

**READING THE GOSPEL OF MARK WITH AFRICAN  
EYES:  
A FRESH LOOK AT THE EXORCISM AND HEALING  
PASSAGES IN MARK**

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**ABSTRACT:** This article examines the Exorcism and Healing passages of the Gospel of Saint Mark. It is based on a research, conducted with Ghanaian worshippers from twenty two London based Ghanaian churches on their reading of those passages. It unearths explanations and applications that are quite different from conventional ones found in Western European scholarship. The findings have deep implications for hermeneutics and cross cultural interpretation of the Gospel

**INTRODUCTION**

The world is indebted to Western scholars with interpretation of the Bible including the Gospel of Mark. Their interpretations have been adopted in all parts of the world including Africa, Asia and Latin America. However, a close observation reveals that these scholars interpret the Biblical texts with their world-views behind them especially on passages pertaining to exorcism and healing. For some of these scholars demons do not exist<sup>1</sup> For others even if demons existed at all, they existed in the time of Jesus and not now.<sup>2</sup> There are others who intimate that people (during the time of Jesus) explained certain phenomena by reference to demons, but suggest that in this contemporary era there is the need to look elsewhere<sup>3</sup> for the causes of such phenomena. They offer psychological, sociological or philosophical interpretations to the activities of demons and spiritual powers, while others maintain that in the ancient world

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<sup>1</sup>J B Cortes and M F Gatti, *The Case Against Possessions and Exorcisms* (New York: Vantage Press, 1975).

<sup>2</sup>See D F Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu, Zweiter Band* (Tuebingens Verlag von C F Osiander, 1836); R Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York: Scribner, 1958); R Bultmann, *The New Testament and Mythology and other Basic Writings* (London: SCM, 1985).

<sup>3</sup>H M Wilson, 'Witch Beliefs and Social Structure', in M Marwick (ed.) *Witchcraft and Sorcery* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982); I M Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion* (London: Routledge, 1989).

demons and other spiritual powers were (and are still) operating<sup>4</sup> and that there is the need to exorcise them.

Based on a research among Ghanaian Christians in several Churches in London, this paper explores the fresh ideas that emerge from African readings of the Gospel of Mark, especially, passages relating to exorcism and healing. As part of the discussion, the paper also examines Western scholars' interpretations of the concerns of Mark in the passages that deal with exorcism and healing. We will at the outset present the concerns of Mark (and what he fails to explore). This will be followed by examining the Western Scholars approach to the concerns of Mark (including the highlighting of what they miss in their interpretations), and there will be Ghanaian readings on Mark (bringing out the fresh ideas they bring to the text).

### **THE CONCERNS OF MARK AND MARKAN COSMOLOGY**

Mark discusses the power and fate of Satan/demons in his Gospel in relation to his cosmology. We will therefore begin by giving a summary of his cosmology. In Mark's world-view, the Spirit Beings are God, Satan, Beelzebul, angels and demons. God is the creator of this world. By his nature he is kind but he can inflict punishment on humanity and punishment can take the form of diseases. Humanity is surrounded by temptations which can come from demons, human desires and the will of human beings. Beelzebul acts on behalf of Satan and Satan is seen as competing with God/Jesus while the angels give support to Jesus in his temptation. In Mark's world-view, there is the belief in demons that can torment, attack and possess people making their lives miserable. These demons can take absolute control of their victims forcing them to act against their will. We will be looking

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<sup>4</sup>F Macnutt, *Deliverance from Evil Spirits* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1996); G H Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus* (Tübingen: J C B Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1993); Van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus* (Leiden: Brill, 1965); R Leivestad, *Christ the Conqueror: Ideas of Conflict and Victory in The New Testament* (London: SPCK, 1965); C. F. Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1989); M F Unger, *Demons in the World Today* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1971); Sydney H T Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons* (Baker Books: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1995); E Ferguson, *Demonology in the Early Christian World* (New Haven: Mellen, 1984).

at two major events in Mark because they are connected to the exorcisms. These events are the Temptation Narrative and the Beelzebul controversy. Mark briefly describes the Temptation narrative in two verses (Mark 1:12-13). For Mark, Jesus and Satan are engaged in a struggle in the Temptation. Mark provides no answer to the outcome of the Temptation. Mark presents Jesus defending himself against the Scribes' accusation. The accusation hinges on the source of his power. Jesus is accused on two counts: being possessed by Beelzebul and by the prince of demons he casts out demons. If the accusations are true the implication will mean that even though Jesus is on the side of Satan (because he is using his power) he is at the same time opposing Satan, thereby causing internal conflict. Jesus in a series of logical arguments disproves these charges indicating that the Scribes have accused him falsely. The implication of Jesus' defence is that he is using the Holy Spirit in casting out demons. Mark presents Jesus dilating on power relations between him and Satan in two parables – The Parable of the Strong man (Satan is strong) and the Parable of the Divided Kingdom (Satan is bound). The impression one gets from Mark's presentation of the Parables is that we have a world where Satan is strong and another where Satan is defeated.

The combination of these two parables creates a tension and this tension is not solved by Mark and might have spawned different moods<sup>5</sup> among Mark's readers. Mark does not give any indication as to when Satan was bound or would be bound.

### **Exorcisms**

Mark presents the exorcism stories in which Jesus exorcises demons. The exorcisms show Jesus attacking the territory of the evil spirit. In Mark 1:21-28, Jesus is teaching in the Synagogue when he is confronted suddenly by an evil spirit. The confrontation takes the form of a series of questions and affirmations (Mark does not explain the significance of the questions and affirmations). Jesus rebukes and casts out the evil spirit to astonish the crowd.

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<sup>5</sup>See C Geertz, 'Religion as a Cultural System', in C Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (London: Fontana 1993) pp. 87-125. Geertz discusses the various moods experienced in different cultures.

In Mark 5:1-20 Mark presents a picture of a man who has been completely overpowered (possessed) by an evil spirit to the extent that his behaviour is controlled by the evil spirit. All attempts by the people in the vicinity to set him free failed. There is confrontation between Jesus and the evil spirit, in the form of question and adjuration. Jesus asks the name of the demon who replies that we are many. The picture presented by Mark is that of the demons requesting Jesus not to be sent out of the area. On the request of Jesus these demons are drowned. People who knew the demoniac initially now come to see him healed and restored to normal life.

In Mark 9:14-29 Mark presents a picture of the disciples finding it difficult in exorcising a demon from a child. Jesus rebukes the crowd for their lack of faith and a dialogue ensues between the father of the boy and Jesus. Here, Jesus is portrayed as having difficulty exorcising the demon. The demon convulses, with the boy falling flat on the ground. The demon with this gesture showing off his power, but in the end the demon is cast out of the boy. Jesus then affirms that this type of demon can be exorcised only by prayer, stressing that prayer is needed when exorcising demons. The impression we get from Mark is that Jesus, in exorcising demons, is establishing the Kingdom of God. Mark concludes his presentation on exorcisms by informing his readers on how to resist demons. They include prayer, exercising faith in Jesus, doing God's will and being in the household of God, that is the Church.

### **The Way Mark Presents Jesus in the Healing Stories**

According to Mark, Jesus is the one who heals through physical contact, raising and lifting up the sick. He is the one who becomes emotionally disturbed when he comes into contact with the sick. His anger and his emotions indicate that he has compassion for the sick. He identifies those whose sickness are caused by sin and forgives them and sets them free. He teaches that there is nothing wrong with healing and saving a soul from death on Sabbath.

Even though Jesus heals those who are ceremonially unclean, these defiling forces have no effect on him. He restores the faculties of hearing and speech, and his healing is described by onlookers as beyond explanation.

### **Limitations of Mark**

According to Mark, the only spiritual agents that possess victims are demons. Mark talks about Jesus defeating the demons. Is it partial or final overthrow of the demons? Where did the demons that were exorcised eventually go? Will they eventually enter other people or other creatures? What really happens to them? Will they come back and torment or possess other people? If they come back does that not imply struggle with demons in life? If that is the case does it mean that Satan has actually been bound? Has the binding actually taken place? Mark does not tell us what happens to the demons when they are exorcised. Mark is silent on why people are possessed, the type of people possessed and how to guard against being possessed.

### **WESTERN SCHOLARS' APPROACH TO THE CONCERNS OF MARK**

Western scholars including E Best <sup>6</sup>J M Robinson <sup>7</sup>and Joel Marcus <sup>8</sup>have been able to comment on the concerns of Mark, and we will be looking at these concerns. <sup>11</sup>

### **The Temptation Narrative**

The focus in this section will be on the outcome of the temptation because of its relationship with the exorcisms. Best and Robinson have had a heated debate on the power and fate of Satan and demons in relation to the temptation narrative. These scholars affirm that Satan is strong and was engaged in a struggle with Jesus in the temptation. Best maintains that Satan was bound in the temptation <sup>9</sup>and that the exorcisms were mopping-up operations <sup>10</sup>creating the impression that the world is a demon-free world. Robinson argues that Jesus was locked up in a struggle with Satan in the temptation and that Satan was not defeated decisively in the temptation but on the cross <sup>11</sup>. The exorcisms are real struggle between Jesus and Satan. He presents a world of struggle with Satan and demonic forces.

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<sup>6</sup>E. Best, *The Temptation and the Passion : The Markan Soteriology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 1990).

<sup>7</sup>J. M. Robinson, *The Problem of History in Mark* (London: SCM Press Limited, 1957).

<sup>8</sup>Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8* (London : Doubleday, 1999).

<sup>9</sup>Best, *Temptation*, p.15.

<sup>10</sup>Best, *Temptation*, p.15.

<sup>11</sup>Robinson, *Problem*, p.53.

The exorcisms are real struggle between Jesus and Satan. He presents a world of struggle with Satan and demonic forces. The views of these scholars have their weaknesses but our intention is to bring to light how Western Scholars look at these issues. J Gibson<sup>12</sup> intimates that Jesus resists Satan in the temptation, while M. D. Hooker intimates that for Mark, 'it was so obvious that it was unnecessary to spell it out'<sup>13</sup> However, U. Mauser affirms that Mark does not report Jesus' victory because for Mark, Jesus did not win the victory nor did he cease to be tempted.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Beelzebul Controversy**

We have already affirmed that Mark is silent on the period of the binding of Satan. Is it in the temptation as affirmed by Best, on the cross as opined by Robinson or will be in the Parousia as indicated by Joel Marcus<sup>15</sup>. The call by S R Garrett is very important. According to her, 'we ourselves must decide and how we fill in this particular gap in the narrative influences our reading of the rest of the story'.<sup>16</sup> We have also intimated that the tension created by the combination of the two parables is not solved by Mark. Western scholars give a clue. One way is to affirm that what is predominant is the claim that Satan is strong. This will mean Satan's power is not divided but is alive. This suggests that Christians are enlisted in a cosmic battle with their weapons in Jesus Christ and they still have a battle to be won and there is the need to depend on Jesus. Another way is to maintain that Satan, the strong man is bound. This suggests that the danger is past. Jesus has bound the demonic householder and he can therefore take Satan's domain at will and that those who are in Jesus are his brothers and sisters in his house. They listen to his words and do God's will and live in a safe zone where Satan cannot touch them. The third way is to suggest that there is a tension which cannot be solved. The impression one gets is that we live in a world where on the one hand Satan's Kingdom is alive and on the other hand Satan's Kingdom is overpowered.

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<sup>12</sup>J. B. Gibson, *The Temptations of Jesus in Early Christianity* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995) pp. 30-32

<sup>13</sup>M. D. Hooker, *The Gospel According to St Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963) p.5.

<sup>14</sup>U. Mauser, *Christ in the Wilderness* (London : SCM Press, 1963) p.100.

<sup>15</sup>J. Marcus, *The Way of the Lord : Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark.* (Westminster :John Knox Press. 1992)

<sup>16</sup>S. R. Garrett, *The Temptations of Jesus in Mark's Gospel* (Grand Rapids, Michigan : Eerdmans, 1998) p.8.

## Exorcisms

Western scholars give a lot of information on exorcisms in the Gospel of Mark. They give us a picture of the supernatural insight<sup>17</sup> of the evil spirits with which they were able to recognise the authority and identity of Jesus.

These scholars bring to light the way the demons behave when they meet Jesus. Robinson opines that the struggles in the exorcisms are like that between Jesus and Satan in the temptation narrative<sup>18</sup> while Best affirms that the struggles in the exorcisms are not similar to that in the temptation narrative.<sup>19</sup> These scholars explain the titles the demons use in addressing Jesus. For Robinson, the titles are ways of overpowering Jesus<sup>20</sup> while for Best they show the superiority of Jesus over the demons.<sup>21</sup> We are informed by Western scholars about the theories explaining the delay of the cure of the Gerasene demoniac<sup>22</sup> and the various theories explaining why Jesus granted the demons' request to be thrown into the sea.<sup>23</sup> Best intimates that the demon convulsing the boy does not mean the demon is strong, but it is a sign that the demon has been thrown into confusion at the presence of Jesus<sup>24</sup> and Jesus taking the boy's hand so that he stands on his own is interpreted by Western scholars as Jesus anticipating his own death and resurrection which is shortly to come<sup>25</sup> Western scholars describe the difficulty Jesus had in defeating the demon in one instance even though eventually the demon was defeated.

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<sup>17</sup>D E Nineham, *St Mark* (London: SCM Press Ltd 1963) p.75.

<sup>18</sup>Robinson, *Problem*, p.30

<sup>19</sup>Best, *Temptation*, p.18.

<sup>20</sup>Robinson, *Problem*, p.20

<sup>21</sup>Best, *Temptation*, p.17.

<sup>22</sup>R. H. Gundry, *Mark : A Commentary on his Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1993) p.251.

<sup>23</sup>See H. Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom*, trans. H Jongste (Philadelphia : Presbyterian and Reformed, 1969) pp. 113-115; O Bauernfeind, *Die Worte der Dämonen im Markusevangelium*. BWANT 44 Stuttgart : Kohlhammer, 1927 pp. 42-44; Loos, *Miracles*, p.392; Page, *Evil*, p.155.

<sup>24</sup>Best, *Temptation*, p.17.

<sup>25</sup>Anderson, *Mark*, p.231

## Diseases

We are still on exorcisms. The question is, how do we interpret the exorcistic features in the healing narratives in the Gospel of Mark? Are they to be interpreted literally, metaphorically or symbolically? Western scholars have contributed immensely in this area, and we will like to look at their contribution briefly.

In Mark 1:29-31 the passage has the 'superficial features of exorcism'<sup>26</sup> because no mention is made of the departure of a demon and on that score it can only be a physical disease. The passage in Mark 1:40-45 deals with the healing of a leper. Jesus' anger is directed at the disease.

The passage in Mark 1:40-45 deals with the healing of a leper. Jesus' anger is directed at the disease. He touches the leper and by saying the word the leprosy leaves the man. The exorcistic features in the passage are to be interpreted metaphorically<sup>27</sup> In Mark 7:31-37 it is difficult to ascertain whether this is a healing narrative<sup>28</sup> or exorcism<sup>29</sup> But evidence provided by Mark can be used to inform us. It is possible to have exorcistic features in a healing narrative. The way in which exorcistic features are used in the passage, especially the reference to the release of the tongue suggest that the healing is exorcistic.

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<sup>26</sup>G Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (Edinburgh : T & T Clark, 1966) p.87.

<sup>27</sup>R T France, *The Gospel of Mark A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Cambridge : W B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002) p.19. France affirms that there is no evidence that leprosy was attributed to demon possession.

<sup>28</sup>A. Menzies, *The Earliest Gospel : A Historical Study of the Gospel According to Mark* (London : Macmillan and Company Limited, 1901) p. 159; H C Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic in the New Testament Times*, SNTSMS 559 (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1988) pp. 95-121; Gundry, *Mark*, p.384.

<sup>29</sup>Hull, *Magic*, pp. 81-84 and 160n 52; G A Deissman, *New Light on the New Testament* (Edinburgh : T & T Clark, 1907) p.88; G A Deissman, *Light from the Ancient Near East. The New Testament illustrated by recently discovered texts of the Graeco - Roman world.* Translated by L R M Strachan (London : Hodder and Stroughton, 1910) pp. 304-307; Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p. 474.

Mark 8:22-26 is healing story. Jesus uses saliva by spitting on the man's eyes and he laid his hands upon him. There is no healing command. Jesus asks a question which gives the man the occasion to attest a partial cure thereby preparing for the second stage of the cure. The man's sight is restored – the text gives evidence of a complete cure. There are two meanings in the word seeing<sup>30</sup> in this passage – physical vision and inner understanding, both of which are symbolic.

We have examined the Western scholars' views on the concerns of Mark. The question is, have they exhausted everything we need to know? Like Mark, there are some questions unanswered. These questions include the following: Why are people possessed by demons? How are they possessed? When are they possessed? How do people cope with demons? Are demons the only agents that possess people? What are the causes of diseases and how can these diseases be checked? What new information do we get regarding the techniques employed by Jesus in curing diseases? We will be examining the Ghanaian readings to see how they answer the above questions but first of all we need to discuss African cosmology.

### **AFRICAN COSMOLOGY**

In examining African cosmology, the focus will be in relation to evil. Africa is a large continent with different people. Contextually we are dealing with Africa south of the Sahara. People within this vast region have different religious beliefs and practices. Taking the whole region as a unit one can still speak of African Traditional Religion because of the principal themes (beliefs and practices and values) reflected in the religions of the people throughout the area<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup>L. Williamson, Jr. *Mark, Interpretation : A Bible Commentary For Teaching and Preaching*. (Louisville : John Knox Press, 1983) p.147.

<sup>31</sup>MA Oduyoye, 'The value of African Religious Beliefs and Practices for Christian Theology', in *African Theology en Route*, eds. K Appiah-Kubi and S Torres (Mary Knoll, New York : Orbis Books, 1979) pp. 109-116 esp. pp. 110-113; Emezie Ikenga –Metuh, 'Religious Concepts in West Africa Cosmologies', in *Journal of Religion in Africa XIII, 1* (1982) pp. 11-24 esp. p. 23; D Zhan, *The Religion, Spirituality and Thought of Traditional Africa* (Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, 1979) pp. 4-5; J S Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Oxford : Heinemann, 1969) pp. 1-.2.

In dealing with evil in African Traditional Religion, it has to be put in the context of people's world-view<sup>32</sup>, a world-view with many mystical agencies who may be suspected to be behind any unusual event.<sup>33</sup> In African Traditional Religion the Spirit beings are God, divinities and ancestors. The question is whether in African Traditional Religion evil can be associated with these Spirit Beings. There is nothing in the attributes of God affirming that he can be associated with evil. However, he has the power to punish,<sup>34</sup> as a result of human behaviour.

The divinities are lesser categories of spiritual forces that respond to the needs of human beings in their secular and religious lives.

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<sup>32</sup>For an explanation of the people's world-view especially in relation to Africa, See K A Busia, 'The African world-view' in J Drachler (ed.) *African Heritage* (New York : The Cromwell – Collier Press, 1963) pp. 146-151; J S Pobee, *Toward an African Theology* (Nashville : The Parthenon Press, 1979) pp. 43-52; O. Imasogie, *Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa* (Ibadan : University Press Limited, 1983) pp. 47-66; Emefie Ikenga Metuh : *God and Man in African Religion – A Case Study of the Igbo of Nigeria* London : Geoffrey Chapman, 1981) pp. 48-49. Metuh defines a people's world-view as 'the complex of their beliefs and attitudes concerning the origin, nature, structure of the universe and the interaction of its being – with particular reference to human beings'. It is against this world-view as background that major problems of human beings are conceived, assessed and solutions sought. Metuh stresses the point that a people's traditional view is by no means static. It is constantly being re-interpreted and reformulated in the light of new experience within the community, and stimuli from external contacts.

<sup>33</sup>Ikenga – Metuh, *African Religion*, p. 150; K Ferdinando, *The Triumph of Christ in African Perspective : A Study of Demonology and Redemption in the African Context* (Carlisle : Paternoster Press, 1999) p. 1. Ferdinando affirms that a 'striking' aspect of the traditional African world-view is the belief that an invisible domain of spirits and occult forces exists impinging on the world of humanity and everyday reality which can be influenced and manipulated by human beings. See also S S Farrow, *Faith, Fancies and Fetish* (London : S P C K; 1924) p. 116.

<sup>34</sup>H Sawyerr, *Creative Evangelism; Towards a New Christian Encounter with Africa* (London : Lutterworth Press, 1968) p. 15. See J. S. Mbiti, *Concepts of God in Africa* (London : S P C K 1970) p. 81-84 for examples of God's way of punishing people in some traditional societies in Africa. See E K Twesigye, *African Religion, Philosophy and Christianity in Logos – Christ* (New York : Peter Lang Publishing Inc. 1996) p. 285. Twesigye classifies God's action as God's righteous anger and punishment at work because of human sin. There are parallels in Mark 1 : 40-45 and 2 : 1-12.

They are regarded as 'the children/messengers of God or his agents'<sup>35</sup> but they remain essentially spirits<sup>36</sup> and they fulfil specific functions. They may be good or evil and may have their abode in the environment yet they are distinguishable from their habitats. They have unlimited mobility and can move anywhere and as such are not confined to the physical objects in which they reside. When they are evil, they are able to cause mischief. Some divinities may bring epidemics, drought, poverty and in some cases death when people offend them. The evil that come upon people are there to correct, purify and at the same time draw them closely to the divinities.

The ancestors are people who were living on earth but have died and now belong to the ancestral world. For somebody to be in ancestor the person must have reached an old age and must have left some descendants. They have the power to fend off evils that affect the whole living community. They are the owners of the land and it is under their guidance that humanity strives to keep in step with harmony and order of creation. The ancestors ensure the proper order of the social world and call on humankind to account for their wickedness through various punishments<sup>37</sup> including diseases. In that capacity they act on behalf of the Supreme Being.

The divinities and the ancestors are the cause of misfortunes. Like the Supreme Being, they can offer benefits in areas over which they have control by offering protection and punishing people.

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<sup>35</sup>K K Anti, 'Women in African Traditional Religions'. A paper presented at Women's Centre Eastern Washington University, Cheney, Washington, May 1996 p. 2; J O Kayode, *Understanding African Traditional Religion* (Ile - Ife : University of Life Press Limited, 1984) p. 4.

<sup>36</sup>K A Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion* (Accra : FEP International, 1978)

<sup>37</sup>M C Kirwen, *The missionary and the Diviner: Contending Theologies of Christian and African Religions* (Mary Knoll, New York : Orbis Books, 1978) p. 35. Luo ancestors are believed to cause a wide range of diseases, from tuberculosis to hallucinations, as punishments for breaches of taboo or neglect of sacrifice. See M G Whisson, 'Some Aspects of Functional Disorders among the Kenya Luo', in A Kiev (ed.), *Magic, Faith and Healing* (New York : The Free Press, 1964) p. 206. See R J Gehman, *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective* (Kijabe : Kesho Publications, 1989) p.150.

They use their punitive powers more frequently and more harshly than God. Some of them are associated with one form of misfortune or the other, yet they are not intrinsically evil. They are seen as agents employed by God to execute his punitive measures to recalcitrant offenders apart from the Spirit beings, there are evil spirits. They are sometimes called wandering spirits. Because they were not able to reach the Spirit land after their death they wander, are restless and dissatisfied. They are always on the move in the world making life unbearable for their surviving relations.<sup>38</sup> These spirits are believed to be inherently evil.<sup>39</sup> They can be grouped in categories – disincarnate human spirits, non-human spirits, anonymous spirits who may attack individuals, families or communities and those with a status of a deity.

In African traditional cosmology evil can be linked with human agents, and one such agent is the witch who represents the biblical portrayal of Satan. It is not a supernatural being but a human one. Most discussions of witchcraft spend some time explaining away<sup>40</sup> the phenomenon of witchcraft. Whether people conceive of it as factually true or not it is a psychological reality<sup>41</sup> in African societies. It certainly exercises hypnotic power on those who believe themselves to be bewitched. Often they lose the will to survive. The view that increased education and Western medical facilities have significantly changed attitudes to witchcraft cannot be sustained,<sup>42</sup> and some modern changes may actually increase the incidence of witchcraft, as in the case of the Gusii and Baskin.<sup>43</sup> For those whom witchcraft is a reality, there is therefore greater insecurity.

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<sup>38</sup> Ikenga – Metuh, *God and Man*, p. 26.

<sup>39</sup> See S N Ezeanya, 'God, Spirits and the Spirit World', in K A Dickson and P Ellingworth (eds.) *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs* (London : Lutterworth Press, 1969) pp. 30-46 esp. p. 44. See E Igenga – Metuh, 'Incarnating Christianity in African world-views' in E Ikenga – Metuh (ed.) *African Enculturation Theology : Africanizing Christianity* (Onitsha : Imico Books, 1996) pp. 72-83 esp. p. 83.

<sup>40</sup> J S Pobee, 'Aspects of Traditional African Religion', in *Sociological Analysis – A Journal in the Sociology of Religion* Vol. 37, No. 1 Spring 1976 pp. 1-18 esp. p. 13.

<sup>41</sup> J S Pobee, *Toward an African Theology* (Nashville : The Parthenon Press, 1979) p. 100.

<sup>42</sup> For example, see Ferdinando, *The Triumph of Christ*, 41n 118 for a confession from a witch.

<sup>43</sup> See H Hill, 'Witchcraft and the Gospel : Insights from Africa', in *Missiology : An International Review*, Vol. XXIV. No. 3. July 1996, pp. 323-344 esp. p. 324. Hill affirms that witchcraft permeates Ivorian societies and it is number one problem for Zairians.

The problem still exists even today African society is oppressed by witchcraft.<sup>44</sup> As far as traditional African society is concerned, 'a denial of the presence of witchcraft is a denial of the existence of the activities of evil'.<sup>45</sup> Witches try to injure their neighbours because of jealousy, envy, hatred and bad feelings.<sup>46</sup> They attack their victims in several ways through diseases which prove difficult to cure, involuntary abortion and death. They can also cause barrenness<sup>47</sup> and impotency.<sup>48</sup> Other human agents of evil are sorcerers. These are individuals who consciously and deliberately employ magic against other people by means of medicine, rituals or spells. They are feared in African society. They have the power of changing themselves into animal form at will.<sup>49</sup> There is also the concept of the evil eye, a belief in many parts of the world. This is the process when 'someone projects harm by looking at another's property or person'.<sup>50</sup>

In the traditional world-view, words pronounced deliberately with intention take upon themselves a reality of their own which can

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<sup>44</sup>Pobee, 'Aspects of Religion', p. 12. For the reality of the fear of witchcraft among the educated, see Masamba Ma Mpolo, 'Sorcery and Pastoral Care and Counselling', in *African Theological Journal* Vol. 19, 1 (1990) pp. 38-52. Mpolo affirms that 'even African Students in European universities ascribe their maladies to bewitchment'.

<sup>45</sup>A I Berglund, *Zulu Thought Patterns and Symbolism* (London : C Hurst, 1976) p. 269.

<sup>46</sup>Kirven, *The Diviner*, p. 31.

<sup>47</sup>Bannerman – Richter G, *The Practice of Witchcraft in Ghana* (California : Gabari Publishing Company, 1982) p. 101. See Opoku, *Traditional Religion*, p. 145. According to Opoku witches can turn the wombs of women upside down. They can remove the reproductive glands in men making them impotent.

<sup>48</sup>Bannerman – Richter, *Witchcraft*, p. 102.

<sup>49</sup>E. G. Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion* (London : Sheldon Press, 1974) p. 118.

<sup>50</sup>C Maloney, 'Introduction' in C Maloney (ed.) *The Evil Eye* (New York : Columbia University Press, 1976) p.v.; See B J Manila, *The New Testament World : Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta : John Knox, 1981) p. 120. Evil eye belief refers to the conviction that certain individuals, animals, demons or gods have the power to cause negative effect on any object, animate or inanimate, on which they may look. Evil eye works voluntarily or involuntarily. The negative effect it can cause are injuries to the life and health of others, to damage an individual means of substance and livelihood, or to their honour and personal fortune. For a discussion on how the effects of the evil eye correlate with envy, a quality of the heart, see Malina, *The New Testament World*, pp. 120-123.

bring about the desires of the speaker<sup>51</sup>. The most negative purpose for which speech can be employed is cursing. It is very widespread even in modern and recent Africa.<sup>52</sup>

What comes out clearly from the African cosmology is that it is very complex. The complexity is to be seen in the forces (both spiritual and physical) working against humanity. Even though the African cosmology is complex, in terms of power that inflict pain, agony and misery on people, there are hosts of agents who are there to redeem humanity anytime disaster strikes. These agents are diviners and traditional healers. In African traditional religion we do not have the view of the devil and demons trying to fight against Jesus, and we are not given any clue regarding when the devil will be bound. With this brief description of African cosmology, let us see how Ghanaians in London reads and interpret some of the exorcism and healing passages in Mark.

### **THE SELECTION OF THE GHANAIAN READERS**

How were these Ghanaian readers selected? The city of London was chosen because all the churches in the United Kingdom can be found in London, and majority of Ghanaians in the United Kingdom are in London. We divided the churches into groups- Main Line churches, Seventh Day Adventist churches, Pentecostal churches, Pentecostal and Charismatic churches and Ministries.

Through sampling, twenty two churches<sup>53</sup>, in London were selected. Ghanaians worshipping in these churches were involved in Bible studies based on questions designed by the author. The objective was to find out how Ghanaian worshippers from these churches read and interpret some of the exorcism and healing passages from the Gospel of Mark through Bible study reports.

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<sup>51</sup>D Burnett, *World of the Spirits : A Christian Perspective on Traditional and Folk Religions* (London : Monarch Books, 2000) p. 146, see J A Motyer, 'Curse', in *New Bible Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Leicester : Inter-Varsity Press, 2003) pp. 248-249.

<sup>52</sup>A Kriel, *Roots of African Thought I*. (Cape Town : AA Balkema, 1984) p. 67.

<sup>53</sup>The Ghanaian worshippers are from the following churches in London: Corpus Christi Roman Catholic Church, St Thomas The Apostle Catholic Church, Upper Tooting Methodist Church, Camden Town Methodist Church, Archway Methodist Church, Harlesden Methodist Church, Trinity (Methodist/United Reformed) Church, St Andrews United Reformed Church, Ealing, Rectory Road United Reformed Church, Kensington United Reformed Church, Streatham United Reformed Church, London Central Ghana SDA Church, South East London Ghana SDA Church, South West Ghana SDA Church, Slough Ghana SDA Church, Elim Church of Pentecost (Camberwell Branch), Elim Church of Pentecost (Battersea Branch), Calvary Love Evangelical Fellowship, Assemblies of God – UK and Ireland), *Musama Disco Christo Church*, Beneficial Veracious Christ Church and Triumphant Prayer Ministries.

### **Socio-Economic Background of the Readers**

Who are these people? These are people who have spent some time in Ghana and are now living in the West. Whilst in Ghana, they would have been exposed to traditional practices, beliefs and the African (Ghanaian) world-view. What is the extent to which these practices, beliefs and world-view influenced their interpretation of Mark? Are their interpretations detached from or close to traditional practices, traditional beliefs and the Ghanaian world-view?

These readers now in Britain are exposed to Western culture, Western values and Western ways of thinking, knowledge of physics, the laws of cause and effect and the Western world-view on modern medicine. But how far have these Western views influenced the way they interpret some of the texts in Mark's Gospel? To what extent do they dissociate themselves or get close to Western views in the way they interpret Mark? What is the extent to which both African and Western world-views are reflected in their interpretation of Mark?

Majority of the Ghanaian immigrants in the United Kingdom live in London. They came from Ghana to work or to study in this country. Some have married and established themselves in this country, while some have married other nationals. Because of the historical links between the United Kingdom and Ghana, some have lived in this country for a long time and worship in churches (both white and black churches) in this country and some of them hold high offices in these churches.

Some of the readers were students from Ghana now pursuing degree course in the United Kingdom. There are some who had their secondary education in the United Kingdom and are now doing degree courses, and there are some who have already completed degree courses in this country and other pursuing Adult Education courses. Almost all the readers can read English except very few people (about 5% of all the readers). These are grandparents who are here to visit their families. The passages were read in the Ghanaian languages and the questions were also translated to them, resulting in significant contributions being made by all the readers.

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The majority of the readers are professional workers such as lawyers, accountants, engineers, business men and women, teachers, secretaries, mechanics, drivers, underground workers, managers, caterers, security workers, prison officers, policemen, carers, technicians in hospitals and administrators.

### **Why do we choose Ghanaian Christians or worshipers?**

The world-view of Ghana approximates the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Mediterranean world-views but at the same time there are differences between these world-views. We would like to find out how Ghanaians with a background closer to the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Mediterranean world-view but who live in Britain read and interpret texts from Mark's Gospel. What new ideas and questions do these readers bring to the texts which are not addressed by Western scholars? What modes of readings will emerge from these Christians as they interact with these texts in Mark? What leading questions will they bring into their readings? How do they help us to get a better understanding of Mark?

### **Responses from African (Ghanaian) Readers to Markan Texts**

This section deals with the way Ghanaian readers responded to some of the concerns of Mark. The readers were asked to comment on Mark 3:23-27. The readers were of the view that in this passage, Jesus declares clearly that he has no relationship with Satan, and that the power he uses is not from Satan but from God. The majority of the readers intimated that we have two kingdoms-the kingdom of God (Jesus) and the kingdom of Satan.

The kingdom of God (Jesus) is fighting against the Kingdom of Satan and as Christians we have to put on the whole armour of God. The readers are aware that the house in Mark 3:27 is a metaphor. It refers to the earth or the world; and within it are people who have been enslaved by Satan and his cohorts. The enslavement takes many forms including possession, physical diseases and other forms of spiritual attacks. According to these readers, Jesus goes into the house because he is stronger than Satan and his cohorts and he binds them through rebuke or command and he sets the captives free.

For these readers there is an on going battle between the two kingdoms and this has two implications: (1) there are some people in this house who need to be set free by the power of Jesus and (11) those in Jesus' kingdom who need to continue praying, fasting, having faith in Jesus and resisting Stan and his cohorts when he strikes.

The readers were asked to comment on when Satan was bound or when he was going to be bound. In Central London Ghana SDA, there were two views. Satan was bound after the resurrection and Satan would be bound in the second coming of Jesus. The views of the readers from South West London .

Ghana SDA were: Satan would be bound when Jesus comes, Satan was bound before Jesus started his work, Satan's power came to an end on the Cross, and Satan was bound when Jesus said, 'it is finished'. In Slough Ghana SDA, THE VIEW WAS THAT Satan would be bound during the second coming of Jesus. In MDCC there were four different views: Satan has been bound either in his ministry, on the Cross, in the Resurrection or would be bound in the Parousia. The readers from MDCC who affirmed that Stan is bound made a slight distinction between demonic forces that possess or attack people and Satan who is the originator of these demonic forces. Satan was tied up and could not act, yet he sent his agents (the demons) to do his work. It is like an army officer who has been imprisoned or chained but that does not mean that those following him are imprisoned or chained. For these readers the demons are strong.

What about the readers responses to the causes of the diseases in Mark 5: 1-20, 8:22-26, 9:14-29 and the techniques employed by Jesus in healing the diseases? Participants from Archway Methodist Church were in three groups. One group affirmed that the cause of the disease in Mark 5:1-20 was mental imbalance. The second group affirmed that it was a demonic disease and in the third group some people affirmed that the man had an unbalanced mind while others intimated that an evil spirit possessed the man.

The participants from Musama Disco Christo Church (MDCC) gave three views. (i) the man gave the chance for these demons to come upon him to be used against himself, (ii) an evil spirit was tormenting the man and (iii) an evil spirit cursed the man.

The participants in the South East London SDA, with the second highest percentage of health professionals were divided into three groups. The first group affirmed that the man was suffering from a mental problem. In the second group, there were two views: the disease was either a mental illness or a spiritual disease caused by demons. There were three different views in the third group.

(i) The disease was caused by witches called 'African Electronics' in African parlance.

(ii) The man inherited the disease from witches and demons and  
(iii) the disease came upon the man because of his disobedience to the spiritual powers including ancestors.

One group from Calvary Love Evangelical Fellowship (CLEF) affirmed that it was schizophrenia. The second group were of the view that it was spiritual madness, while the third group affirmed that it was an attack from an evil spirit.

Participants from Elim Church of Pentecost (Camberwell) expressed three different views:

(i) the disease was an attack from demons which could be a curse, a punishment from the spiritual powers or the gods

(ii) the disease was physical and (iii) the disease could be both physical and spiritual.

Participants from South West London Ghana SDA intimated that the blindness in Mark 8:22-26 was caused by sin, demons, God, deficiency in diet, an accident, hereditary or it was from birth.

Participants from Upper Tooting Methodist Church, with the highest percentage of health professionals affirmed that the disease was the personification of the devil, spiritual blindness (implying the man did not know Jesus), a physical blindness or a metaphor signifying ignorance.

The readers from St. Andrews URC Ealing, gave the following causes to the blindness: physical blindness, an accident, a virus, infection, old age, deficiency in diet, shock, hereditary, demons or from birth. The readers from Elim Church of Pentecost, Battersea, indicated that the disease could be spiritual blindness, physical blindness, from birth or it could be caused by sin, a generation curse, demons or witches. The readers from Central London Ghana SDA gave the following causes to the disease in Mark 9:14-29: grand mal epilepsy, serious epilepsy, the disease was caused by an evil spirit or it was a disease of the mind. The readers from Streatham URC gave these causes: it was damage in the brain affecting the nerves; once Jesus said, 'be healed', it was a spiritual disease.

The readers from Harlesden Methodist Church affirmed the following: it was a brain damage, the man was born with it; it was a spiritual disease. The readers from St. Andrews URC Ealing gave medical and demonic explanations to the disease. The readers from St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church, Nunhead gave the following responses: this was an attack of the evil spirit it could be hereditary, a punishment or a curse or a long term suffering without a cure.

How did the readers interpret some of the techniques employed by Jesus in healing the diseases in Mark 5:1-20, Mark 8:22-26 and Mark 9:14-29? The readers who studied Mark 5:1-20 were asked to comment on the techniques employed by Jesus in healing the disease. The readers were concerned with why Jesus asked the name of the demon. They affirmed that Jesus wanted to know the type of demon possessing the man, for in Africa there are different names for different demons. The readers from all the churches wanted to know why Jesus had to command the demons to enter into the demons and drown. The responses from MDCC were interesting.

(i) Jesus sacrificed two thousand swine to free one man who had a soul as compared to two thousand swine that had no soul; and that it was better to free a man with a soul than to free animals without souls for human life was greater than that of animals in the eyes of the Lord. The readers from MDCC posed the following questions: (i) Why did Jesus pass through the graveyard? (ii) What was Jesus doing in that area? (iii) Did Jesus go there with the view of searching for the Legion for a contest?

Many people passed through the area without any confrontation but when the evil spirits saw Jesus, they asked 'did you come here to destroy us?' These questions are very important. For the African, the graveyard is the place inhabited by ghosts and the evil forces. In traditional Religion, during certain times of the year the adherents go to the graveyard and offer food and drink to the departed. The belief is that they will come and eat the food and take the drink. The readers opined that Jesus passed through the graveyard because he knew there was somebody to be released from bondage. This statement raises a number of concerns. (i) What type of people are vulnerable to these spirits? (ii) Why are they vulnerable? and (iii) how can they be liberated? To the African, these demons have influence or power over a certain class of people- (i) those who fear them and (ii) those who have an alliance with them through pact, seal and other dealings. For some traditionalists, even though these powers are there, they do not fear them. They have traditionally maintained an intimate relationship with them. They communicate with them, honour them with offerings and depend upon them for guidance. For those people who are in bondage to those spirits to be released, they consult diviners and traditional healers for protection and for treatment. For the African Christian, liberty or liberation comes from Jesus.

The readers who studied Mark 8: 22-26 were asked to comment on the strategies used by Jesus in healing the blind man. The readers from South West London Ghana SDA, Upper Tooting Methodist Church, Balham, St. Andrews URC Ealing and Elim Church of Pentecost, Battersea, affirmed that Jesus took the man by the hand

because it was a way of reassuring him that he was in safe hands. Jesus took that strategy because he did not want the people to know about the healing process otherwise other people might imitate him wrongly by using dubious means for healing.

The readers from St. Andrews URC opined that Jesus took the man out of the village because it was possible that people in the village had no faith or they were evil.

All the readers from the churches indicated that Jesus took the man out of the village because he did not want conflict. The readers affirmed that what Jesus was about to do (the use of spittle in healing) could be questionable, offensive or unacceptable to the Jews, and this would cause the other people to underestimate the faith of the man. The readers were asked to comment on the use of the spittle by Jesus.

All the readers stated that Jesus knew the spittle could heal him, implying Jesus had foreknowledge of events, one of the attributes of God. Some of the readers from Upper Tooting Methodist Church, Balham, affirmed that may be it was the tradition of the area for people to use spittle in healing. The readers from these churches claimed Jesus laid his hands upon the blind man, and with this gesture Jesus was transferring power from him to the man. They also affirmed that Jesus placed his hands on the man as a way of diagnosing the disease. The last strategy used by Jesus was that he laid his hands upon the man the second time. The readers affirmed that it was a way of giving the man assurance, an important aspect of any healer. The readers intimated that by laying his hands on the eyes, it could encourage the man to continually depend on Jesus, and that Jesus wanted to test the faith of the man.

The readers who studied Mark 9:14-29 were from Central London Ghana SDA, Streatham URC, Harlesden Methodist Church, St. Andrews URC, Ealing and St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church, Nunhead. What fascinated them was Jesus' dialogue with the father. They all questioned why Jesus delayed the healing (by having a dialogue with the father) instead of expelling the demon outright? There were some responses: (I) the situation did not demand prompt healing. (ii) Jesus was making an experiment

(iii) it was a way of diagnosing the disease (iv) it would result in faith healing (v) Jesus knew the right time to act. For these readers even though the boy was seriously sick, Jesus had a purpose for delaying the healing.

All the readers from the various churches indicated that Jesus rekindled the faith of the man by affirming, 'all things are possible to him who believes'. This was one of the characteristics of a healer. The readers from these churches also affirmed that Jesus took the centre stage by rebuking the demon. The boy was like a corpse and Jesus lifted him up. The readers stressed the need to be prayerful in dealing with demonic attacks.

From these readings, one can find differences of opinion among readers from the same church on the causes of the diseases and on the spiritual techniques employed by Jesus in healing. What factors led to the divergent views among the readers? A glance at the educational and professional experiences of the readers shows that almost all the readers have been exposed to Western education particularly Western physics. They depend on motor vehicles and aeroplanes, they do encounter things which provide strong accounts of causality, and they have scientific ways of explaining things. Belief in scientific explanations does a lot of work in trying to make sense of what happens to people in their daily lives. This includes belief in causality. Why do some of these people who have spent their lives in an environment that rejects belief in demons, witches and a host of spiritual powers still believe in these things and still hold on to their traditional beliefs? What is the power of these traditional beliefs? The answer can be found in the past experiences of the readers and how they or their relations were treated when they had similar diseases.

They were either treated medically (which shows the extent to which these readers have been influenced by Western scientific way of thinking), traditionally or they resorted to both methods for treatment. The other factor that may have caused divergent views among the readers is the knowledge of African culture and tradition which is tied to the African world-view.

### **COPING WITH SPIRITS**

All the readers were asked how to cope with these spirits (demons, witches, divinities, etc.)? The question of coping with these spirits was answered along four lines by the readers: First, by avoiding these spirits. A quick glance through the readings of these Ghanaians shows that some readers affirmed that there was the need to avoid these spirits operating in their own world. They could attack people, cause misery and even kill. They could not rest until they inhabited a body. Many spirits could dwell in a human body if given the chance (Mark5:1-20). The readers affirmed that if they were unclean, we were open to demonic attacks implying we have to apportion our lives in such a way that we might not invite these demons into our lives. These spirits wanted to get hold of us, and if we led loose lives, they would attack us. Anyone who gives the spirits a chance becomes a habitat for these spirits, as they move on earth looking for someone to inhabit or destroy. If we lead holy lives, these spirits will not be able to attack us. This is buttressed by the fact that in their readings they affirm that if these spirits recognise that Jesus is living in us, they will fear and if we have faith in Jesus, we will not be attacked by them. The second way to cope with evil spirits is by looking to Jesus for protection. The readers affirmed that these spirits are around, but we do not have to worry about them at all because whenever they met Jesus they were overpowered. What we have to do is to give our lives to Jesus. If we do that, anytime these spirits attack us, they engage in battle with Jesus and we will have our freedom. This interpretation does not mean that that Satan and the demons have been bound. The idea is that anytime these spirit of our relationship with him) in binding these demons. The readers emphasised the power of Jesus, which was reflected in his healing. Because Jesus is powerful, there is the need to put our trust and confidence in him. The power of Jesus is able to transform life, and there is the need to have faith in Jesus so that our lives can be transformed.

The third way to cope is to understand that the demons are strong and therefore the believer needs a strong faith and prayer and fasting backed by a life of holiness to resist them. The readers intimated that these spirits are strong and alive. Whenever Jesus

meets the demons he has to fight with them. They really challenge Jesus and even though in the end Jesus defeats them, Jesus does not have it easy. The sigh of Jesus is interpreted as a sign of tiredness, showing the struggle involved. If Jesus did not have it easy, then it follows that his followers will not have it easy. Satan and demons tempt the followers of Jesus.

They can lock them up to the extent that they live in chains. They also attack the followers of Jesus to ensure that they fall by the wayside. The Christian life is a spiritual struggle with spiritual forces. If one wants to follow Jesus, there are forces that he is bound to reckon with. Those who follow Jesus have to constantly engage in a battle with these demons. The solution lies in having faith in Jesus, resisting these demons, leading holy lives, praying and fasting.

The fourth way of coping with evil spirits and their attacks has to do with the practical ways of helping one another. These readers were challenged by people bringing the sick to Jesus for healing. According to the readers, the sick could not go to Jesus on their own. They had to be supported by their neighbours; they had to take risks and eventually led the sick to Jesus. This communal living or 'we-feeling,' very central to African milieu, is what we should aim at. As Christians with one faith, one Lord and one baptism, we need to show concern to one another by helping one another. It is in the church that we should carry each other's burden. We are told that the people had information about Jesus before they sent the sick to him. The church should be a place where we have information that will help people to grow in the Christian faith, resisting spiritual powers, living consistent Christian life and supporting one another spiritually, financially, emotionally and psychologically. With this communal feeling the church can be a witnessing church to the world.

What are our findings so far? Firstly, this section provides conflicting views of the readers on the concerns raised their understanding of the causes of evil and diseases like possession, blindness and epilepsy. They have conflicting views on physical, spiritual and both physical and spiritual causes. On the binding of Satan there were conflicting views. For some of the readers, Satan had already been bound and even regarding when he

was bound these readers gave conflicting views. Even though for these readers Satan had been bound or will be bound, it did not mean that Satan was immobile.

Apart from these conflicting views, there was a consensus on some of the concerns they raised. They all agreed that there was a spiritual warfare between the two kingdoms headed by Jesus and Satan. They all agreed that the house in Mark 3:27 referred to the territory of Satan and that Jesus was sent to set those in the house free from the clutches of Satan. The readers agreed that Jesus had power over Satan.

One could find consonance and dissonance between African views and Mark. For both Ghanaian readers and the Markan community, human beings on earth are in subjection to evil forces creating a situation whereby they find themselves vulnerable to these cosmic forces and there is the need to rely on Jesus for survival. Both communities emphasise the importance of faith in Jesus.

These readers bring valuable concerns that are not raised by Mark or Western scholars. These concerns are why people are possessed by spirits and ways of coping with these spirits, causes of diseases, spiritual techniques employed by Jesus in his healings and the significance of graveyards.

One can see in this section the extent to which science and tradition have influenced the readers in reading Mark. Even though these readers are in the Western world, there are certain areas where they are influenced by traditional practices and beliefs and this is reflected in their responses.

We have looked at Mark, Western scholars' reconstruction of Markan cosmology and now Ghanaian readers' views. What emerges when we put all these together? It is clear that Ghanaian readers are interested in learning from Mark how to live in a world which is dangerous and where disease can prove disastrous. The accounts they give of such dangers (spiritual and physical) vary considerably, but there is obviously widespread belief that

demonic and other spiritual agencies are actively producing problems. So they want to know how to counter them as they also want to know how serious these dangers are in the light of what Mark says about the struggle between Jesus and Satan.

What is interesting in the Ghanaian readings is the great variety of views they derived from their reading of Mark. They have shown the extent of the power of Satan, demons and other hosts of spiritual powers and Jesus power over these spiritual forces. They had informed knowledge about how to counter or avoid these satanic attacks. The knowledge included realising the existence of these forces, trusting in Jesus Christ and having faith in him, resisting these forces in the name of Jesus Christ, leading holy lives, reading the Bible, praying and fasting. This variety of views from the Ghanaian readings should suggest interesting new lines of enquiry for scholars concerned to construct Mark's cosmology and that of the early readers. How would they have thought about these issues in the light of their reading of Mark? The Ghanaian readings certainly suggest Mark's readers might well have had divergent views (like Western scholars) about the continuing power of Satan and such contradictions/differences of view were normal in religious communities. Such divergence seemed to be encouraged rather than discouraged by Mark's narrative.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this paper, what comes out clearly is that in interpreting the Gospel, one needs to take into consideration one's cosmology. This is reflected in the Gospel of Mark, the Western scholars' interpretation of Mark and the Ghanaian readings of Mark. For an African living in the United Kingdom, in order for him to understand the Gospel effectively, there is the need for those who interpret the Gospel to him to be well versed in African cosmology. There is therefore the call to Western scholars to really look at anthropological explanations and understandings of demonic and other spiritual agencies and other factors that play major roles in African cosmology. Through the study of anthropology, these scholars would learn much about how societies that believe in spirits cope with those fears and anxieties and they would also come to understand better the hopes and expectations of people who come from these societies.

The Western scholars need to be aware of the diverse views in Mark and be cautious not to over interpret and force one cosmology on Mark. They need also to be much more aware of how African readers read this text and the ethos these texts might generate for those readers who believe in the power of demons and other spiritual agencies.