

9-1-1966

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Frederick W. Danker

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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Recommended Citation

Danker, Frederick W. (1966) "Mark 1:45 and the Secrecy Motif," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 37, Article 42.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol37/iss1/42>

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Mark 1:45 and the Secrecy Motif

FREDERICK W. DANKER

The concluding verse of Mark's pericope of the healing of the leper (1:40-45) contains two challenging problems. The first is the question of the reference for the phrase *ὁ δὲ ἐξελθὼν*. Does Mark have in mind Jesus or the leper? The second is imbedded in the result clause, *ὥστε μηκέτι αὐτὸν δύνασθαι φανερωῶς εἰς πόλιν εἰσελθεῖν, ἀλλ' ἔξω ἐπ' ἐρήμοις τόποις ἦν*. How is it that Jesus is unable to appear openly in a town and must remain in deserted areas, yet in the very next verses (2:1-2) He is harassed by crowds at Capernaum? Each of these problems is discussed in literature on Mark, but no solution that does justice to the relation between the two has yet been offered.

With respect to the first, Erich Klostermann concluded that it is best to interpret Jesus as the subject of *ἐξελθὼν*.¹ The thought is similar, he observes, to that expressed in v. 38, and a change of subject is obviated. Vincent Taylor² inclines toward the more generally accepted view that the leper is meant, who, contrary to Jesus'

command, broadcast the story of his healing. This view finds further support in a subsequent response to a healing (7:3-6). Certainty in the interpretation depends, however, on exploration of the second problem.

Is the result clause merely a statement in line with 3:7-9, that the proclamation of Jesus' activity arouses great popular curiosity? Johannes Weiss³ concluded that Mark used the story of the leper to give expression to his dogmatic view that Jesus discouraged the spread of His fame. K. L. Schmidt⁴ questioned this interpretation on the grounds that v. 45 finds a natural place in the context. Erich Klostermann thought that a blend of two ideas has entered into the story: (1) that Jesus did not enter into a city but into a desert place; (2) that He did appear privately, but not openly.⁵ Mark 2:1-2 points up the difficulty. Jesus does enter a town, namely Capernaum, although, it is true, after some days (*δι' ἡμερῶν*, v. 1); and He does not keep His privacy. But Klostermann's suggestion, instead of explaining the difficulty, merely describes it, and a solution is to be sought from a different quarter.

I

I suggest, therefore, that it is possible to see in 1:45 a reference to hostility.

¹ *Das Evangelium des Markus* (in *Handbuch zum Neuen Testament*, III), 3d ed. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1936), p. 21; cf. Wilmoughby C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew* (ICC), 3d ed. (Edinburg: T. T. Clark, 1912), p. 76.

² *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 2d ed. (New York: St. Martins, 1966), p. 190. Taylor calls attention to Luther's rendering of "Geschichte" for *τὸν λόγον*.

³ *Das Älteste Evangelium* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1903), p. 152.

⁴ *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu* (Berlin: Trowitzsch and Son, 1919), pp. 66-67.

⁵ Klostermann, p. 21.

Mr. Danker is associate professor of exegetical theology (New Testament) at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

Schmidt thought that the adverb φανερώς was added by the evangelist to ease the transition to 2:1,⁶ but a different purpose is suggested by the appearance of this word in John 7:10. John's account states that Jesus went up to the feast οὐ φανερώς ἀλλὰ ὡς ἐν κρυπτῷ. The context gives the answer. According to John 7:1 the enemies of Jesus seek to kill Him.⁷ A related circumstance appears to lead to Jesus' withdrawal in the Markan narrative, and the apparent conflict between 1:45 and 2:1 vanishes. For reasons of personal safety, suggests Mark, Jesus steers clear of the towns and keeps to the countryside. The phrase (καὶ ἤρχοντο πρὸς αὐτὸν πάντοθεν, 1:45) is no longer in opposition to the retirement expressed in the result clause. Jesus does not escape the crowds but the enemy. Thus the program expressed in 1:38 is continued without interruption. The transition to 2:1 is made easily. The phrase δι' ἡμερῶν is a further clue to the situation. Jesus dares to re-enter Capernaum but prudently keeps in retirement (ἡκούσθη ὅτι ἐν οἴκῳ ἔστιν). Then we are reintroduced to the crowds, and Jesus does not withdraw but speaks the message (καὶ ἐλάλει αὐτοῖς τὸν λόγον).

But who are the enemies, and what has motivated their hostility? The story of the leper provides the clue. Instead of shouting "Unclean! begone!" Jesus welcomes the leper in apparent violation of the Law (see Lev. 13:45-46; cf. Lam. 4:15 and Mishnah Negaim 3, 1), and goes to the length of what might seem unnecessary personal contact (ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ ἤψατο, v. 41). The early community

seems to have been aware of the problem raised by such contact and therefore accentuated the zeal of Jesus for observance of the Mosaic code.⁸ Along these lines we are to explain the introduction of the strong word ἐμβριμησάμενος (v. 43). It is the community's way of underscoring how sternly Jesus commanded the leper to tell no one, but to go directly to the priest, in accordance with Lev. 14. The authorities, however, did not hear this part of the story. According to the Markan account the leper, instead of following orders, told the story of his healing throughout the area (v. 45), with the result that Jesus could not enter a town openly. The implication is that the religious authorities were aroused by the direct violation of the law in Jesus' personal contact with the leper, since that was the primary ingredient of the leper's account (τὸν λόγον, v. 45).⁹ Hence Jesus must receive the crowds elsewhere in order to carry out the program of proclamation mentioned in v. 38. That He does this in deserted places (ἐπ' ἐρήμοις τόποις, v. 45) is not without point. In 1:13 Jesus encounters Satan in the desert. But now the locale of demonic opposition is reversed. The place of temptation is now the city, and the deserted area is a place of refuge.¹⁰

Statements in the narrative preceding

⁸ According to Weiss, the story as it originally circulated may have contained only a request for affidavit of purity and subsequently the healing element was introduced (pp. 152 to 153).

⁹ Cf. T. A. Burkill, "Anti-Semitism in St. Mark's Gospel," *Novum Testamentum*, III (1959), p. 41, n. 3.

¹⁰ The word περιζῶ is used only of the religious opposition after Mark 1:13; see 8:11; 10:2; 12:15. On ἐρημος, see Mark 6:31, 32, 35.

⁶ Schmidt, p. 66.

⁷ See also John 8:59; 10:39; 11:53-54.

the pericope of the leper and the subsequent account in Chapter 2 confirm this interpretation of Mark's intent. According to 1:22 Jesus does not teach "as the scribes" do. This criticism gives advance notice of the conflict that is shortly to be described more precisely. In the pericope immediately following that of the healing of the leper the battlelines are drawn, as the Scribes question Jesus' authority to forgive sins (2:6-7; cf. v. 10). This notice of the developing opposition is reinforced by the account of the response to the kind of company kept by Jesus (2:16-18). Here the Pharisees are specifically introduced (καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς τῶν Φαρισαίων), who charge that Jesus eats with publicans and sinners. A further charge of failing to observe the fasts is introduced in the form of a question in v. 18. Jesus' answer clearly indicates that two points of view are coming to a clash (vv. 19-22). The account of the show bread (vv. 23-28) underscores the conflict. Since it is the habit of Jesus to do much of His work in the synagogues,¹¹ the opposition puts Him under observation in the hope of finding some charge against Him (3:2). Their demonic intention is clearly expressed in v. 6: "The Pharisees forthwith counseled with the Herodians how they might kill Him." In response to this hostility Jesus withdraws as in 1:45, this time from the city to the seashore, and receives the crowds. His hospitality is apparent from the fact that He healed many (3:10). The result is that He is forced again to withdraw under the pressure of the popular claim on His energies (v. 9).

Further support for our explanation of

¹¹ Cf. Mark 1:21, 23, 29, 39; 3:1; 6:2.

1:45 is found in the Matthaean version of the pericope of the healing of the leper. Although he has anticipated the opposition of the Scribes and Pharisees in his account of the activity of John the Baptist (3:7), he reserves the development of the conflict theme in relation to Jesus for a later stage in his narrative.¹² For this reason he does not include Mark 1:45 in his record of the healing of the leper (Matt. 8:1-4) and recites in 9:2-8 Mark's story of the healing of the paralytic (Mark 2:1-12), but only after considerable shifting of Markan material. In view of the writer's experience with scribal thought,¹³ it is probable that he understood the legal issues involved, and his omission of Mark 1:45 is an indirect witness for the interpretation here advanced.

Luke, in contrast with Matthew, retains Mark 1:45, with the more general statement, διήρχετο δὲ μᾶλλον ὁ λόγος περὶ αὐτοῦ (Luke 5:15), and with the significant addition that Jesus, while in the desert, spent His time praying (v. 16). A study of all Luke's other statements about Jesus at prayer indicates that he also understands the issue suggested by Mark. In 3:21 he adds to Mark's account of the baptism (Mark 1:9-11) that Jesus was praying. This is expressed immediately after the account of John's arrest (vv. 19-20), which Luke considered so important that he may have for this reason not

¹² The harsh words spoken about the "hypocrites" in Matt. 5:20; 6:1, 5, 16 are confided to the disciples (Matt. 5:1-2), a fact ignored in Allen's comments (p. 75) on the Matthaean account in relation to Mark.

¹³ Cf. Frederick C. Grant, *The Gospels: Their Origin and Growth* (New York: Harper, 1957), pp. 141-43.

included Mark's account of the death of John the Baptist (Mark 6:17-29) in favor of the recital in Luke 3:19-20.¹⁴ The imprisonment of John the Baptist foreshadows the fate of Jesus,¹⁵ and thus the conflict between Jesus and the authorities is anticipated. After introducing Jesus at prayer in 9:18, Luke goes on to record Jesus' prophecy of His death, with the instrumentality spelled out clearly (v.22). Again in 9:28, alone of the evangelists, Luke observes that Jesus was praying at the time of His transfiguration, and the reason is apparent from his singular addition of the content of the conversation of Moses and Elijah—they speak about Jesus' coming death in Jerusalem (v.31). Prayer and conflict are viewed in close association. Again, the account of the Beelzebub controversy (11:14-26) is preceded by the mention of Jesus at prayer (11:1). And the scene of Jesus at prayer in Gethsemane (22:44) requires no comment. The battle lines are formed. Luke, in short, underscores the Markan suggestion of the beginning of conflict.¹⁶

¹⁴ For details on the function of John the Baptist in Luke's narrative, see Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, trans. Geoffrey Buswell (New York: Faber & Faber, 1960), pp. 22—27.

¹⁵ Note Luke's deletion of Mark 9:11-13; cf. Luke 9:9.

¹⁶ In contrast with Matthew, Luke locates the delivery of Jesus' memorable sermon "on the plain" (ἐπὶ τόπου πεδινῷ, 6:17). Whereas Matthew shows Jesus retreating with His disciples to a mountain place, Luke does not separate Jesus from the crowds. His record of the sermon includes woes (vv. 24-26) aimed directly at some of his hearers (Matthew's first woe is pronounced in 11:21). Other instruction is directed at "those who hear" (Luke 6:27). Luke 8:8,21; 11:28; 14:35 indicate that the expression is to be understood as responsive hearing.

II

It remains now to discuss the much-debated question of the "Messianic secret."

According to Wilhelm Wrede, who was the first to undertake a thorough analysis of the problem of Mark's frequent references to Jesus' injunctions to silence, Mark has borrowed a theological view current in certain circles to which he belonged. A major difficulty encountered by early Christians was the problem that only after the resurrection did the disciples appear to understand that Jesus was truly the Messiah. Wrede concludes that Mark attempts to resolve the difficulty by representing Jesus as keeping His Messiahship a secret, and that this dogmatic construction is imposed on the records. Variations of this hypothesis continue to appear in discussions of the Markan account,¹⁷ but a fresh examination of the passage in question is required in view of the larger issue that appears to be connected in Mark's mind with the charges of legal impropriety noted in the healing of the leper.

The relevant passages in Mark are: 1:25; 1:34; 1:44; 3:12; 4:11-12 (34); 5:43; 7:24; 7:36; 8:26; 8:30; 9:9,30.¹⁸

¹⁷ See Taylor's discussion and the literature cited, pp. 122—124; for critique of Taylor's "biographical" interest, see T. A. Burkill, "Concerning St. Mark's Conception of Secrecy," *The Hibbert Journal*, LV (1957), 154—58. Wrede reviews a number of explanations, pp. 37—51. For critique of E. Sjöberg, *Der Verborgene Menschensohn in den Evangelien* (Lund: Gleerup, 1955), see T. A. Burkill, "The Hidden Son of Man in St. Mark's Gospel," *ZNW*, LII (1961), 206—13.

¹⁸ Passages which introduce the motif of the disciples' misunderstanding are not included here. Methodologically, the question of the misunderstanding of the disciples (cf. Mark 4:13, 40-41; 6:50-52; 7:18; 8:16-21,32; 9:5-6,10,

Of these twelve passages (4:11-12 and 34 are parallel) it is noteworthy that the following explicitly raise the question of Jesus' Messianic person: 1:25; 1:34; 3:12; 8:30; 9:9; or a total of five. Of these, three involve the cure of demoniacs (1:25, 34; 3:12). According to Jewish expectation, the cure of demons would take place

18-19, 32; 10:24; 14:37-41) should be first separated from the silence motif, and then analyzed in relation to it (cf. Joseph B. Tyson, "The Blindness of the Disciples in Mark," *JBL*, LXXX [1961], 261). The prohibition in Mark 9:9, with the proviso, εἰ μὴ ὅταν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐκ νεφῶν ἀναστῆ, appears to be in contradiction with the analysis advanced here. Why should the disciples be discouraged from affirming what the blind man asserts in 10:48-49? It should be observed, however, that the prohibition makes reference to details (ἃ εἶδον) not included in the blind man's expressions, and the further function of the prohibition is to stress Jesus' initiative in permitting His true role to be exposed in due time. Failure to note this last feature led T. A. Burkill to conclude that Mark subjected "his doctrine of the secret to a strain it cannot withstand, the result being that in Mark 14:62 there is actually a disclosure of the Son of Man outside the circle of the initiated" ("The Hidden Son of Man in St. Mark's Gospel," p. 196). Nor does the attempt of Mark to show Jewish officialdom culpable "break" his secrecy motif and make "for a certain inconsistency" (*ibid.*, p. 197); rather, the explicit messianic affirmations in the Passion account are the consistent climax of the hostility previously signaled also by the secrecy motif. Finally, Burkill's surprise at the absence of the silence motif in 2:1-3:6 ("Anti-Semitism in St. Mark's Gospel," p. 40) may be dispelled with the realization that an oblique reference through the silence motif would be otiose where hostility is explicitly described. A command to silence is *never* found in Mark's Gospel within a story that includes the hostile parties. The apparent contradiction in Mark 5:19 to the silence motif is easily resolved in the light of the secrecy-hostility motif. The cured demoniac is to "go to his own house, to his own" and proclaim what the Lord has done. His locale is sufficiently removed in Mark's mind from the centers of opposition.

in the Messianic time.¹⁹ It is also ancient Jewish belief that sicknesses are the result of demonic activity,²⁰ and significantly both the cure of the deaf man (7:36) and the blind man (8:26) are accompanied by commands to silence. We may then add these two instances to the five Christological passages, making a total of seven commands in connection with the Messianic issue. This leaves five passages unaccounted for, namely, 1:44; 4:11-12 (34); 5:43; 7:24; 9:30. Mark 1:44 is part of the pericope under discussion. According to the rabbis, the cure of a leper is God's doing.²¹ It is understandable why, aside from the legal issue, the leper should proceed directly to the priest. The story that he had been healed by Jesus might conceivably add grist to the opposition's mill, "What is Jesus claiming for Himself, the prerogatives of God?" But the legal question is uppermost in the narrative. The other passage is incorporated in the story of the raising of Jairus' daughter (5:43). According to the rabbis, the raising of the dead is also the work of God or the Messiah.²² Again the command to silence is understandable. The circulation of the story would suggest to the

¹⁹ See Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, IV, 1 (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1956), Excursus 21, p. 527.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 504-505; cf. Matt. 9:33 (of a deaf man); 12:22 (blind and deaf). Mark omits a recital of the specific temptations (Mark 1:12-13) to avoid a contradiction with the overt statement of the demons, 5:19.

²¹ See Strack-Billerbeck, IV, 2, Excursus 27, p. 751.

²² Strack-Billerbeck, I, 523-524. But see p. 560 on the same deed ascribed to the rabbis, and see *infra*.

opposition high claims, prejudicial to their interests.²³

Three passages remain: Mark 4:1-12 (34); 7:24; 9:30. The second of these (7:24) is easily explained as a desire to avoid the impression that Jesus exceeds the boundaries of His call to Israel, for the woman is specifically called a Greek, and a Syrophenician by birth (v. 26). The last (9:30) expresses the thought that Jesus did not want His trip through Galilee advertised. The reason is given in 9:31; His death is soon to take place. We shall have more to say about this passage later. Mark 4:11-12 and 34 deal with the problem of Jesus' parabolic instruction. The citation in v. 12 is from Is. 6:9-10. Isaiah is told to "make the heart of this people fat and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts and turn and be healed." It is the leaders of the people, the proud and the haughty, who come under special indictment (cf. Is. 2:11, 17; 3:14, and especially Ch. 28). The people are confused and oppressed (cf. 3:12; 5:7-8). Significantly, in Mark the instruction in parables follows the scribal charge that Jesus is in league with Beelzebub (3:20-30), and it is noteworthy that the first mention of parables occurs in this very pericope of conflict, namely, 3:23: ἐν παραβολαῖς ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς. This is the clue to the interpretation of 4:12. The parabolic instruction is Jesus' response to the unbelief of Israel's leadership. Mark 4:12 does not mean that all the people are under indictment. This is clear from 4:33, where it is stated that Jesus spoke the word in parable, but with the significant

²³ Cf. John 11:47-48, 53.

proviso, καθὼς ἠδύναντο ἀκούειν. In other words, suggests Mark, open speech would hasten the showdown with the leaders, an overt Messianic claim is suppressed to hold off the inevitable hour that Jesus is to meet in His own good time.

We are now prepared to take another look at Mark 9:30, which states that Jesus went through Galilee but did not want His journey advertised. The reason given is that He was instructing His disciples about His death. The fact that Herod was responsible for John the Baptist's death may be a contributing factor (Mark 6:17-28).²⁴ Jesus must die in Jerusalem, not at the hands of Herod. And the disciples have previously been warned about the "leaven" of Herod (8:15).

Our examination of the passages which include commands to silence or suppression of information from the general public reveals that in every instance the problem of conflict with the official leadership of Israel is involved. The question of Jesus' Messiahship is the main issue. This comes out strongly especially in the commands to silence directed to the demons. Mark draws up his entire narrative in such a way that the reader may understand that Jesus chooses the place of battlefield—the

²⁴ Cf. 3:6 (see Taylor, p. 224); 6:14; and see Luke 9:7-10; 13:31. My colleague, Edgar Krentz, alerts me to the fact that in the pericope of the commissioning of the Twelve (6:7-13), which precedes the introduction of Herod, no mention is made of the Kingdom as content of their proclamation. They are to preach and cast out demons (v. 12). The omission (per contra, Luke 9:2) is an indirect silence-hostility motif. In Mark only Jesus proclaims the Kingdom, and not openly after 1:15. In 4:11, 26, 30 and 9:1 only the Twelve or the μαθηταί are addressed. The recognition of the crowd in 11:10 is in accord with the striking change at 10:48, see *infra*.

cross, at the appropriate time. Suppression of the overt Messianic claim on the one hand reveals the judgment that has come over Israel's leadership²⁵ and at the same time holds off the fate of Jesus until the appropriate hour. That this is Mark's literary construction is evident from the narrative which follows 9:30. In 10:48 there is a striking change in the silence motif. Instead of Jesus, it is the people who command the blind man to hold his peace, for he has identified Jesus with the Messianic title, Son of David. Jesus neither says nor does anything to suggest restraint. The sequel explains why. They are near Jerusalem (11:1), and Jesus is prepared now to accept the consequences of His identity. At the conclusion of His apocalyptic discourse, Jesus says, ὁ δὲ ὑμῶν λέγω, πᾶσιν λέγω (13:37). He no longer speaks to the few but to all. There may be in these words a suggestion that the entire Christian community is meant as well as the disciples of Jesus' time, but the contrast with previous statements concerning Jesus' reserve in revelations of this type is significant. Finally, in 14:62 and 15:2, we hear the unreserved admission of the Messianic claim. In response to the high priest's question, whether He is the Christ, Jesus says, ἐγώ εἰμι. And to Pilate's question, "Are you the King of the Jews," He answers οὐ λέγεις. The crucifixion follows hard and fast.

Through his accent on the silence motif Mark succeeds in keeping his reader's attention focused on the final outcome. The early Christian readers, who knew the outcome, would sense the tension as it built up in successive stages. Mark 1:45 is an

²⁵ Cf. G. H. Boobyer, "The Secrecy Motif in St. Mark's Gospel," *New Testament Studies*, VI (1960), 225—235.

important clue to Mark's narrative method. The legal question suggests the real reason for hostility from the religious leadership. A Messianic claim in itself would not necessarily arouse hostility, but once hostility for other reasons takes shape, all of Jesus' activity is suspect and the Messianic question assumes major importance. The hostile leadership wants no part of Jesus.

We have already examined Luke's accent on the hostility motif in the light of his references to Jesus' prayers. His use of the Markan material in which the secrecy motif appears bears out the conclusion reached above. In every instance in which he records a Markan incident which includes this motif, he preserves it in order to reinforce his own accent on the developing hostility against Jesus.²⁶ Thus the commands in Luke 4:35, 41; 5:14, and 8:56 appear in accounts which follow the programmatic pericope, 4:16-30, with its stress on hostility. By placing the rejection at Nazareth ahead of any reference to commands of silence, Luke offers a material motivation for his use of the silence-hostility motif and thereby sharpens the Markan usage. For Mark, as was noted earlier, employs the motif already in 1:25 and 1:34, but except for the evaluation of scribal teaching in 1:22, he does not suggest a convincing motivation until 1:40-45. The verdict on parabolic instruction is understandably retained in Luke 8:10. In 9:21 and 9:36 the Christological issue is the determining factor.

²⁶ The stories of the Syrophenician woman (Mark 7:24-30), the healing of the deaf man (7:32-37), the healing of a blind man (8:22-26), all part of Luke's "Great Omission," and Mark 9:30 are omitted; the last, in order to bring the prophecy of Jesus' death in closer association with the pericope that precedes; cf. Wrede, pp. 176—177.

In Matthew there are four passages parallel to Mark which include the secrecy motif (8:4; 13:13; 16:20; 17:9). The absence in Matt. 8:1-4 of Mark's detail about the effects of the leper's recital was previously noted. The command to silence (8:4) is retained because it confirms the legality of Jesus' action in defense against criticism from Jewish legalists. The explanation of Jesus' parabolic instruction (13:13) is associated with the need for private communication now that the hostility has become overt. 16:20 and 17:9 are parallel to Luke's retention (9:21, 36). Two other passages appear in related Markan contexts, namely 12:16 and 9:30. In 12:16 Matthew omits Mark's reference to the demons,²⁷ and in 9:30 he attaches Mark's command to silence (5:43), which appears in the story of the raising of Jairus' daughter, to the healing of the blind man. The only two other instances in which he includes the Markan account but omits the secrecy motif are 15:21 and 17:22. The absence in 15:21 is understandable in view of Matthew's aim to show that Jesus is the authentic Messiah. Jesus exercises His Lordship also over once-hated Canaan. The omission in 17:22 is perhaps to be traced to what seemed an inexplicable γάῳ.²⁸ On

²⁷ In Matt. 8:16 a directive to silence is omitted to make room for a fulfillment saying, but it reappears in the related account in 12:16, where the specific command to the demons is generalized to apply to all His miracles, in order to introduce a pertinent Isaianic citation.

²⁸ Cf. Matthew's rephrasing (28:1-2) of Mark 16:1-4 with its abrupt γάῳ in v. 4.

the other hand Matthew includes much Markan material that lacks commands to silence but establishes the hostility of the opposition and also introduces, independent of Mark, accounts that carry a similar message (see, for instance, chs. 5—7 and 23). Since it offers the earliest interpretation of Mark, the Lukan and Matthean use of Mark's secrecy-hostility motif aids greatly in confirming the solution proposed in this study.

In summary, Mark does not say that Jesus commands silence concerning His miracles in order to avoid the impression of being a mere miracle-worker, or to avoid undue publicity in order to have more moments of peace with His disciples, or to avoid the impression of being mistaken as a political or a seditious Messiah, or because He wished to express His modesty or to withhold the truth about His person from the world until after the resurrection. Nor does He command the demons to keep silent out of a desire to avoid recognition from such an undesirable source. The "Messianic secret," at least in respect to the commands to silence, is primarily used by Mark to point up the hostility of the religious and political leadership and to mark clearly Jesus' own choice of the destined hour. Whatever ingredients may have been imbedded in the pre-Markan accounts, Mark has utilized them in the interests of a consistent accent on official hostility.

St. Louis, Mo.