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The Significance of the Phrase 'Fishers of Men' in the Synoptic Gospels.

D. Rudman

The metaphor "fishers of men" in the call narrative involving Simon, Andrew, James and John is usually understood to describe the missionary activity of the early church. An understanding of the chaotic nuances associated with the sea in this metaphor, and of the different ways in which Jesus confronts chaos and commissions the disciples to do so, reveals that it is multivalent. While it may refer to preaching the gospel, "fishing for men" can also refer to the activities of healing, raising the dead, or exorcism.

I. *Introduction*

The story of Jesus' call of the disciples Simon, Andrew, James and John in Matt 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:3-11 is not generally recognised as a problematic passage in terms of its interpretation or theology. Most debate has in fact centred on the historicity of the events described in the narrative, with some arguing that the story is essentially based on an eyewitness account, while others counter that it is purely legendary in nature.

Among the latter, Bultmann is the most extreme proponent of the view that Jesus' call to the fishermen is an "ideal scene" arising out of the metaphor "fishers of men" (Matt 4:19; Mark 1:17; Luke 5:10).[1] Ironically, the same metaphor is seen by the former as evidence for the historicity of this vignette. Elsewhere in the OT, the image of fishing for human prey is always negative (Jer 16:16 cf. Ezek 29:4-5; Amos 4:2; Hab 1:14-17).[2] Accordingly, the

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[1] R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 28.

[2] W. Wuellner, *The Meaning of "Fishers of Men"* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), pp. 88-133; C. W. F. Smith argues on this basis (and

argument goes, the metaphor would not have been used by Jesus unless it was suggested by what Simon and his fellows were actually doing. The detailed nature of the narrative in terms of the actions of the characters ("casting a net...fishermen...fishers of men...in a boat, mending their nets") also, for Cranfield, suggests an historical reminiscence. For him, therefore, what we have here is not a fictional narrative but Petrine eyewitness.[3]

Adopting a stance somewhere between both poles is Anderson, who sees Bultmann's proposition as merely speculative, but also rightly points out the dubious nature of Cranfield's view that the narrative details betoken Petrine eyewitness. In fact, the most notable aspect of the narrative is the bareness of the information provided. Jesus arrives, calls his disciples-to-be, and they leave everything and follow him. There is no debate, there is no reflection on the consequences for them or their families (Simon at least seems to be married, since he has a mother-in-law [Matt 8:14-15; Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38-39]), nor is there any reference to the psychology of the participants in the drama.[4] Possibly, as Anderson suggests, there is an historical kernel to the story. However, it has now become

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comparing 1QH V 7-8; Matt 13:47-50) that the brothers' task is to summon people for judgment rather than to win them for the kingdom of God ("Fishers of Men" *HTR* 52 [1959], pp. 187-203). This view has not found favour since it militates against the plain sense of the text.

[3] C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p. 70. G. Klein, "Die Berufung des Petrus," *ZNW* 58 (1967), pp. 1-44; W. Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (THNT 2; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1977), pp. 54-55; D. A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13* (WBC 33A; Dallas: Word, 1993), p. 76; C. S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 150-51).

[4] H. Anderson, *The Gospel of Mark* (NCBC; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1976), p. 87; E. Best, *Mark: The Gospel as Story* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1988), pp. 64, 83.

generally accepted that this is beyond the power of the biblical scholar to verify.[5]

II. *The Significance of the Fishing Metaphor*

For all the commentators noted so far, the central aspect of the call narrative is the metaphor "fishers of men", derived from the stated occupations of Simon, Andrew, James and John. However, remarkably little (other than the article by Smith mentioned in n. 2) has been written about the significance of this expression. Instead, there is a scholarly consensus that it is simply a neat adaptation of the negative OT usages reapplied to the missionary work of the early church.

While I do not take issue with this viewpoint at a fundamental level, it seems to me that the image of the disciples of Jesus fishing for men has a deeper resonance with OT theology than has hitherto been assumed by commentators on this passage, and that this has led to a more superficial reading of the narrative than its author intended. In order to demonstrate this assertion, it will firstly be necessary to examine the characterisation of the sea in OT and NT texts (including the gospels) and to make some suggestions on the basis of this and other texts about the nature of Jesus' mission.

(a) *The Sea*

While it is true that some texts in the OT stress the idea that the sea is part of God's Creation (Ps 95:5), by far the majority express the view of creation as a process in which Yahweh placed limits on the elements of chaos (especially the sea and darkness) and thereby established a place in which life could be sustained. The twin characteristics of the uncreated world in Gen 1:2 are darkness and the deep. God's first actions are to create light and establish

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[5] Recent scholarship tends to steer clear of questions relating to historicity. Note here the carefully chosen words of M. Davies: "Simon and his brother Andrew are described as fishermen, which allowed Jesus to interpret their calling metaphorically to become 'fishers of people', that is, missionaries" (*Matthew* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993], p. 47).

boundaries for darkness (i.e. the creation of day and night [Gen 1:4-5]), and to divide the waters and gather the lower waters to one place (i.e. the creation of the sky and dry land [Gen 1:6-10]).[6] The story of the Flood (Genesis 6-8) represents a literal undoing of creation by God. In Gen 7:20-21, the fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven are unstopped and all land based life is erased as the chaos waters assume their natural space. Noah's ark, with its human and animal cargo, has effectively become the cosmos. Appropriately, the emergence of this cargo is depicted as a new creation. God blesses Noah and his sons, as was the case with the first humans (Gen 9:1 cf. 1:28), and they are given dominion over the animal kingdom (9:2 cf. 1:28). In Gen 9:17, God orders the animals to emerge from the ark, "every living thing" (כל החיה, cf. Gen 1:20-21, 24), "bird" (עוף, cf. 2:20-21, 26), "beast" (בהמה, cf. 2:24-26) and "every creeping think that creeps" (כל הרמץ הרמץ, cf. 2:26) so that they can "swarm" (שרץ, cf. 1:20-21) and "be fruitful and multiply" (פרו ורבו, cf. 1:22), in a replay of P's creation story.[7]

Although there are a few texts in the OT that represent the sea in a positive light (Isa 48:18; Ps 104; 25), the identification of the deep with the forces of chaos elsewhere makes clear the negative way in which the sea was viewed by most Israelites. Water imagery could be used to characterise the hostility of surrounding nations (Jer 6:23 cf. Ps 65:8 [Eng. 7]; Isa 8:5-8; 17:12-14),[8] while the plotting of the wicked could be compared to the restless sea (Isa 57:20). Both the nations and the wicked are viewed as representatives of chaos (i.e.

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[6] The parting of the Red Sea was also seen by Second Isaiah as a creative act (Isa 43:16-17; 50:2; 51:9-10). Israel are thereby created as a separate entity for the first time, after being subssumed by the chaotic power of Egypt (on the nations as chaotic entities, see below). It is a nice irony that Pharoah's forces, the representatives of chaos, are themselves engulfed by the chaos waters.

[7] S. Niditch, *Chaos to Cosmos: Studies in Biblical Patterns of Creation* (Chico: Scholars, 1985), p. 11.

[8] E. R. Follis, "Sea" in *ABD* 5.1059.

of anti-creational forces) because they disrupt the order that Yahweh has intended for the world.

The negative representation of the sea in the OT finds several echoes in the NT. In Ps 104:7-9, an ancient author describes the moment of creation when "at (Yahweh's) rebuke the waters fled...(He) set a boundary they cannot pass..." (cf. Jer 5:22; Job 38:8-10). The story of Jesus' calming of the storm in Mark 4:35-41 makes use of the motif of the forces of chaos (there the wind and waves) being stilled with a rebuke (ἐπετίμησεν, v. 39) and a command to be silent, just as in the LXX translation of Ps 104:7 (ἐπιτιμήσεωι).[9] Jesus reenacts the creation as a sign that he has divine power, and perhaps that his eschatological mission is one of reforming the creation. The terror of his companions in v. 41 ("Who is this? Even the wind and waves obey him!") is based on the premise that Jesus has performed the action of a god.[10] Jesus' mastery over the deep may also be witnessed by Matt 14:22-33; Mark 6:47-51, in which Jesus walks across the sea to save his disciples, once more at the mercy of an unpredictable sea. Again, echoes of the theme of chaos are evident in this story since the activity is said to take place at night (Matt 14:23, 25; Mark 6:47-48). For the biblical authors, night was the time when the power of chaos was at its height: thieves operated (Job 24:14; Jer 49:9; Matt 24:43; I Thess 5:2) and the wicked carried out their plots (Job 38:12-13). Paul contrasts the immorality of the night-time (τα ἔργα του σκότους, "deeds of darkness") with the law-abiding behaviour that marks the daylight hours (Rom 13:12-13) and Luke sees a special significance in Jesus' arrest at night ("Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. but this is your hour—when darkness reigns" [Luke 22:53]).[11] Given the

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[9] E. Schweizer, *The Good News According to Mark* (London: SCM, 1970), p. 110.

[10] Wind does not really appear in the OT as an expression of chaos, although the phrase רוח אלהים in Gen 1:2 may mean "mighty wind" (so NEB) rather than "spirit of God." If so this would constitute a clear usage of the term in a chaotic context.

[11] M. L. Barré, "Night" in K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, P. W. van der Horst (eds.), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Leiden/Grand Rapids: Brill/Eerdmans, 1999), p. 624.

chaotic context, the disciples unsurprisingly think Jesus is an escapee from the netherworld when he walks across the waters to them (Matt 14:26; Mark 6:49). This adds to the sense of chaos since death was also seen by biblical authors as a manifestation of chaos. Death is a reversal of creation. The lifebreath granted by the Creator to the individual returns to the Creator at the time of death (Eccl 12:7 cf. Gen 2:7). Sheol, the place where the essence of the individual resides after death, is a place of dust (Job 17:16; 21:26) and silence (Pss 31:17-18; 94:17; 115:17; Isa 47:5). It is a sterile, lifeless place, not unlike the land in Gen 2:5 before the creation of humanity (cf. also Gen 1:9-10). As the abode of the uncreated (that is, of those whose lifebreath has been taken back by the Creator), Sheol stands outside creation and is equated with chaos. Thus, it is associated with darkness (Job 17:13 cf. Lam 3:6; Job 18:18), and, like the chaos waters of Gen 7:11; 8:2; Isa 24:8, is fitted with portals (Isa 38:10; Pss 9:14 [Eng. 13]; Job 38:17) and bars (Jon 2:7 [Eng. 6]; Job 38:10) to prevent the escape of its inhabitants. The association of Sheol with chaos led some biblical writers to use the metaphor of the individual being engulfed by the sea to characterise Death (Jon 2:3-10 [Eng. 2-9] cf. Pss 42:8; 69:2-3, 15-16; 88:7-8; Job 38:16-18). In eschatological texts, the defeat of Death is a vital part of the wider defeat of chaos (Isa 25:8; 26:19; Dan 12:1-3).[12]

The negative characterisation of the sea in the NT may also be seen in the book of Revelation. It is no surprise that the chaos monsters representing the nations in Daniel 7 and the first of the beasts in Revelation 13 appear from out of the sea. Appropriately, with the final victory of God over chaos and the reformation of the creation, the sea is dried up (Rev 21:1 cf. Sib 5:447-48; AssMos 10)—that is, the chaotic power it represents is destroyed and creation finally perfected. Incidentally, night also ceases to exist in this new creation (Rev 22:5 cf. 21:25; Isa 60:18-12; Zech 14:7).

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[12] Cf. D. Rudman, "Reflections on a Half-Created World: The Sea, Night and Death in the Bible," *BBS* 19 (2000), pp. 33-42; "The Use of Water Imagery in Descriptions of Sheol," *ZAW* 113 (2001), pp. 240-44.

(b) *Synthesis*

All of this theology of creation, order and chaos feeds into the apparently simple metaphor of Simon, Andrew, James and John as "fishers of men." These four who are to become Jesus' first disciples are used to risking their lives among the elements of chaos, for the fishermen of the Sea of Galilee[13] not only put out in boats on dangerous waters, but habitually did so during the hours of darkness (cf. Luke 5:5; John 21:3). I suggest that the ultimate significance of this metaphor extends beyond the simplistic "disciples = fishermen, unbelieving humanity = fish" parallel. In the light of the OT and NT evidence put forward here, it would be more appropriate to imagine their new role, as fishers of men, as being to pluck other human beings from their subjugation to chaos. This idea was put forward almost half a century ago in a brief note by Manek. However, perhaps because he did not expand on how he envisioned humanity as subject to chaos, it has not found favour among subsequent scholars.[14] Underlying the theology of the OT and NT texts dealing with the sea (and especially those with an eschatological slant) is the idea that the powers of chaos represent a continuing threat to the created order. In fact, this theme is also prominent in the synoptic gospels, especially in Jesus' confrontations with demonic forces. Some exploration of this theme is appropriate, since it may help us to understand how the original NT authors might have construed the mission of the earliest disciples.

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[13] An interesting observation is made by M. D. Hooker (*The Gospel According to St. Mark* [London: Black, 1991], p. 59), who notes that Mark always refers to the lake of Galilee as a "sea" (θάλασσα) whereas the expected term would be λίμνη ("lake"). Although it is true that Aristotle once uses θάλασσα in the sense of lake (*Meteorologica* 351a 9), it seems likely that Mark is emphasising the chaotic associations of fishing on the sea.

[14] J. Manek, "Fishers of Men," *NovT* 2 (1958), pp. 138-41.

(i) *Demonic Powers*

Jesus' confrontation with the powers of chaos is given its most explicit expression in those scenes in which he comes face to face with Satan or other representatives of the demonic. In the OT, wilderness areas were seen as places of chaos or uncreation because they are uninhabitable by (that is, hostile to) human beings or normal animal life (so, e.g., the use of the term תהו in Gen 1:2 and Deut 32:10; Job 6:18; 12:24; Isa 24:10; Isa 45:18). In the NT, demons are depicted as wandering in desert areas (Matt 12:43). Appropriately, it is in the wilderness, Satan's own territory, that Jesus confronts Satan (Matt 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13). Yet, the power of chaos is at its most disturbing for the biblical authors in those scenes that show how it can insinuate itself into the normal, ordered world. This ability is most clearly seen in those passages describing Jesus' healing ministry, where the line drawn between sickness and possession by evil spirits is often indistinct (cf. Matt 4:23-25; 8:16-17; 10:1; Mark 1:34; 6:13).[15] By casting out demons and/or healing the sick, Jesus is seen to confront the chaos manifested in everyday life and to impose order. Thus, for example, by cleansing lepers (cf. esp. Matt 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-17), Jesus reintegrates those cast out of society back into the ordered world that had rejected them. By casting out demons (e.g. Matt 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-12; Luke 8:26-33), those likewise forced to live outside society (here, among the dead, and therefore in another chaotic place, Matt 8:28; Mark 5:1; Luke 8:27) are reintegrated by Jesus (Mark 5:19; Luke 8:39)

(ii) *The Authorities*

Less explicit, but nevertheless evident to the careful reader, is the equation of the authorities (especially the religious authorities) with the realm of chaos. Earlier in this article, I have noted the equivalence of death and chaos in both OT and NT texts, and just

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[15] See the discussion by D. G. Reese ("Demons" in *ABD* 2, pp. 140-41) and J. G. Kallas (*The Significance of the Synoptic Miracles* [London: SPCK, 1961], pp. 78-79.

now pointed to how the Gerasene demoniac, overwhelmed by his chaotic possessors, is depicted as living in a place of death and non-existence. The motif of the tomb in this story also makes its appearance in a report in Matthew of a swingeing attack by Jesus on the religious authorities "...you are like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside look beautiful, but inside are full of the bones of the dead and of all kinds of filth. So you also on the outside look righteous to others but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness (ἀνομίας)" (Matt 23:27-28). Put simply, chaos is the absence of creation and/or the absence of law (νόμος). Those who are without law, or who do not obey the law are, by definition, chaotic, and therefore opposed to God (accounting for the many cases noted earlier where the wicked are associated with the sea [Isa 57:20]; or darkness [Job 24:14; 38:12-13; Rom 13:12-13]). Luke's equation of those who arrest Jesus by night with the powers of darkness (Luke 22:53) makes a similar point about the ultimate allegiances of the religious authorities, not to God and order, but to chaos and evil (a point made the more clearly by the fact that Luke has Satan, who has taken over Judas, conferring with the temple authorities about how to do away with Jesus [Luke 22:3]).

(iii) *The Nations*

As the Psalmist hints, an Israel subject to the dominion of the nations was a sign of a world in chaos (conversely, an independent Israel ruled by a just king could be seen as a perfection of creation [Isa 11:1-9]). For many OT authors, Israel was a microcosm of creation, and the hostile nations that surrounded it equivalent to the waters that continually sought to engulf the created world. The image of the nations as chaotic in nature has a particular resonance in eschatological texts such as Daniel 7, where four composite beasts arise from out of the sea. Commentators differ as to the details of interpretation on this text, but almost all agree that, for the author of Daniel, these represent the kings of the chaotic empires that held Israel in thrall from the time of the exile.[16] A similar

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[16] J. A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (ICC; Edinburgh: Clark, 1927), p. 285; A. Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel* (Atlanta: Knox, 1979), p. 138; J. J. Collins, *Seers, Sybils &*

interpretation is generally placed on the chaos monsters in Revelation (i.e. that they represent Rome and/or various of its emperors), which are also connected with the sea.[17]

The gospel writers are, however, generally more circumspect about their assessment of the Roman Empire (Acts 1:6 is more than a little evasive about the restoration of Israel, and Matt 22:21; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25 all quote the same saying counselling acquiescence to the Roman system of taxation).[18] Nevertheless, there is at least one hint, in the narrative of the Gerasene demoniac, that even to the gospel communities, the Romans could be identified with the forces of chaos. When questioned by Jesus, the demons inhabiting the Gerasene demoniac give their name as "Legion" (Mark 5:9; Luke 8:30—this detail is apparently suppressed in Matthew). In both gospels, the explanation offered for the name is linked to the multitude of demons that have taken up residence in the victim. However, one may also see the possessed man as a metaphor for an Israel that is under the control of Rome's legions (cf. again, the depiction of the armies of the nations with chaos imagery in Jer

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Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism (Leiden: Brill, 1997), p. 145. A dissonant voice which rejects any link with chaos is A. J. Ferch ("Daniel 7 & Ugarit: A Reconsideration," *JBL* 99 [1980], p. 75).

[17] J. P. M. Sweet, *Revelation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), p. 208; A. Y. Collins, *Crises and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), p. 59.

[18] A. E. J. Rawlinson (*The Gospel According to St. Mark* [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1925], p. 165) and B. H. Branscombe (*The Gospel of Mark* [London: Methuen, 1937], p. 213-14) both draw attention to Jesus' bald acknowledgement of the fact that all coinage was ultimately the property of the ruler whose portrait it bore. No comment is made on the rightness or wrongness of Caesar's rule, and certainly there is no recognition implied of the idea that temporal rulers possessed a divinely-given authority as we find in Paul (Rom 8:1ff.). On Acts, cf. e.g. F. F. Bruce (*The Book of the Acts* [London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1965], p. 38).

6:22-23; Isa 8:5-8; 17:12-14; Ps 65:8 [Eng. 7]).[19] Arguably, this identification links the Romans with the eschatological foe of Israel.

(iv) *Death*

Again, it has already been noted that Death is seen in many OT texts, especially those with an eschatological slant, as a manifestation of chaos. There are stories in the gospels of Jesus' resurrection of individuals as part of his overarching healing ministry. If the death of the individual can be conceived as a movement from the world of creation to that of uncreation, that is, to the chaotic, then the resurrection of the individual can be seen as a form of re-creation, a reemergence of the individual from chaos. By resurrecting the daughter of the synagogue leader (Matt 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-41; Luke 5:21-41) or Lazarus (John 11:38-44), Jesus once again demonstrates his mastery over chaos and his status as a creator-figure radically opposed to chaos.

Appropriately, the narratives concerning Jesus' own death in the synoptic gospels (Matt 27:45-54; Mark 15:33-39; Luke 23:44-47) also make much use of chaos imagery. It is significant, for example, that as Jesus dies on the cross, all three synoptics relate that a darkness gradually spread over the earth. In essence, the Passion Narrative as told in the synoptics may be read in the light of the OT chaoskampf tradition as a text in which as Jesus the creator-figure weakens, the power of chaos over the world increases. The narratives culminate with the tearing of the temple curtain (Matt 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45). Traditionally, this is seen either as indicating the future destruction of the temple, or as indicating the end of temple ritual and the traditional barriers between God and

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[19] J. Marcus (*Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB 27; New York: Doubleday, 1999], pp. 351-52) notes in the context of the swine into which Jesus drives the demons that the wild boar was the symbol of the legion posted in Palestine at this time. Cf. also B. Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 183.

Humanity.[20] However, reference to Josephus, who states that the curtain bore a representation of the cosmos (BJ 5.212-13 cf. the four colours of the curtain in 2 Chr 3:14, which are linked by Josephus to the four elements that make up the cosmos),[21] suggests that the moment of Jesus's death sees a rending of creation prior to its reformation, under a new set of rules, with Jesus' resurrection (that is, with his own personal conquest over death).[22]

III. *Conclusions*

In the light of some of the observations above about the nature of Jesus' mission and its interaction with the forces of chaos, it is now possible to see some of the ways in which the disciples might be viewed as "fishers of men." In Mark 6:7-13, the disciples are commissioned to follow Jesus's example. It is said that "he gave them authority over the unclean spirits...(and) they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. They cast out many demons, and anointed many who were sick and cured them." In Matt 10:8, the disciples are told "Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons." The disciples become fishers of men in their preaching activity, since by doing so they draw people from a course which is opposed to God (and hence chaotic—possibly criticism of contemporary religious authorities is also implied here) and place them into alignment with God. However, by curing the

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[20] The view that the tearing of the curtain signifies the destruction of the temple, is adopted by Rawlinson (*St. Mark*, p. 238), Branscombe (*Mark*, p. 299) and H. M. Jackson "The Death of Jesus in Mark and the Miracle from the Cross," *NTS* 33 [1987], pp. 16-37). Among those who take the figurative approach are Schweizer (*The Good News Acccording to Mark* (London: SCM, 1970, p. 354) and B. M. F. van Iersel (*Mark: A Reader-response Commentary* [JSNTS 164; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998], p. 474).

[21] M. Barker, "Beyond the Veil of the Temple: The High Priestly Origins of the Apocalypses," *SJT* 51 (1998), pp. 3-4.

[22] Cf. D. Rudman, "The Crucifixion as Chaoskampf," *Bib* 84 (2003), pp. 102-07.

sick, especially those with maladies which place them at the margins of society, they also snatch people back from chaos. The leper denied social contact since the impurity associated with leprosy was transmissible (m. Meg. 1:7; m. Neg. 8:8; 13:17; m. Kelim 1:4), the maimed who must beg for their living rather than engage in the everyday occupations that maintain the fabric of society (e.g. Mark 10:46-52 [note the location of the blind man by the roadside *outside* the city]), the demon-possessed who are chained up or outcast (e.g. Mark 5:2-4), the dead (Matt 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-41; Luke 5:21-41):[23] these are the fish for whom the disciples also spread their nets in the gospels (Mark 6:7-13; Matt 10:1, 7-8), and subsequently in the book of Acts (3:1-9; 5:15-16; 20:7-12). In a world where chaos manifests itself in a hundred guises, the fishing metaphor applied to the disciples must also be seen as multivalent.

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[23] So Hooker (*Mark*, p. 72), who notes that "...those who were excluded from the community because of their infirmity are restored to membership of God's people (1:44; 5:15, 34)." Cf. also R. H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on his Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), p. 67.