

Mimicry in the Beelzebul controversy (Mk 3:22–30) as nonviolent resistance

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This article investigates Mark 3:22–30. Through both words and deeds of casting out demons with the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus explains the cosmological, spiritual meaning of the essence of casting out demons. However, the parables and exorcism in this controversial story of Beelzebul can also be examined from a socio-political perspective on imperialism through a postcolonial reading of mimicry. The concept of mimicry, which creates an ambivalent relationship between the coloniser and the colonised, occurs because the colonised mimic, that is, repeats the movements of the coloniser in their habits, assumptions, and commands. The representation and reproduction of the colonised are never simple; they become both a resemblance and a camouflage that ultimately undermines the hegemony of the coloniser.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: This article argues that the reading of postcolonial mimicry produces nonviolent resistance by the common people of Galilee against the Roman imperialists and Jewish collaborators, as articulated through the controversial story of Beelzebul.

Keywords: mimicry; postcolonial; Beelzebul; non-violent resistance; subversive.

Mark 3:22–30 (NIV):

And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, 'Beelzebul possesses him! By the prince of demons, he is driving out demons.' So, Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: 'How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man's house. Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin.' He said this because they were saying, 'He has an impure spirit.'

Introduction

This passage is not about the casting out of demons or Satan, but rather the response of the scribes who came from Jerusalem to investigate and judge Jesus' many exorcisms. In addition to the exorcism in the synagogue of Capernaum (Mk 1:21–28), Mark reports many other exorcisms in several passages: 1:32–34, 39, and 3:11. According to the scribes, Jesus performed exorcisms because He had the power of the prince of demons, Beelzebul. With the power of the prince of demons, the demons that possessed many people would be subdued. In other words, according to the scribes, Jesus Himself was possessed by the prince of demons (Mk 3:20).

I have expressed the opinion that the exorcism and demon possession recounted in the Gospel of Mark are facts that must be viewed synchronically as a presentation of Jesus' identity (Hauw 2019). Jesus is the eschatological exorcist, par excellence, because He is the bearer of God's Kingdom. Alongside the coming of God's Kingdom, the chaotic situation in Galilee due to the political power of Rome and its collaborators (local rulers) had fostered rebellion and hysteria in society. From a socio-historical perspective, incidents of demonic possession were considered an effect of the revolutionary situation. Meanwhile, exorcists were categorised as saviours of the people (messiahs) (Hollenbach 1981).¹ Both exorcists and demon-possessed people were political

1. The chaos and rebellion that occurred in Palestine in the 1st century were caused by dissatisfaction with the local rulers (Jewish leaders), who were none other than Roman collaborators. In addition, the successors to Emperor Augustus were, in many ways,

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threats to the rulers because they could cause chaos and disrupt social order. For Jesus, as an exorcist, He was considered a threat to both sides. For the Jewish elite, Jesus was a rival who could unite the common people to overthrow the status quo. The same implication applied to the Roman colonists; Jesus' miraculous deeds could be dangerous because He was attempting a restoration that would integrate the people, which could ultimately threaten their colonial power. For both the Jewish and Roman rulers, Jesus' actions would be seen as an attempt to subvert the common people into resistance.

The majority of Mark scholars have accepted that Mark's gospel is closely related to imperial rhetoric (Tan 2006:34). Any miraculous deeds and political power can go hand in hand as a propaganda strategy to unite and rule. Emperor Vespasian used miracles (exorcisms and healings) as propaganda to establish the legitimacy and permanence of his rule (Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.10; 2.78; 4.81; Suetonius, *Vesp.* 5.2–6; 7.2–3; Dio, 64.9.1; 65.1–2–4; 65.8.1; Josephus, *Wars* 1.23; 4.623; 3.401–404), (Samuel 2007:122fn52). In a similar vein, Jesus' exorcisms can be viewed in a socio-historical context related to imperial rhetoric.

Alongside the above opinion, Mark's account of Jesus' power is thick with apocalyptic characteristics. From this perspective, Benny Liew sees Jesus' *parousia* as an eschatological politics involving a power struggle between Jesus and the Jewish leaders as collaborators with Rome through an inter(con)textual reading of the Gospel of Mark (Liew 1999a). Thus, a binary reading is created, namely 'insiders' versus 'outsiders', which he uses to describe the concept of mimicry in postcolonial studies. Jesus is presented as the Son of Man who has authority, as well as the Son of Man who suffers. He died on a colonial cross, as well as died as the redeemer of sins for many people, according to God's will. This ambivalent Jesus ultimately uses his power and all his attributes to become the new ruler. The rhetoric of the Gospel of Mark's Empire, which narrates divine and colonial power, remains clear even as attention to Jesus' apocalyptic power and the concept of mimicry.

However, Samuel's (2007) criticism of Benny's view warrants consideration: was Jesus replacing or duplicating the Roman imperialists and their collaborators through His power? Or was Jesus Himself a colonialist or a hybrid

.....incompetent rulers. Between 41 and 66 CE, when the Gospel of Mark was written, Palestine was ruled directly by Rome (under Emperor Claudius) through procurators. The socio-economic conditions triggered by the taxation system (cf. Mk 2:14), the rampant landlords (cf. Mk 12:1–11), severe poverty (cf. Mt 20:6–7), and unstable employment were common in Palestine. Religious conditions experienced a great decline. The Temple had been converted to other uses (cf. Mk 11:15–17), the Sanhedrin had almost no influence, and the religious leaders were divided (Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots, scribes). According to Mark's account, Jesus was aware of the socio-economic and political situation of the time, when Jewish collaborators and Roman rulers held power. Jesus must have been very familiar with Pilate, who judged Him.

When the chaos in Galilee and Judea became uncontrollable, Roman troops invaded several times. What cannot be forgotten is the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE by General Titus, as Rome's response to the first Jewish war (66–74 CE). The chaos usually erupted because of the corrupt Roman government and its procurators. The people of Galilee and Judea, fed up with all of this, rose up and resisted. The war against Rome and its collaborators continued and only truly ended with the defeat of Bar Kokhba in 134 CE.

(others) in the Gospel of Mark? (p. 85). Samuel himself believes that, using a combination of the concepts of mimicry, ambivalence, and hybridity, Jesus, in the Gospel of Mark's discourse of power, is best described as an unpredictable figure (a conundrum). He [Jesus] could be affiliated with, or opposed to, both the local Jews and the Roman colonisers (pp. 5, 158–59).

This article does not seek to determine what kind of portrait of Jesus emerges from an examination of Jesus' conflict with the scribes in the Beelzebul narrative (Mk 3:22–30). My concern is how this story can be viewed in a postcolonial discourse using the concept of mimicry. Liew and Samuel use different concepts when applying postcolonial mimicry. This difference will be explained later. Neither of them pays attention to the narrative of exorcism/demonic possession, including the controversial Beelzebul narrative. Thus, this article fills the gap left by the two. How can we understand the Beelzebul narrative in the discourse of postcolonial studies, especially the concept of mimicry?

Research methods and design

The concept of mimicry is defined as the duplication or rewriting of colonial ideology by the colonised (Liew 1999b:94 note 44). For Liew, mimicry is a potentially dangerous re-inscription of power. It may cause the colonised to mimic and mock, accommodate and disrupt the imperial tyranny (Liew 1999a:7–31, 1999b:46ff). This concept differs from Homi Bhabha's. Bhabha interprets mimicry as a colonial way of changing and recognising 'the other', as someone different but almost the same, yet not the same. As an effective and highly fluid strategy, through power and knowledge, mimicry is used by colonialists to subjugate and control colonised groups. However, this mimicry strategy creates a threat from the colonised to the colonisers because the similarities and differences (between colonisers and colonised) create a space of ambiguity and hybridity. Distance, or the space between, becomes important. The other can enter the complex picture of mimicry and parody to threaten colonial discourse repeatedly. However, this space also allows for mutually beneficial cooperation and negotiation. For the colonised and the coloniser, mimicry functions as both resistance and a threat (Bhabha 1994:85–88, 102ff; Samuel 2007:27). I interpret mimicry as imitation as a form of resistance. Jesus' response in the parable, when accused of being Beelzebul's mediator, is a mockery that parodies the weakness of Jewish religious leaders, who were originally collaborators with the Roman imperialists. Mimicry creates ambivalence between the coloniser and the colonised in customs, assumptions, commands, and so on. The representation and reproduction of the colonised through mimicry are never simple. Still, they are forms of camouflage that ultimately reveal an attitude of resistance capable of undermining the coloniser's hegemony. However, the domination, normality (something that is considered normal), and preconceptions of the colonisers are seen as inappropriate.

My argument will follow the narrative flow that begins with the accusation and then moves on to Jesus' response. The power struggle is at the centre of Jesus' accusation and response. Therefore, after explaining the accusation, power will be discussed. The response follows the two discussions. Parables are the main elements used by Jesus to respond. The metaphor of a divided household and Satan rebelling against himself is the content of the first parable. Meanwhile, the second parable illustrates a strong person subduing a stronger one. Anticipating the second parable, the Gospel of Mark adds a discussion of unforgivable sins. This discussion follows on from the parable of the strong man, because the stronger man is none other than the Holy Spirit Himself. Therefore, those who resist the Holy Spirit will not have their sins forgiven. The accusations of the teachers of the law are categorised in the narrative as unforgivable sins. The concept of mimicry will be combined in the explanation of this argument.

The accusations of the scribes

In social studies, an accusation means labelling someone negatively, that is, marking someone as deviant (deviant behaviour). This kind of stigmatisation serves to control behaviour that is considered abnormal or dangerous (Guijarro 2002:159, 162). The accusation of the scribes who came from Jerusalem was that Jesus used the power of the leader of demons, Beelzebul. Therefore, in their view, Jesus was a follower of Satan, or even Beelzebul himself. The concept of hierarchical power within spiritual entities, which was believed in the Mediterranean at that time (1BCE–3CE), supported this view. The words 'leader of demons' and 'demons' in verse 22 indicate a hierarchy within the kingdom of demons. External support can be found in the pseudo-Solomon writings, which state that by using stronger spiritual power, weaker spirits can be subdued (T. Sol 1:13; 3:1–3; 5:1) (Hauw 2019:46). The hierarchical concept of the Kingdom of Satan and the accusations of the Torah scholars are similar; the stigmatisation of Jesus seems perfect because the accusations are well constructed.

In the broader narrative (Mk 3:20–21; 3:31–35), the story of Jesus' family frames the Beelzebul narrative. The crowd accused Jesus of being insane [*exestē*], an accusation that Jesus' family used against him. Mark distinguishes between illness caused by medical reasons and demonic possession (Hauw 2019:4–8). However, the distinction between insanity and demonic possession can be blurred for people at that time and even now (Solevag 2014:3; Strecker 2002:119–122). *Exestē*, or insanity, can be ambiguous. In Mark 2:12; 5:42; 6:51, *exestē* means amazement. The context of Jesus performing miracles through healing and exorcism supports the meaning of 'amazed'. However, in Mark 3:21, the meaning of 'insane' is appropriate. This is because Jesus' family came [*exēlthon*] to take Him away (to arrest Him [*kratēsai auton*]). Two interpretive perspectives are possible for understanding the relationship between 'came' and 'took Him'. The first is that Jesus' family wanted to put Him in custody so that He would not disturb the peace. The second is that the action was intended to protect the family's honour from the shame

caused by Jesus' deviant behaviour. The second interpretation is based on verse 31b, which states that Jesus' family did not need to arrest Him by force but simply 'called Him'. The family's behaviour reflects the cultural system of honour and shame of the time.

Nevertheless, Jesus' family [*hoi par autou*] represented the general public [*ochlos*] in their accusations against Jesus. Opposition to Jesus came from two entities with two related issues, namely that Jesus had committed a transgression. The first opposition arose from the community represented by Jesus' family, who claimed that Jesus was insane or not in his 'right mind', in the sense that he was in an abnormal position according to family rules. The second opposition came from religious leaders who claimed that Jesus was 'outside' the agreed religious (doctrinal) boundaries, as seen in the question about the source of Jesus' power. Thus, Jesus was positioned as a religious criminal for associating God with the power of Beelzebul. Furthermore, the accusation was made to the crowd so that the opposition would come from the community (against Jesus) rather than from the scribes. In this way, the accusation socially provoked the crowd and the family to oppose Jesus. In Jewish religious terms, the accusations were punishable by stoning (Ex 22:18; Lv 20:27). The threat posed by these two accusations was grave and serious (Guelich 1989:170). This situation placed Jesus in a middle ground, where a response was expected because both entities had used their respective powers to abuse Jesus.

The accusation was deliberate because the teachers of the law and Jesus' family came to see him. Particularly, the teachers of the law deliberately came from Jerusalem to Galilee, where Jesus lived, to examine his activities. Previously, the Gospel of Mark had reported the activities of the teachers of the law (Mk 1:22; 2:6), but this is the first time they are mentioned as deliberately 'coming from Jerusalem' (Mk 3:22). The confrontation between the Jewish elite and Jesus became public, which was also the first public confrontation (followed by Mk 7:1–13; 10:2–9). With accusations directed at Jesus, the confrontation invited ordinary people to destroy Jesus' reputation. The impact of the confrontation was evident from the beginning when Jesus' family wanted to 'take Him away' (Mk 3:21). From a sociological perspective, reputation is linked to honour. Conversely, a deviant is someone with a bad, shameful reputation. One motive for reputation destruction in Jewish culture is envy. Mark 15:10 reports that the motive for Jesus' accusation was envy ('[*Pilate*] already knew that the chief priests had handed Jesus over because of envy'). Envy is reflected in a person in the metaphor of 'evil eye' (e.g. Berakhot 55b; Mt 6:22–23; cf. its opposite in Eph 1:18 'the eyes of your heart'). Material or economic reasons, social status, gender, and ancestry are some causes of envy (Malina 2001:108–133). The destruction of Jesus' reputation was deliberately designed and placed in the public sphere as an open confrontation, not a question for investigation. Still, a statement that 'By the power of the ruler of demons, He casts out demons' had become the conclusion of the scribes. Undoubtedly, the power struggle became central to the Beelzebul narrative.

The power [*exousia*] of Jesus' eschatology

The vocabulary 'to drive out' [*ekballei*], 'to be divided' [*emeristhē*], 'to stand firm' [*stathēnai*], 'to rebel against' [*anestē eph'*], and 'seize or rob' [*diarpasai*], and 'bind' [*dēsē*], describe a struggle for power or authority. This power struggle is placed in an apocalyptic context. Mark 3:26 mentions 'the end has come' (*telos echei*), which signifies the end times. In eschatological concepts, power [*exousia*] turns into force [*dunamai*] when the Kingdom of Beelzebul wages war against the Kingdom of God led by the Holy Spirit. The eschatological idea continues as seen in the idea: the denial of the power and strength of the Holy Spirit is equated with absolute rejection marked by unforgivable, eternal sin (Mk 3:29). The final characteristic of denial (represented by the scribes) marks the total and final alignment of a power (Satan), but on the other hand, a renewing power (the Holy Spirit) proclaims victory and His reign marked by independence. Apocalyptic-eschatological vocabulary and ideas contain subversive behaviour arising from motives of resistance, first against the Kingdom of Satan and also against the scribes.

The power struggle and apocalyptic-eschatological context did not just appear in the Beelzebul narrative, but from the first line of the Gospel of Mark. Samuel (2002:405–419) has argued that the beginning of the Gospel of Mark has colonial and postcolonial characteristics. According to him, Mark 1:1 is both a negotiation and an attack, directed at the Roman colonisers and the leaders of the Jewish religious tradition. However, behind all that, the role of the Kingdom of Satan is very clear. Mark 1verses12–13's brief account of the Spirit urging Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil confirms the backdrop of power struggles in this Gospel. Although brief, the story is one of Jesus' victories. It anticipates all the power struggles throughout this Gospel. The words 'He lived among the wild animals [*theria*], and angels served Him' refer to the cosmic powers that control the supernatural (demons) and natural (Collins 2007:151; cf. Tan 2011:32) worlds. The prophetic text of Isaiah 13:20–22 uses the metaphor 'beasts of the desert' (*theria* in the LXX) to refer to animals that will inhabit the desolate land as a result of the judgment of the LORD, namely, the Babylonian colonists who invaded Judah. The same prophecy will befall the colonists of Edom. According to Isaiah 34, verses 11–17 (cf. 1 Bar 4:38), Edom will become desolate because of the judgment of the LORD. Jesus' experience in the wilderness in Mark 1:12–13 reminds us of Israel's experience in the wilderness after they left Egypt (Guelich 1989:37–39). Freedom from Egyptian oppression overshadows the reading of these two verses. In addition, the motif of liberation from colonialism has already appeared since Mark 1 verses 2–3 ('Behold, I send my messenger before you, who will prepare your way; a voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths'). Furthermore, whether the source of this quotation was thought of in the apocalyptic context of Malachi 3 verse 1 for the LORD to come to the Temple; or Israel's freedom from Egypt to Canaan in Exodus 23 verse 20; or Isaiah 40 verse 3 about the coming

of the Messenger who will return to Zion to become king, it is clear that all three contexts are related to eschatological restoration, namely the liberation of Israel from colonialism. Thus, a subversive nuance can be felt throughout Mark 1, verses 1–13, and even in the subsequent stories.

It cannot be denied that Jesus' power is God's power, as demonstrated by John the Baptist's ministry to Jesus (Mk 1:2–11). Jesus' power is eschatological power, for He is God present at the end of time, with heavenly power and the power to defeat Satan (Mk 1:10–13). Jesus' message, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel' (Mk 1:15), is a message for an eschatological people, but the one who proclaims it is the one who marks the beginning of the eschatological age and the end of the previous age. For the 'Kingdom of God', that is, the beginning of God's reign in this world, began with the coming of Jesus. The end of John the Baptist's ministry, as recorded in Mark 1:14, marks the distinction between the old and new eras. More significantly, John's silencing through imprisonment signifies the use of political power. This becomes clear in Mark 6:14–29, because Herod Antipas did not accept John the Baptist's rebuke of his unlawful marriage, which led to his beheading. Although his motive was personal, Herod Antipas used his political power to kill John. Basically, only the Roman colonists had the power to impose the death penalty (cf. Jesus had to be tried by Rome), and Herod Antipas, as a Roman collaborator, apparently received permission to do so. Herod Antipas's fear of John the Baptist (Mk 6:20) proves that Herod used his political power for his own honour (to avoid embarrassment in front of his guests) and, more importantly, he misused it. The end of John the Baptist's ministry confirmed the beginning of Jesus' ministry as the bearer of God's reign in this world. With God's power, Jesus ministered. The Gospel of Mark presents Jesus' power by duplicating the power of His opponents, as we shall see.

Mark 1:1 introduces Jesus with the opening superscription (incipit) 'The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God'. (Hauw 2004). This beginning precedes what will happen, but also refers to what has already happened. (Samuel 2002:407). In classical Greek literature, 'beginning' [*arche*] can mean 'kingdom' or 'power' (Herodotus 1.91; Thucydides 4.128). *Arche*, meaning 'origin' or 'beginning of something', was used by Polybius to describe Rome's desire to rule the entire world (1.3.6; 1.3.10; 3.2.6; 4.28.3). In line with this, the Priene inscription states that the beginning of the good news [*euangelion*] was the birth of the emperor [*epiphania*], which marked the beginning of a new political order. The Roman Empire throughout the world in the 1st century did indeed usher in a new situation, socially (household rules), economically (a tax system that burdened the people), politically (the presence of collaborators as local rulers), and religiously (the worship of the emperor). As the Roman emperor, all aspects of life revolved around and emanated from this emperor. Titles and jargon such as *divus* [God], *divi filius* [sons of God], *princeps* [prince], *pontifex maximus* [high priest who started the new calendar], *pax*

romana [emperor who brought peace through victory], *salus* [health or well-being], *felicitas* [happiness], *concordia* [harmony or unity], *pietas* [devotion], and others, were applied to the emperor or the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire was present as a theological and political beginning.

Early readers of the Gospel of Mark, inside or outside Palestine, were certainly familiar with Roman influence. However, the author of Mark proclaimed that the 'beginning' of the good news and the 'Son of God' was Jesus Christ, not the Roman Emperor. The reference to Jesus Christ as the Son of God was a form of resistance through imitation. This reproduction creates ambivalent behaviour among Mark's readers. Readers are challenged to determine to whom their loyalty is given.

Readers of Mark who are aware of the religious, political, and linguistic context will know that 'the beginning' refers to God Himself (Gn 1:1). As a people who had been colonised and exiled, the Israelites understood the meaning of a 'beginning' of a new era that would dominate their lives. In an apocalyptic context, Daniel frames the struggle between two powers. On one side is the struggle of Media-Persia against Babylonian colonialism; on the other side, these two great colonial powers face the Jews. Daniel sees the end of this war in a vision, when one like a son of man comes and destroys the colonialists and their government to save the Jewish people (Dn 7:12–14). Immediately after that, a new era dawned (Dn 7:21–22; cf. Dn 6:26–28).

The new era is good news. The good news for Mark's readers is the coming of Yahweh's reign on earth, which will free the captives (Is 40:9–10; 52:6–7, 4–5). However, Yahweh's coming is preceded by John the Baptist (Mk 1:2–3), who announces that Yahweh is at work in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the 'Way of God' who came to bring God's new reign with the distinctive feature of ending the reign of Satan. The new era promised in the Old Testament is fulfilled with the appearance of the new Ruler, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is difficult to deny that the readers of the Gospel of Mark are challenged to acknowledge Jesus as *arche*, *divus*, *euangelion*, and the Son of God [*uiou theou*]. These predicates mimic Rome and its collaborators as part of a subversive effort of resistance. At the end of the Gospel of Mark, readers come to understand that the 'Way of God' does not use violence or revolution, but on suffering (theology of the cross). In this way, colonialism collapses. The confession of the Roman centurion (Mk 15:39) when he saw Jesus die, crying out, 'Truly, this man was the Son of God', is a subversive message related to the confession of the collapse of imperial hegemony (Samuel 2007:152–157; Tan 2011:369).

Mark's introduction to Jesus is significant for understanding His power. Jesus' power in demonic conflicts has been evident since Mark 1 verses 13, 21–27, and the general conclusion of Jesus' ministry in Mark 1, verses 32–34, 39, and Mark 3, verses 7–12. Even in that general conclusion, not only demonic conflicts are conveyed, but also Jesus' power over incurable diseases (paralysis and blindness), as well as the

forgiveness of sins (Mk 2:5, 13–17), the beginning of a new age (Mk 2:18–22), and the maker of the Sabbath rules (Mk 2:23–3:6) (Hauw 2025). Although Mark's introduction may have been added later, the earliest readers would have understood very well who Jesus was and how his power was in him. I will show how Jesus' pre-existing power was used mimetically as a form of resistance in his response to the Beelzebul narrative.

Jesus' response

Jesus responded to the teachers of the law by calling them. This call is reminiscent of how Jesus' disciples were once called to follow Him (Mk 6:7; 8:34), commanded by Him (Mk 8:1), explained to (Mk 12:43), and confronted about Jewish customs (Mk 7:4). In Mark 10 verse 42, Jesus called his disciples to explain how the world (Rome) was governed by power and arrogance ('You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the nation's lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them') (Collins 2007:499). Contrary to the imperial way of power, Jesus advised:

[B]ut it shall not be so among you. Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant. Whoever wants to be first among you must be the servant of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mk 9:35; 10:43–45).

Much can be said about Jesus' answer. However, being a servant always means being a disciple (Tan 2011:252). Discipleship is Jesus' way of making people his followers. Discipleship does not use power and force as the rulers of nations do. The story of Jesus receiving a little child and placing him in the midst of his disciples, saying, 'Whoever welcomes one such child in My name welcomes Me. Whoever welcomes Me is not welcomed by Me, but by Him who sent Me' (Mk 9:37), teaches the value of discipleship that is seen in a paradox: 'whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all' (Mk 9:35). Discipleship in Mark contrasts with imperialistic forced subjugation (to become enslaved). Opposing imperialistic violence by voluntarily becoming a follower, as in discipleship, is a duplication of nonviolence.

By calling the teachers of the law, Jesus gave them the right to respond to their accusations. With their legitimacy as religious leaders and the power of Rome, the teachers of the law put Jesus in danger by inviting the crowd to oppose him. The reader understands that this time Jesus escaped the accusations of the rulers of Jerusalem, but later he would remain silent and die because of their accusations (Mk 14:57–65; Mk 15:2–5).

The main accusation against Jesus was that He had used the power of Beelzebul, a foreign god. This is because Beelzebul is often equated with Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron (2 Ki 1:2), or with Beelzebub, 'Lord (who dwells in) Heaven', who in Hellenistic culture was *Zeus Olympios* (Hebrew: *be'el semayin*). Whichever background is chosen, both refer to foreign gods as enemies or rivals of Yahweh. Apocalyptic literature, such

as Daniel 5:23, attributes the title *mare semaya* or 'the Ruler of Heaven' to Yahweh. The use of this term clearly confirms Yahweh's confrontation with the gods of foreign nations (cf. Hauw 2019:97). The Torah scholars equate Jesus as an enemy of Yahweh and at the same time an enemy of Israel. The emergence of the terms 'leader of demons' and 'demons' (Mk 3:22), as well as the description 'a demon can cast out demons' (Mk 3:23, cf. 26). Even the concepts contained in all the parables used by Jesus, not only imply the existence of a hierarchy in the Kingdom of Satan, but more importantly, serve to reinforce the accusations of the scribes against Jesus. From the perspective of mimicry, religious leaders branded Jesus as an enemy of religion and an enemy of the nation. Meanwhile, the scribes were defending the status quo while cornering Jesus, who was seen as overthrowing imperial authority.

Jesus' response begins with the rhetorical question, 'How can Satan cast out Satan?' The expected answer to this question is very clear: it is impossible for Satan to cast out Satan. Verse 26 confirms the expected answer: 'So also, if Satan rebels against himself and is divided, he cannot stand but has come to an end'. Jesus clearly rejects the accusations of the teachers of the law. More importantly, Jesus rejects the accusation that He is possessed by Beelzebul. However, implied in the Pharisees' accusation is that Jesus' power is greater than the power of the demons that have possessed many people.

Although the meaning of the rhetorical question is clear, it serves as a tool for Mark to weave certain elements into the whole story for the sake of coherence (Dewey 1980:5–39). Jesus responds to the accusations of the scribes by using images of family relationships and of His power. These images are wrapped up in two parables. Firstly, the metaphor of a divided kingdom and a divided household (Mk 3:24–26). Secondly, the metaphor of a stronger man subduing a strong man (Mk 3:27). Continuing the last metaphor, the narrative discusses the unforgivable sin (Mk 3:28–29), which centres on Jesus' identity. As mentioned earlier, the scribes did not ask about Jesus' identity, but rather about the origin of His power. Jesus' power exists within an eschatological and binary framework, as detected from the vocabulary 'Beelzebul and the Holy Spirit', 'unforgivable sin and forgivable sin', 'family and not family' (Kee 1983:89, 108–109, 119–120, 139, 157–158, 37). This framework shows a field of resistance in which mimicry operates subversively as resistance. How can the division of the kingdom and the division of the household be understood in the concept of mimicry resistance?

Divided kingdom and divided households

Gospel literature can be used in ideological and socio-political fields for liberation (Tolbert 1996:25–26). The parables (*parabolais* or comparisons) that Jesus used in response to accusations against Him touched on socio-political issues. If the term 'Legion' in Mark 5:1–20 can represent Rome as the Devil (Hollenbach 1981:581), then in

the parables used by Jesus (Mk 3:24–27) we do not find a direct relation to that. Following the readings of Myers, Waetjen, Dewey, and Kee, Benny Liew notes that the narrative of Beelzebul as anti-Roman colonialism is the result of the implications of the narrative of the expulsion of evil spirits in Gerasa (5:1–20) (Liew 1999a:85fn28). Are there other reasons that could support the narrative of Beelzebul depicting resistance to Rome through mimicry? Using everyday wisdom, such as parables, Oakman has proven that Jesus' argument in response to the accusation that he was collaborating with demons was an argument that was socially and politically appropriate in Galilee during Jesus' ministry (Guijarro 2002:161). Mark 4:10–12 describes the meaning of the parable: 'so that: Even though they see, they do not understand, even though they hear, they do not comprehend, so that they may not turn and be forgiven'. Parables are both declarative and secretive. This concerns all of Israel's hopes for God's reign (Mk 4:11). Access to understanding the secrets of God's reign is only through divine revelation (cf. Dn 2:28–29; 27–30), which is only understood by Jesus' disciples (insiders) while outsiders will not understand it (*hina* [so that] and *mepote* [even though] with an intentional *telic* nuance) (Tan 2011:98).

The term 'kingdom' [*basilea*] is imperial vocabulary. Mark 1:1 and verse 15 announced that the 'Kingdom of God' had come as a counter to the Roman imperialists and the Kingdom of Satan (the concept of hierarchy) that ruled the old era (regarding the church's attitude towards the emperor and the Roman empire, see Hauw 2022:49–74). Meanwhile, domestic conflicts within Jesus' family have been used as the narrative framework for Beelzebul (Mk 3:20–21, 31–35). Both comparisons are paralleled by conditional clauses ('if', vv. 24–25); they are hypothetical. The institution of 'kingdom' is a macro-political unit, while 'household' is a micro-political unit (Guelich 1989:176). Jesus apparently drew on the experience of 1st-century warfare and domestic conflict in His argument.

Long before the Roman Empire became a superpower, the Jews had endured many wars, including the resistance to Antiochus Epiphanes. Since Emperor Augustus (31 BCE) succeeded in uniting his country and conquering Greece, political turmoil in Palestine continued, even more so after his death (14 CE). By the beginning of the 2nd century CE, the Roman emperor had changed at least 12 times, resulting in many wars. Between 68 and 69 CE alone, three emperors ruled (Galba, Otho, and Vitellius).

The fragmentation of the emperor's political power had caused instability in the colonies. In countries other than Palestine, Tacitus (*Agricola* 30–31) and Josephus (*Ant.* 18.1.1) had described the poor Roman government, which had caused hatred towards Rome (Cassidy 2001).

Meanwhile, in Palestine, the Jewish elite fought over who would become the civil leader, often also serving as the religious leader (High Priest in the Temple). Another impact

was changes in the economic and administrative systems, including heavy taxes imposed on the colonised people to support the war. Protests against this situation caused the 'Jewish family' to split. In 6 CE, the Zealot family started a rebellion. The Zealot revolution continued throughout Jesus' ministry. In 66 CE, the Zealots, led by Judas, defeated the Roman legions, creating a brief period of Jewish autonomy (until 70 CE).

This political turmoil and revolution were relevant to the circumstances of Jesus' time. Guijarro (2002:165) argues that this kind of situation often led to demonic possession; demonic possession was seen as a symptom of social conflict, whether it manifested as mental illness, a form of social protest, or a way of escaping oppression. If this socio-historical view is part of what the Gospel of Mark is saying about demonic possession, then Jesus' response of using the analogy of a divided kingdom is valid as mimicry. Jesus' response not only mimics the subversive practices of Roman politics but also serves as a form of resistance.

The following two examples are pressures on Jewish 'households'. It has been mentioned that the killing of John the Baptist (Mk 6:14–29) was due to the political power of Rome's hench (wo)men. This event led Jesus into conflict with Rome, as evidenced by His criticism of the Roman rule (Mk 10:41–45). The story of paying taxes in Matthew 17:24–27, which is not recorded in Mark, may send a political signal about Jesus' attitude towards Rome. 'Then let them be free' (v. 26) does not provide a clear answer. What did Jesus mean? Did Jesus tell the people not to pay the Roman tax? Did Jesus himself act in this way? In verse 27, the tax was paid through the miracle of catching fish. The money for the payment did not belong to Peter or Jesus; it came from a miracle. It was a very special payment. Jesus was ambiguous (Cassidy 2001:32–33). These two stories not only show the pressure on the Palestinian people but also Jesus' view (criticising and allowing ambivalence). Clearly, Jesus responded to the situation as it was.

A divided household is the example Jesus uses. According to Oakman, the words in this parable should be placed in the context of a low-income family and the political situation in which they were spoken. Again, according to Oakman, the conflict over Beelzebul emphasises the political and economic dimensions related to demonic possession and also economic inequality, malnutrition, endemic cruelty, and the destruction of homes in rural areas (Guijarro 2002:166).

As the basic and primary unit of the kinship system, the household supports society within a larger political system. Household relationships are biologically bound, containing relationships, roles, status, and so on. Households can become more extensive when attention (nurturing) and care (nurturing) are extended to 'neighbours'. Belief and economy are important elements in the household. Family trust gives roles, values, and goals to fathers, mothers, eldest children,

and ancestors. It unites the family, encourages commitment, and a sense of belonging mediated by ancestors so that all family members, ancestors, and their kin can be prosperous, healthy, and wealthy (Malina 2001:82).

The distinction between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' in the concept of the household is very strong. When a household breaks up, kinship ties, solidarity, commitment, and a sense of belonging are lost. In relation to society, the household becomes a political social network. Politics that works for the collective interest seeks to achieve common goals. Economics and religion in politics are inseparable (Malina 2001:83). Just as households are divided into 'insiders' and 'outsiders', so too is society when one element is not fulfilled (economics, religion, politics).

In the Greco-Roman concept of the household (household code), the father is the owner (patron) of all his family members. All family members must respect him. In the Roman macro household, the emperor is the 'father of the fatherland' [*pater patriae*] and the patron of the state, who must be respected and who unites all citizens. The Roman household code reflects the belief that the god Zeus (or Jupiter) is the pater in Olympus because he is the supreme god and heads the household of the gods.

The relationship between the household code and this belief paved the way for the acceptance of the view that the king was the incarnation of a god (as was the case in the East), so that the imperial cult (worship of the emperor) was ritualised and massively enforced during the reign of Domitian (81–96 CE) (Hauw 2022:58–59). The connection between the household and the kingdom is undeniable. Therefore, the failure of the household contributes to the collapse of society or the political system. Jesus' response, which uses the divided kingdom and the divided household, echoes imitation as a form of resistance (subversive mimicry). With this parable, the Gospel of Mark represents the attitude of the colonised towards resistance.

The stronger overcomes the strong

The concept of mimicry resistance is evident in the second part of Jesus' response in verse 27: 'But no one can enter the house of a strong man to plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man'. This metaphor is not separate from the previous metaphor (vv. 24–26), as both metaphors confirm Jesus' rejection of the accusations of the teachers of the law (cf. Guelich 1989:176; Tan 2011:90). However, the second metaphor not only continues the image of a battle between two powers to possess or liberate, but also serves as a climax (cf. Pero 2013:74, who views it as the centre of the chiasm). If the previous metaphor emphasises the thesis (kingdom and household) 'cannot stand' (vv. 25–26) so that 'its end has come', namely the destruction of a social institution, then the second metaphor emphasises 'reclaiming the stolen property' of the enemy (v. 27). Thus, the concept of authority is transformed into the power of resistance.

According to Collins (2007), the brief comparison in the metaphor of verse 27 (the strong man and the stronger man) is deliberately veiled (intentionally invisible) for the sake of diplomacy, to convey important statements, or to criticise certain listeners in a real situation. In this way, the truth will be revealed clearly, without the need to remove its dangerous sting or its sharp, hurtful edge. Thus, a persuasive attitude is put forward (p. 233).

Furthermore, Collins hypothesises that, at that time, if Jesus in this dialogue was of lower status than the scribes, then this metaphor can be seen as Jesus' indirect claim that He was the Messiah. This is because, diplomatically, the scribes were led to agree that the exorcism performed by Jesus came from God. However, if in this dialogue Jesus' status is higher than that of the scribes, then Jesus' words are ironic and accompanied by a threatening tone. This is because the scribes are led to agree that Jesus' power can conquer the Devil, and therefore, Jesus' power is greater than that of the scribes.

Whatever the choice, Jesus clearly rejects the accusation that his power comes from Beelzebul, and his opponents in this narrative are the scribes. How this metaphor of the strong man and the stronger man reflects resistance to Roman colonialism has not been clearly explained, although some aspects have been mentioned in previous discussions.

The strong man and the legion

At the beginning, it was noted that the metaphor of the strong man and the stronger man, as a reference to anti-Roman colonialism, would be validated if 'legion' (Mk 5:1–20) described the strong man in the Beelzebul narrative. More significantly, the mimetic attitude of resistance to Roman colonialism would be immediately understood by readers of this narrative.

However, Collins argues that the allusion to the strong man and the stronger man follows the Jewish concept of the divine warrior. The image of the LORD as a divine warrior appears when He subdues Leviathan, thereby restoring God's reign over the world (Job 41:1–2). Mark describes Jesus as following the model of a divine warrior, as seen in the words of John the Baptist, 'after me will come one who is more powerful than I' in Mark 1:7 (Pero 2013:75). Then, in the brief story of the temptation in the desert, Jesus, the divine hero and messenger of God (the Messiah), is presented as the conqueror of Satan (Mk 1:13) (Collins 2007:232–233 fn.141; cf. Guelich 1989:176).

Collins and the divine hero proposal are not the only opinions; other proposals with a Jewish background to explain the metaphors of the strong man and the stronger man have also been put forward. For example, Twelftree (2007) believes that the metaphors of the strong man and the stronger man have no political background. Still, the readers of Mark clearly connect these metaphors with the promise of Israel's restoration from captivity in Babylon according to Isaiah 49:24–25:

Can the prey be taken from the mighty, or the captives of the wicked be rescued? Truly, this is what the LORD says: The captives of the warriors can be rescued, and the spoils of the wicked can escape, for I myself will fight against those who fight against you, and I myself will save your children.

According to Twelftree (2007:107–108), the readers of Mark relate this news from Isaiah personally, not politically, because Mark is introducing Jesus who is fighting against Satan in a cosmic and spiritual war.

Witmer (2012:124–125), who rejected Twelftree's proposal, argued that the captivity and exodus of Israel from Babylon were political events rather than personal or spiritual ones. According to Witmer, there was a clear connection between the actions of evil spirits at the cosmic level and the unfolding of political events on the ground. Furthermore, the separation of politics and religion is anachronistic because the world of the 1st century never did so. He provides two pieces of evidence: the palace of the king of Israel and the Temple were in the same complex, and the political consequences and prophecies of the prophets were never separated. Witmer believes that readers of the Gospel of Mark were more likely to associate it with the context of Roman colonialism in the 1st century than to refer to Babylon, which had occurred centuries earlier.

However, Witmer also argues that Jesus may have been recalling Isaiah 49 in the metaphor in Mark 3:27 (the strong man and the stronger man). If so, then Jesus was implicitly linking the events in Isaiah to the specific political and social situation in his own context (Witmer 2012:124–125).

Whatever the background of the proposed metaphor, Jesus used the metaphor of the strong man and the stronger man to describe His activity in casting out demons and to refute the accusations of the scribes. More significantly, Jesus uses this metaphor to describe himself as the stronger man, who successfully robs the strong man of his possessions (cf. Guelich 1989:176). This conclusion is supported by Jesus' act of freeing a person possessed by demons and making that person belong to the Kingdom of God, which accurately reflects the political atmosphere of the 1st century regarding siding with the Kingdom of God or the Roman Empire.

It cannot be denied that the metaphor of the strong man and the stronger man does indeed contain an image of the casting out of evil spirits in Gerasa (Mk 5:1–20).² The man possessed by demons in Gerasa had great power (vv. 3–4), and he encountered Jesus when he got out of the boat. This man's strength is dramatically described as 'no one could restrain him, not even with chains ... but he broke the chains and smashed the shackles. No one was strong enough to subdue him'. The passive infinitives (he broke them and snapped them) are demonic passive (Pero 2013:148), the context of which (the casting out of demons) is the same as the Beelzebul narrative.

2. Some variant readings are Gerasēnōn (κ' B D); Gadarēnōn (A C); Gergustēnōn (W), and Gergesēnōn (κ' L) is preferable because it is a part of Decapolis territory (see Guelich 1989:275–277; Metzger 2008:23–24, 84).

This similarity in context is marked by the use of words and phrases such as *dunatai* (Can 3:27//5:3), *diarpasai* (seize Mk 3:27//Mk 5:4), *dēsē* ([he] binds Mk 3:27//Mk 5:3, 4). The similarity in the use of the double negative (no one [*oukēti oudeis*] Mk 5:3), which emphasises the extraordinary power of this strong man, is also used in Mark 3:27 (*ou ... oudeis*).

The power of this man is also evident from the word 'legion' because there were thousands of evil spirits that possessed this man (Hauw 2019:135–138). From this word, as well as the appearance of a herd of pigs, Mark connects references to the Roman military and politics with the story of the liberation of this possessed man (Myers 1994: 190–194; Wengst 1987:7–54, 66). Anti-imperialist bias is inevitable because the location of the event [*Gerasa*] is foreign territory, which reinforces the characteristics of mimicry resistance.

We must not forget the negotiation that took place during the exorcism. When the evil spirits begged to enter the herd of pigs, this negotiation reflected a power struggle between two opposing entities, with the losing side resorting to diplomacy to save its existence. Pero's (2013:159) suggestion to read Mark 5:24 in the light of Mark 3:27 is very reasonable. In this way, Jesus, as the stronger person in the *Gerasa* narrative, can be demonstrated. Moreover, Jesus succeeded in freeing the demon-possessed man (Mk 5:8).

The mighty and the power of Roman colonialism

How are the power and authority of Roman colonialism described? Then how was that power and authority overthrown by those who were stronger? That argument is collected in this section, more importantly, how Jesus and His Government subdued that power and authority. Resistance and mimicry are depicted in apocalyptic prophecies, political realities, and the Gospel narrative of Mark; more importantly, the reclaiming of stolen property is clearly depicted, when authority becomes power for the sake of resistance.

Apocalyptic prophecies

Daniel's apocalyptic description of a statue with feet made of iron and clay is interpreted as the fourth kingdom whose strength is like iron (Dn 2:32–40). Traditionally, this kingdom is understood to be Greece or Rome (Archer 1985:46; Craven 2002:618). However, more importantly, after the destruction of the kingdoms of the world by the stone that was cut out, a new kingdom will arise that will never be destroyed, because it is established by the God of Heaven (Dn 2:44). This description in Daniel 2 parallels Daniel 7 verses 1–14. Both affirm that God himself will initiate a new age.

The Gospel of Mark conveys part of the fulfilment of this apocalyptic message (Hauw 2022:49–74; Liew 1999a:87). The coming of God's reign in the Gospel of Mark is manifested in the person and work of Jesus, which marks the beginning of a new age (Mk 1:14–15). The power of Roman imperialism,

overthrown at the beginning of God's reign, implies the defeat of the Roman regime by a more powerful ruler.

Real politics

In 27 BC, Octavian received many honours from the Senate for his self-sacrifice to the republic. The name 'Augustus' was bestowed upon him (Archer 1994:689–690). Another tradition linked the name etymologically with the authority and ancient practice of divination, thus making him a figure 'worthy of worship'. Senate members understood this event as an expression of the emperor's unique status and power to be worshipped as the 'son of God', especially since his stepfather, Julius Caesar, had declared himself to be God (Samuel 2007:408–418; Stauffer 2008:96–97; Wright 2005:64). Therefore, it was reasonable for Roman imperialism to claim the emperor had the status of a son of God. Augustus built a temple in Pergamum for his own worship. Initially, the practice of worshipping the emperor began as worship of the Roman goddess in 195 BCE, marked by the construction of the goddess's temple in Smyrna, Asia Minor. The Roman emperors were then considered descendants of the Roman goddess. A century after Octavian, Domitian (81–96 CE) legalised the cult of the emperor (Freed 1994:39, 370).

The Gospel of Mark, written in the middle of the 1st century (44–66 CE), has the superscription 'This is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God' (Mk 1:1) (Freed 1994:98). This superscription claims Jesus Christ as the Son of God, which can be understood as a subversion, namely a movement to bring about change to the ruling Roman regime (Samuel 2007:415–417; Tan 2006:34). This resistance was not violent but rather nonviolent or passive.

The implication that the Roman emperor represented power was inevitable. Even before Julius Caesar, Rome had practised violent colonialism. The colonised population was sold into slavery. High taxes were imposed on all Roman subjects. Humans were exploited for economic gain. By the 1st century CE, 25% of the Roman colonial population were slaves. Rome's status and glory were motivated by military power. Julius Caesar was the first emperor to achieve governmental glory by uniting all the colonies. There were 54 million people throughout Rome, including 8 million in Italy, and 1 million in the city of Rome itself (Cassidy 2001). This large number is not just a figure but represents those who were oppressed under a strong and cruel regime.

Narratives of power and colonial and collaborator forces

Liew (1999a) explores the relationship between power and apocalypticism (the spirit of resistance, driven by longing for the changes that will occur during the *parousia*) in the Gospel of Mark. In various contexts, power [*exousia*] portrays Jesus' conflict with Jewish authorities (Mk 1:21–3:6; 11:27–33; 12:13–44). Throughout the narrative, Jewish leaders are viewed negatively as Roman collaborators. The question of Jesus' power has been openly raised since the Beelzebul narrative (Mk 3:20–30). He successfully sees the relationship between the story of Beelzebul and the story of Jesus cleansing the Temple (Mk 11:15–33), which leads to the understanding

that the Jewish rulers are associated with the domination of the Devil. In fact, these rulers were Satan's 'feeding ground' (Liew 1999a:74–75).

However, the Gospel of Mark also criticises the colonial rulers, the Romans. Several narratives demonstrate this. Firstly, the story of James and John asking to sit on the right and left sides of the Kingdom of God (Mk 10:35–45) was responded to by Jesus with a rebuke of the arbitrary practices of the nations' [*katexouniazounin*]. The image of oppression and totalitarianism is contrasted with the spirit of service and servanthood, which makes the perpetrator more powerful. This concept parallels the idea that the stronger will defeat the strong. At the same time, it conveys a warning of the imminent terror that will befall Rome.

Secondly, the death of John the Baptist (Mk 6:14–29) parallels the suffering and death of Jesus (Mk 14:1–15:47). Likewise, Herod (who killed John) parallels Pilate (who killed Jesus), both of whom had the power to kill God's messenger. John the Baptist's sermon and Jesus' silence (when asked to be judged) made the rulers uncertain. Again, the rulers were confused because the two defendants (John and Jesus) were without fault. Herod and Pilate bowed to the pressure of the crowd. They had no power, even though both were powerful Roman collaborators. The powerful Herod and Pilate were subdued by the more powerful.

Thirdly, the narrative about taxes (Mk 12:13–17) implies collaboration between Jewish leaders and Roman colonisers. The question of whether it was permissible to pay taxes was a trap set to accuse Jesus. Whether he agreed or disagreed with paying taxes, the consequences would be fatal for Jesus. However, Jesus' clever answer freed Him from the trap ('Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's'). In front of Jesus, both groups appeared weak ('They were amazed at what He said'). In the narrative, Jesus not only subdued the Jewish collaborators but also the Roman colonisers. Jesus was stronger than those who were strong.

Fourthly, the narrative of the wicked tenants (Mk 12:1–12) who rented a vineyard refers to the Jewish and Roman leaders. The owner of the vineyard is God, who rules over the field, and to Him the tenants must be accountable. One day, the tenants will be destroyed.

Fifthly, if the previous narrative about children (Mk 9:33–37; Mk 10:13–16) is viewed from the perspective of discipleship, then the narrative also contains the perspective of serving and sacrificing for those who have no power and are worthless in society, as was the view of children at that time (Tan 2011:223). Those who fail to demonstrate this attitude will receive consequences commensurate with the punishment of drowning (Mk 9:42–48). Although there is no apparent direct relationship, this story shows that the powerful will be defeated by those who are more powerful, namely those who serve. The above narratives describe the anticlimax of power and strength in various contexts. These stories relate to various aspects of the power of the Roman

colonisers. Roman power was subdued by a greater power. Mimicry of resistance is clearly evident in these stories. The story of the Roman centurion's confession, 'Truly, this man was the Son of God' (Mk 15:39), is the climax of the mimicry of resistance against the Roman rulers. In these words, the Roman ruler finally acknowledged that Jesus was the Son of God, not the emperor. This acknowledgement caused a major political upheaval for Roman imperialism, because the authoritative personal acknowledgement of Rome became a public acknowledgement (Liew 1999a:88). However, this resistance was also directed at the Jewish rulers, because Jesus died as a 'King of the Jews' who was not recognised by them (Mk 15:26). This story reflects mimicry resistance. The powerful rulers were defeated by someone even more powerful.

Unforgivable sin

The Beelzebul narrative ends with the topic of unforgivable sin, namely, blaspheming against the Holy Spirit. For blaspheming against the Holy Spirit is equivalent to committing an eternal sin (Mk 3:28–30). How does this exorcism narrative relate to the teaching on sin?

The term 'Holy One of God' already appeared in the context of the casting out of evil spirits in the synagogue of Capernaum (Mk 1:21–28). This terminology refers to the person of Jesus, the exorcist. Jesus' identity is central to the exorcism narrative. With this title, Jesus is seen as the bearer of the holy God, who destroys all impurity (Tan 2011:42). The implication that Jesus is the Holy Spirit Himself cannot be denied. Moreover, the Holy Spirit is already mentioned in John the Baptist's introduction in Mark 1:8, which introduces Jesus Christ as the baptiser with the Holy Spirit. Since Jesus is the Holy Spirit Himself, the relationship between the Beelzebul narrative and the Holy Spirit has been answered. However, the explanation of the unforgivable sin in relation to Jesus' exorcism activities has not yet been answered.

The narrative of Beelzebul questions the origin of Jesus' power. When Jesus' identity is that of the Holy Spirit Himself, then Jesus' power comes from the power of the Holy Spirit, namely, the Holy One of God. Thus, Jesus' power comes from His status as the Son of God Himself.

The casting out of demons in the synagogue of Capernaum also offers insight into unforgivable sin, namely 'new teaching' (Mk 1:27). Jesus' 'new teaching' points to a new power that overcomes the oppressive ruler (evil spirits). Jesus duplicates the oppressor for liberation. Jesus replaces the old ruler with a new ruler through his new teaching, which is power (Mk 1:27). In other words, the new teaching is the defeat of evil spirits. In this framework, the unforgivable sin is the unbelief that Jesus can defeat Satan. This unbelief is tantamount to rejecting the Holy Spirit Himself, who not only can defeat the power of evil spirits, but who can also forgive sins (Mk 3:29).

Thus, the conclusion of the Beelzebul narrative, which teaches the concept of unforgivable sin, witnesses the fall of the strong at the hands of the stronger. The power of the Roman collaborators, who rejected God's reign, was declared incapable of liberating itself. The power of the Holy Spirit confined the colonialists and their collaborators to ineffectiveness. By casting exorcism as the narrator's anti-imperialist stance, the narrative of Beelzebul is very likely to serve as a model of resistance. Moreover, a person who has been freed from demonic possession now becomes a member of God's government (Pero 2013:158), while those who reject the activities of God's government will be disabled. However, it should not be forgotten that the framework of resistance is also eschatological. The binary conditions seen on the surface become resistance to the world situation behind all events. Mimicry and subversive operations for the sake of resistance are the true nature of the metaphor of the stronger person defeating the strong person to rob all his possessions.

Conclusion

The question posed in this article is how the narrative of Beelzebul (Mk 3:22–30) can be read through a postcolonial lens using the concept of mimicry, which I interpret as imitation as a form of resistance. In this narrative, which can be read as an imperial and apocalyptic narrative, resistance is carried out by both the author of the Gospel and the figure of Jesus against the Roman rulers and their collaborators, namely the Jewish religious leaders. This narrative describes the subversive efforts of ordinary people in the name of resistance. At the same time, it also includes the intervention of God (the Kingdom of God).

By following the narrative, I have constructed an argument that clearly demonstrates the presence of mimicry. The battle for authority and power becomes the central theme of Jesus' accusations and responses. In the Beelzebul narrative, power ultimately becomes strength. Jesus' response, through two metaphors and a statement of unforgivable sin, highlights this emphasis. More significantly, Jesus rejects the accusations of the Roman collaborators by imitating the Roman imperialists, thereby representing the resistance of the Galilean common people.

Jesus' response in the Beelzebul narrative, by repeating the actions of the colonialists and their supporters, has created an ambivalent relationship. This ambivalence is evident in the way the people of Galilee, who were oppressed by Rome and its collaborators, became survivors. The instrument used by the people, namely, duplication, became a weapon to challenge imperialist hegemony. This is evident in the metaphor of a divided kingdom and household, with the stronger people robbing the possessions of the strong people. Jesus' response regarding unforgivable sin, also became a weapon serving the same purpose, but in a unique way. This is because the apocalyptic aspect accompanying the concept of unforgivable sin (when one rejects the power of Jesus or the Holy Spirit) becomes the ultimate weapon. Jesus, who

experienced oppression and can be seen as representing the oppressed people/those controlled by Satan, actually holds the ultimate power to destroy the hegemony of the oppressors/Satan. Through mimicry, camouflage is deliberately employed to confront the rulers, for the sake of nonviolent resistance, which is the deepest motive behind the reproduction of imitation to distort and harm the oppressors.

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