

Community versus Communities: The Gerasene Demoniac Depicting Authors of the

By

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Abstract

New Testament sch

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Richard Ascough for all your guidance within the field of New Testament studies and the future of my academic career. You allowed me to take my time in exploring a field that I had a minimal amount of knowledge in, yet a large interest in. You were there to answer my questions and send me in the right direction, no matter the topic of discussion. I also want to thank you for

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I. Introduction

For years, scholars have struggled with the identity of the man called Jesus. Was he an apocalyptic preacher, a Cynic sage, a teacher, the Jewish messiah, or a prophet? The optimum sources scholars have to begin to answer these questions are the gospels (both canonical and non-canonical). Thus, can individuals use the canonical gospels and other material about Jesus to create a biography of the man and not just examine whom the Jesus of doctrine/faith was? Furthermore, can his two natures actually be separated? There has been an entire quest devoted to answering these questions that I pose; scholars differing theories to who Jesus actually was. To be able to understand who Jesus was however, one must first examine the sources that provide information about the man. Therefore, this paper will examine the sources, in particular, the Gospel of Mark, in hopes of concluding whether the information provided might be used to learn about Jesus or if the material sheds insight into particular early Christ groups instead.

In the beginning *The*
Gospels for all Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences, Richard Bauckham asks two questions, which are essential to consider when studying New Testament texts. The first is whether the texts were written for Christians or non-Christians, which he concludes that the gospels (the texts he is focusing on) were in fact, written for Christians. The second is whether the gospels were written for a general Christian audience or for

methodology to the pericope Mark 5:1-20. We will commence with a brief explanation to highlight how source critics have concluded that Mark was the first of the four canonical gospels to be written, followed by a brief literature review of some of the material that scholars have written exploring gospel community theory. In addition, we will examine the redactional differences between the synoptic gospels to demonstrate that both the authors of the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke have their own agenda and thus, each of the gospel authors are influenced in their writing by their own community.

To successfully explain how each author wrote their gospel for a specific community of followers, it is necessary to first explore what evidence scholars are providing that oppose community theory. Therefore, the first section of this paper will provide a brief literature review of some of the material that denies the gospel community theory. This section will focus on the work of Richard Bauckham. However, in addition to Bauckham, we will also examine an article written by Stanley Stowers, a book by Richard Burridge, as well as some evidence provided by Ben Witherington III from his commentary on the Gospel of Mark. Moreover, we will use an article by Thomas Kazen to challenge the

A quick synopsis of these scholars illustrates that they argue that the gospels were written for a vast amount of people due to their origin and style of how the stories in the gospels are presented. Thus, this section will provide a more in-depth analysis of these works, so that we may then further challenge their claims when applicable as well as exploring redactional differences amongst the synoptic gospels.

After providing the necessary foundation for the paper, we will move on to applying various methodological approaches to the Gerasene demoniac, first in Mark 5:1-

word choice and themes. This will be followed by a similar analysis of the Gospel of Matthew and w

included bias of the different early church communities.¹⁰ It is important to highlight the conclusions made by source critics because we will be relying on them throughout this paper (especially when we explore the redactional differences amongst the synoptic gospels). Therefore it is necessary to stress that I am in accord with the majority of scholars who agree that the Gospel of Mark was the first of the canonical gospels to be written and that the other synoptic gospel authors used the Gospel of Mark as one of their sources.

II. Community versus Communities: For Whom Did the Gospel Authors Write?

There seems to be some uncertainty and disagreement among New Testament scholars when discussing whether or not the authors of the gospels wrote for specific communities or if they were addressing a wider audience that consists of no particular group. In other words, did Mark write for his Markan community and Matthew write for his Matthean community, etc., or did each author envision his work being read and heard by any church?¹¹ Scholars such as Bauckham, Stowers, and Burridge believe that the authors of the gospels did not write for a specific group of Christians, and thus, they challenge the community theory that has been taken for granted in gospel scholarship for decades.¹² As the aim of this paper is to challenge these scholar analysis of the Gerasene demoniac pericope in the synoptic gospels, we begin by providing an overview of what they argue and the evidence they provide in their work.

A point of contention amongst New Testament scholars is the understanding of theory to aid in their arguments either for or against community theory. For instance,

¹⁰ McKnight, *What is Form Criticism?*, 9-10.

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Bauckham and Ben

Bauckham argues that it was written for a specific community or reveal the concerns about a specific community because its often to any competent reader.¹⁹

That Mediterranean world could read, most individuals in that target group would have heard his gospel orally.²⁰ Therefore, if the gospels were supposed to be read, as Witherington highlights,²¹ then in fact, they were actually written for a very small fraction of the population and this contradicts

Furthermore, Bauckham contends that the authors would not write down a biography of Jesus for the use of the church he belonged to and potentially taught at himself, because oral preaching would be a more appropriate method; Bauckham questions why the auth

Moreover, there are many differing arguments about what type of genre Mark is.

For instance A. Y. Collins argues that the gospel is

imaginative ideal of community he discusses in his rhetoric.³⁵ Furthermore, Bauckham argues that after years of assuming community theory, scholars are not willing to justify any other hermeneutical attempt that may be more useful and informative.³⁶ In other words, scholars have been using a notion of community that is confusing and non-definitive for too long, which has led them to approach a text with assumed ideas and preconceived notions of what to look for when exegeting a New Testament text. All of this is done, according to Bauckham and Stowers, without proof or justification.

Therefore, the two scholars

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According to Kazen, however

bases his thesis on a source that is already highly criticized for examining the Matthean community in isolation from other potential Christian groups.³⁸ Furthermore, Bauckham should have approached his claims in a more balanced manner. Instead of assuming that the author either wrote for a general Christian audience or a specific community, perhaps

group of churches [that] possibly cover . This is clearly the approach taken by the author of the book of Revelation, who imagines his text circulating among various Christian groups, albeit limited to those in Asia Minor (Rev. 1:19-3:22). Thus, the gospels cannot be used to attain specific information about a community or to

³⁵ Stowe

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³⁷ Kaz

³⁸ Ibid., 564.

III. Form Critical and Demythologizing Analysis of Mark 5:1-20

After providing a foundation for this paper by examining the evidence provided by scholars who deny community theory, we will use this next section to further demythologization methodology to the original pericope of the Gerasene demoniac in Mark 5:1-20. This methodological approach will illustrate the objective of the author and the message this evangelist wanted to share with his Markan community. Therefore, this section exemplifies how the author's editorial work reveals his biases that were based on the concerns of his community.

Although New Testament hermeneutics experienced various modifications (with source criticism evolving into redaction and form criticism, followed by comparison method years later), the form critical approach has continued to base its foundations on Dibelius

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been quite influential in the field of New Testament studies. It is for this reason that this room

for improvement when using a source critical approach of comparison because they found that previous scholars ignored the fact that for several decades, the early Christ/Christian groups relied upon the oral tradition to transmit their theological message. Therefore, scholars had to adjust their approach in attempt to identify which

⁴² This

desire to investigate the gospels from the original pre-literary period led to a form critical

⁴¹ McKnight, *What is Form Criticism?*, 17.

⁴² John Paul Pritchard, *A Literary Approach to the New Testament*, (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 20-1.

s objective for

Mark 5:1-20 and the context of the story, it is necessary to begin by

form critical methodology to analyze the Gerasene demoniac story. We will initially

explain the context of the story, followed by demythologizing the

while learning about their theological frameworks. For instance, scholars may discover the Markan community's ideologies, theological beliefs, community organization, community interests, daily life, etc., by analyzing what literary forms the author emphasized in his gospel and whether the author of the text shifted from the fixed form. Bultmann believed his methodological approach would allow scholars to comprehend how the communities altered the forms as they were transmitted orally from prior

miracles stories to be similar to Hellenistic miracle narratives, the next step to understanding the Markan community is to compare how this particular miracle story differs from other literature that can be classified under the same category of miracle stor .

As was mentioned, sometimes Mark 5:1-20 can be misclassified under the prophetic and apocalyptic sayings form, however this pericope is not apocalyptic in nature. Although the larger themes prevalent throughout the Gospel of Mark are prophetic and apocalyptic, as is evident when the author begins his gospel with the Holy

At first glimpse, this pericope may appear to be similar to other miracle stories as it commences with the recognition of an illness: the demonic possession of one of the citizens of Gerasanes. This pericope however, differs from other exorcisms or miracle stories. In Mark 5:9, the author names the demon legion, which means many. If we refer to Mark 5:13, the author further depicts that there are many demons as he refers to

both implying that the author did not just

include one demon, but several. This is important, as the common characteristic of a miracle story was a single illness, or in the case of exorcisms, a single demonic presence.⁵³ Having more than one demon not only varies the traditional form, but also differs from other exorcism stories found throughout the Gospel of Mark. For instance, a single demonic presence is depicted in Mark 1:23-28, with the healing of the demoniac in the synagogue, as well as when Jesus rebukes a fever that was produced by a demon in Mark 5:29-31. Therefore, this pericope alters its foundational characteristic by including many demons instead of one. It is only once the pericope is demythologized however, that a scholar can understand why the author changed from the traditional form.

Another difference that occurs in Mark 5:1-20 is that it does not follow the particular literary pattern that tends to be used in this type of miracle story, which is that a command against a demon tends to be accompanied by a physical reaction.⁵⁴ In this pericope Jesus uses name magic to cast out demonic forces; Jesus casts the demons out by winning the name magic battle (Mark 5:7).⁵⁵ Most miracle workers in antiquity were known to have secret identities, which should not be revealed. If their identity were revealed, then the one who exposed their identity would gain power over the miracle

worker.⁵⁶ Therefore, although name magic was not unique in exorcism stories or throughout the gospels, what makes this pericope different, is that Jesus uses name magic against the demons to cast them out;⁵⁷ the demons are most presented as trying to use name magic against Jesus, but he does not tend to use it against the unclean spirits.

Furthermore, Jesus never falls privy to name magic, which is important to note.

has intentionally shared _____ and thus, will provide insight into his environment and the period of time he was writing. If we explore other areas of the instance, the author warns his audience to prepare for the persecution of both the Roman state and the synagogue in Mark 13:8-9:⁶⁷

be famines; this is the beginning of the birthpangs. But take heed to yourselves: for they will deliver you up to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings

Examining this passage, it is evident that the author is alluding to destruction, brutality, and war (political overtones), as he uses the motif of nation, governors and councils who will over take other nations and kingdoms all while persecuting those who visit the synagogue.

In Mark 5:9, Jesus asked the name of the demon who had possessed an individual of the town of Gerasanes. The response was Legion _____ (Mark 5:9). If an individual reads the pericope with the inclusion of myth, the text appears to illustrate the power of Jesus, as he exorcises numerous unclean spirits from the town of Gerasanes. However, if the myth/pre-scientific thought is removed, then an individual is able to _____ allusion

land.⁶⁸ Instead of using a descriptive phrase, such as demon, Satan, or unclean spirit, the author chooses to provide the demon with a Latin name that had to be

⁶⁷ Robert H. Stein, *Mark: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*

translated into Greek. Decades before the birth of Jesus, Roman legions marched through the area of Galilee as well as its surrounding areas. They burnt villages, killing all those who were ill and infirm while enslaving the able; it was the Romans who determined the conditions of the public.⁶⁹ By the time Jesus was born, the Romans were using crucifixion as a means to terrorize and instill fear in the local populace.⁷⁰

Furthermore, in Mark 5:10, the legion of demoniacs begs Jesus to allow them to remain in the country. The author could have said land, or town, but he chose to say country. From this passage, it is evident that the legion of individuals who are unwelcome are not native to the land, as they are begging to remain; if the legion was native to the country, they would be welcome, or be exiled to another place within their homeland. Thus further emphasis is placed on the Roman legion being a foreign occupant that remains in the land although they are unwanted, just as the legion of demons wish to remain in Gerasanes even though they are neither native to the land nor welcomed by its inhabitants.⁷¹

Therefore, by applying Bultmann to both Mark 5:9-10 and Mark 13:8-9, it is evident that the author of the Gospel of Mark must have wanted to illustrate that the foreign authority or nation rising against another nation was the Romans. Moreover, as

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must have had an intended audience; not everyone would have understood that the swine illustrate that demons and/or even those who do not follow Jesus, would be impure like the pig was considered in Judaism. Therefore, to make this message relevant, it could not have been written for any Christian at the time (as the Gentiles would not have understood the significance of the swine), but for Jewish Christians. We can see, then, that the author had a target audience for whom he highlighted specific things he wanted to share and reveal with that audience.

the unclean spirit onto another object, animal, or person. Thus, by choosing swine, the author clearly reflects his distaste towards the Roman occupation, as he chose the dirties and impure an this passage then

⁷⁵ In addition, the swine may -understanding; just as the author used the apocalyptic rhetoric in Mark 13:8-9 to illustrate the fear of his community, the swine also indicate how the Romans make him and other natives of the land feel: humiliated, worthless, powerless, etc. By casting the demons onto the swine instead of removing them completely from the area (Mark 5:13) reverse the roles by having the Romans feel the humility of being treated like the lowest of animals.

Furthermore, in Mark 5:13, the swine that now have the legion of demons in them, run down a bank and drown themselves in the nearby water. If one is to keep the myth in the narrative, this part of the story emphasizes Jesus' power, and hence the power of God (a message that could be important to a general Christian audience throughout history). However, by demythologizing, we can posit that if the author was writing about the Roman legion, then the

omans to be driven out of their land.⁷⁶ To drive the Romans out of their land however, the various Christian groups must unite. While exorcisms tend to represent God overpowering Satan,⁷⁷ due to its political overtones, this specific exorcism represents th

overthrow the Romans and drive them out of their land (the legion of demons being cast

⁷⁵ Ibid., 55.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 55.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 14.

dissatisfaction of their current political situation is clearly illustrated by him choosing the most impure animal to cast the demons onto.

The above analysis also challenges scholars, such as Witherington, who believe that the Gospel of Mark was written either in Rome, for Roman Christians, or both; he concluded this because the author of the gospel often combines Greek words that render from Latin idioms.⁷⁹ For instance, as mentioned earlier, the word legion is actually a

face the legion of Roman soldiers, and thus, encouraged his followers to reach out to gentiles as well as other Jewish communities. He did this by explaining that the story took place in a community of gentiles, and still Jesus helped them exorcise the demons. With the use of symbolism, this pericope about exorcism unconventionally followed the form of a miracle story, to illustrate not only the power of Jesus as a miracle worker, but to demonstrate the power those who united with one another over their devotion for Jesus

IV. Changing Situations: What about Matthew and Luke?

As previously mentioned, the Gospel of Mark was written prior to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. This is important to reiterate, as this section will explore the redactional differences between the three gospels; in other words, we will examine what Matth

from what community they belong to. It is for this reason that Martin Hengel denied that

driven by the demon into the desert.)

Jewish sects. Therefore, this analysis explores the redactional differences between the

The author also wanted to illustrate the power of Jesus, by depicting the protagonist exorcising _____ ing them to hell. One reason an author may want to highlight the power of a leader is to ensure that an uncertain and questioning community may be persuaded and reassured that they have chosen the right path following a strong leader. If this is the case, then the author of the Gospel of Luke may be a Gentile, as this group would be more likely to question if they belong to a division of Judaism.⁹¹ Returning to Luke 8:31, the author uses the word abyss instead of _____ the Romans entered, took control and desired to remain in power of a country that was not their native land nor welcomed. Thus, instead of being sent to hell, the author just exiles the Roman legion. However, in Luke 8:31, the author explains the demons begging _____ to further emphasize the power of Jesus, as he has the ability to rebuke the powerful demons to hell. Therefore, it is evident that not only is the author of Luke a Gentile, but that he was writing to a community of followers that must have been Gentile as well.

Jesus, because he does not need to highlight the powerfulness of a central figure to a new movement.

In Luke 8:26, the author highlights that the country of Gerasenes is opposite of

the man of Gerasenes

as well as, the numerous smaller military designations of the Roman legion⁹⁵ occupying various lands. The first representation in Luke illustrates the power of Jesus and what happens to those who follow or do not believe in Jesus, while the latter idea further intensifies the political message that wa

is a little more realistic. By addressing the Gentiles, and reassuring their faith, he is asking the Gentiles to unite with other Jewish-Christian movements to overpower the small military designations, and thus, eventually overthrow the powerful Roman legion.

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Furthermore, by depoliticizing the original pericope of Mark, this exorcism Jesus performs returns to signifying the spoken word of God overthrowing the kingdom/power of Satan (something many exorcisms in the gospels tended to represent).⁹⁹ Thus, Matthew demonstrates that Jesus is working for God, and has the power of the Holy Spirit to heal
 ise demons
¹⁰⁰ through

Jesus.

Another part of the pericope that the author decides to refrain from including in his version is the ending where the previously possessed man begs to join Jesus. The author chooses to end with the citizens of Gerasenes begging Jesus to leave (Matt 8:34). This is important, as it was not until the Gentile community saw Jesus that they begged him to leave, and thus the author makes it appear as though the citizens of Gerasenes unwelcoming nature towards a Jewish miracle worker, the author may be reflecting the conflict developing Gentiles and Jews; some scholars argue that appears to reflect the conflict developing between the early church and rabbinic Judaism.¹⁰¹

If this is the case, then the Gentile community is not in fear of Jesus like they are in the other two synoptic pericopae. Instead, the Gentile community does not understand the power and significance of Jesus and thus, it makes sense why no one followed Jesus at the end of the pericope; no one followed Jesus to his boat at the end of the story,

⁹⁹ Eric Sorensen, *Possession and Exorcism in the New Testament and Early Christianity*, ed. Jörg Frey, Martin Hengel, and Otfried Hofius, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 128-9.

¹⁰⁰ Ascough, *Miracles of Jesus*, 14.

¹⁰¹ David L. Turner, *Matthew: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 13.

because although he appeared to be a miracle worker, he was Jewish, and that would be problematic for the Gentile community.

Therefore, it appears that the Matthean community consists of Jewish followers, as he is writing to someone who is used to using exorcism stories in a similar way (for instance the Lord's rebuke of Satan in Zechariah 3:2), and has not attempted to recruit Gentiles to their associations. Furthermore, the author focuses on depicting Jesus' power and the ungratefulness of the Gentile community, thus it is evident that the Matthean community must be made up of Jewish followers. This notion, however, has been debated by scholars: New Testament scholars have debated whether or not the Matthean community is made up mostly of Jewish followers that are still associated with the synagogue or if his community includes many Gentiles that have separated from the synagogue.¹⁰² By analyzing this pericop appears that the Matthean community consists of mostly Jewish-Christian followers who are still associated with the synagogue. If the Jewish followers still associated themselves with the synagogue, then they would not be interested in converting Gentiles, and thus, this returns to the analysis of the Gentile community of Gerasenes, where the citizens of the town did not hold Jesus on the same level of importance as the Jewish-Christian of the Matthean Jewish community would.

Unlike the author of the Gospel of Luke, Matthew wrote for a Jewish-Christian audience in hopes that his followers would be able to use the themes and messages in his gospel to teach others. The -Christians is evident, as he the

¹⁰² Ibid., 14.

ministry of John the Baptist.¹⁰³

of Jesus, because then his Jewish-Christian followers may focus more on questioning who was following Jesus instead of on the more important message of the story. In

negative consequences of not following Jesus comprehend when comparing it to the original source in Mark, because a reader may analyze what the author had changed from the original material and thus figure out why he did it. This method can also be applied to the Gospel of Matthew, who wanted his community to understand that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah, and thus, his community was actually another sect of Judaism. By emphasizing this, the author hoped to ease the conflict between the early Christ movement and rabbinic Judaism.

By applying a redactional critical method to the Gerasene demoniac pericopae in the synoptic gospels, I was able to determine the agenda of the two gospels that were written after Mark. As redactional critics believe the authors edit the oral and original written material, their theological motivations or personal agendas shine through their editorial work. The editors/authors are influenced by their environment and group of followers/community, thus it is difficult for them to not reveal their influences and concerns in their work. It is for this reason that redactional criticism is a useful form of comparison in New Testament studies.¹⁰⁷

V. Conclusions

So what was the purpose of arguing in accord with community theory for 50 plus pages when many scholars are already in agreement that you can learn about the gospel -political situations, and crucial characteristics about their community of followers through analyzing their gospels? The answer is because although

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important to note that this would be the next step a scholar would make to provide a more encompassing understanding of the authors of the gospels, what they were trying to illustrate and why they wrote what they did. Furthermore, I want to mention that although I only focused on the English translation of the gospels in this paper, I could have drawn even more conclusions by analyzing the Greek translation. However, due to the parameters of this paper and my current level of Greek, this type of analysis must be left for my PhD dissertation.

does not provide a different way of interpreting the text, this paper has strongly attempted to challenge this argument by allowing the gospels to speak for themselves. Although I do agree with community theory, I did not want to approach this paper assuming that I was correct, or take for granted the work already accomplished by other scholars within the field. Instead, I wanted to use this paper to explain why community theory is true. Bauckham is right in that scholars may approach gospel analysis in other ways, however, the same conclusions will arise, as

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