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# Recent study of Mark 13: Part 2

David Wenham

*In the first part of this article (TSF Bulletin 71, pp. 6–15) Dr Wenham introduced the problems associated with this area of study and surveyed work done on it up to Beasley-Murray's Jesus and the Future. He also covered three books written since then. Here he continues his survey with three more books written in the last ten years. Unfortunately it has been necessary to abbreviate the section on R. Pesch considerably. Copies of the full version of this section may, however, be obtained from the TSF office.*

## R. Pesch

Rudolf Pesch's *Naherwartungen: Tradition und Redaktion in Markus 13 (Near Expectations: Tradition and Redaction in Mark 13)*<sup>1</sup> is a very capable work. Pesch, a Roman Catholic like Lambrecht, starts out by criticizing all or most of his predecessors who have studied Mark 13, including Beasley-Murray, Hartman<sup>2</sup> and Lambrecht. His main criticism is that most scholars in the past have failed to expound Mark 13 within its Marcan context, tending instead to jump from the exegetical question to the quite separate question of the historical Jesus. What Pesch advocates is a thorough-going redaction-critical study.

He begins his own analysis by trying to put Mark 13 within its total Gospel context. Scholars in the past have divided the Gospel up in many different ways, seeing it as a three-part, a four-part, a five-part, a six-part or even a seven-part work! Pesch argues that the result of people's different suggestions has been to show that there are six major breaks in the Gospel — at 3: 6, 6: 6 (or 29), 8: 26, 10: 52, 12: 44, and 13: 37 — and his own conclusion is that the Gospel has a sixfold structure. Chapter 13, according to Pesch, does not fit into any of these six sections, and he explains that it is a sort of supplement or appendix added by the evangelist. He claims that this perhaps rather surprising conclusion is proved by an examination of the six sections, since each has a strikingly regular 'stichometric' structure. He also claims that Mark's readers could have recognized it as such. We do not propose to examine Pesch's analysis in detail; but we confess that we find it highly unlikely that Mark's readers would have recognized Pesch's analysis of Mark's Gospel, even granting that they may have been familiar with ancient literary techniques.

After his discussion of the place of chapter 13 in Mark, Pesch turns to an examination of the structure of

Mark 13 itself. He agrees with Lambrecht in dividing the discourse into three sections (5b–23, 24–27, 28–37) and he argues that there are clear pointers in the text which support this analysis.

He then proceeds to a verse-by-verse discussion of the chapter.

## Verses 1–5a

The opening verses of this chapter are strongly Marcan in style; and Pesch is not impressed by the argument that the disciples' exclamation about the size of the temple, for example (verse 1), has an authentic ring. What Mark is doing here, Pesch explains, is deliberately holding together two questions — one about the destruction of the temple and the other about the end. The implication of verse 4 is that the destruction of the temple may be seen as a sign of the end; but the question of the actual relationship of the two events is left open. This interest in the relationship of the destruction of the temple and the final end betrays the evangelist's hand, in Pesch's view, and reflects a post-AD 70 situation.

## Verses 5b, 6; 21, 22

Pesch takes these verses together and explains that Mark is creating a deliberate *inclusio* here. In both sets of verses there is a switch from the second person to the third, and Pesch explains that the second-person usage is characteristic of Christian exhortation and not of Jewish apocalyptic. He supposes that the second-person passages are the evangelist's additions to and application of the apocalyptic description which is in the third person. Mark begins with the key word *blepete* (RSV 'take heed'), and it may be that he is attacking those who draw wrong conclusions about the connection between the destruction of the temple and the end time.

## Verses 7, 8

In these verses there is again a tension between second and third persons, and this, together with the content, suggests to Pesch that Mark has worked over his apocalyptic source here. The source spoke of coming wars (as in verse 8a) as part of the end events; but Mark, in line with his anti-apocalyptic tendencies, explains that wars are only a preliminary phenomenon and that 'it must happen, but the end is not yet'. He agrees that they are the 'beginning of the pangs'; but he refuses to give dates in answer to the question of verse 4. Pesch says that in his reinterpretation of his source here, Mark has in mind the Jewish war. Even the 'earthquakes' are to be interpreted in this way.

## Verses 9–13

On verse 9a Pesch assures us that 'it cannot be doubted

<sup>1</sup> Patmos, Dusseldorf, 1968.

<sup>2</sup> He is unimpressed with Hartman's arguments and thinks that Hartman has effectively proved the opposite of what he claims, e.g. that Mk. 13 is not primarily a Danielic midrash.

that this warning derives from the evangelist himself'. Verse 9b on the other hand is a pre-Markan logion (though since it presupposes the Gentile mission it probably derives from the post-Easter church situation). Verse 10 has been tacked on to verse 9 by Mark because of the linking phrase, 'for a witness to them'; but he may not be responsible for the creation of the saying. Verse 11 could come from the same tradition as verse 9b, as could verse 13a. Verses 12 and 13b, which both have connections with Micah 7 (verses 6, 7), could go back to Mark's apocalyptic source, though Mark has altered their original meaning by putting them into their present persecution context.

#### Verses 14–20

This difficult passage belongs within the first section of Mark 13, which ends with the retrospective 'I have told you all things beforehand' of verse 23. It refers to events that were past or present for the evangelist; he starts to look to the future only in verse 24. The interpretation of the 'abomination of desolation' as the Antichrist is impossible in the Marcan context, since the advent of the Antichrist would make flight irrelevant (verse 14) and would leave no further place for the false prophets and false Messiahs to whom Mark goes on to refer. The context and the fact that this passage parallels verses 7 and 8 show that the verses are referring to events of war, and also suggests that the place 'where it ought not to be' must be the temple. The word *erēmōsis* ('desolation') fits in with this, as it is used in the LXX of the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem. In verse 14c the return of the third-person form indicates a return to Mark's source. Pesch finds the command to flee from Judea 'to the mountains' peculiar; he claims that it does not correspond to the situation of the Jewish war, since, when Jerusalem was attacked, the war-machine had moved away from Judea; in any case Judea is mountainous, so that a call to flee to the mountains is out of place. Pesch suggests that what has happened is that Mark has reinterpreted an original injunction to flee from the city, and that he uses the word 'Judea' symbolically to refer to Judaism. Mark advises Christians to make the final break.

Most of the rest of the section (verses 15–20) can be ascribed to Mark's source, though in verse 18 the original *proseuchesthōsan* has been altered to a second-person form. In verse 19 'until now' (*heōs tou nun*) is Marcan, showing that the promised distress was present at the time of writing; if we had a genuine prediction of the future we should expect something like 'until those days'. Pesch also regards verse 20b as Marcan, leading as it does into verse 21.

#### Verses 21–23

Mark's source went on from the preceding section straight into the description of the parousia. But Mark introduces again the false prophets. In verse 23 the *humeis blepete* (picking up verses 5b, 9a) and the 'I have told you all things beforehand' show that this is the end of the first part of the discourse. The *proeirēka* ('I have told . . . beforehand') shows that the previous dis-

course is regarded as prophetic prediction, though the thrust of the discourse is parenetic, not speculative. The perfect tense reflects the evangelist's standpoint: he invites the church to look back and to make sense of its history.

#### Verses 24–27

Mark here rejoins his source, adding the phrase 'after that distress' (*meta tēn thlipsin ekeinēn*) to the original 'in those days' (*en tais hēmerais ekeinais*). The language of the section is symbolic, as its fragmentary nature (e.g. its failure to describe men's reactions to the events) and its Old Testament echoes should suggest; verse 26 which translates the symbolism should suggest the same thing. The Old Testament background (e.g. Isaiah 13 and 34) shows that the language is that of judgment; and the message of the section is that God comes to judge sinners. Pesch maintains that the coming spoken of in verse 26 is a coming in judgment; the preceding context and also the use of *opsontai* ('they will see') suggest this. There is no hint that it is the redeemed who are to see, and the parallel passage in Mark 14: 62 as well as others referring to the future coming suggests that the reference is to judgment.

So then Mark dates the second coming soon after the distress, but gives no signs for predicting its arrival except those things which the church had already experienced.

#### Verses 28–32

According to Pesch Mark has come to the end of his apocalyptic source when he reaches this point, and yet he does have some source material to draw on. Thus in verses 28 and 29, 28b may be pre-Markan. Having described the Son of man's coming in the previous section (verses 24–27), Mark now reverts to the question of the timing of the end, which he had discussed negatively in the first main section of the discourse (verses 5b–23). The *hotan* in verses 28, 29 takes us back to that section and to the original question of verse 4. When this backward link is recognized, it will be appreciated that the *tauta ginomena* of verse 29 are the events described in the first section, including the destruction of the temple, and not the events of verses 24–27. So, after arguing in the first section that the events described there were not the immediate precursors of the end, Mark now changes tack and explains that that even so they are signs of the nearness of the end, signs 'that he [the Son of man] is at the doors'. In other words Mark is saying that the events did not necessarily mean an immediate parousia (as some were proclaiming); they did however mean that it was near. The nearness is spelt out in verse 30, where 'all these things' is broader than the *tauta ginomena* of verse 29, and includes the events of verses 24–27. Verse 31 with its antithetic parallelism is probably a pre-Markan saying, and it is used by Mark to bind together the two sayings of verses 30 and 32, which express the two sides of Mark's eschatological teaching — his emphasis on the nearness of the parousia and his rejection of chronological calculation. Verse 32 viewed in this way fits well into the context, and Pesch rejects the

view that there is a break between verses 31 and 32. The saying of verse 32 guards against any misinterpretation of the earlier saying in verse 30, and the force of the combination is to say that 'the day is near, but the exact time is uncertain'.

#### Verses 33–37

Pesch detects the evangelist's hand in the arrangement of this section. The original would simply have referred to the servant's 'work' (*ergon*); but in the church situation with the parousia not having come it was important to know that Jesus had given authority for the period of delay.

Having completed his long pilgrimage through chapter 13 Pesch reviews the results. The pre-Marcian traditions that he has identified are (1) a group of persecution logia in verses 9, 13a and 11. These he regards as the products of Christian prophetic activity, since they do not reflect the situation of Jesus' earthly ministry. (2) Two parables, 28b and 34, the first of which and perhaps the second could go back to Jesus. (3) Two individual logia (verses 31, 32), both of which could go back to Jesus in their original form. In the original form of verse 32 Jesus was included, but not mentioned, in those not knowing the time of the end; and this is an argument for the genuineness of the saying. (4) An apocalyptic tract or handbill lying behind verses 6, 22, 7b, 8, 13b–17, ?18, 19 and 20a, 24–27. The contents are typical of traditional apocalyptic, and the vocabulary is not typical of the Gospel. This latter point together with its unusually close dependence on the LXX in its use of the Old Testament suggests that it was not part of Jesus' teaching; it probably originated in Greek-speaking circles. The author's *Sitz im Leben* is that presupposed between verse 13 and verse 14: he expected the temple in Jerusalem to be attacked in the near future. Most probably then, Pesch thinks, he wrote in AD 40. But his tract, which was a purely Jewish document originally, was taken over by Christians and in the years before AD 70 was reapplied to the Jewish war. On its authority some Christians were teaching that the imminent destruction of Jerusalem would bring the end. Mark in his Gospel wanted to counteract this excessive apocalyptic enthusiasm, and he did so by taking over the tract (which was widely regarded as going back to Jesus) and by reinterpreting it to suit his more moderate eschatological expectations.

Pesch ends his discussion by a review of Mark's redactional work in chapter 13. Mark's intention was to warn against those who were deceiving people by their excited calculations concerning the end-time, and also to urge Christians to disassociate themselves from Jerusalem and Judaism. As well as warning against apocalyptic enthusiasts, the evangelist wished at the same time to maintain a flexible hope for a near end; but he stresses the nearness of the end not so much out of an interest in the future as out of an interest in the present. Elsewhere in Mark the present is characterized by the nearness of God's rule; so here in Mark 13 the future hope has relevance to the present, in which

discipleship must take place and in which we are to watch and to be ready.

Pesch's book raises many questions. I have already suggested that his analysis of the structure of Mark's whole Gospel is not without difficulty, and the same may be said about his structural analysis of Mark 13. His analysis of the individual sections of the chapter is speculative at many points (though not so much as Lambrecht's), and it often seems to hinge on questionable assumptions. Thus, for example, he regularly explains the tension between the second and third persons in Mark 13 as a reflection of Mark's use of sources, when it need be nothing of the sort. He is too quick to conclude that a saying which describes the church situation (*e.g.* verse 9b with its reference to Gentiles) must derive from that situation, and he is too quick to assume that a phrase reflecting Marcan vocabulary or ideas must derive from Mark himself. Pesch's work is not to be ignored, since it contains many stimulating ideas; but his apparent unwillingness to try to make sense of the chapter not only in terms of Mark's theology but also in terms of Mark's apparent intention (*i.e.* to record what Jesus said) leaves the reader unsatisfied.

#### L. Gaston

Lloyd Gaston's book *No Stone on Another: Studies in the Significance of the Fall of Jerusalem in the Synoptic Gospels*<sup>3</sup> is, as its title suggests, much more than a study of Mark 13; but its first section is devoted to a form-critical study of the chapter, and it is this that we must look at.

#### Verses 1–4

Gaston, like many other scholars, thinks that the Lucan eschatological discourse (Lk. 21) is independent of Mark's; and in these opening verses he prefers the Lucan setting to that in Mark. Mark, in line with his characteristic emphases, has made the discourse a private one addressed to the disciples. The only thing in the opening verses that is not Mark's own formulation is the saying of verse 2. The double question of verse 4 is not just a question about the destruction of Jerusalem: it is assumed by the disciples that the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the world go together, and both are included in 'these things'.

#### Verses 5–8

These verses, which consist of exhortation (5b, 7a, 8b) supported by apocalyptic instruction (6, 7b, 8b), probably go back to a pre-Marcian source. The order in the apocalyptic parts — false Christs, wars, famines and natural disasters — has a parallel in Revelation 6, and Gaston thinks that Mark and Luke had independent access to an apocalyptic source here. There is some confusion in verse 6 between false prophets ('in my name') and false Messiahs ('I am he'), and according to Gaston we cannot read both together. If either is

<sup>3</sup> Brill, Leiden, 1970.

secondary, Gaston thinks it is the former, since it is in the first person.

#### *Verses 9–13*

Here there are parallels in Matthew 10 and also in Luke 21, and Gaston argues that Matthew and Luke are largely independent of Mark 13; all three Gospels go back to a common source. Luke has added his verses 16 and 17 from Mark to his source, thus modifying what was originally a rather optimistic passage in the light of the church's experience of persecution. Mark and the Lucan source overlap in the phrases *eis marturion autois* (Mark's verse 9), and *apobēsetai humin eis marturion* (Luke's verse 13); but according to Gaston the phrases have quite different meanings in the two Gospels. The meaning in Luke is that the disciples will have an opportunity to explain their faith; but in Mark, as the parallel in 6 : 11 shows, the meaning is that the injustice experienced by the Christians will be a testimony against their persecutors. Mark's verse 10 misunderstands *eis marturion autois* in verse 9, taking it in the Lucan sense; this and the fact that it breaks the flow from verse 9 to verse 11 show that the verse is out of context. Gaston is unimpressed by the arguments suggesting that the saying in verse 10 could not go back to Jesus, but he suggests that the original form of the saying is found in Matthew 24 : 14; this explains the *prōton*, which does not make very obvious sense in Mark's context. Mark 13 : 12 has Q support; but 13b and, with less assurance, 13a are ascribed to the church. Gaston suggests that the whole section 13 : 9–13 may once have been placed in a speech of the risen Christ and that verse 10 was added then, the thought of world mission being important in that context.

#### *Verses 14–20*

Gaston's discussion of these verses is quite complicated, but may be roughly summarized as follows: the 'abomination' of Daniel 7 must be understood in its original Danielic context as a pagan altar or religious symbol that was installed in the Jerusalem temple. It was taken by most interpreters of Daniel to be an idol. In its Marcan context, however, the phrase 'abomination of desolation' has to do with the destruction of the temple, that being the subject of the whole discourse (cf. verse 4). The question therefore arises of how Mark came to use the phrase in this new way, introducing the idea of the abomination bringing destruction. Gaston's explanation is that the oracle lying behind Mark 13 : 14–19 was first used by Christians in its proper Danielic sense at the time of the Caligula crisis in AD 40, when the emperor ordered his statue to be erected in the Jerusalem temple. Then there was no question of the abomination bringing destruction. However, when that crisis passed, the oracle and with it the phrase 'abomination of desolation' came to be reinterpreted eschatologically in connection with the expected destruction of Jerusalem. This was possible, since the Danielic context was no longer immediately in mind and because the Greek word *erēmōseōs* (which Gaston sees as a mis-

interpretation of the original Hebrew) suggested the idea of destruction.

Mark took over this oracle, and he was responsible for putting it into a context where it refers to the destruction of the temple (see verse 4) and not just to the destruction of Jerusalem; probably he is also responsible for the surprising masculine participle *hestēkota*, which shows that he had a personal Antichrist in mind. His typically parenthetical 'let the reader understand' is an encouragement to the reader to grasp the significance of the grammatical anomaly.

That verses 14–19 have undergone reinterpretation is confirmed by the observation that verse 19, which seems to suggest that the great distress is not the final distress, and verses 15 and 16 which recommend flight, do not fit with the present eschatological context; there should be no further distress, and flight would be inappropriate at the *eschaton*.

#### *Verses 21–23*

If the preceding passage (verses 14–20) refers to the appearance of the Antichrist, then verses 21–23 are logically out of place, since they refer to false prophets and false Christs appearing subsequently; they may be regarded as material that has been added to the context through the influence of the link word *eklektōi*. The form of the saying suggests that they are church teaching addressed to Christians in a situation where false prophets and Messiahs were known; and verse 23b confirms that it is church members in general and not the disciples in particular who are being addressed.

#### *Verses 24–27*

The key to understanding these verses, according to Gaston, is to see that the writer has identified the coming of the Son of man in Daniel 7 with the promised parousia of Jesus. This identification has led to the gathering together in this context of a number of Old Testament passages about judgment and the end, but is untypical of the New Testament where Daniel 7 is usually applied to Jesus' ascension rather than to his second coming. Gaston concludes from the unusual identification that the passage does not go back to Jesus. (He also argues curiously at one point that the sayings in the section cannot go back to Jesus, since they are derived from the Old Testament; but he later appears to undermine this argument when he says that if verse 27 goes back to Jesus, then Jesus must have had scriptural warrant for what he says in the verse.)

#### *Verses 28–30*

Gaston argues that verse 28 is awkwardly placed, if, as it seems, the *tauta* has to be taken to refer back to verses 5–23 and the *engus estin* to the coming in verses 24–27. It may, however, be viewed as an independent saying, which originally had to do with the presence of the kingdom in Jesus' ministry. Verse 29 could then be the editor's interpreting addition. The 'harvest' (*theros*) is then what is 'near', and the context shows that the *theros* is the ingathering of the elect at the coming of the Son of man. Verse 30 is an independent logion, which is

shown by the parallels in Mark 9:1 and Matthew 10:23 to be probably genuine, and it is used here to reinforce the preceding point.

#### *Verses 31, 32*

These verses have parallels elsewhere in the Gospel tradition, and may both be genuine sayings. Verse 32 does not contradict verse 30, though it may have been positioned here in order to guard against possible misunderstandings of verse 30.

#### *Verses 33–37*

These echo the synoptic parables which urge watchfulness; but Gaston doubts whether Jeremias is right to detect here an underlying parable of a doorkeeper. Verse 37 is important, since it makes clear that the discourse is not intended just for the disciples. Gaston suggests that it could indicate that the discourse was not transmitted as the words of Jesus and that it could have been added to the discourse when Mark put it into his Gospel.

Gaston proceeds to discuss the form and function of Mark 13; and starting from the observations (a) that the discourse is a farewell discourse in form and (b) that there is no reference to Jesus' coming death, he suggests that it may go back to a synoptic apocalypse that was originally regarded as part of Jesus' post-Easter teaching. The discourse is, in Gaston's view, moral exhortation supported by apocalyptic, not an apocalypse with exhortation mixed in; and the real audience addressed is the author's contemporaries, not the disciples. Form criticism of the sayings suggests that Jesus could not have been author of the discourse; the sayings fit more into the epistolary genre than in a Gospel. 'They are', Gaston says, 'prophetic paraclesis and can be thought of as a "sermon" delivered probably to a group of Christians in Rome in the sixties of the first century.'

He suggests that the original core of the chapter was the unfulfilled prophecy of verses 14–19 (which probably derived from Christian prophets around AD 39–41). This came to be applied at some later stage to the expected fall of Jerusalem, since it was known that Jesus had spoken about this, and at the same time verses 20, 24–27 were added with their hope of an early parousia. The next stage was for the oracle to be incorporated into a Christian prophetic exhortation, verses 5–13 and 21f. and perhaps 33–36 being added. Subsequently other material in verses 28–37 was added. Mark's contribution was not very great: he may have added verses 23 and 37 thereby showing that it is ordinary Christians who are being addressed in the chapter; he may have been responsible for the four watches of the night in verse 35b (this being a Roman way of measuring time). Verse 14 he interpreted of the Antichrist; and most important of all he made the whole discourse a response to the question about the destruction of the temple, whereas previously the reference had been to the destruction of all Jerusalem. Gaston leaves his exegesis of Mark 13 at this point; but,

taking up the last point about Mark's reinterpretation of the oracle, he proceeds to survey Jesus' attitude to the temple. He concludes that Jesus was not interested in the Jerusalem temple or cult, since he saw it as his mission to found a new community as a new temple.

Gaston's treatment of Mark 13 is less thorough than others that we have considered, and it is not more satisfactory. The author explains with confidence the history of the traditions contained in the chapter, but like others he builds too much on too little. For example, the comparison with Luke does not justify his conclusion that Mark's verses 1–4 are mostly a Marcan creation. His interpretation of Mark's *eis marturion autois* in 13:9, though possible, is not certain, despite 6:11. His explanation of verses 14–19 is ingenious, but it is doubtful whether it is necessary to postulate a double application of Daniel 7 first to Caligula and then to the destruction of Jerusalem. His objection to verses 24–27 on the grounds that they have interpreted Daniel 7 untypically is not very substantial. As well as finding detailed points of this sort to question in Gaston's work, the reader who has read other works, such as that by Pesch, will feel disappointed by his failure to examine the redaction of the whole chapter; he tends to deal with the discourse verse by verse and not to analyse carefully the direction and purpose of the whole.

#### *R. T. France*

The last book to be mentioned in this survey, R. T. France's *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and His Mission*,<sup>4</sup> has been reviewed before in the *TSF Bulletin*. On the present occasion our interest is not in the whole book, but only in the author's interesting suggestions about Mark 13, especially verses 24–27; these are confined for the most part to an appendix at the back of the book. He begins by stating the problem, namely that verses 32f. of Mark 13 appear to refer to a coming of Christ differentiated from the fall of Jerusalem, whereas verses 24–27 appear to associate his coming with the fall which is expected soon. He then reviews various solutions that have been offered to explain the problem, and finally himself comes down in favour of the view that the coming described in verses 24–27 is not the parousia at all, but Jesus' coming to Jerusalem in judgment (in AD 70). He proceeds to argue his case exegetically.

He argues that the whole of the preceding context from verse 4 onwards (where the disciples' question is about the destruction of the temple and nothing more) leads one to expect a description of the fall of Jerusalem in verses 24–27. Verses 5–13 describe events which Jesus' hearers will experience, and lead us into the decisive events described in verses 14f. Verses 14f. then describe events connected with the fall of Jerusalem, but they do not in fact describe the final catastrophe itself. When, therefore, we come to verse 24, 'But in those days after that tribulation . . .', we expect a description of the fall of the city to which everything has been

<sup>4</sup> Inter-Varsity Press, London, 1971.

leading. The context following verses 24–27 confirms this impression (*i.e.* verses 28–30): it speaks of events in the near future that Jesus' hearers will experience themselves, and the terms *tauta* and *tauta panta* which referred in verse 4 to the fall of Jerusalem are picked up again here. Verse 32, on the other hand, marks a new beginning according to Dr France; it clearly refers to a day different from 'those days' which have already been described. Dr France concludes that the context suggests that verses 24–27 describe the fall of Jerusalem. 'Indeed,' he says, 'unless the wording makes such an exegesis quite impossible, we might say that the context demands it. But in fact the wording not only allows, but even encourages such an interpretation, when seen against its Old Testament background.'

France explains his last point: the language used in verses 24 and 25 of disturbances in the heavenly bodies is taken from the Old Testament, where it is characteristically used to describe God's judgment on nations. So the probable reference here is to political disaster, not to strange astronomical phenomena. But what then of verse 26 and its reference to the coming of the Son of man? France argues that the Daniel 7:13 passage about the Son of man is properly interpreted in its context not of a coming of the Son of man to earth, but of a coming to God, to the Ancient of Days; and Jesus, in France's view, consistently interpreted the passage in that way. He nowhere used it to refer to his second coming, but rather to his coming to God in exaltation and vindication. So what is in view here is a display of Jesus' exaltation, which the Jews will see when he comes to judge them. The mission of the *angeloi* ('messengers', not necessarily 'angels') and the ingathering of the elect in verse 27 are not the final angelic ingathering of the faithful but the missionary ingathering of God's people from the nations.

Dr France's theory is an attractive one; but like most explanations of Mark 13 it is not without its difficulty. His view that the 'coming of the Son of man' elsewhere in Jesus' teaching is consistently the coming of Jesus to vindication is open to dispute, though it is not unreasonable. But a more substantial problem is the fact that Mark 13:24–27 has parallels elsewhere in the New Testament, where the reference is unmistakably to the last day (*e.g.* Mt. 13:40f.). The similarity of the language used might suggest that the same event is being referred to.

France has some further observations relevant to a discussion of Mark 13 in his book. Most notably he argues verse by verse against the view that the Septuagintalisms of the discourse show that it cannot have had a Semitic origin. In the course of his discussion of the phrase *to bdelugma tēs erēmōseōs* he denies Gaston's claim that the Greek *tēs erēmōseōs* is a misinterpretation of the original Hebrew.

#### D. Conclusions

The preceding rather superficial survey of six scholars' ideas on Mark 13 has not done justice to any of the

various opinions and theories discussed, and it has probably left some readers depressed at the complexity and apparent insolubility of many of the problems considered. What, if anything, can be said by way of positive conclusions? What has come out of it that is of any importance?

It is clear that the scholars we have considered have agreed unanimously on very little; there is, for example, no consensus on whether a Little Apocalypse lies behind Mark 13 or not. But certain important questions have emerged in the course of our survey. First, there is the question of structure. Pesch and Lambrecht in particular have been asking the right sort of questions about the structure of Mark 13, and they have made some important suggestions about it. They have argued forcefully that certain sayings in the chapter cannot easily be removed from their context, the implication being that much of the chapter stands or falls together.

Second is the not unconnected question of the redactional intention of the evangelists in their account. Although the over-simple tendency to assume that Marcan style and Marcan ideas prove Marcan origin and disprove anything more is annoying, the attempt to grasp the author's understanding of a whole passage and to explain what sort of situation is being addressed in the passage is a welcome change from the tendency to look at parts of the chapter in a rather disjointed way.

Third and perhaps most important is the question of method and approach. The striking failure of the different scholars to agree and their success in casting doubt on even cherished opinions (*e.g.* on 13:30, 32) is frustrating; but it is also instructive, since it shows how ambiguous the evidence very often is. This ambiguity ought to make scholars cautious in their theorizing — more cautious than some of those whose ideas we have looked at. (I have commented more than once on the speculative nature of the scholars' various suggestions.) One result of the ambiguity of the evidence is that the different scholars' presuppositions play a more obvious part in their reconstructions than they might otherwise: thus it is evident that Moore and France on the one hand are inclined to take the text at its face value and to treat it as authentic unless there is good evidence to the contrary. Others seem determined to go the other way: evidence of Marcan style or church situation is taken to show that the material does not go back to Jesus, the idea of genuine predictive prophecy does not get much of a hearing. The second approach is that which tends to treat the evangelists as guilty unless proved innocent (and is reflected in the criterion of dissimilarity); the first approach is prepared to treat the evangelists as innocent and to see if the Gospels make sense viewed in this way.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the three general questions mentioned, our survey of recent study of Mark 13 has of course raised many detailed questions about particular points of interpretation and has brought together arguments, some old, some new, for different points of view.

<sup>5</sup> See the Introduction in R. T. France's book for a helpful discussion of method and for a defence of the conservative approach which he adopts (and which I favour).

There is hopefully some limited value in raising questions in this way and in collecting together some of the possible answers and arguments; but the survey would obviously have been of more use to the reader if some clear guidance could have been given as to the right answers. Unfortunately I do not claim to have those answers nor even to have thought through all the questions with sufficient care to make my opinions worth while. Despite this a few tentative and provisional comments on some of the questions raised will be made, if only not to disappoint the reader.

#### *Some personal comments*

Perhaps as vital as any questions to do with Mark 13 are the questions of structure. In the first place, there is the question of verses 5–23: are these verses one section, with verses 5f. and 21f. forming an ‘inclusio’, as various scholars have suggested? In favour of this it has to be admitted that there is striking similarity between the warnings about false Christs in verses 5f. and those in verses 21 and 22, and this parallelism could be a deliberate stylistic device marking the beginning and end of the section. An alternative possibility, however, is that verses 5–13 describe a chronologically distinct period from verses 14–23; if they do, then the warnings of false Christs in verse 5f. and verses 21f. could be quite separate, though similar. Despite the opinion of some of the scholars we have examined, the second possibility has definite attractions: verses 5–13 may be taken as describing a preliminary waiting period, a time characterized by false prophecy, wars, persecutions, *etc.*; then verses 14–23 describe the beginning of the awaited action — the waiting is over, and action begins. Note the *tote . . . tote* in verses 14 and 21. It is worth noting in defence of this view that verses 21–23 are not an exact repeat of the earlier verses 5 and 6: in the latter verses the false prophets and Christs reinforce their message with signs and wonders.<sup>6</sup>

Another crucial structural question relates to verse 32: does this mark the start of a new section? Or does it go with what immediately precedes it? Notwithstanding the arguments of Lambrecht and others, the case for seeing it as marking a new departure is not to be too quickly dismissed. It is arguable that the sequence of the chapter runs from period A = verses 5–13 (perhaps dividing into two sub-sections 5–8, 9–13), to period B = verses 14–23 (dividing into 14–20, 21–23), to period C = verses 24–27, to a conclusion = verses 28–31. Verses 32–37 then seem almost like an afterthought tacked on, and the reference is not to what immediately precedes.

Going on from the questions of structure to other doubtful points, we may consider first the meaning of the disciples’ question in verse 4, ‘When will all these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things (*tauta . . . panta*) are to be accomplished?’ Scholars are divided over whether the whole double question here

refers simply to the destruction of the temple (which Jesus had prophesied in the preceding verse 2), or whether the reference of verse 4b is broader, the *tauta . . . panta* including the parousia and the end of the world as well as the destruction of the temple. In favour of the second view it is argued that the phraseology used echoes that of Daniel 12 : 7; but this seems a quite indecisive argument. Much more convincing, however, is the argument from the subsequent context, since Jesus’ reply to the disciples’ question in verse 5f. does seem to imply that there was more to the disciples’ question than at first appears. Jesus begins his reply by a warning of false prophets coming in his name and pretending (we may suppose) that the second coming has arrived; he begins, in other words, by talking about the time of his own return. If this reply has relevance to the disciples’ question before, as we may presume, then this suggests that the implied meaning of Mark’s double question may well be the same as that found in the more explicit Matthean version, ‘When will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?’ If the Matthean version of the sayings is independent of Mark’s, then it may be seen as a confirmatory piece of evidence for the view that the disciples’ question is about more than the destruction of the temple; and even if Matthew is dependent on Mark at this point, his version is still interesting evidence showing that Mark was interpreted in the way being suggested from a very early date.

The phrase *to bdelugma tēs erēmōseōs*, ‘the abomination of desolation’ in verse 14 of Mark 13 is as mysterious and difficult to interpret as any in the whole of the chapter, and I do not claim to have any satisfactory explanation of it. The allusion to Daniel is of course clear, and perhaps the simplest way of taking Mark 13 : 14 is as a literal prophecy of the desecration of the temple through the setting up within it of some sacreligious object, idol or person. Such a desecration was of course threatened by the emperor Caligula around AD 40, and this fact lends some plausibility to the theory of those who suppose that the prophecy was written at the time when that great threat hung over Jerusalem.

It is not to be taken for granted, however, that the simplest and most literal interpretation of the phrase ‘the abomination of desolation’ is necessarily the correct one. It is equally possible and perhaps more likely (unless it is conceded that Mark 13 was written during the Caligula crisis — a view that has real difficulties<sup>7</sup>) that the phrase is intended to evoke a general picture of the sort of situation described in Daniel. What is being looked forward to in Mark 13 : 14 on this view is not an exact repetition of the events of the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, but a similar equally disastrous situation, in

<sup>6</sup> It might perhaps be possible to hold that verses 5–13 and 14–23 describe two separate periods and yet to accept that verses 5f. and 21f. form an inclusio around the whole section.

<sup>7</sup> *E.g.* how did a prophecy that did not originate with Jesus and that quickly lost its immediate relevance when the Caligula crisis passed come to be preserved and to be ascribed to Jesus? If one were to admit that the chapter originated around AD 40, this would solve the problem of the original interpretation; it would not solve the problem of interpretation in Matthew and Mark, who, in most people’s opinions, wrote after the Caligula episode.



which an invader comes bringing desolation and desecration to the temple and the holy city; when such a situation threatens, then is the time to flee (Mk. 13 : 14, 15). This interpretation is very much in line with that found in Luke, whose parallel verse to Mark 13 : 14 reads, 'When you see Jerusalem being encircled by armies, then know that her desolation has drawn near' (Lk. 21 : 20). (It is arguable that those other views which take the setting up of the abomination to be a specific act of desolation in the Jerusalem temple either in AD 40 or AD 70 do not cohere well with the subsequent demands to flee, since these suggest a time before the final disaster has occurred.) There may be some doubt about the legitimacy of citing the Lucan version as evidence for our suggested interpretation of Mark; but even without the Lucan evidence the interpretation would deserve consideration. We do not altogether rule out the view that the 'desolating sacrilege' may have a double reference, (a) to the historical judgment on Jerusalem and (b) to the eschatological coming of the Antichrist.<sup>8</sup> The evidence of 2 Thessalonians, itself a problematical chapter, could be taken to support such a view.

The other problematical phrase in Mark 13 : 14 is the call to the reader to 'understand'. A good case has been made out by the scholars whom we have reviewed for taking this as the evangelist's invitation to the readers of his Gospel to get the meaning of the rather obscure allusions he has made just before (either the phrase *to bdelugma tēs erēmōseōs* or *hopou ou dei*, 'where it ought not'). The evidence of Mark does not suggest that it is the book of Daniel (or any apocalyptic tract) that is being read. In Matthew, however, there is a specific reference to the prophet Daniel, so that the question is more open there. This might affect our interpretation of Mark, if we supposed that Matthew had the more primitive account at this point.

One of the most interesting questions in Mark 13 concerns the interpretation of verses 24–27. If it is figurative, should the whole section, verses 24–27, be seen as a prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem or as a prophecy of the parousia of Christ? The extensive Old Testament background to the language of verses 24 and 25 does suggest that it may be figurative and the upheavals described should not necessarily be taken too literally; the reference may well be to political and other disturbances among men rather than to cosmic catastrophes. But this real possibility does not seem to us to tip the balance decisively in favour of the view that 26 and 27 describe the destruction of Jerusalem rather than the parousia, attractive though that view is. Against this view it has already been argued that the language of the verses has parallels in other passages that certainly refer to the parousia. I have also suggested in discussing the structure of the chapter that verses 14–23 may refer to a different period from verses 24–27. Verses 14–23 seem to me to be a complete description of a particular period of intensive suffering, which comes to an end (see the reference in verse 20 to the Lord shortening the days);

verses 24–27 do not therefore seem to be the climax of verses 14–23, but to describe something new and quite distinct. This analysis of the structure of the chapter is, of course, conjectural and far from certain; and against it it has been argued that, if verses 14–20 describe the events connected with the fall of Jerusalem (a view which seems likely to me), then they are incomplete since they contain no description of the fall itself. But this argument is indecisive: although there is nothing that can be isolated as a specific reference to the fall of Jerusalem, that particular event could be included within the general description of the terrible distress of 'those days'.<sup>9</sup>

To conclude that verses 24–27 probably describe the parousia, not the fall of Jerusalem, means undoubted problems for the Christian interpreter, since the impression that Mark gives — Matthew does so even more — is that the events of verse 24f. (*i.e.* the parousia) follow on directly from the events just described in verses 14–20 (*i.e.* the fall of Jerusalem). Unless it is to be concluded that the Jesus of Mark is mistaken in his understanding of timing, we have then to assume that the time-scale is very compressed, so that what seem like near events are so only theologically; chronologically they are widely separated.<sup>10</sup>

The last particular problem verse on which I will comment briefly is verse 30. When Jesus says that 'this generation will not pass away until all these things (*tauta panta*) happen', what are 'all these things'? The question, like so many others in Mark 13, is a very difficult one. The view that the *tauta* of verse 29 are the signs of the parousia and that the *tauta panta* of the following verse is a wider expression including the parousia itself is an attractive one in the context (even though it is difficult theologically); on the other hand, the alternative view — that the *tauta* in verse 29 and the *tauta* in verse 30 both refer to the signs of the parousia — is quite possible. The deciding factor in this question may be one's verdict on verse 32: if, as we have argued, verse 32 introduces a new section and is not just an amplification of the preceding verses,<sup>11</sup> then this probably tips the balance in favour of the view that the parousia itself is excluded from the *tauta panta* in verse 30. There the discussion is about the time of the signs, and then in verse 32 the question at issue is the time of the end. This analysis would cohere with other evidence in the Gospels and Acts which suggests that Jesus taught (a) that the destruction of Jerusalem was to come in a generation (*e.g.* Mt. 23 : 29–36), and (b) that the

<sup>9</sup> If it is tentatively concluded that verses 24–27 do describe the parousia and not the fall of Jerusalem, then it is possible (though not inevitable) that the language of verses 24 and 25 should be taken straightforwardly after all, as describing some sort of celestial, not terrestrial, upheavals.

<sup>10</sup> On the strong note of imminence in biblical eschatology see C. E. B. Cranfield, *St Mark*, p. 408; G. E. Ladd, *Jesus and the Kingdom* (SPCK, 1966) and A. L. Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament*.

<sup>11</sup> The presence of the demonstrative pronoun *ekeinēs* in the phrase 'of that day' is one relevant point against the view that verse 32 is speaking about the same thing as the preceding verses, *e.g.* verse 30.

<sup>8</sup> So C. E. B. Cranfield, *St Mark* (CUP, 1959), p. 401f.

date of the second coming was unknown (*e.g.* Acts 1:7; Lk. 17:20f.).

Enough has been said on some of the particular difficult points arising in Mark 13. On most of the general questions I find myself in agreement with Beasley-Murray's conclusions. Thus I agree that the discourse is a combination of apocalyptic instruction and practical exhortation, not just one or the other. The exhortation is intended to discourage too much excited apocalyptic speculation among Christians, but also to encourage preparedness and endurance. I agree with Beasley-Murray that the apocalyptic instruction of the chapter is not inconsistent with what is known of Jesus' teaching elsewhere. Like him I am not impressed with the argument that the Marcan style of the chapter and the Septuagintalism of its Old Testament quotations show it to be inauthentic; nor am I very impressed with the arguments that have been put forward to show that the chapter is composite (though there is a case for viewing 13:10 as misplaced and for preferring Matthew's positioning); the idea of a Little Apocalypse source does not appeal. So far as the relationship of the three synoptic Gospels goes in this chapter, I remain undecided, though Beasley-Murray's view that Matthew and Luke had access to non-Markan traditions is attractive. The

most important question on which I find myself in disagreement with Beasley-Murray is the christological question: he believes that Mark 13:30 shows Jesus to have been in error over the precise timing of the parousia, but maintains that this conclusion does not jeopardize Christian faith in Jesus' divinity. To me the ascription of error to Jesus in this saying does seem to have serious implications for Christian faith in Jesus and his teaching; fortunately, however, Beasley-Murray's interpretation of 13:30 is not the only, or even clearly the best, exegesis possible.

To end this survey of study of Mark 13 since Beasley-Murray on a note of substantial disagreement is not perhaps quite fair to him. As has been seen, in my opinion many of his conclusions stand today, despite the objections and questions which have been raised by subsequent scholars. It is, however, true to say that his was by no means the last word on all the questions of Mark 13.<sup>12</sup> Much work remains to be done if this most tantalizing and important of chapters is to be satisfactorily explained and so to be used to full effect in the Christian church.

<sup>12</sup>Since this article was written there has appeared K. Grayston's 'The Study of Mark XIII' (*BJRL* 56, 1974, pp. 371-387).

## The theological journals in 1973-74

Ralph P Martin

*Owing to difficulties beyond his control Professor Martin was unable to give us his annual survey of the journals last year: he has kindly extended his scope in this article to cover two years and has summarized a collection of interesting essays which will reward the reader who is prepared to regard this article as no more than a menu for the feast that awaits him. We continue to be grateful to Professor Martin for his help in this way.*

The following survey-article has to be a jumbo-sized one since (i) it covers virtually two calendar years, 1973-74; and (ii) I began this task with only low expectations of being able to write a decent-length article but have in fact been pleasantly surprised at the quantity and quality of literary output from contemporary evangelicals and others. Once again, certain criteria have been followed. In the main, articles whose value and significance seem to be more than ephemeral — a very subjective judgment, to be sure — have been included, and I have cast more than a passing glance at the work of my contemporaries and colleagues in the scholarly evangelical world. On the latter score, there is ground for great encouragement and hope that at last younger evangelicals are making some sort of impact on the literature. It has been possible this time to group articles together,

suggesting a concentration of interest in specific areas.

### Old Testament

Pride of place goes to D. J. Wiseman's magisterial survey 'Law and Order in Old Testament Times' (*VE* 8, 1973, pp. 5-21), with its special emphasis on the Mesopotamian background of law and history-writing. The dictum *ex oriente lex* is no less true than its familiar counterpart. Several studies throw light on central OT themes (*e.g.* 'The Exodus' by R. E. Nixon [*ExpT* 85.3, 1973, pp. 72-5], concluding that the event is both historical and redemptive and that both adjectives are complementary). Others throw light on troublesome textual matters; L. C. Allen's 'More Cuckoos in the Textual Nest' (*JTS* 24.1, 1973, pp. 69-73) resumes where an earlier article left off, and passes on to consider 2 Kings 23:5; Jeremiah 17:3, 4; Micah 3:3; 6:16, LXX; 2 Chronicles 20:25, LXX. D. J. A. Clines takes a close linguistic look at Psalm 19 in the light of Genesis 2:9, 17; 3:5ff. in 'The Tree of Knowledge and the Law of Yahweh' (*VT* 24.1, 1974, pp. 8-14). H. G. M. Williamson contributes 'A Note on I Chron. 7:12' (*VT* 23, 1973, pp. 375-9).

D. J. A. Clines (in *JBL* 93.1, 1974, pp. 22-40) writes