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Unbelief, Lawlessness, and Satan: Viewing the Freer Logion as a Scribal Response to Open- Ended Eschatological Themes in Mark

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Abstract

The focus of my study is to demonstrate that major variants in the text of Early Christian Literature were purposely inserted into the text in light of theological controversies by scribes who represented a certain perspective on behalf of an Early Christian community. The text on which this paper is focused is the ending of the Gospel of Mark and the major textual variant known as the “Freer Logion.” I will argue that the Freer Logion was purposely inserted to conclude themes that were left open by the author of Mark and not addressed by the scribe who inserted the Longer Ending of Mark.¹

There seems to be a problem with the ending of the *Gospel According to Mark*.² When one studies the various manuscripts of Mark, one finds at least four different endings that are not similar; they are actually very different (Metzger 1975, 122). The earliest and best manuscripts of Mark show that the text ends at 16:8, which reads: “So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid” (Mk 16:8 NRSV).³ This ending has been disputed by some scholars, but it is generally the consensus that Mark originally ended with verse 8 or that the rest of the original ending was lost in transmission (Bartholomew and Boomershine 1981). The second known ending to Mark is an

¹ The following is a list of frequently abbreviated terms used in this paper.

- I Primary Texts, Manuscript Variations and English Translations
 - a FL: “Freer Logion”—an addition to Mark 16:14 found only in Codex Freerianus
 - b LE: “Longer Ending of Mark”—Mark 16:9-20
 - c LXX: The Septuagint—the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures
 - d NRSV: *New Revised Standard Edition Bible*
 - e W: Codex Freerianus
- II Other Abbreviations
 - a EDNT: *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*
 - b NIB: *New Interpreter’s Bible*
 - c NOAB: *New Oxford Annotated Bible*

Special thanks to my advisor and friend, Dr. Matthew Baldwin.

² The Gospel of Mark will only be italicized when written out as the full title, *The Gospel According to Mark*. All other references to Mark will not be italicized.

³ All translation of canonical biblical text comes from the *New Revised Standard Edition* unless otherwise noted.

expansion of verse 8, which dictates that the women told Peter and “those with him” what they had been told at the tomb of Jesus. Jesus then appears to commission the spreading of the “imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation” (Metzger 1975, 123). The third ending is the one most familiar to those who read the KJV translation of the Bible, which is based off the *Textus Receptus*, the Greek text cobbled together by sixteenth-century Dutch humanist scholar Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam (Metzger 1992, 98). This is the Longer Ending of Mark, verses 9-20, which, according to James Kelhoffer (2000), was written sometime in the second century CE.

However, the fourth ending has been neglected by most scholarship because it is clearly not written by the author of the majority of Mark nor the author of the *Longer Ending*. This ending, which is an expansion of the *Longer Ending*, is only preserved in one extant manuscript, the *Codex Freerianus*, which is represented by the letter “W” in the Nestle-Aland Apparatus, and is marked by the addition of a singular verse known as the Freer Logion. Codex W is dated to the late fourth to early fifth century CE (Metzger 1981, 82). Although a similar extension of the LE is noted by Saint Jerome in the fourth century CE, the Freer Logion is otherwise unparalleled (Metzger 1975, 124). This verse includes eschatological themes such as “unbelief (απιστια)” and “lawlessness (ανομια)” as products of an “age (αιων)” under the influence of “Satan (Σαταναν),” that are not treated in the “mission and miracle minded” context of the Longer Ending of Mark (Kelhoffer 2000, 46-47). The distinction between Mark and the Longer Ending is a curious one because the genre of Mark is seen as an “apocalyptic historical monograph,” that is, a history written with eschatological themes and purposes driving the narrative (Collins 1992, 27). The reason that this distinction is curious is that the LE is typically viewed as a completion for the main body of Mark; since Mark is so thoroughly-going apocalyptically minded, one would expect a treatment of the predominant eschatological themes. However, all that is present is two mentions of “unbelief” in Mk 16:14 that are quickly dismissed by the Risen Jesus after he scolds the disciples for their “unbelief” and a modified one in verse 16, where Jesus notes that the “one who refuses to believe will be condemned” in reference to those who refuse to believe in the gospel as preached by the Eleven he is commissioning to preach and perform miraculous deeds (Kelhoffer 2000, 101). Furthermore, Codex W is not known for unintentional variants within the text, but most variants are intentional theological and grammatical “improvements” made on the text by a scribe. The addition of the Freer Logion is no exception to this rule (Hurtado 1981, 68).

Therefore, considering the eschatology of Mark and scribal habits of Codex W, one must conclude that the Freer Logion was intentionally added into the Longer Ending to provide closure to the eschatological character of Satan as the articulator of themes found or inferred in the main body of *Mark* but not addressed in the Longer Ending as agents of Satan. The Freer Logion certainly serves purely mechanical purposes, such as softening the rough transition between verses 14 and 15 of the Longer Ending, but primarily serves as an extension and “completion” of the larger eschatological themes found in the *Gospel According to Mark*.

Short Literature Review

Very little convincing work has been done on the Freer Logion that does not treat it as a spurious “gnostic” connection added on by “heretics” in the eyes of the orthodox, which is discussed below. Thomas R. Shepherd (2009) has written an article on the usage of “narrative analysis” as a tool for dating and analyzing textual variants in Early Christian Literature. Shepherd uses the Freer Logion as a case study for this method but does not take his study far

enough in comparing it to other Early Christian Literature. The approach he takes is novel and is badly needed in the field, but his results are ultimately inconclusive. The methodology that he employs is what partially inspired the approach taken to the Freer Logion in this paper.

Clarence Russell Williams (1915) discusses the Freer Logion in his book, *The Appendices to the Gospel According to Mark*, but the questions he asks of the variant are not the ones that I think need to be asked. He ultimately concludes that it is not an authentic saying of the historical Jesus and that the response of the Risen Christ does belong with the excuse of the disciples in the Freer Logion. I do not find his remarks very helpful in the way of this research, but he does clarify the connection between the Freer Logion and Jerome, a point relevant to the dating of the FL Williams 1915, 419-432). Also, there is a book written in German on the Freer Logion that seems to be the general source to which some scholars point. There was no translation of the text available, and since I am not familiar enough with German to translate, the time would have not been well spent in my research on this resource (Gregory 1908).

Scholarship Concerning Early Christianities, Orthodoxy, and the Freer Logion

Another focus of examination for the Freer Logion is viewing this saying as an insertion of an early Christian voice that was heard but often answered briefly or dismissed offhand. If we are to trust the dating and location of Codex W, according to the paleography and other elements considered by those dating this manuscript, then it is to be placed in the fourth century CE in Egypt, where theological diversity was being strangled by the closing grasp of the “orthodox” upon the neck of other early Christianities and the texts that supported these competing religious traditions (Robinson 1990, 18-20). By heeding a postmodern critique of the Eusebian meta-narrative of Orthodox Christianity and continually listening to the voices of the “losers” in the struggle for “orthodoxy,” then one shows that this phenomenon is no different than any other human phenomenon. The history of the Christian church in antiquity was re-written by Eusebius and other church writers to make it appear that the form of Christianity that they promoted was the original and only valid form of Christianity—all other forms were “heresies” that arose after the proto-orthodox form of Christianity was already established. The fact that early proto-orthodox Christians rewrote history in order to make the other early Christianities seem heretical has been proven by many scholars. One example is found in the work of Gregory J. Riley, Professor of New Testament at Claremont School of Theology. In his work entitled *One Jesus, Many Christs: How Jesus Inspired Not One True Christianity but Many* (2000), he defends the thesis that Christ was understood by various early Christian communities as a Greco-Roman hero on a sliding scale of the amount of divine nature mixed with human nature. This scale ranged from the semi-divine hero, Heracles, who had human family but performed divine tasks, to the fully divine Dionysus, who only appeared in human forms to certain human beings for specific purposes (Riley 2000, 119-128). Thus, the idea is that the nature of Christ as fully human and fully divine was fashioned by the proto-orthodox Christian leaders as the received dominant view, but this was not the dominant view of Christ in the diversity of early Christianities.

Furthermore, Bart D. Ehrman, Professor of New Testament at University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, has argued that controversies over the understanding of the nature of Christ were present in various texts, canonical and extra-canonical, that were later changed by “orthodox” scribes to represent the orthodox understanding of Christ (Ehrman 2011, 2-6). This resulted in removal of the textual variants that represented other understandings of the nature of

Christ and the subsequent subjugation of other early Christianities that held those different understandings.

April D. DeConick, Professor of Biblical Studies at Rice University, has persuasively proven that the struggle for orthodoxy was not just waged outside of the boundaries of the texts that composed the New Testament canon. It was just as often a struggle that would use elements of a would-be canonical text, such as the *Gospel of Mark*, to prove that proto-orthodox Christianity was wrong and that another early Christianity, known as Sethian Gnosticism, was right in their understanding of the universe, anthropology, and the divine (DeConick 2007, 144-145).

As points of interest, some of the other early Christianities have been classified under the category of “Gnosticism,” which when carefully navigated can be seen to have heavily influenced orthodox Christianity itself. Edward J. Mally, a contributor to the *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, has written that the Freer Logion probably originated from “Gnostic circles,” and quickly dismisses the FL because he does not recognize it as an “orthodox” addition to the original Markan text (Mally 1968, 60). Therefore, the major ideological purpose of this paper is to give the Freer Logion a valid hearing as part of a larger conversation concerning eschatological questions raised in the *Gospel of Mark* but not answered by the evangelist himself, nor by the author of the Longer Ending of Mark. However, these issues concerned other early Christians as well, and the Freer Logion represents a possible answer to these questions and a solution to the issues at hand.

As mentioned above, the orthodox used and revised various differences in the texts to suit their various needs for theological purposes. Saint Jerome, best known for the Vulgate, records that part of the Freer Logion was preserved in some of the Greek manuscripts, which read after Mk 16:14, “At length Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were at the table; and he upbraided them for their lack of faith and hardness of heart, in that they did not believe those who had seen him after he had risen. And they began to apologize, saying: ‘This world of iniquity and unbelief is under Satan and does not allow the true virtue of God to be understood because of unclean spirits; therefore now reveal your justice’ ” (Metzger 1979, 182-183).

Jerome mentions the expanded version (LE plus the partial-Freer Logion) of the Longer Ending in a list of scriptures rebuking Pelagian views that humanity is originally without sin (*Dialogus contra Pelagianos* II 15). What is unique about the full Freer Logion found in Codex W is that the Risen Christ responds to the “apology” of the Eleven, thus addressing early Christian concerns that were put on their lips by the scribe who inserted the FL. The response by the Risen Christ in the Freer Logion is a crucial part of the discussion concerning the question or the request that the disciples make of the Risen Christ.

Manuscript Information on Codex W

Codex Freerianus is the manuscript in which the Freer Logion is found in the complete Greek and is the only known extant manuscript that contains the complete FL. The Codex is written on parchment and contains all four complete gospels with the exception of John 14:25-67 and Mark 15:13-38 (Metzger 1981, 82). The Codex is dated to the late fourth/early fifth century and the gospels, according to Metzger, are in the “so-called” Western order, meaning that they are ordered as follows: Matthew, John, Luke, and Mark (Metzger 1981, 82).⁴ Furthermore, the

⁴ The “traditional” order of the canonical gospels is Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

text also appears to be a patchwork of several other manuscripts because it has lost some sections of text over the years, and several pieces were added on to replace those lost sections, including a major section of the *Gospel According to John* (1:1–5:11), which was added around the seventh century CE (Metzger 1981, 82). The text contains textual variants, but by far the most interesting variant is the one this work concerns, the Freer Logion. The Freer Logion makes up lines 9-24 on the page it is located in the manuscript, and it reads in the Greek:

Κακεινοι απελογουντο [MS. –τέ] λεγοντες οτι ο | αιων ουτος
 Της ανομιας και της απιστιας | υπο τον σαταναν εστιν ο μη
 Εων τα υπο | των πν[ευμ]ατων ακαθαρτα την αληθειαν | του
 θ[εο]υ καταλαβεισθαι δυναμιω δια | τουτο αποκαλυψιν σου
 την δικαιοσυ | νην ηδη εκεινοι ελεγον τω Χ[ριστ]ω και ο |
 Χ[ριστο]ς εκεινοις προσελεγεν οτι πεπληρω | ται ο ορος των
 Ετων της εξοθσιας τοθ | σατανα αλλα εγγιζει αλλα δεινα
 (MS. δεινα) και υ | περ ων εγω αμαρτησαντων παρεδοθην εις
 θανατον ινα υποστρεψωσιν εις την | αληθειαν και μηκει
 αμαρτησωσιν | ινα την εν τω ουρανω πν[ευμα]τικεν και
 α | ψθαρτον της δικαιοσυνης δοξαν | κληπονομησωσιν. (in Metzger 1981, 82)

Another characteristic that should be noted about the Freer Logion is the way that it is actually appended to the LE in Codex W, meaning that the ending of Mark follows this formula: Mark 16:1-8+ 9-14 + the Freer Logion + 15b-20 (Collins 2007, 805). It is also noted by Collins that the beginning of verse 15, “and he said to them” (καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς) is omitted so that the Freer Logion can be inserted in between verse 14 and verse 15b (Collins 2007, 805).

In the Codex Freerianus, verse 14 in the Longer Ending of Mark is expanded with the Freer Logion, and the expanded section reads:

And they excused themselves, saying, “This age of lawlessness and unbelief is under Satan, who does not allow the truth and power of God to prevail over the unclean things of the spirits [*or*, does not allow what lies under the unclean spirits to understand the truth and power of God.] Therefore reveal your justice now”— thus they spoke to Christ. And Christ replied to them, “The term of years of Satan’s power has been fulfilled, but other terrible things draw near. And for those who have sinned I was delivered over to death, that they may return to the truth and sin no more, in order that they may inherit the spiritual and incorruptible glory of justice which is in heaven.” (in Metzger 1975, 124)

In this passage, the “age of lawlessness and unbelief” (ο αιων ουτος της ανομιας και της απιστιας) is attributed to the era being under the influence and power of “Satan” (σαταναν). The agents of Satan are mentioned twice in this saying and in this context, and Satan can be seen as the one causing the eleven disciples to not believe in the resurrection of Christ. Thus, the disciples (the first speaking party in the text) ask the Risen Christ to reveal his “righteousness or justice now” (δικαιοσυνην) in order to counteract the rule of Satan in that age. Therefore, it can be argued that the conflict between Satan and Jesus as the Christ in the larger narrative context of Mark is reflected in the Freer Logion when the Eleven ask the Risen Christ to reveal his “justice” to counteract the power (especially lawlessness) of Satan (Collins 2007, 809). The nature of

Satan in Mark is that of the opposing force to Jesus as the representative of God's Kingdom and is apparent throughout the larger context. If these themes are supported by the larger narrative context of Mark, then the Freer Logion is best seen as an attempt to give closure to the eschatological conflict left open-ended by the larger text and simply not addressed by the Longer Ending of Mark.

Satan in Mark

The first mention of Satan in Mark is found in the first chapter. After Jesus is baptized in the Jordan and "anointed" by the Spirit (το πνευμα), a "...voice from heaven..." declares Jesus as "...my Son, the Beloved..." (Mk 1:10-11). The "son of God" is a designation typical of the Israelite King or "the anointed one" of Israel (Psalm 2, 89, 2 Sam. 7:14).⁵ After Jesus's baptism, he is "immediately" (ευθως) driven or "cast out" (εκβαλλει) into the wilderness by the Spirit, presumably the one that descended upon him in verse 10, where he is tempted by "Satan."

Therefore, the immediate introduction of Satan into Mark is in direct response to Jesus being "divinely" recognized as the Christ, and this initiates immediate conflict with the son of God, Jesus. Knut Schäferdick (1971) writes that Jesus emerging from the "wilderness" after surviving the temptation is more than a simple event, it is "...a victory [over Satan] which proves who is stronger" (158). After Jesus emerges from the "wilderness," John the Baptizer is arrested and Jesus comes proclaiming "...the good news of God...saying, 'The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news'" (1:14-15). Thus, because Jesus did not submit to Satan, John the Baptist is arrested in the midst of the religio-political conflict writ large onto a cosmic scale in Mark. It is the noticeably obvious cosmic ideas in conflict such as Satan versus the anointing of Jesus by the Spirit and recognition as the "son of God," that denote the eschatological tones that are painted throughout Mark.⁶

The second and third mentions of Satan in Mark are found in chapter 3, when Jesus is being sought by his immediate family to restrain him (v. 21), and he is accused of exorcising demons out of people by the power of "Beelzebul...the ruler of demons" by the scribes from Jerusalem (v. 22). The unusual name, "Beelzebul," deserves an etymological explanation as to its relation to the word "Satan." M.R. Ryans (2003) mentions in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* that there is a discrepancy between the Latin and Syriac manuscripts of the Markan text (which render the word as "Beelzebub" when translated into English) but most Greek manuscripts have Beelzebul (200). Ryans (2003) connects the discrepancy to knowledge of an Aramaic word (*b^{er} el-d^{ab} b^{ab}ā*) for "accuser/adversary" derived from the Hebrew root "שטן" (stn) for "accuser/satan" and notes that this word has roots in the Akkadian phrase, *bēl dabābi*, which means "master of speech," especially in a court of legal proceedings (200).⁷ Because of the close etymological relationship between "Satan" and Ba'al," Richard A. Horsely (2001) notes that Beelzebul could mean "Lord of the (Divine) House" or "Ba'al, the Prince" which was "...originally a title of the

⁵ All English translations of the Bible are NRSV with a close eye on the Greek text of Codex W.

⁶ The work of Elaine Pagels on the role of Satan in the canonical gospels has had significant influence on my thoughts about cosmic conflict in Mark. See Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1996).

⁷ It is worth noting that Satan first appears in the book of *Job* in the Hebrew Scriptures as a master accuser of the character of Job. Also, one could call someone a "satan" and simply mean that person is an adversary without referencing the agent of Satan (See 1 Samuel 29:4). He is not yet personified as the opposition of God in *Job*; this is a later development in religious history that is chiefly present in the New Testament. See note 32.

Canaanite storm and fertility god (2 Kings 1:2), later demonized into the chief power of evil” (63). On all accounts, Beelzebul is synonymous with Satan in the text and the notes by Ryans and Horsely serve to illustrate that fact.

After this, it seems that Jesus rightly understands the Scribes’ accusation as parallel to being accused of working his deeds by the power of Satan, and he tells a parable about the divided house/kingdom and another about plundering a house, saying:

“How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered” (Mk 3:23b-27)

Horsley (2001) also notes that a kingdom was a larger scale of a household in the cultural context in which Mark was written, and both metaphors were seen as respective representatives of domain and power for both God and Satan (63). The proclamation of the “Kingdom of God” in Mark and Luke as well as the “Kingdom of Heaven” in Matthew is seen as one of the central tenets of Jesus’ message in the synoptic gospels.⁸ Therefore, one can see the inherent fallacy that Jesus points out in this parable: Satan cannot work against Satan and even if the scribes are right, his end has come. Regardless of the scribes’ accusation, Satan’s end is imminent because Jesus is casting out demons through the power of the Spirit of God (thus tying up the “strong man” and plundering his house), and the Kingdom of God has come near, leading to the defeat of the Kingdom of Satan.

The fourth mention of Satan in Mark is found in chapter four, and Jesus mentions Satan in the explanation of the parable of the sower (4:1-9) to his twelve closest disciples (4:10-20). This misunderstanding of Jesus’ parables and purpose is commonplace in Mark and has even given rise to the notion that Jesus was not understood by his intimate disciples until after his death.⁹ Regardless of ideas concerning the misunderstandings of Jesus’ disciples as used by the author of Mark, Jesus makes an explicit reference to Satan in Chapter 4 in his explanation of the parable, stating, ““The sower sows the word. These are the ones on the path where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them”” (4:14-15). A few verses earlier, Jesus rebukes them for not being able to understand his parables even though they have “...the secret of the Kingdom of God given to them...” (11b).

Perhaps this reference to the word being immediately taken away by Satan is the thorough misunderstanding of Jesus’ parables and ministry by the disciples; thus, Jesus has to constantly struggle with his disciples and Satan to get them to understand his message and purpose. Adela Collins (2007) makes reference to this parable in context of the Freer Logion, writing that since this “age of unbelief and lawlessness is under Satan,” then the disciples’ unbelief is caused by Satan, who in the parable snatches away the “word that has been sown in

⁸ Mark 1:14-15; Mt 4:12-17; Lk 4:14-15

⁹ See Wilhelm Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien. Zugleich ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Markusevangeliums*. (Gottiengen, 1901). This is the German title of Wrede’s work that made the Messianic Secret known in scholarly circles. Wrede stated that the Messianic Secret was a literary device used by Mark to show why Jesus was not well known as the Christ (messiah) until after his death.

them” (809). Thus, the connection between the Markan context in which Satan causes “unbelief” and the same theme in the Freer Logion is clearly understood in light of this explanation of the parable of the Sower.

The fifth and final direct mention of Satan in the main body of Mark is found in Chapter 8. This is an interesting and complex mention of Satan in Mark because it displays an intimate and multi-faceted type of relationship between Jesus and the Twelve, particularly Peter. In verse 27, Jesus asked his disciples about who people say he is and he receives various replies, which ironically represent various functions that he actually performs throughout his ministry (Collins 2007, 42). However, when Jesus asks who they say he is, Peter pipes up and states that he is the Messiah and then, in a manner typical of the Markan Jesus, he “sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him” (8:29-30). Then Jesus causes great controversy among the Twelve when he begins to teach about his death, stating, “...the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes and be killed and after three days rise again” (v. 31). After this, Peter takes Jesus aside in order to persuade him not to be killed and Jesus’s reply is verbally violent to Peter, stating, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things’ ” (8:33b). Jesus most likely identifies Peter with Satan in this passage because he feels that Peter is trying to stifle the ultimate plan of defeating Satan through Jesus’s death and resurrection as the Risen Christ as it is laid out in the Markan narrative.

After this final direct mention of Satan in Chapter 8, Jesus does not make another reference to his principal opponent in the rest of Mark. The open-endedness of the narrative regarding the principal opponent of Jesus in Mark can be construed as the following: the power and function of Satan is transferred over to his human antagonists¹⁰ so Jesus could be crucified in the ultimate attack against the Kingdom of God. In other words, Jesus’s rhetorical opponents become the mirror image of Jesus’s eschatological opponent in the last 8 chapters of Mark.¹¹

In the conclusion of this section, one can see the constant conflict between Satan and Jesus from the beginning of Mark. As soon as Jesus is recognized as the “anointed one” and son of God at his baptism, he is in direct conflict with the enemy of God and adversary of humanity, Satan. The nature of Satan is expressed in his ability to oppress and snatch away the “good news” from some people and even cause obtrusive unbelief in Jesus’s followers, especially Peter, the first human to correctly identify Jesus in the Markan narrative.¹² This is in keeping with the theological tendency of the character of Satan as the chief opponent of God as represented by Jesus in the main body of Mark and the Risen Christ in the Freer Logion.

¹⁰ Namely a few Jewish authorities and their Roman overlords because the opposition found in the Markan narrative is from said authorities and only the Roman government had the ability to administer capital punishment. It was a combination of both supernatural and human powers that resulted in Jesus’s death in Mark.

¹¹ Elaine Pagels argues that Jesus’s Jewish opponents are demonized throughout the entirety of the gospel of Mark in her monograph *The Origin of Satan*. While she argues this rather effectively, the figure of Satan and Satan’s agents regularly show up in Mark until chapter 8. After this the mention of Satan disappears in the main body of Mark. Therefore, I reserve emphasis for the demonization of the Jewish hierarchy until after chapter 8 of Mark.

¹² The demons readily identify Jesus as the “Holy One of God” in Mark, a title that insinuates that they know who Jesus really is, whereas the human actors in the horizontal plane of reality do not make this realization (Mark 1). Also, the demons identify Jesus as the “Son of God,” (Mark 3:11) a title that was directly tied up in the Jewish expectation of the Messiah (Psalm 2).

Unbelief in Mark

In the Longer Ending of Mark, the verse before the Freer Logion reads: “Later he [Christ] appeared to the Eleven themselves as they were sitting at the table; and he upbraided them for their lack of faith and stubbornness, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen” (Mk 16:14 NRSV). The phrase that is translated “lack of faith” in this passage is “*ἀπιστιαν*” in the Greek and can also be translated as “unbelief” in other circumstances. In most manuscripts that contain the LE, this verbal admonishment is followed by verse 15 in which Jesus tells the disciples to go out and proclaim the good news (*εὐαγγέλιον*) to the world and continues on with his commission as if the Eleven did not defend themselves or provide an excuse for their “unbelief.” The scribe of Codex W obviously found this intolerable and inserted the Freer Logion, with the first two lines reading: “And they excused themselves, saying: ‘This age of lawlessness and unbelief (*ἀπιστια*) is under Satan, who does not allow the truth and power of God to prevail over the unclean things of the spirits’.” Therefore, in defense of themselves, the eleven disciples state that their unbelief (*ἀπιστια*) was caused by living in an age under Satan and that is why they did not believe Mary Magdalene’s account of the “risen Christ” in verse 11 of the LE. Therefore, “unbelief” seems to be a tool of the opponent of the divine in the Freer Logion, and this phrase serves as a pivot-point for action in Mark’s narrative nearly every time it appears in the main body of the text.

In the New Testament, there are 11 mentions of *ἀπιστια* (unbelief) in various sections. This stands in stark contrast to the 243 mentions of belief (*πιστις*) in the New Testament (Barth 1993, 121). A brief survey of the usage of this term in the New Testament reveals that *ἀπιστια* has two primary meanings: unfaithfulness and lack of belief (Barth 1993, 122). Therefore, based on Gerhard Barth’s (1993) synopsis of the usage of *ἀπιστια* in the NT, it represents a cognitive and emotional condition caused by doubting the good news as manifested in Christ on one hand and not being able to believe or trust the authority of the divine manifested in Christ on the other.

The first appearance of “unbelief” in Mark is in Chapter 6 and is in the context of Jesus arriving in his hometown, Nazareth. In this passage, Jesus begins to teach in the local gathering place (synagogue) on the Sabbath and his listeners were “amazed” or “astounded” (*ἐξεπλησσοντο*) saying, “Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us? And they took offense at him” (6:2-3). In this passage, one can perceive the crowd gathered at the synagogue listening to Jesus teach, questioning the source of his authority because they knew him as the local carpenter (*τεκτον*) and knew his family. PHEME PERKINS (1995) notes, “his status as a local craftsman would have been considerably lower than that of a member of the educated class who could devote himself to learning the Law” (592). For the same reason, they were offended by Jesus because first century Mediterranean “villagers took offense at those who attempt to elevate their position above that to which they are entitled by birth” (Perkins 1995, 592). Jesus replied to his townspeople, saying, “‘A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his house’ ” (Mk 6:4), which is a common proverb expanded by the Markan portrayal of Jesus (Collins 2007, 290). However, the next two verses are pivotal in the eschatological battle between Jesus the Christ and Satan. These verses read, “And he was not able to do any powerful work there, except he laid his hands on a few who were

ill and healed them. And he marveled at their unbelief” (Mk 6:5-6a).¹³ These verses are crucial because it seems that Jesus’s ability to perform “powerful works” is literally bound or restrained by the lack of belief or better yet, by the strong presence of “unbelief” (απιστια) in his hometown. If Jesus’s hands are bound by the presence of unbelief, then Jesus’s opponent, Satan, seems to have a strong instrument in temporarily restraining Jesus’s ability to do “powerful works” in his ministry.¹⁴

Collins (2007) notes that while Mark literally writes that Jesus was unable to “do many powerful works there,” Matthew changes this statement to read “And he did not do many powerful works there,” and as she astutely notes, “Luke omits the statement entirely” (292). It seems that the stifling nature of this situation written by Mark was too much of a theological embarrassment for the later synoptic evangelists who effectively “sanitized” the text by editing or removing the verse from the narrative. Perkins (1995) notes that even Mark “moderates” the situation by stating that Jesus’ power cannot be completely restrained by unbelief, adding the phrase “except that he laid his hands on a few who were ill and healed them” (592). This seems to be the Markan eschatological expectation that God’s power working through Jesus is more powerful than any tool formed against him by Satan, and even if it temporarily limits the power manifested in Jesus, it cannot completely stop it.

This motif is effectively reflected in the Freer Logion when the Risen Christ states that the “time of Satan’s power is fulfilled” and powerfully dismisses the disciples’ temporary “unbelief” with his presence, encouraging them to pursue the “...incorruptible glory of justice (δικαιοσυνης)¹⁵ which is in heaven.” The insertion of the FL allows the scribe to have the Risen Christ encourage others to pursue the goal of “justice” that was established in his vindication inasmuch as it acts as a weapon against “unbelief.” As will be discussed later on, this “justice” also counteracts the power of “lawlessness,” as it is an eschatological agent that divided early Christian communities.

In the second and final mention of “unbelief” in the main body of Mark, the theme is found in context of Jesus’s healing (or exorcising a spirit out of) a man’s son (Mk 9:14-29). The organizational context of this exorcism is that it comes right after Jesus’s transfiguration on a mountain before Peter, James, and John (9:2-8) and is followed by Jesus’s second teaching about the death and resurrection of the Son of Man as well as his teaching about who will be the greatest in the Kingdom of God (9:30-37). In the transfiguration experience, the voice of God reconfirms Jesus’s status as the Messiah and the “son of God,” as well as emphasizes the authority of his words and deeds, stating, “ ‘This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!’ ” (Mark 9:7b). In this instance, Jesus’s authority is reconfirmed before he descends the mountain to face his earthly opponents (the Scribes), a boy possessed by a demon (the demon serving as an agent of Beelzebul/Satan), and the result of Jesus’s disciples not being able to cast the demon out of the boy (unbelief and faithlessness) in the passage at hand.

When Jesus arrived at the scene, he saw a “great crowd” surrounding his disciples and the scribes arguing with each other, but when the crowd noticed Jesus, they were “immediately

¹³ This is the translation Dr. Collins provides in her *Hermenia* commentary on Mark. I utilized it in lieu of the NRSV because Collins seems to capture the essence of the situation better than the NRSV.

¹⁴ This reference will become clearer in the next mention of *apistia* in Mark.

¹⁵ This word gets traditionally translated as “righteousness,” but this traditional translation has lost its meaning over time, so I substituted “justice” for “righteousness” to emphasize the meaning in the passage to the twenty-first century reader.

overcome by awe and they ran forward to greet him” (9:14-15). Jesus inquires about the argument and is presented with a man whose son demonstrates signs of epilepsy, but who he is convinced is possessed by a demon. When he asked Jesus’s disciples to cast it out, they could not do so (9:17-18) (Collins 2007, 435-436).¹⁶ After learning this, Jesus “answers” the crowd, stating “ ‘You faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him to me’ ” (9:19). Jesus’s reply to this situation is read as out of place if it is taken as directed to his disciples, but is most likely not directed to his disciples, given the context of the situation. The context of the situation finds Jesus surrounded by scribes who are constantly picking at Jesus’s teachings by asking him trick questions and questioning his authority, a fickle crowd who can easily sway onto Jesus’s side or his opponents’ side, given his experience with an un-supportive, unbelieving crowd in his hometown in Chapter 6.¹⁷

Because of these factors, Perkins (1995) states that he has “...previously condemned his generation as wicked and adulterous (8:38), and his own healing activity was restricted when those from his hometown did not believe in him (6:5-6)” (634). After Jesus replies to the lack of belief from the crowd (possibly instigated by the scribes challenging the power of Jesus based on his own disciples’ failure to heal the boy), Jesus has a lengthy conversation with the father of the boy who is showing the symptoms of epilepsy caused by demon.¹⁸ In this conversation, the man begs Jesus, saying “if you are able to do anything, have pity on us and help us” (9:22b). Jesus’s reply shocks the man, saying “ ‘If you are able! —All things can be done for the one who believes’ ” (9:23). In this situation, when the man begs Jesus to heal his son, Jesus empowers the man and states that this man’s trust (πιστις) is what will make his son whole again.¹⁹

At this point in the text of Codex W, there is a significant change in the reading of the text: the typical reading for this passage is “εὐθὺς κράξας ὁ πατὴρ τοῦ παιδίου ελεγεν” which translates, “Immediately, the father of the child cried out” (Mk 9:24). However, the scribe of Codex W makes two changes in this text, changing “πατὴρ τοῦ παιδίου” (the father of the child) to “τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ παιδαρίου” (the spirit of the older child) (Hurtado 1981, 78). This is a significant change in the text because instead of the father of the boy crying out, it is the spirit of the older boy crying out, and in this particular situation, the age of the boy is significant. Collins (2007) writes that the ancient physician Hippocrates notes that if this type of disease/possession did not cure itself at the onset of puberty, then it was incurable (438). Additionally, Collins (2007) reports that another ancient physician, Galen, writes that after this point, the boy’s condition would become progressively worse (438). The usage of παιδαρίου (older boy) instead of παιδίου (child) indicates that the boy has reached or is very close to puberty, thus the situation is particularly acute in that the boy needs to be healed now or he cannot be helped. Also, when Jesus inquires about how long the child has been showing these symptoms, the father replies “from childhood,” which makes it seem that the boy most likely has reached puberty (9:21b) (Collins 2007, 438). In desperation after watching Jesus’s disciples fail to heal his son, this man

¹⁶ Collins notes that other ancient Greek treatises such as ones attributed to Hippocrates write extensively about the symptoms of epilepsy, and these symptoms described are the ones demonstrated by the boy in Mark 9.

¹⁷ Keep in mind that after chapter 8, Jesus’s opponents are particularly synonymous with Satan in this eschatological battle between God and Satan for the freedom of Humanity.

¹⁸ The presence of the scribes indicates the presence of the opposition and alludes to the incident in chapter 3 where Jesus’s power to exorcise demons is attributed to Beelzebul (3:22-23).

¹⁹ Collins, “Mark,” *Hermeneia*, 438.

cries, “I believe! Help my unbelief! (ἀπιστία)” (9:24 NRSV).²⁰ This man’s implicit trust in Jesus is in staunch contrast to the unbelief/lack of trust that Jesus has encountered repeatedly since Chapter 6 in Mark’s narrative, and Collins (2007) writes that the climax of the story is the father’s cry, but “there is ambivalence between his desire to trust and to step beyond the boundaries of human limitations...and his realization that he cannot do so without divine assistance [as well]” (438). The man empowers Jesus with his trust just as much as Jesus inspires the father to trust in him to be able to help his son. After this dramatic exchange between Jesus and the man, Jesus rebuked the “unclean spirit” and told the spirit to “never enter him again” (9:25). After this exchange and much physical struggle, “it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, ‘He is dead’ ” (9:26b). When the crowd remarks that the boy is dead, this displays their “tendency to disbelie[ve]” in Jesus’ authority. Jesus proves them wrong again by taking the boy’s hand, lifting him up, and the crowd saw that “he was able to stand” (9:27) (Perkins 1995, 634). Jesus’s authority in this situation overcomes the unbelief in the crowd, and according to this story, it only takes the faith of one man to empower Jesus to heal. Thus, “unbelief” as a tool of Satan is repeatedly defeated by the presence of Jesus as the Christ and the trusting few who believe in him as the representative of God. He cannot be held back—even by death—from appearing and inspiring belief and miracles in those who see Him, such as he does for the Eleven in the Freer Logion.

Lawlessness in Mark and Early Christian Literature

The last theme to be addressed in this paper is “lawlessness.” The term “lawlessness” (□νομία) occurs 15 times in the New Testament (Limbeck 1993, 106). The related forms of □νομος (lawless/unlawfulness) and □νόμως (not possessing the law) are utilized 9 times and 2 times respectively (Limbeck 1993, 106). The use of □νομία is usually apocalyptic or eschatological, especially in the context of 1st John, 2nd Thessalonians, Matthew 24, and 2nd Corinthians. The other usage of □νομία is in the context of the justification of humanity through Jesus Christ, and in these instances, an inferred juxtaposition with the “Just One” (□ δίκαιος) is usually in the context of the passage (Rom 4:7; Titus 2:14; Heb 10:17).

The only usage of □νομος in Mark is found in 15:28 and is agreed upon by most scholars to be a later insertion to the text that was extracted from Luke 22:37 (Limbeck 1993, 106).²¹ Regardless of this variant in the text, the entire section (15:13-38) containing this verse is absent from the Markan text of Codex W; therefore, it would not be relevant to a discussion of “□νομία” in Mark. However, the use of this word in Luke is relevant to the larger meaning of “□νομία” because it is a direct quotation from the LXX in Luke 22:37. The verse that is quoted in Luke 22:37 is Isaiah 53:12, the last verse in the “suffering servant” song found in Isaiah (Is

²⁰ In Codex W, as noted before, it reads the “spirit of the older child cried out,” which in this situation insinuates that the scribe of W thought it was more appropriate for the actual boy to cry out to be helped in this desperate situation. The context of “τό πνεύμα τοῦ παιδαρίου” (9:24) in contrast to the “πνεύματι τό ἀκαθάρτ□ (the unclean spirit)” (9:25) that inhabits the boy leads one to conclude that it was the actual boy who cried out and not the “unclean spirit” who does so. Also, the context of the “spirit makes him unable to speak” (9:18) makes the whole reading slightly skewed but since Jesus addresses the “unclean spirit” as “mute and deaf” in verse 25, it allows the reader to think that the “unclean spirit” could not speak anyhow. Regardless of the reading, a human was trusting Jesus to help him do what was thought to be impossible.

²¹ Also see Metzger 1975, 119. Metzger notes that it is a variant in predominantly later manuscripts and lists several other factors against the inclusion of this variant in the Markan text.

52:13-53:12) (Blenkinsopp 2001, 1052). The majority of this passage was interpreted by some early Christians (including the author of Luke) as applicable to the suffering and death of Jesus as the Christ as absolution of God's wrath against the sins of humanity. Also, the juxtaposition of the "righteous [just] one" with the "lawless [ones]" is found within this text: "The righteous one...shall make many righteous and he shall bear their iniquities... because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors" (Is 53:11b; 12b NRSV).²² Thus, the early Christian motif of juxtaposing the "righteous [just] one" with the "lawless" in terms of justification seems to be borrowed from Isaiah and possibly other Hebrew scriptures.

□νομία is utilized four times in the Gospel of Matthew (Limbeck 1993, 106), and one occurrence is set in the discussion of the "Little Apocalypse" (Matthew 24) that the evangelist of Matthew copied and expanded from Mark 13 (Beasley-Murray 1992, 1081). In his eschatological discourse, Jesus states "And because of the increase of lawlessness (□νομία), the love of many will grow cold" (Mt 24:12). Limbeck (1993) explains this proportional inverse of the increase of lawlessness and the decrease of love for each other in humans by explaining that the synoptic Jesus taught the essence of the "law and prophets" (νόμος καί ο□ προφήται) is to "love God and one's neighbor" (Mt 22:34-40) and that a negation of the essence of the law (νόμος), which "law-lessness" (α-νομία) clearly is, would have corresponding results (106). Moreover, an increase in □νομία would be devastating to most early Christian communities because the life-blood of what allowed their community to survive and thrive was the sharing of goods as needed and their "love for each other" in the early Christian gatherings (Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-35; John 13:34-35). Thus, □νομία is certainly an eschatological opponent that would have to be restrained for the current time but could only take full effect near to the Parousia of the Risen Jesus so it could be destroyed in his return (2 Thessalonians 2:7).

Another mention of □νομία in Matthew is in reference to the Pharisees and their staunch observance of the smallest financial demands of the law (νόμος), but neglect for the essence of the law (justice, mercy, and faith) (Matthew 23:23); so, for the aforementioned reasons, the Pharisees " 'on the outside look righteous to others, but inside...are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness' " (Matthew 23:28) (Limbeck 1993, 106). The idea that "hypocrisy and lawlessness" belong together is carried throughout the rest of early Christian literature as well and receives special emphasis in canonical and extra-canonical literature alike (1 John; *The Shepherd of Hermas*). Hence, the usage of "lawlessness" as an eschatological theme of opposition to God marked by hypocrisy is combined with the lack of love for one's fellow neighbor in order to make a formidable enemy that has to be destroyed by divine power manifested in Christ. As will be demonstrated in other early Christian literature, the Cosmic Christ will be seen as the returning "righteous one" who is expected to destroy all apocalyptic enemies (especially lawlessness) that oppose God and oppress humanity.

In 2nd Thessalonians 2:1-12, there are several distinct references to the "man of lawlessness" (□ □νθρωπος τ□ς □νομίας), the "mystery of lawlessness" (μυστήριον τ□ς □νομίας), and the "lawless" one (□ □νομος). The subject of this passage is the Parousia of Christ and what must come to pass before the much-expected return of Christ happens. According to the author of 2nd Thessalonians, the arrival of the "man of lawlessness" (2

²² The NRSV is translating from the Hebrew text of Isaiah, which reads "and [he] was numbered with the transgressors" in the Hebrew. The Greek text of the LXX reads, "And he was counted among the lawless" and makes the juxtaposition clearer.

Thessalonians 2:3;8) will precede the return of Christ because Christ has to destroy this enigmatic individual in his second-coming (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

There are several problems with the passage at hand, the most prevalent of which is the division of the text. Abraham Smith (2000) writes that the text is divided into two sections: one which “focuses on the coming of a mysterious figure called ‘the lawless one’²³ (vv. 3-7)” and another which “renders the source(s) and consequences of the lawless one’s arrival (vv. 8-12)” (757). In other words, the first section of this passage dictates that Jesus will not return to declare himself as God until “the rebellion [*i.e.*, apostasy] comes first” (□ □ποστασία πρ□τον) and the “man of lawlessness is revealed” (□ποκαλυφθ□ □ □νθρωπος τ□ς □νομίας) (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). The passage is expanded; it states that “mystery of lawlessness is already at work,” but “only until the one who restrains it is removed” (2 Thessalonians 2:7). Once all of this is in order and the “man of lawlessness” has been revealed (□ποκαλυφθήσεται), “the breath of the Lord” will destroy him and the second coming of Jesus will “reduce the effective work of the lawless one” (1 Thessalonians 2:8) (Smith 2000, 759). The most relevant part of the second section of this passage is verses 9-12 because they detail that the “coming of the lawless one is apparent in the working of Satan, who uses all power, signs, lying wonders, and every kind of wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10). The fact that this passage states that the “coming of the lawless one” is apparent in the “working of Satan” is important because it directly referred to in the Freer Logion. The FL states that one of the main characteristics of the “age under Satan” is “lawlessness.” Also, to add to the contrast between “justice/righteousness” and “lawlessness,” the passage states in the end that those “who have not believed the truth but took pleasure in unrighteousness (□δικί□) will be condemned” (2:12). This means that those who delight in the works opposite of “justice/righteousness” will be destroyed and face the same fate as the “man of lawlessness.” Thus, the apocalyptic passage in 2nd Thessalonians 2:1-12 is an early Christian reference to □νομία (lawlessness) as an eschatological theme to be destroyed by the “justice of Christ” in his victorious return.

In 1st John 3, □νομία is also referred to as a contrast to being just (δικαίος) and doing what is just (δικαιοσύνην), an apocalyptic mindset of Early Christianity that is linked back to Jesus as represented by Paul and in the Synoptic Gospels (1 John 3:7) (Black 2000, 412). 1st John was probably written circa 100 CE by a group of elders who possibly inherited the Johannine tradition from the apostle John and lived in community practicing “Johannine Christianity,” which is now recognized as a distinct form of early Christianity (Perkins 2001, 406-407). With the date and context of this letter in mind, the text can be discussed in a fuller manner. The first mention of □νομία in 1st John, Chapter 3 reads, “Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin (□μαρτίας) is lawlessness (□νομία)” (1 John 3:4). In this verse, “lawlessness” is synonymous with “sin”; with this observation in mind, it is interesting to note that a variant reading of 2nd Thessalonians 2:3 is found in a significant number of manuscripts in the Byzantine tradition and in the Codex Alexandrinus as “man of sin” (□ □νθρωπος τ□ς □μαρτίας) (Nestle and Nestle 1950, 525).²⁴ This reading contributes to the earlier conclusion in which it was determined that this enigmatic figure was related to the work of Satan and that the destruction of this “man of sin/lawlessness” was to be fulfilled in the second coming of the ascended Jesus as

²³ The Greek reads “man of lawlessness” in verse 3. Smith writes “lawless one” to stay in line with the NRSV translation in the *NIB*.

²⁴ It also dictates that this reading is found in other manuscripts such as Latin and Syriac translations.

the triumphant Christ. This eschatological expectation of the early Christian communities is represented by the majority of the New Testament texts and expresses the hope that the primary apocalyptic enemy would be destroyed by the Cosmic Christ. Hence, a similar connection is made in 1st John in the next verse, which reads “You know that he [Jesus] was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin” (1 John 3:5). This verse presents an obvious reference to the first “revelation” of Jesus as the Christ (Mark 1:10-11) and the understanding of his purpose as the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). The motif of “revelation” is also continued from 2nd Thessalonians 2 in which the “lawless one” is “revealed” (□ποκαλυφθή) in his own “coming” (παρουσία). He is promptly destroyed and his work rendered ineffective by the Parousia (παρουσία) of Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:8-9).

Another parallel between the Freer Logion, 2nd Thessalonians 2, and 1st John 3 is found in this verse:

Everyone who commits sin is a child of the devil; for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8).

In this verse, the elder reiterates the apocalyptic image paralleled in 2nd Thessalonians 2, that is, that the work of the devil is “sin” and has been “from the beginning,” which is referenced in the statement that the “coming of the lawless one is apparent in the working of Satan” who is deceiving those who are “perishing” (2 Thessalonians 2:9). Therefore, they are “children of the Devil” because they “sin” and those who are “perishing [from unbelief]” because of the “deception of Satan” are groups bound by similar concepts. They stand in stark contrast to the “Son of God” who has been revealed to “destroy the works of the devil” to set people free from the various manifestations of the oppression caused by sin and the inevitable destruction of all diabolic works.²⁵ This understanding is also found in the Freer Logion when the eleven disciples ask the Risen Jesus to “reveal his justice now” in order to judge and destroy the effectiveness of the tools of Satan as well as to help them understand Jesus’s resurrection and purpose in dying such a violent death.

The contrast between “justice/righteousness” and “lawlessness” is driven even further by Paul in 2nd Corinthians 6. Paul is writing to the church in Corinth in reference to whom Christians should relate: “Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14). In this passage, Paul is speaking to these concerns as expressed in human relationships played out in the church at Corinth. It is clear that this passage is not dealing with purely abstract concerns, but with the impact of those who wished to not share what they possessed (unbelievers) with those who lived in a communal setting that depends on shared resources. In this context, one can see the dualistic antagonism that is portrayed by these two terms in the understanding of eschatology and the practical implications for Early Christian communities represented by the New Testament.

The last text that will be discussed in this section is a small section of the *Shepherd of Hermas*. The *Shepherd of Hermas* was a popular apocalypse that was written in the first half of the second century by Hermas, the brother of the bishop of Rome at that time (Ehrman 2003, 251). As far as the genre of the text is concerned, it is generally agreed upon that it is an “apocalypse” because of its use of angelic mediators, visions seen by the narrator of the text, the

²⁵ Black, “Commentary on 1st, 2nd, 3rd John,” *NIB*, 412.

narrator utilizing an assumed identity that was well-known from the past, and other general motifs that denote apocalyptic literature (Collins 2005, 409-414). It was a rather important work shortly after its composition and was a competitor for canonization into the New Testament and is still extant in one of the earliest bound codices of the New Testament, the Codex Sinaiticus, which dates to about the middle of the fourth century CE. Bart D. Ehrman (2003) writes that it was not canonized because it was a well-known fact that it was not written by an apostle, and apostolic authorship was one of the required standards established for the New Testament canon (251). Regardless of the canonization questions surrounding the text, it was still an important text for a great deal of early Christians.

The text is a collection of visions, commandments, and parables that concern the fate of a Christian after this Christian has been baptized but has started to sin again; the text places an emphasis on how much forgiveness and grace God grants to these individuals (Ehrman 2003, 251). The text asks whether there is only one chance, two chances, or multiple chances at forgiveness and repentance. This question is answered in a series of visions, particularly one in which a tower is being built by angels (Vision 3.3-7.6). When the narrator asks the angelic mediator what the tower being built represents, she replies, “The tower, which thou seest building, is myself, the Church, which was seen of thee both now and aforetime” (Hermas 3:3).²⁶ The importance of the tower representing the church is the fact that the stones are early Christians and compose the structure of the church.

More importantly, this tower’s construction involves stones of different colors, shapes, and sizes, including some that are either discarded and/or destroyed by the building of the tower. The primary group that is destroyed and cast away by the builders is described as “sons of lawlessness” (υἱοὶ τῆς ἀνομίας) (Hermas 6:1). These “sons of lawlessness” evoke the complete “wrath of the Lord” because of their “hypocrisy.” Carolyn Osiek (1999) writes in her commentary on the *Shepherd of Hermas* that “this group does not hesitate between good and evil; they are not torn between alternatives. They are set in their hypocritical ways” (72). Thus, like the Pharisees in Matthew Chapter 23, stubborn hypocrisy is the marked feature of a people who are designated in the text as “sons of lawlessness” and are denied any chance at salvation because of the “hypocrisy” of declaring faith yet still practicing “lawlessness.” There are various other descriptions for what happens to the other stones: some are left to rot, some are misshapen, and others are white, perfect, and used in key places in support of the tower. There are various explanations for these stones, but the most important factor is Osiek’s (1999) conclusion about this tower: that the “placing of the various groups outside the tower,” renders the entire vision of the tower as eschatological in nature (75). Osiek continues, writing:

The eschatological structure could be suggested by the general societal sensitivity to social stratification, especially as present in meal customs.... [...]The relative placement of guests was a matter of utmost sensitivity and importance. [...] In Christian house church gatherings...the approval or disapproval of the host or hostess for the behavior of certain members must have been reflected in their assigned places. In the social structure of salvation, it is not birth or wealth that determines status, but willingness to accept the call to conversion...who can only

²⁶ This is J.B. Lightfoot’s translation of the *Shepherd of Hermas*, accessed via Early Christian Literature Online (<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/shepherd.html>) on December 5th, 2010.

bring ruin on themselves by refusal. The responsibility is put squarely on the shoulders of the hearers themselves. (Osiek 1999, 75)

Therefore, the eschatological tone of “lawlessness” as used in the New Testament and related literature is shown, especially in the manner that it stands in contrast to the “justice of Christ,” Christians being just, and the return of Jesus as the triumphant, cosmic Christ who will destroy “lawlessness” and those who practice it. Also, “lawlessness” becomes synonymous with “sin,” “unrighteousness,” and the “work of Satan/the Devil.” Consequently, those who insist on continuing in “lawlessness” and practicing hypocrisy on a regular basis were irreparably damned by the authors of 1st John, 2nd Thessalonians, and the *Shepherd of Hermas* alike. Finally, all of this relates to the theme of “lawlessness” in the Freer Logion because it effectively shows that such lawlessness was seen as a function and tool of Satan that would be destroyed by the vindicated Jesus serving in his full capacity as “righteous judge” and Cosmic Messiah.

Dating of Freer Logion and Concluding Remarks

When it comes to discussing the Freer Logion, I will make the assumption that it was written as an extension for the Longer Ending of Mark, considering the location of the logion (between 16:14 and 16:15b) and the purpose it serves in the LE, mechanically and transitionally. If this assumption is made then, as stated above, Kelhoffer (2000) dates the Longer Ending between 120 and 150 CE. He persuasively argues for this dating and the fact that the author of the LE depended upon written copies of the other three gospels based on the similar features they share, such as vocabulary and other factors (Kelhoffer 2000, 97-100; 157-244). Also, Metzger (1981) states Codex W is dated to the late fourth/early fifth century CE (82). Furthermore, the work to which Jerome explicitly refers—the copies of Mark containing the extended LE with insertions similar to the Freer Logion—is dated to the fourth century CE as well (Metzger 1975, 124). Mally suggests a date for the Freer Logion in the *Jerome Biblical Commentary* as late second/early third century CE (Mally 1968, 60).

I propose that the dating of the Freer Logion is most likely middle to late second/early third century CE based on the dating proposed by Kelhoffer for the LE, the approximate dating of Codex W, and when Jerome wrote about other copies of the extended LE extant in the fourth century CE. Another feature taken into consideration for the dating of the Freer Logion is the usage of the eschatological themes (Satan, unbelief, and lawlessness, for example) which were shown to be in popular usage by the Pauline school, the group of elders who wrote the Johannine epistles, the Gospel According to Matthew, and the usage of lawlessness in the mid-second century work, the *Shepherd of Hermas*. If one accepts the usual dating of Matthew at around 80 CE; the dating of the possible forgeries of Paul²⁷ (2nd Thessalonians and the questionable passage in 2nd Corinthians) around 80 CE; the Johannine literature to be dated around 100 CE; and the *Shepherd of Hermas* and 1st Timothy at the middle of the second century, then it must be concluded that the eschatological themes were still in full force in the late first to middle second century based on their discussion in the aforementioned early Christian literature.

²⁷ There is much debate in scholarship concerning the authenticity of Paul’s hand in the authoring of the passages in question. Regardless of the authorship of these passages, they seem to be developments in the Pauline school of thought.

In conclusion, the Freer Logion represents the voice of an early Christian community probably located in Egypt and expresses the theological and practical concerns about the works of Satan and how the Risen Christ would address these works. Even though the works of Satan are still in play and cause strife to the community, Satan has been defeated by the resurrection of Christ. While more terrible things can be expected to come, the faithful will overcome them through Christ's justice and inherit the "glory of justice" that is preserved for those who have "trust" in the Risen Christ and do not practice "lawlessness" in their individual and communal lives. While The Freer Logion is not a part of the original Markan text, much like the Longer Ending, it still effectively addresses themes present in the text and relevant to both proto-orthodox and heterodox concerns within early Christian communities.

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