus. In other words, on the evangelist's interpretation the story is not convincing; the injunction to silence comes too late since the secret has already been divulged. This consideration, however, only serves to indicate that St. Mark does not see the situation in this perspective. His concern is not so much with the niceties of credible historical description as with the problem raised by the non-acceptance of Jesus. Confronted by this urgent theological problem, he seeks to make it plain to his readers that the demons are aware of Jesus' identity and that precautions are taken to prevent their knowledge from being noised abroad in human society. But since he is not a biographer in the modern meaning of the term, the question of the audibility of the demon's address in 1, 24 does not occur to him.

On the other hand, the fact that a congregation is present when the possessed cries out, affords some confirmation for our presumption that in 1, 23 ff. (as distinct from 1, 34 and 3, 11 f.) the evangelist is not creating a new narrative, but for the most part is transmitting traditional material derived from a *Novelle* already in circulation. Despite its brevity the passage certainly exemplifies several motifs which are characteristic of the category of exorcism-stories, as is shown in the following enumeration:—

(1) Vv. 23 f. The demon is disturbed on sensing its conqueror. Cp. Lucian: *Apokeruttomenos*, 6,—‘But if she sees any physician and only hears that he is one, she is especially incited against him...’ Also, Mk. 9, 20. In Acts 19, 16 the demon even provokes its victim to attack and overpower the would-be exorcists.

(2) Vv. 23 f. The demon speaks through the person it possesses. Cp. Lucian: *Philopseudes*, 16,—‘The patient himself is silent, but the demon answers in Greek or in the language of whatever foreign country he comes from...’ Philostratus: *Vita Ap.*, 3, 38,—‘The demon discovered himself (spoke out) using my child as an actor...’

(3) V. 24. The demon knows the power of the exorcist. Cp. *Altorientalische Texte* (ed. Gressmann), pp. 78 f.,—‘The evil spirit says to the Egyptian god who is brought to the patient, You come in peace, great god, you who destroy the evil spirits.’ See also R. Reitzenstein, *Hellenistische Wandererzählungen*, p. 124, and R. Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, p. 239.



(4) V. 24. The demon seeks to gain access to apotropaic power by using its opponent's name. Cp. Mk. 5, 7; Acts 16, 17. Cp. Josephus: *Ant.* 8, 2, 5 for the use of Solomon's name by the Jewish exorcist Eleazar; in Lucian: *Philopseudes*, 10 reference is made to the belief that cures can be effected through sacred names. Cp. also Mk. 9, 38; Acts 3, 6. Thus the device of naming the name could be employed in attack (by the exorcist) and in self-defence (by the demon).

(5) V. 25. The verb φιοῦν (lit. 'to muzzle') is a characteristic expression for binding (καταδεῖν) the demon. Cp. E. Rohde: *Psyche*, pp. 603 f. In Mk. 4, 39 (πεφίωσο) the reference seems to be to the binding of the demon of the storm. For a modern parallel cp. the words of Blumhardt (*Briefliche Äußerungen aus Bad Boll*)—'I never permit the demons to speak. I command them to be silent.' (cited by R. Otto: *The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man*, p. 349; cp. p. 346, n. 2).

(6) V. 25. Ἔξελεθε ἐξ αὐτοῦ. Cp. ἔξελεθε ἀπὸ τοῦ Δ-κοι-, line 3013, leaf 33, the great magical papyrus (Paris), reproduced by Deissmann: *Light from the Ancient East*, p. 251 (cp. p. 256, n. 1). Exactly the same formula as that in the papyrus occurs in Lk. 4, 35 (which has ἀπό instead of St. Mark's ἐκ). For the Hebrew equivalent, cp. S-B, vol. 1, p. 760 (S 3).

(7) V. 27. The spectators are amazed at the miracle. Cp. Mk. 2, 12; 5, 16; 7, 37; Philostratus: *Vita Ap.*, 4, 20,—'... they clapped their hands in wonder.' For the use of ἅπαντες in this connection, cp. Mk. 2, 12; Acts 9, 35; and for the use of ἐθαμβήθησαν, cp. Lk. 5, 9; Acts 3, 10 (θάμβος).

Thus it appears that the principal elements of 1, 23 ff. may be explained as characteristic features of a typical miracle-story which St. Mark reproduces in abbreviated form and with its introduction and conclusion adapted to the requirements of its context in the gospel. But in this case the address of the demon (v. 24) and the injunction to silence (v. 25) have a meaning within the framework of the story itself and quite independently of the evangelist's doctrine of the messianic secret. Hence we must now seek to determine that earlier meaning on the lines just indicated in our general survey of the narrative's typical motifs.

The parallels suggest that the injunction to silence in its original significance has nothing to do with the idea of concealing a mystery; the verb φιοῦν seems to have been commonly employed in incantations as a technical term for binding a demon and thus subduing it to the will of the exorcist. As an angry dog is rendered harmless when it is muzzled and can no

longer bark, so a demon's hostile power is broken when it is brought to silence. But though composed of quasi-technical expressions, Jesus' command is remarkable alike for its simplicity and its brevity. Unlike the demon, Jesus does not make an elaborate declaration; his supernatural power is such that he needs no sacred name, no mysterious formula, and no expression of special *gnosis*. He only commands that the demon should end its speech and leave its victim. He speaks as the plenipotentiary of God; and as he speaks, so it comes to pass. For the demon's cry in v. 26 does not signify disobedience to the injunction to silence. On the contrary, like the accompanying convulsive movements, it only serves to show that the demon is already reduced to a state of impotence; the creature's nefarious strength utterly fails before the invincible might of him whose coming is destined to seal the doom of Satan's kingdom. Jesus utters the authoritative word and the demon can do no more than make futile (if violent) agitations and force an inarticulate cry prior to taking its abrupt departure like a fugitive thief dispossessed of his spoils (cp. Mk. 9, 26).

With respect to the demon's address in v. 24, the parallels suggest that it would be originally intended not as a confession, but as a weapon of defence or instrument of apotropaic power. The unclean spirit is evidently disturbed on sensing the menace of impending disaster, and raises its voice to defend itself against its opponent who threatens to launch an attack. Fridrichsen, however, objected to an exegesis of this kind on the ground that the demon's utterance is too elaborate to be used as a mere instrument of self-defence.<sup>9</sup> He thinks that such a moment of supreme danger is hardly a fitting occasion for a prolix address. Hence, while not denying that the apotropaic motif may have been present in the first instance, he contends that the address as it now stands was elaborated (apparently before the story came into St. Mark's hands) for the apologetic purpose of protecting Jesus against the calumny of those who declared that he was in league with Beelzebul, the prince of the demons (cp. Mk. 3, 22 ff., Mt. 12, 24 ff./Lk. 11, 15 ff.). In their perversity some of the human enemies of Jesus allege that he is

---

<sup>9</sup> A. Fridrichsen, *Le problème du miracle* (1925), pp. 78 f.



an agent of Satan, but the unclean spirit knows that he is the Holy One of God and subverts the allegation by proclaiming the truth to the world. As Fridrichsen himself puts it:—

“Comment peut-on parler de l’alliance et du secours de Beelzeboul, quand les Esprits eux-mêmes appellent Jésus le Saint de Dieu?”<sup>10</sup>

Thus in v. 24 we are presented with a form of early Christian apologetics in which the falsity of the Beelzebul charge is exposed by the demons themselves. The spirit’s address is a confession designed to give proof of the divine character of the source whence Jesus derives the supernatural power to perform his miraculous deeds.

But while the unclean spirit undoubtedly gives expression to the truth concerning Jesus, there does not seem to be sufficient warrant for the suggestion that its confession in v. 24 was deliberately framed with a view to refuting the Beelzebul charge. The Beelzebul controversy is dealt with in Mk. 3, 22 ff. and in Mt. 12, 24 ff./Lk. 11, 15 ff., but in neither case is there any reference to the confessions of the demons. Moreover, the argument that the address of v. 24 is too prolix to be used by the demon as a mere instrument of self-defence against the impending onslaught of the exorcist, is far from convincing. The address includes but three concise clauses, and if these are read as though they were meant to have apotropaic significance, the two affirmations which follow on the opening question are seen to increase the effectiveness of the utterance as a defensive weapon. Neither assertion is superfluous. The demon knows the divine purpose of Jesus’ coming and the divine character of his status; and by giving full expression to its knowledge it seeks to ward off the threatened offensive of its dangerous opponent. The remainder of the story shows the utter futility of its defensive efforts and thus brings out the absolute nature of the authority of Jesus; his compulsive power is such that he can break down the strongest forms of demonic resistance by the utterance of the simplest commands.

That the whole address is a formula of defence and an integral part of the story in its original form, has been persuasively argued by Dr. Bauernfeind in his monograph on the

<sup>10</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 79.

utterances of the demons in St. Mark's gospel.<sup>11</sup> The opening question, so it appears, is not a free construction, but is formed after the analogy of the question given in 1 Kgs. 17, 18 (LXX, 3 Kgs.) where the widow of Zarephath would drive away the terrible man of God, Elijah, who, she thinks, has brought disaster upon her household:—

“What have I to do with you, man of God? You have come in to me to bring my offences to remembrance and to slay my son!”

Philo expressly refers to these words in an interesting passage<sup>12</sup>, and the way in which he utilises them suggests that the widow's utterance may have served as the model for a current apotropaic formula. The passage reads:—

“To return to the book of Kings. Every mind that is about to be widowed and bereft of evils says to the prophet, Man of God, you have come in to me to bring my iniquity and my sin to remembrance.”

As in Mk. 1, 24, the individual who speaks is under the influence of a supernatural power, though in this case the power is not demonic but divine. The mind is conscious of its self-identity and yet, as Philo goes on to explain in what follows the above quotation, it is in a state of God-sent frenzy. For the divine Logos, the interpreter and prophet of God, has just entered the soul and is bringing it to newness of life. But the divinely inspired process of spiritual regeneration induces the painful recollection of past sins and the mind seems to be inclined (if only temporarily) to resist the power of the indwelling Logos, which it addresses partly in terms of an utterance whose apotropaic significance was perhaps widely known.<sup>13</sup> If this is so, the words *τί ἐμοὶ καὶ*

<sup>11</sup> O. Bauernfeind, *Die Worte der Dämonen im Markusevangelium* (1927), pp. 3 ff., 29 ff., 68 f.

<sup>12</sup> Phil. *Immut.*, 29.

<sup>13</sup> This explanation differs from that proposed by Dr. Bauernfeind, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-10, who thinks that the mind greets the Logos with an address of welcome. He takes the view that the widow's utterance had become the scriptural prototype of a current apotropaic formula, but he proceeds to argue that when Philo took it over he radically modified its meaning. That is to say, in Philo's passage an instrument of self-defence has become an address of welcome; but Dr. Bauernfeind allows that the formula is not entirely deprived of its apotropaic significance, since the mind seeks to ward off the evil influence of its past sins. Such an explanation, however, seems to be unduly complicated. Dr. Bauernfeind's further suggestion, *ibid.*,

σοί (which lay special emphasis on the motif of self-defence) may have been omitted because the mind's desire to drive away its heavenly visitor is not firmly established; the wish is checked and finally overruled by the knowledge that the presence of the Logos is really something to be prized beyond all else.

It appears, then, that in the address of Mk. 1, 24 the demon attempts to overcome the menacing onslaught of the exorcist and may be resorting to a current apotropaic formula of scriptural derivation. The demons were masters of the magical arts<sup>14</sup> and, as we learn from such a story as the Q account of the temptations (Mt. 4, 1 ff./Lk. 4, 1 ff.), the prince of the demons was well versed in the scriptures! And the 'I know' clause with which the address is concluded may have originally belonged to the same circle of ideas as the formula apparently utilised in the earlier part of the address. At all events, statements of a similar character occur in the incantations of extant Hellenistic magical papyri. The following passages are taken from a magical papyrus of the fourth or fifth century, now in the British Museum:—<sup>15</sup>

"(I know) your name which was received in heaven, I know your forms..."

"I know your foreign names and your true name..."

"I know you, Hermes, who you are and whence you are..."

The resemblance of this last example to Mk. 1, 24 c is particularly striking. As we have already maintained, however, St. Mark himself construes the address of v. 24 in the sense of his idea of the messianic secret. In his interpretation, that is to say, what seems to have been originally intended as an apotropaic

---

p. 12, that the demon of Mk. 1, 24 may be identifying itself with the widow is not acceptable in view of the plurals ἡμῖν and ἡμᾶς which seem to indicate that it identifies itself with all the members of its kind. And there appears to be no real warrant for his more general suggestion that the self-identification of the demon in Mk. 1, 24 should be taken to correspond to the self-identification of Simon, the false prophet of Samaria, *ibid.*, pp. 1-3, 10-13 (cp. Acts 8, 9 ff., Origen: *C. Celsum*, 7, 9, and Jn. 8, 48). There would be a real analogy between the two cases only if the possessed of Mk. 1, 24 sought to gain power of compulsion over Jesus by identifying himself with the possessing demon!

<sup>14</sup> Cp. Bauernfeind, *ibid.*, pp. 12 f.

<sup>15</sup> No. 122; see Bauernfeind, *op. cit.*, pp. 14 f.; Reitzenstein, *Poimandres* (1904), p. 20.

utterance becomes a confession or mode of supernatural witness to the Messiahship; and the formula for binding the demon in v. 25 becomes an injunction to secrecy.<sup>16</sup>

Besides the injunctions to silence imposed upon the demons, there are, in the first main section of the gospel, four passages, namely, 1, 44; 5, 43; 7, 36; 8, 26, where human beings are enjoined to keep silence, in each instance concerning a miracle which Jesus has just performed. The injunction is disobeyed in 1, 45 (if the first word of the verse refers to the patient) and in 7, 36 (cp. 5, 20?). But this disobedience is not to be taken literally as an actual frustration of the purpose of Jesus. The idea is rather that the Lord's real nature necessarily expresses itself if only in the form of a miracle-worker's widespread fame. In St. Mark's interpretation, the miraculous deeds of Jesus are the needs not of an ordinary miracle-worker but of the Messiah himself; and in view of the fact that the miracles were not construed in this sense by the public that witnessed them, the evangelist maintains that it was part of the divine plan of salvation that they should not have been properly understood. It was a direct consequence of God's predetermined purpose that the people should not ap-

---

<sup>16</sup> Dr. Bauernfeind would object to this exegesis, *op. cit.*, esp. pp. 76 ff. (cp. pp. 56 ff. [re. Mk. 3, 11 f.] where, however, the discussion is somewhat discursive and obscure). If we understand him aright, Dr. Bauernfeind's principal contention in this connection is that St. Mark would not attach importance to the testimony of the demons since in the cosmological dualism of primitive Christianity the essential function of the demons is to wage total war against the kingdom which Jesus represents. They are not yet subdued to the will of God, and their hostility is so great that they could in no wise be brought into the service of the Messiah. The kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan are diametrically opposed to each other, and representatives of the latter kingdom would not be given a role in the gospel which might have been played by angels and which corresponds to the role assigned to the heavenly voice in 1, 11 and 9, 7. The charge that Jesus is aided by Beelzebul is vigorously opposed in 3, 22 ff. Also, the demons, being agents of Satan, are instruments of falsity and do not know the truth (cp. Jn. 8, 48). In Jas. 2, 19 f. the demons believe and are terrified, but their faith is valueless because it does not issue in works. But to interpret the demons' recognition of Jesus' true nature as a form of supernatural witness to the Messiahship, does not necessarily detract from their hostility or in any way incapacitate them for the waging of a total war. In knowing that Jesus comes as Messiah the demons know that the doom of the kingdom of Satan is near, yet their knowledge, so far from mitigating the violence of the con-

preciate the miracles of Jesus as manifestations of his messianic dignity; and hence the Lord deliberately takes precautions to prevent his miraculous works from disclosing his real status and enjoins silence upon the witnesses of his mighty deeds.

As Dibelius has pointed out<sup>17</sup>, it is important to distinguish the injunctions to silence of 5, 43; 7, 36 and 8, 26 from the secrecy which belongs to the miraculous processes described in the stories to which the injunctions are attached. Thus we learn from 5, 37 and 5, 40 that only the three most intimate disciples and the child's parents are allowed to witness the raising of the little girl; the injunction comes almost at the end of the story in v. 43 a:—

“And he charged them much that no one should know it.”

In the concluding clause (v. 43 b) Jesus requests that the little girl be given something to eat—a feature which was perhaps introduced by the evangelist who wished to supply additional evidence for the success of the miracle. Again, in the story of the healing of the deaf-mute, the medical operations are not permitted to begin before the patient has been taken aside from the multitude privately (7, 33). The story is rounded off by a notice which has all the appearance of being a generalising comment of the evangelist; it reads:—

“And he charged them (that is, presumably, the multitude), that they should tell no one; but the more he charged them, the more exceedingly they made it public. And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, He has done all things well; he causes even the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak” (7, 36 f.).

Finally, in the report concerning the blind man of Bethsaida, we are informed, 8, 23, that Jesus takes the patient by the hand

---

flict between the two kingdoms, apparently intensifies it by inciting the demons to make a final and supreme effort in desperation. Doubtless, agents of Satan are inherently evil and represent falsity. But to stress the point that even the demons are forced to testify to the truth in this particular case only sets in stronger light (a) the reality of the Messiahship and (b) the ignorance of men. The truth about Jesus has such compelling power that the demons, despite their evil nature, cannot but acknowledge it; yet men do not know it and (for the present) are not meant to know it. Jas. 2, 19 seems to presuppose that the demons know the truth of faith; the demons' utterances bear witness to the truth, but not their deeds!

<sup>17</sup> M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (1935), pp. 73, 94.

and restores his sight outside the village; the report ends with the injunction to silence in 8, 26:—

“And he sent him away to his home, saying, Tell it to no one in the village.”<sup>18</sup>

The secrecy which is attached to the miraculous processes in these three cases may be due to the influence of the notion that divine action should be concealed from the profane eyes of the public<sup>19</sup>; the same motif is exemplified in popular wonder-stories of widely separated cultures. On the other hand, in each of the three instances, the almost stereotyped injunction to silence does not seem to constitute an integral part of the preceding story (which has already reached a characteristic conclusion in the demonstration of the success of the miracle) and is evidently a supplementary notice appended by the evangelist himself. In the injunctions of 5, 43 and 7, 36, as in 8, 15 and 9, 9, the verb διαστέλλεσθαι is used; and in 8, 26 it appears that εἰς is employed with the meaning of ἐν, as in 1, 9; 2, 1 (reading εἰς οἶκον with D and other authorities), etc. The injunction is disobeyed in 7, 36 so that the miraculous deeds of Jesus are proclaimed seemingly against his will. One may perhaps be permitted to compare 1, 45 and 5, 20; but a surer parallel is to be found in 7, 24 b:—

“And he went into a house and desired no one to know it; and he could not be concealed.”

As we have already suggested, the idea is not that Jesus was actually frustrated, but that his real nature was such that he

<sup>18</sup> Turner (n. 4) supports this (k) reading, pp. 78, 727 f. He observes that St. Mark uses εἰς habitually for ‘in’ as well as ‘into’ (cp. 1, 9) and scholars were tempted to adapt his phrases to grammatical rule by inserting or substituting some part of the verb ‘come’ or ‘enter’ (B has done this, for instance, in 1, 21. 39; 8, 26), or else by changing εἰς (with acc.) to ἐν (with dat.) as B does in 2, 1. The Latin evidence does not help us to decide between two Greek prepositions since early translators rendered such details of the Greek into the idiom of their own language; but in 8, 26 the only texts to give one verb only, and that the right one—‘tell it to no one (into the village)’—are k and one other Old Latin ms.

<sup>19</sup> Cp. Mk. 9, 25 a (in 9, 29 the recipe against the deaf and dumb spirit is passed on esoterically); Acts 9, 40; 1 Kgs. 17, 19. For references to non-biblical stories, see R. Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* (1931), p. 239, n. 4. This secrecy is not involved in such stories as Mk. 1, 23 ff.; 2, 1 ff.; 3, 1 ff., etc.



could not escape winning a great reputation as a performer of miracles. Though it is not reported that the injunctions of 5, 43 and 8, 26 were disobeyed, it would be practically impossible to carry them out, for the little girl and the blind man could hardly be expected to spend the rest of their days in hiding! The difficulty is particularly acute in the case of the little girl; the funeral arrangements have been made, the mourners have already assembled in the house (5, 38 b) and are aware that the child is dead when Jesus enters the room where the corpse lies. But St. Mark does not consider the matter in this aspect, any more than he considers the historical difficulty caused by the audibility of the demon's confession in 1, 24.

It is probable that the injunction to silence of 1, 44 is also to be interpreted in the light of St. Mark's conception of the messianic secret; and it may be argued that the evangelist actually interpolated v. 43 and the words ὅρα μηδενὶ μηδὲν εἶπης, ἀλλὰ of v. 44 into the text of the story of the cleansing of the leper as he received it.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, one would have thought that the doctrine of the secret itself would hardly require the employment of such forceful language as that used in v. 43, for even if the ἐμβριμησάμενος is allowed to have the meaning 'having given strict orders' (cp. Mt. 9, 30), the ἐξέβαλεν seems to express an affective violence which accords well with the emotional tone already given to the story by the ὀργισθεῖς in v. 41. Thus it is not unlikely that v. 43 was included in the story before it came into St. Mark's hands and, if this is so, we may infer on *a priori* grounds, that the words ὅρα μηδενὶ μηδὲν εἶπης, ἀλλὰ were also included in the pre-Markan form of the story. For when orders are given in a mood of angry irritation, they usually contain a negative command, that is, a prohibition of the action (whether actual or possible) which occasions the speaker's irritation. Accordingly, we should assume that, with the exception of v. 45, St. Mark is transmitting the text of the story substantially in the form in which he found it, and hence that v. 43 and the interdiction of v. 44 (like the injunction to silence of 1, 25) have a significance which is independent of the evangelist's doctrine of the secret.

Seeing that no spectators are mentioned in the story, one

<sup>20</sup> Cp. Bultmann, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

could suggest that the original idea behind vv. 43-44 a is that the nature of the cure is a holy thing which must on no account be profaned by being disclosed to the public. But this story does not refer to any mysterious technique (such as that described in 7, 32 ff. or 8, 22 ff.) and no special medical formula or prescription (such as that of 9, 29) is given. An alternative possibility is that Jesus does not advertise his miraculous powers after the manner of the ordinary wonder-worker.<sup>21</sup> But neither this nor the preceding suggestion seems to offer a satisfactory explanation of the emotional agitation evinced in v. 43 which, in all probability, has a cause similar to that of the ὀργισθεῖς in v. 41.<sup>22</sup> Jesus is displeased with the leper because he has not

---

<sup>21</sup> Cp. Fridrichsen (n. 9), pp. 77 ff., where it is argued that the injunctions to silence in 1, 44; 5, 43; 7, 36; 8, 26 are not from St. Mark's hand, but were already present in the tradition and were meant to defend Jesus against the charge of being a magician in league with Beelzebul: Jesus was not a charlatan of the stamp of Lucian's Alexander—'Quand on le représentait comme un sorcier de grande envergure, on répondait du côté chrétien que toute réclame lui était étrangère. Au lieu de s'attacher ceux qu'il avait guéris, au lieu de les faire marcher devant son char triomphal, au lieu de faire publier sa gloire par eux, il les a jetés dehors et leur commandé sévèrement de se taire. C'est donc l'extrême opposé des pratiques du thaumaturge ordinaire' (*ibid.*, p. 81). It should be noticed, however, that in Mk. 3, 22 ff., while it is denied that Jesus is a miracle-worker who is in any sort of alliance with the prince of the demons, there is no mention of the common characteristics of miracle-workers, such as their enthusiasm for self-advertisement; and that in the parallel in Mt. 12, 15 ff. the reticence of Jesus is simply given a scriptural warrant by a citation (in v. 19) of Is. 42, 2 ('He shall not strive nor cry aloud; neither shall any one hear his voice in the streets'). Nevertheless, despite the indirect nature of the evidence, it is not impossible that both evangelists were to some extent influenced by a desire to bring out a contrast between Jesus and the ordinary thaumaturge. Attention ought also to be drawn in this connection to the fact that St. Mark's mode of representation seems partly to have been determined by a concern to show that Jesus was really innocent of all seditious messianic activity; although his words and works greatly impressed the public, so far from seeking to arouse excitement among the people, he did his utmost to check it (cp. R. H. Lightfoot: *The Gospel Message of St. Mark* [1950], pp. 37, 46).

<sup>22</sup> The evangelist is about to illustrate the conflict with the Jewish leaders (2, 1 ff.), and he may wish to make it plain at the outset that the conflict is really due not to any disrespect for the Mosaic law on the part of Jesus (cp. 7, 10-13; 12, 28-34), but to the evil nature of his opponents—the official custodians of the law.



complied with the provisions of the law of Moses; and the continued displeasure of v. 43 is perhaps occasioned by the thought that the man will further contravene the law by associating with healthy people and informing them of the cure (or cleansing) before he is officially pronounced clean by the competent authority. Hence Jesus is represented as brusquely casting the man forth and forbidding him to have any social intercourse prior to the pronouncement of the priest's verdict. The legal procedure will then be 'a testimony to them' in the double sense that it affords official proof of the reality or completeness of the cure and witnesses to Jesus' respect for the law. In St. Mark's interpretation, however, the injunction to silence of v. 44 may also serve as a theological explanation of the people's failure to understand the Lord's miraculous deeds as disclosures of his messianic status.

*Woodford Green, Essex, England.*

*T. Alec Burkill.*