



# Synoptic, redactional, stylistic and narratological observations on the retelling of Mark 7:30 in Matthew 15:28

**Author:**Peter-Ben A. Smit<sup>1,2,3</sup>**Affiliations:**<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Theology, VU University Amsterdam, The Netherlands<sup>2</sup>Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Utrecht University, The Netherlands<sup>3</sup>Department of New Testament Studies, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, South Africa**Note:**

Prof. Dr Peter-Ben Smit is a research associate of Prof. Dr Jacobus (Kobus) Kok in the Department of New Testament Studies, Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa.

**Correspondence to:**

Peter-Ben Smit

**Email:**

p.b.a.smit@vu.nl

**Postal address:**

Herengracht 559 HS, 1017 BW Amsterdam, The Netherlands

**Dates:**

Received: 16 Apr. 2013

Accepted: 04 June 2014

Published: 13 Oct. 2014

**How to cite this article:**

Smit, P.B.A., 2014, 'Synoptic, redactional, stylistic and narratological observations on the retelling of Mark 7:30 in Matthew 15:28', *HTS Theological Studies/Theological Studies* 70(1), Art. #2690, 6 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i1.2690>

**Read online:**

Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

The Matthean redaction of Mark 7:30 in Matthew 15:28 often receives scant attention in scholarship in terms of its narrative quality. At most, it is regarded as a truncation of the full Marcan version, while all attention is given to Matthew's introduction of the notion of 'faith' in this verse. This article argues, by contrast, and on the basis of a synoptic comparison and narratological analysis of both texts, that more justice is done to both versions of the conclusion of this healing miracle when understanding them as achieving different narrative effects, with Matthew focusing on the immediacy of the healing, while Mark creates suspense, thus focusing on the veracity of Jesus' statement that the girl in question is healed.

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

In research on the Matthean redaction of Mark 7:30 in Matthew 15:28, emphasis is usually given to the Matthean introduction of the notion of the woman's πίστις, replacing the Marcan reference to her λόγος, which indeed is rather Matthew's redaction of Mark 7:29 than 7:30 and certainly shifts the emphasis from the strength of the Canaanite/Syrophenician woman's speech to her attitude towards Jesus that is usually seen as paralleling the faith of the equally Gentile centurion in Matthew 8:10 (e.g. Davies & Allison 1991:556; Frankemölle 1997:209; Gnilka 1988:31–32; Hagner 1995:442–443; Konradt 2007:63–70; Luz 1990:131; Nolland 2005:636).<sup>2</sup> However, there is much more to the Matthean redaction of Mark 7:30 than just this change, important as it is; this is, however, often not discussed in scholarship on the verse, which makes both the literary art of this verse and its relationship to Matthew 15:28 somewhat like the ugly ducklings of the pericopes of which they are part. This concerns specifically Matthew's redaction, not so much of Jesus' words to the woman, but rather of the narration of the subsequent events, that is, the actual departure of the demon (Mark) or the healing of the woman's daughter (Matthew). In this article, it will be argued that Matthew places much stronger emphasis on the event and immediacy of the healing of the daughter by reordering the Marcan sentence and by his use of an agentless passive to describe the daughter's healing. In Mark 7:30 and Matthew 15:28 one encounters two stylistically well-crafted sentences that both draw attention to different aspects of the healing or, in Mark, exorcism. Comparing both verses with one another by means of studying Matthew's redaction of his Marcan sources sheds light on both ways of narrating the end of the healing of the Canaanite/Syrophenician woman's daughter and heightens the appreciation of both. Thus, it will become clear that there is much more to both Mark 7:30 and Matthew 15:28 than, for example, Evans put it concerning the first verse: "She found her daughter ... the demon having departed" confirms the miracle' (Evans 2001:388; see also Lührmann 1987:131: 'Daß Jesus Recht hatte, konstatiert abschließend der Erzähler; in der Tat findet die Mutter ihr Kind geheilt vor.'). In a way, this article fills a *Leerstelle* left by Hagner's commentary on Matthew 15:28: 'Matthew, like Mark, lets the conclusion of the story have its own impact' (Hagner 1995:443; see also Burkill 1966:25–26). The question remains: Does the narrative have a particular kind of impact on the reader and how is it achieved?<sup>3</sup> As Hagner's *Leerstelle* already illustrates, the question of the narrative artistry and function of Mark 7:30 and Matthew 15:28 has remained curiously under-researched in modern research into the Gospels of both Mark and Matthew, despite the rise of a variety of literary and

1.This contribution has its origins in an exchange with Prof. Hans-Ulrich Weidemann, Siegen, following the presentation by Susanna Asikainen on the full Marcan and Matthean pericopes of which the last verses are discussed here, on the occasion of the first meeting of the European Network for the Study of Masculinity in Early Christianity (Bern, 29–30 November 2013). Miss Asikainen's presentation focused on the (challenged) masculinity of Jesus in these stories. I am grateful to the Rev. Frank Krebs, St. Louis, USA, for proofreading this article.

2.It may also be noted that considering the Matthean shift from λόγος to πίστις, it might also be worth considering that if πίστις is not just understood as denoting 'faith' or 'trust', but also something like 'proof' or 'argument' (in the Aristotelian sense of the word), then the shift from λόγος to πίστις might be smaller than one would think based on modern translations that translate 'word' and 'faith.' This consideration is based on a discussion with Suzan Sierkema-Agteres, MA, of Groningen University.

3.One would have expected reader-response studies in Mark to have picked up on this question, but this does not seem to be the case, see, for example, Van Iersel (1998:251), does not pay any attention at all to the narratological aspects of Mark 7:30 and the possible influence this could have on the reader and his or her response to the text.

narrative approaches to these texts (see Struthers Malbon 2000, 2011; Miller 2004; Moloney 2004; O'Day 2001; Powell 2011; Pui-Lan 1995:71–83; Ringe 1985, 2001; Rhoads, Dewey & Michie 1982; Wainwright 2001). Therefore, this article asks and answers the question how the narrative art of Mark 7:30 and Matthew 15:28 can be characterised.

Methodologically this article has its point of departure in a stylistic and narratological analysis of Mark 7:30, which are subsequently given relief with the help of insights from a comparison with Matthew 15:28 and a consideration of the Matthean redaction. The synoptic and redaction-historical considerations are at the service of the narratological (i.e. synchronic) analysis of Mark 7:30 and, as a consequence of the synoptic and redaction-critical considerations, of Matthew 15:28. By reading the two texts as mirrors for one another, the characteristics of each stand out even more clearly. To be sure, not the full arsenal of narratological (or, for that matter, redaction-historical) methodology will be used here, but only those methodological steps that are useful for an analysis that has its point of departure in the most immediately striking characteristic of Mark 7:[29–]30 when compared to Matthew 15:28: Mark's apparent wordiness.

## Mirroring Mark 7:30 and Matthew 15:28

### The synoptic comparison as starting point

Attention to the outstanding characteristics of Mark 7:30 and Matthew 15:28 are required first when the two texts are compared to one another in a synoptic comparison. The result is seen in Table 1 (including Mk 7:29).

As is immediately obvious, Matthew has considerably shortened the Marcan account, both Jesus' words, which now emphasise the woman's trust in Jesus rather than her speech, the actions of the woman (completely omitted in Matthew), and the successful exorcism. While theological reasons doubtlessly played a role in the replacement of Jesus' reference to the woman's *λόγος* with one to her *πίστις*, which turns Matthew's presentation of her into both one of a model Gentile believer and one of someone clearly subordinate to Jesus (which is not at all that clear in Mark), and while a desire for literary economy may have played a role in the shortening of the account, considering this comparison also gives reason to raise the question as to what further effects the different way of narrating the 'same' events may have (see e.g. Finfern 2010:87–89).<sup>4</sup> Is Mark simply loquacious

4. Given that the impact of the events and the light shed on them changes considerably depending on how they are told. It seems to be misleading to simply refer to them as the same (historical) events, given that this would mean privileging the world behind the text to the world in front of the text; if one is interested in the events as narrated by Mark and Matthew, it is heuristically helpful not to speak too quickly of the 'same' events when they are narrated differently. Instead, a reference to a similar, or even identical, 'plot' would be helpful.

TABLE 1: A synoptic comparison of Mark 7:29–30 and Matthew 15:28.

Mark 7:29–30 (NA28)	Matthew 15:28 (NA28)
29 και εἶπεν αὐτῇ· διὰ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ὕπαγε, ἐξεληλυθεν ἐκ τῆς θυγατρὸς σου τὸ δαιμόνιον. 30 και ἀπελθοῦσα εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς εὗρεν τὸ παιδίον βεβλημένον ἐπὶ τὴν κλίνην και τὸ δαιμόνιον ἐξεληλυθός.	28 τότε ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῇ· ὦ γύναι, μεγάλη σου ἡ πίστις· γεννηθήτω σοι ὡς θέλεις. και ἰάθη ἡ θυγάτηρ αὐτῆς ἀπὸ τῆς ὥρας ἐκείνης.

and interested in foregrounding the woman, or is there also something else about his narrative technique? And if there is something more about this, how then does Matthew's version of Mark 7:[29–]30 appear? In order to consider this, first the syntax and narratological characteristics of Mark 7:30 will be considered followed by a similar analysis of Matthew 15:28. In doing so, the analysis will draw on insights from Greek grammar and modern narratology, building on the work of Finfern (2010).

## Narratological and stylistic observations on Mark 7:30

A starting point for the considerations here is the observation mentioned above, that is, that Mark seems to be somewhat loquacious when compared to Matthew when it comes to telling the 'same' events. This observation serves to raise one's curiosity as to Mark's way of narrating in Mark 7:30, the verse in which Mark narrates the events following Jesus' final response to the woman in verse 29, that is, διὰ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ὕπαγε, ἐξεληλυθεν ἐκ τῆς θυγατρὸς σου τὸ δαιμόνιον.

To begin with, it is easy to observe that Mark mentions three things in 7:30: the return of the woman to her house, her finding of the girl on the bed, and the demon's departure. While this can be described rashly as a sequential way of telling the story, even with a somewhat paratactic touch, a reading informed by the stylistic means at Mark's disposal and contemporary narratology teases out more than just this. In order to delve into this in both verses 29 and 30, first the notion of 'focalization' will be used as an analytical tool, after which the sentence structure is considered, and then the literary creation of suspense is examined.

'Focalization' is the term used in narratology to describe through whose eyes a story is told, or, to put it more precisely, who is the *Wahrnehmungszentrum* of a text (Finfern 2010:173: 'Fokalisierung durch eine Figur; hier "Wahrnehmungszentrum"'). This centre (also 'Fokalisationszentrum') consists of a concrete narrative character that is, as it were, 'accompanied' or followed by the narrator (see also Bal 2009:148). In Mark 7:30, this *Wahrnehmungszentrum* clearly is the Syrophenician woman. That this is the case follows from (and can be seen as the reason for) the step-by-step narration of the events as they unfold in relation to the woman: she goes home (*ἀπελθοῦσα εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς*), she finds her daughter on the bed (*εὗρεν τὸ παιδίον βεβλημένον ἐπὶ τὴν κλίνην*) and the demon is gone (*καὶ τὸ δαιμόνιον ἐξεληλυθός*). The latter two things were of course already the case before the woman went home (see v. 29), but because the narrative follows her, the reader only discovers the reality of all this with her. When considering Mark 7:30 in this way, the seeming Marcan loquaciousness gives way to seeing literary artistry. An effect of using the woman as the *Wahrnehmungszentrum* of Mark 7:30 is that the reader is led to empathise with her, as this is one of the effects of following a person throughout a narrative – even in miniature as in the verse under consideration here (Finfern 2010:193). However, as Finfern notes, quite a few other aspects of a narration can also contribute to empathising with



a character, of which the following certainly apply to the case at hand: Little distance when reporting conversations (see the report of the conversation between the woman and Jesus, esp. vv. 27–29) both because of the importance of a character for the action that takes place (the woman is both central to the entire pericope and to v. 30) and because of the proximity between the situation that the character is in, and situations that the reader is familiar with (Finnern 2010:193–194). Having considered the issue of ‘focalization’ and its effect, now another aspect of the rather sequential and seemingly loquacious way of narrating in Mark 7:30 can be considered: the interrelationship between narrated time and the time of the narration.

Every narrative spends a certain amount of time narrating events that themselves lasted for a certain amount of time. The interrelationship between these two kinds of time, *Erzählzeit* and *erzählte Zeit* varies, making a narrative faster or slower. The more the two kinds of time coincide, the slower the speed of narrating is. One of the slowest ways of narrating is the verbatim report of a conversation. This very slow way of narrating occurs immediately prior to Mark 7:30, given that in verses 27–29 a ‘verbal report’ is given of the exchange between the woman and Jesus. This, on the one hand, slows down the narrative, and on the other hand, also creates much proximity between the reader and the characters in the text, which enables the development of sympathies and antipathies (Finnern 2010:170). Also in Mark 7:30 the narrative speed remains relatively slow, given that – as was just noted – the woman is followed step by step, and a sense of empathy can continue to develop. In connection with verse 29 and Jesus’ words there, this leads to the creation of suspense, as will be considered below. However, the interrelationship between the time of narration and narrated time is but one of the temporal aspects of the narration of an event. Two others concern the order in which events are narrated and the frequency with which this happens (see Finnern 2010:93 and his broader discussion on pp. 85–96). These pertain to both Mark 7:29 and 30.

To begin with, the frequency of the narration of the events can be considered (see Finnern 2010:98–99 for an overview of different kinds of frequency). While one might at first sight think that the events of verse 30 are recounted only once, a look at verse 29 strongly suggests that this is not the case: Jesus here already says what has happened (the demon has left the woman’s daughter, she is sent home) and the woman’s actions in verse 30 enact what was said in verse 30. This repetitive way of narrating creates a focus on the woman’s actions as such and slows down the narrative at the same time, which again strengthens the focus on her actions, thus allowing the reader to follow the woman even more closely.

When turning to the order in which the events are narrated in verse 30, the order appears strictly chronological on the one hand, given that the actions of the woman are followed, while there is also the case of Jesus’ proleptic words in verse 29 that already have ‘promised’ a certain outcome to the woman’s

return home and to her daughter.<sup>5</sup> The combination of these two orders in which the reader is told about the events makes for quite a special effect that can now be considered in somewhat more detail.

The combination of the repetitive way of narrating with the sequential narration of the woman’s actions themselves slows down the narrative and creates a strong focus on these actions. This was already established. There also is a related effect, the creation of suspense. Suspense is understood here as follows, following Finnern who, in turn, draws on Bal (2009:163), that suspense is ‘the effect of procedures by which the reader or character is made to ask questions.’ Suspense is created by a number of means in a narrative, according to Finnern (2010):

Zu einem hohen Spannungspotenzial tragen verschiedene Faktoren bei...: eine große Nähe und Sympathie zu den beteiligten Figuren ..., offene Fragen, Limitierung der offenen Fragen auf möglichst nur zwei Alternativen, Anzahl und Intensität der Informationen über die Alternativen, die Bewertung der möglichen Auswirkungen, geringe Wahrscheinlichkeit des erhofften Geschehens ..., eine Applikabilität ... und bestimmte Themenkreise der Erzählung. Grundlage für die Spannung ist die ‘partielle Informiertheit’ über Handlungen (bereits Geschehenes oder später Geschehendes) oder Figuren (bei unklaren Verhaltensweisen). (pp. 199–200)<sup>6</sup>

In the case of Mark 7:30, suspense is created by the same means as focus is created. The proleptic statement of Jesus at the end of verse 29 raises the question whether the demon will indeed have done as Jesus had said he would, and at the same time the slow step-by-step narration of the woman’s actual return home and the discovery of her daughter on the bed with the demon gone. In fact, as Rhoads has pointed out, Jesus’ words and the woman’s actions and experiences largely follow the same sequence, Jesus tells the woman (a) to go to (b) her daughter from whom (c) the demon has departed; she (a’) goes home, (b’) finds her daughter, and (c’) the demon has gone (see Rhoads 1994; Rhoads does not pay attention to the literary artistry of Mark 7:30 though.). Even though it is not a perfect repetition (notably, in v. 29 the reference to the leaving of the demon precedes the reference to the daughter, while in v. 30 this is reverse), it ties Jesus’ words and the subsequent events closely to one another and, following the unfolding of Jesus’ statement step-by-step, as it were, the suspense increases towards the end: Will indeed the last and boldest part of Jesus’ words have a counterpart in the course of events?

By narrating the events this way, through the woman as *Wahrnehmungszentrum*, the narrative confirmation of Jesus’ statement *vis-à-vis* the woman’s that the demon has left her daughter (v. 29) is delayed, which creates suspense: Will Jesus’ words prove to be true, or not? By making the reader go through the process of the woman’s return home, her

<sup>5</sup>In retrospect, the last words of Jesus are not really a prolepsis, given that they in fact refer to an event that has already happened, but the reality of which remains hidden from the reader until it has been discovered by the woman, whose actions and experiences are followed in verse 30, preventing the reader from knowing or seeing anything that she has not seen yet.

<sup>6</sup>See also Mayordomo (1998:79, 250).



finding of the daughter on the bed – this latter, and much-discussed detail, for example, considering the girl’s position as an expression of the girl’s exhaustion after the demon’s departure (Mann 1986:321; Pesch 1976:390), or taking the bed as an indication of her mother’s wealth (Donahue & Harrington 2002:235; Gnllka 1988:293), also serve to ‘zoom in’ even more and to slow down the narrative speed even more – all the while having to ask oneself what will come of Jesus’ words, and only then allowing the reader to discover that the demon has gone. The statement about the demon’s departure has a climactic function, resolving the suspense built up through Mark’s way of narrating the events after Jesus’ words. One may even surmise that some stress is placed on the last word of the sentence, that is, ἐξεληλυθός, which Mark has delayed as long as he could, stylistically and syntactically speaking. Only at the very last instance, is the reader informed that Jesus’ bold words have indeed become true (see also the agreement between the resultative perfects [ἐξεληλυθεν in v. 29 is matched by the perfect ἐξεληλυθός in v. 30] as noted by Donahue & Harrington 2002:235). This climax is both an echo and a confirmation of Jesus’ words in verse 29: ἐξεληλυθεν ἐκ τῆς θυγατρὸς σου τὸ δαίμόνιον. The slight difference between verses 29 and 30 – as far as the sequence of the narration of the events/the woman’s experiences is concerned – only serves to heighten this effect. Where in verse 29 the leaving of the demon is mentioned fairly early on in the sentence (ἐξεληλυθεν ἐκ τῆς θυγατρὸς σου τὸ δαίμόνιον), this is not the case in verse 30, where Mark has placed the essential ἐξεληλυθός at the very last possible position in the sentence, thereby creating suspense and giving this participle a climactic sense.<sup>7</sup> Among the very few commentators who note this is Gundry (1992), when he writes:

To say that because the story does not describe the exit of the demon the point lies in the dialogue (vv. 27–28) is to disregard the climax of the story, which describes the woman’s finding her daughter delivered (v. 30). (p. 381)

A more typical position would be France’s (2002):

The dialogue, rather than the exorcism, remains the focus of interest in the pericope. No account of the exorcism is offered, and no word of command recorded; the removal of the demon is simply spoken of as already a past event (ἐξεληλυθεν). (p. 299)

The effect of narrating the story (or the ‘events’) in this slow, repetitive and subtly structured way with a focus on the woman as *Wahrnehmungszentrum* is that the reader both develops a strong sense of empathy with the woman, that is to say, begins to share her feelings and experiences as they are narrated, because of this, and because of Mark’s narrative strategy that delays the climax till the very end, leads to a very strong sense of suspense and its eventual resolution. Within the miniature setting of one single verse, a roller coaster of emotions is evoked, when the text’s literary artistry is appreciated (see for a consideration of the arc of suspense on this literary level, e.g. Finfern 2010:200). This appreciation only increases when the Matthean version of the ‘same’ story

7. For these observations, I am indebted to Ari Troost, MA.

is taken into account once again and also considered with the help of narratological and stylistic concepts.

## Matthew’s version

When comparing this to the structure of the account of the events after Jesus’ final words to the woman in the Matthean account (i.e. ὄγύναι, μεγάλη σου ἡ πίστις· γενηθήτω σοι ὡς θέλεις), a number of striking differences become apparent, the consideration of which from the perspective of the Marcan narration in Mark 7:30 sheds both light on the characteristics of the Matthean text – and hence on Matthean redaction – as well as on the Marcan one. As above, first the *Wahrnehmungszentrum* (i.e. the ‘focalization’) will be considered, and next the use of time in Matthew 15:28.

When considering the ‘focalization’ in this text, it will be obvious that from the second part of verse 28 onwards that the woman is followed not as the *Wahrnehmungszentrum* of the text as is the case in the Marcan original, but that by contrast, a bird’s eye perspective is used that informs the reader immediately and ‘objectively’ concerning the fact that Jesus’ words matched the healing of the daughter of the (in Matthew’s Canaanite) woman. Rather than inviting to empathise with anyone in particular, the narrative draws the attention to the events themselves and this in a rather distant (‘objective’) way (see Finfern 2010:168–170). In relation to this, another shift in the Matthean narrative should be mentioned, namely, the shift from τὸ δαίμόνιον ἐξεληλυθός to ἰάθη ἡ θυγάτηρ. The focus shifts from the actions of the demon to what happens to the daughter. This can also be seen as serving a more concentrated way of expressing the effect of Jesus’ words as leading to the healing of the daughter, which is only implied in the Marcan formulation concerning the demon’s departure, as well as providing a smoother transition to the healing summary that follows in Matthew 15:29–31.

When turning to the question of *Erzählzeit* and *erzählte Zeit*, a notable difference between Mark and Matthew, which is quite in line with the above noticed shift in ‘focalization’, can be observed. To put it briefly: the narration has been speeded up enormously. No longer is the woman followed step by step through as much suspense towards a much delayed climax, but the reader is informed immediately that ἰάθη ἡ θυγάτηρ αὐτῆς. The placement of the predicate at the beginning of the sentence and the use of an agentless passive here (not a *passivum divinum* as will be argued below) both further the stress on the immediate event. This stress is, of course, underlined by the latter part of this sentence: ἀπὸ τῆς ὥρας ἐκείνης, indicating that the healing of the woman’s daughter coincides with Jesus’ words (Carter 2004:325). It is almost as if Matthew imitates Mark’s famous emphasis on immediacy here (often through the use of εὐθύς). Narrated time and time of narration do and do not coincide here. They do not coincide given that it is not narrated how the girl is healed, no process is narrated; they do coincide given that the immediacy of the announcement of the girl’s healing probably matches an understanding of this event

that is just as immediate and coincides with the preceding words of Jesus.

Having considered the use of time in Matthew 15:28 now frequency can be considered. In a way, repetition is still there. In the first part of verse 28, Jesus states that it will happen as the woman desires, while the actual fulfilment is narrated in the latter part of verse 28. Still, the repetition is much less elaborate than in Mark 7:29–30 and there is no sense at all of using the repetition as a device for delaying the unfolding of the plot indicated by Jesus' words. Rather, to the extent that the second part of the verse indeed repeats the first part, it confirms its immediate fulfilment.

Thus, the redactional changes that Matthew makes, leading to a different way of narrating the 'same' story, produce a different effect. The reader is impressed by the immediate efficacy of Jesus' words, rather than led towards relief as in Mark. Having said that, one element of the Matthean redaction and his way of narrating the story needs to be considered further, the use of an agentless passive at the beginning of the second part of Matthew 15:28. It could be considered as a *passivum divinum*, which would introduce God as the agent here. This, in turn, would alter the narrative situation considerably, given that a further character enters the stage, however invisible. Therefore, at least by way of excursus, this interpretation of *ιάθη* needs to be considered here as well.

### Excursus: Matthew's use of the agentless passive: A divine passive?

Matthew's change of τὸ δαιμόνιον ἐξεληλυθὸς το καὶ ἰάθη ἡ θυγάτηρ αὐτῆς does not only shift the focus of this part of the sentence from actions of the demon to something that happens to the daughter, it also introduces an agentless passive at a very prominent position in the sentence, that is, *ιάθη*. It would be tempting to apply the category of the *passivum divinum* or 'divine passive' to this form, given that one could argue that Matthew, being a Jewish Christian, wishes to both indicate that God is the agent here and to avoid mentioning God directly out of respect for the divine name. The latter idea is the reason for which the notion *passivum divinum* was introduced into New Testament scholarship by Joachim Jeremias in 1971 (Jeremias 1971:20–24; see the criticism of Reiser 2001:47). However, doing so would only be warranted if one has also considered other, less theologically informed and more common reasons for the use of an agentless passive. Wallace has identified the following seven common reasons for the use of an agentless passive (Wallace 1996:435–438): (1) 'The suppressed agent is often *obvious from the context* or the audience's pre-understanding' (e.g. Mt 5:25; Jn 3:23; Jude 3).<sup>8</sup> (2) 'The focus of the passage is on the subject; an explicit agent might detract from this focus' (e.g. Mt 2:12; Mk 4:14–18:20).<sup>9</sup> (3) 'The nature of some passive verbs is such that *no agency is to*

8.Wallace (1996:435–438) further lists: Matthew 3:16; Mark 4:6; 5:4; Luke 4:16; 5:6; 10:9; John 2:10; Romans 3:19; 1 Corinthians 3:10; Galatians 2:7; Revelation 7:4.

9.Wallace (1996:435–438) further lists: Matthew 2:2–3, 12, 18; 4:12; 5:10; John 5:10, 13; 7:47; Romans 1:18; 1 Corinthians 4:11. Young, *Greek*, 135, referred to by Wallace here, points out that this is the fundamental reason for the use of the passive even when an agent is present: 'The most common function of the passive voice is to keep the topic of the passage or the previous subject as the subject of the sentence.' That focus is heightened even further when no agent is expressed.

*be implied.*' (e.g., Lk 4:2: συντελεσθεισῶν αὐτῶν).<sup>10</sup> (4) 'The verb in question is functioning as an *equative verb.*' (e.g. Mt 2:23: πόλιν λεγομένην Ναζαρέτ ... Ναζωραῖος κληθήσεται).<sup>11</sup> (5) The use of the agentless passive is related to the notion of an implicit generic agent, equivalent to the English 'they say' or the Dutch 'ze zeggen' (see e.g. Mt 5:21; Jn 10:35).<sup>12</sup> (6) 'An *explicit agent would sometimes be obtrusive* or would render the sentence too complex, perhaps reducing the literary effect' (see e.g. 1 Cor 1:13, or 12:13).<sup>13</sup> (7) 'The *suppression of the agent for rhetorical effect*, especially for the purpose of drawing the reader into the story.'<sup>14</sup> To this may be added that, to the extent that it has not been included by Wallace in his 7th category yet, the use of the agentless passive to highlight the action, rather than the actor. The latter can certainly be seen to apply to Matthew's redaction of Mark here. The placement of the verb at the very first position of the sentence also indicates a stress on the action, rather than on the agent or the subject of the verb. This also applies to Wallace's category 7. Thus, there is little reason to identify a 'divine passive' here, rather what happens is something different. Quite in line with the observations presented above, all the emphasis now falls entirely on the immediate event of the healing of the girl, rather than on the going away of the demon, which was the climax of the Marcan sentence. Matthew's choice of an agentless passive to stress this agrees well with the further changes he makes to the conclusion of the Marcan narrative.

## Conclusion

As has been shown above, Mark and Matthew, in recounting the same (or at least a highly similar, i.e. one based on the same plot) story, conclude it in two quite distinct ways, which must have had rather different effects on the reader. Both of these effects are appreciated all the more because of the comparison of the two versions with one another. In Mark, the reader is led to a moment of considerable suspense, which is only resolved by the very last word of his account of Jesus' exorcism. Only in the very last instance, Mark reveals that Jesus' bold words of verse 29 have indeed become true. The combination of the experiences of suspense and relief through this way of narrating leaves a strong impression on the reader, or so it may be imagined. The scope of these emotions has been described as follows by Finfern (2010:202): If an action that involves a person with whom one sympathises is ongoing, the emotion is either hope – when looking forward to, or expecting a positive outcome – or fear, when a negative outcome is anticipated. When an action has been completed that involves a sympathetic character, then either joy or relief can be felt, when the outcome is positive, or pity or disappointment when the outcome is not positive.

10. See further also: John 7:8; Acts 2:1; Hebrews 1:11 (listed by Wallace 1996: 435–438).

11. See further also, for example, Matthew 4:18; John 4:5; 5:2; Acts 1:23 (listed by Wallace 1996:435–438).

12. See further also Acts 2:25; Galatians 3:15; 2 Peter 2:2 (listed by Wallace 1996: 435–438).

13. Acts 1:5; Romans 3:2; Revelation 5:6, see also John 2:20 (listed by Wallace 1996:435–438).

14. Wallace (1996:435–438) refers to Mark 2:5, Romans 1:13, and James 2:23, and further to Matthew 5:29; Mark 2:20; Luke 4:6, 43; John 3:14; 9:10; Romans 1:1, 21; 3:19; 2 Thessalonians 2:2–3, 8; Titus 1:15; Revelation 2:13; 6:2.

A mixture of hope and fear, followed by joy and relief seems to be the most appropriate mixture for Mark 7:30, while for Matthew 15:28 immediate joy is the most likely emotion to be evoked by the narrative.

This artful way of telling the story stands out all the more when it is compared with the different approach that Matthew chooses by stressing the immediate healing of the daughter by virtually reversing the Marcan way of recounting it. By means of his choice of words and their syntactical placement, Matthew 'wows' his readership by foregrounding and stressing the immediate effect of Jesus' words to the woman in response to her trust in him. An awareness of this effect of Matthew's way of narrating the story also warns against somewhat dismissive remarks concerning its conclusion, such as '[t]his editorial remark does duty for the longer and much more vivid Mark 7:30' (Davies & Allison 1991:556) or 'rather perfunctory account of the healing' (France 2007:596).

Thus, even though they recount the same (or at least a highly similar) story, Mark and Matthew opt to create two very different narrative effects towards its end. While Mark draws on the reader's curiosity whether Jesus' bold words will indeed come true (Marcus 2000:470), Matthew places all emphasis on showing the immediate efficacy of Jesus' words. Curiously, one would be inclined to call this a virtually 'Marcan' redactional change that Matthew makes here, given its stress on immediacy. Matthew has, with virtually every stylistic means at his disposal, precisely reversed the narrative effect of Mark's way of telling the conclusion of the healing of the woman's daughter.

## Acknowledgements

### Competing interests

The author declares that he no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

## References

- Bal, M., 2009, *Narratology*, University of Toronto, Toronto.
- Burkill, T.A., 1966, 'The Syrophenician woman, the congruence of Mark 7:24–31, *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und Kunde der alten Kirche* 57, 23–37. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/156853667X00210>
- Burkill, T.A., 1967, 'The historical development of the story of the Syrophenician woman (Mark vii: 24–31)', *Novum Testamentum* 9, 161–177.
- Carter, W., 2004, *Matthew and the margins*, T&T Clark, London.
- Davies, W.D. & Allison, D.C., 1991, *A critical and exegetical commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, vol. 2, T&T Clark, Edinburgh.
- Donahue, J. & Harrington, D.J., 2002, *The Gospel of Mark*, Collegeville, Liturgical Press.
- Evans, C.A., 2001, *Mark*, Nelson, Nashville.
- Finnern, S., 2010, *Narratologie und biblische Exegese*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen.
- France, R.T., 2002, *Mark*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids.
- France, R.T., 2007, *Matthew*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids.
- Frankemölle, H., 1997, *Matthäuskommentar*, Bd. 2, Patmos, Düsseldorf.
- Gnilka, J., 1988, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 2. Teil., Herder, Freiburg.
- Gundry, R.H., 1992, *Mark: A commentary on his apology for the Cross*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids.
- Haenchen, E., 1963, 'Die Komposition von Mk vii 27–ix 1 und Par.', *Novum Testamentum* 6, 81–109.
- Hagner, D.A., 1995, *Matthew 14–28*, Word, Waco.
- Hooker, M.D., 1991, *The Gospel according to St Mark*, Black, London.
- Humphrey, R.L., 2003, *Narrative structure and message in Mark: A rhetorical analysis*, Mellen, Lewiston, NY.
- Humphries-Brooks, S., 2001, 'The Canaanite Women in Matthew,' in A-J. Levine (ed.), *A Feminist companion to Mark*, pp. 138–156, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield.
- Jackson, G., 2002, *Have mercy on me: The story of the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15:21–28*, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield.
- Jeremias, J., 1971, *Neutestamentliche Theologie*, 1. Teil., *Die Verkündigung Jesu*, Gütersloh, Mohn.
- Kertelge, K., 1970, *Die Wunder Jesu im Markusevangelium: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung*, Kosel, München.
- Koch, D.-A., 1975, *Die Bedeutung der Wundererzählungen für die Christologie des Markusevangeliums*, De Gruyter, Berlin.
- Konradt, M., 2007, *Israel und die Völker im Matthäusevangelium*, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck.
- Lührmann, D., 1987, *Markusevangelium*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen.
- Luz, U., 1990, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 2. Teil., Benzinger, Zürich.
- Mann, C.S., 1986, *Mark*, Doubleday, Garden City.
- Marcus, J., 2000, *Mark*, Doubleday, New York.
- Mayordomo, M., 1998, *Den Anfang hören. Leserorientierte Evangelienexegese am Beispiel von Matthäus 1–2*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen.
- Miller, S., 2004, *Women in Mark's Gospel*, T & T Clark, New York.
- Moloney, F.J., 2004, *Mark: Storyteller, interpreter, Evangelist*, Hendrickson, Peabody.
- Nolland, J., 2005, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids.
- O'Day, G.R., 2001, 'Surprised by Faith: Jesus and the Canaanite Woman,' in A-J. Levine (ed.), *A Feminist companion to Mark*, pp. 114–125, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press.
- Pesch, R., 1976, *Das Markusevangelium*, 1. Teil, Herder, Freiburg.
- Powell, M., 2011, 'Narrative criticism: The emergence of a prominent reading strategy,' in K.R. Iverson & C.W. Skinner (eds.), *Mark as story: Retrospect and prospect*, pp. 19–43, Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta.
- Pui-Lan, K., 1995, *Discovering the Bible in the non-Biblical World*, Maryknoll, Orbis Books.
- Reiser, M., 2001, *Sprache und literarische Formen des Neuen Testaments: Eine Einführung*, Schöningh, Paderborn.
- Rhoads, D., 1994, 'Jesus and the Syrophenician woman in Mark: A narrative-critical study,' *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 62, 343–375. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/LXII.2.343>
- Rhoads, D., Dewey, J. & Michie, D. (eds.), 1982, *Mark as story: An introduction to the narrative of a Gospel*, Fortress, Minneapolis.
- Ringe, S.H., 1985, 'A gentile woman's story,' in L.M. Russell (ed.), *Feminist interpretation of the Bible*, pp. 65–72, Westminster, Philadelphia.
- Ringe, S.H., 2001, 'A gentile woman revisited: Rereading Mark 7:24–31a,' in A-J. Levine (ed.), *A feminist companion to Mark*, pp. 79–100, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield.
- Skinner, M.L., 2006, 'She departed to her house': Another dimension of the Syrophenician mother's faith in Mark 7:24–30,' *Word & World* 26, 14–21.
- Struthers Malbon, E., 2000, *In the company of Jesus: Characters in Mark's Gospel*, Westminster John Knox, Louisville.
- Struthers Malbon, E., 2011, 'Characters in Mark's story: Changing perspectives on the narrative process,' in K.R. Iverson & C.W. Skinner (eds.), *Mark as story: Retrospect and prospect*, pp. 45–69, Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta.
- Van Iersel, B., 1998, *Mark: A reader-response commentary*, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield.
- Wainwright, E.M., 2001, 'Not without my daughter: Gender and demon possession in Matthew 15.21–29,' in A-J. Levine (ed.), *A feminist companion to Mark*, pp. 126–137, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield.
- Wallace, D.B., 1996, *Greek grammar beyond the basics*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids.