

## The Healing of the Paralytic: An Exegesis

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### Translation (New American Bible)

- 1 When Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days, it became known that he was at home.
- 2 Many gathered together so that there was no longer room for them, not even around the door, and he preached the word to them.
- 3 They came bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men.
- 4 Unable to get near Jesus because of the crowd, they opened up the roof above him. After they had broken through, they let down the mat on which the paralytic was lying.
- 5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Child, your sins are forgiven.'
- 6 Now some of the scribes were sitting there asking themselves,
- 7 'Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming. Who but God alone can forgive sins?'
- 8 Jesus immediately knew in his mind what they were thinking to themselves, so he said, 'Why are you thinking such things in your hearts?'
- 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, pick up your mat and walk?'
- 10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth –
- 11 he said to the paralytic, 'I say to you, rise, pick up your mat, and go home.'
- 12 He rose, picked up his mat at once, and went away in the sight of everyone. They were all astounded and glorified God, saying, 'We have never seen anything like this.'

### Form, structure, and setting

This passage comes as the first in a series of five conflict narratives (2:1-3:6), and does seem to follow the typical structure of such narratives<sup>1</sup>. (1) There is some action by Jesus or his disciples, here being Jesus' pronouncement that the paralytic's sins are forgiven in v. 5. (2) Some person or persons, usually in positions of authority, object to this action; here we have the Pharisees' unspoken accusation of blasphemy in v. 7. (3) Jesus mounts some riposte, often in the form of a counter-question, as he does here in v. 9. (4) Finally,

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<sup>1</sup> Donahue and Harrington, p. 98.

Jesus pronounces some saying which is, as Donahue and Harrington have it, ‘the real point of the story’<sup>2</sup>.

Yet the form of this passage is not so simple, and in fact the question of how this story emerged in the form in which we have it here is subject to some controversy. To identify this as a controversy narrative is obviously true but not exhaustive; another just as obvious form, as suggested by the common title of the passage (i.e., ‘The Healing of a Paralytic’), is that of a healing narrative. Complicating matters further, we have in v. 10 a surprising and, indeed, somewhat ambiguous (see Comment, below) pronouncement by Jesus of his identity as the Son of Man. This is the first appearance of this title in Mark’s gospel, and one of only two instances of its use (the other is in 2:28) to occur before Peter’s confession of Jesus’ messianic identity at Caesarea Philippi. This pronouncement will be discussed further in the Comment on v. 10, below. Suffice it for now to say that this pericope demonstrates the features of three narrational forms: conflict, healing and pronouncement.

Some light may be shed on the passage’s formal identity by examining its structure. Since Bultmann<sup>3</sup>, it has been common (especially among form critics) to argue that this pericope is best understood as a composite of two earlier traditions, namely a healing narrative (vv. 1-5a, 11-12) and a conflict narrative concerning the forgiveness of sins (vv. 5b-10). Although still subject to controversy, this today is the majority view. This interpolation would be typical of Mark’s style, and such an interpretation would clear up the formal

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<sup>2</sup> These authors note Bultmann’s argument (in his *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, pp. 12-14) that almost all of these conflict narrative are quite likely non-historical constructions of the post-Easter Christian community designed to convey Jesus’ sayings by placing his in debate with stylized Jewish leaders. This skepticism of these passages’ historicity does help account for the odd appearance of the Pharisees in some of these passages (e.g., if the house was so full, here in Mk. 2:2, that no one else could fit, then how is it the Pharisees managed to sit down (v. 6) [Donahue and Harrington, p. 95]? Or else, in the fourth pericope in this same sequence (Mk. 2:23-28), what were Pharisees doing walking in the Galilean corn fields on the Sabbath? These settings, awkward as history, are nonetheless effective means of conveying these passages’ spiritual meaning.

<sup>3</sup> Mann, on p. 221, seems to suggest that this theory originated in Bultmann’s *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, pp. 14-16.

confusions discussed above. The most common evidence cited in support of this interpretation, however, is the awkward change of subject in vv10-11 (i.e., Mark gives us a sentence fragment in v. 10, ‘But that you may know...’, then returns to the third person singular, ‘he said to the paralytic...’, in v. 11).

Against this interpretation, Carrington<sup>4</sup> points out that both Matthew (9:1-8) and Luke (5:17-26), always Mark’s greatest critics, retain this story in full, keeping both its healing and controversy components<sup>5</sup>. Hooker, also, has rightly pointed out that ‘stories did not necessarily fall into the neat categories identified by the form critics, and this one may have been more complicated from the beginning’<sup>6</sup>. Indeed, in light of OT tradition, a link between bodily healing and the forgiveness of sins is quite normal, even if the notion that any man (even the Messiah!) could forgive sins was wholly alien to the Jewish tradition of the time<sup>7</sup>. It is worth noting that the Pharisees, crowd, and even Jesus himself would all agree to this. The fact that Jesus successfully carries out this triumphant healing, demonstrating the efficacy of his pronouncement of forgiveness, is intended by Mark to demonstrate that no mere man is at work here. (For further discussion of this point see the Comment on v. 5, below.)

A full understanding of this passage, however, requires that one consider its setting. As noted at the outset, the passage is the first of five Galilean conflict stories, the assemblage of which has been thought by many scholars to be pre-Markan in origin. Opinions differ on this, partly because the function of such a text, if it existed, is rather unclear. Still, supporters of pre-Markan origin point out that these conflicts ‘interrupt Mark’s storyline’ (e.g., in 1:45 Jesus resolves to remain in deserted places, in 2:1 he’s entering a city), and that 3:7 picks up

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<sup>4</sup> Carrington, p. 57.

<sup>5</sup> Carrington artfully suggests (p. 55) that, as T. S. Eliot has put it, an essential element of great art is surprise – here being the surprise of Jesus’ forgiveness pronouncement in v. 5. This element would be lost if we read the controversy as a later interpolation, leaving just a commonplace healing story.

<sup>6</sup> Hooker, p. 84.

<sup>7</sup> Schweizer, p. 61.

right where 1:45 ‘leaves off’. Also, the ambiguous and inappropriate (according to Mark’s theology) occurrences of the title ‘Son of Man’, both within this alleged pre-Markan block, would seem to lend credence to this view.

One point on which most agree, however, is that the stories between 2:1 and 3:6, whatever their genesis, are meant to be read together as a separate and coherent section of Mark’s gospel<sup>8</sup>. Some set this series of Galilean conflicts in relation to a later set of conflicts in Jerusalem (11:27-12:37), although others doubt the usefulness of positing such a relationship<sup>9</sup>. Most agree that the arrangement of the stories is topical rather than thematic, and that Mark’s interest is to illustrate the kerygmatic significance of Jesus’ identity, not simply to reproduce the content of these debates<sup>10</sup>.

Donahue and Harrington<sup>11</sup> have identified a ‘dual structure’ linking the five stories. One structure is linear. According to this view, which is well articulated by Gundry<sup>12</sup>:

‘[w]e can see a progression from silent accusation against Jesus (2:6-7) to a questioning of his disciples (2:16) to a questioning of Jesus himself by neutral people (2:18) to a questioning of him by his enemies (2:24) to a lying in wait for the purpose of accusing him (3:2) and finally to a plot to do away with him (3:6).’

The other structure is concentric; a ‘ring composition’<sup>13</sup> based upon the stories’ topographical settings. The first story (our subject here, 2:1-12) takes places indoors; the second story (Call of Levi, 2:13-17) starts outdoors, only ending indoors; the middle story (Question about

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<sup>8</sup> E.g., Anderson, p. 98.

<sup>9</sup> E.g., Gundry, p. 105.

<sup>10</sup> Anderson, p. 98. Anderson goes on to point out that the stories were likely intended by Mark less as a means of settling issues that persisted into his own time (e.g., Sabbath observance) – which were likely settled – but rather to show that even at the very start of Jesus’ Galilean ministry the shadow of the cross had already fallen over him. Also Lane (p. 91) points out that Mark makes very little effort to tell the story ‘for its own sake’, never dwelling too long on details, his purpose being simply to make intelligible the words (i.e., pronouncements) of Jesus for his post-Easter Christian community. Similarly, Donahue and Harrington (p. 94) note how radically spare Mark’s narrative is in 2:1-12. Mark’s fails to describe the reaction of the crowd to either the broken roof of the descent of the man, both highly provocative events.

<sup>11</sup> Donahue and Harrington, p. 97.

<sup>12</sup> Gundry, p. 109.

<sup>13</sup> This view was first developed by Joanna Dewey.

Fasting, 2:18-22) is at an unspecified location; the final two stories (Corn on the Sabbath, 2:23-28, and Withered Hand, 3:1-6) take place outdoors and indoors again, respectively. And so we have:

indoors → outdoors → non-located → outdoors → indoors

Reinforcing the case for a concentric structure, Donahue and Harrington point out<sup>14</sup>, are the subjects of the stories: the first two deal with sin and forgiveness, the final two with the Sabbath, and the middle one with the people's reception of this new teaching (Jesus as bridegroom, and the new wine / old wineskins). Based upon these several features of coherence, Donahue and Harrington conclude in favor of a pre-Markan origin, suggesting that Mark imposed the linear, progressive structure upon a pre-existing concentric structure.

## Comment

V1-2            There are several reasons to believe that Jesus entered Capernaum incognito<sup>15</sup>, and was perhaps hiding out 'at home' (meaning, presumably, in Peter's house<sup>16</sup>) when the crowds found him. In favor of this reading: (1) Jesus resolves in 1:45 to 'remain outside in deserted places' for 'it was impossible for him to enter a town openly'<sup>17</sup>. Yet in the very next verse we find him entering Capernaum, even if his entry came only 'after some days'. One might guess that this delay was necessary to allow time for the crowd's enthusiasm to wane. (2) It took some time for news of Jesus' arrival to spread around the town (i.e., 'it became known that he was at home'). Given the remarkable personal magnetism Jesus demonstrates

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<sup>14</sup> Donahue and Harrington, p. 97.

<sup>15</sup> In support of this claim: Gundry (p. 110); Lane (p. 93); Nineham (p.92); Schweitzer (p. 60).

<sup>16</sup> Cite

<sup>17</sup> Suggested by Hooker (p. 84). Gundry (p. 110) argues that the inclusion of 'openly', here, suggests such an entry on the sly.

at other times in Mark's gospel (e.g., 1:33; 2:13; 3:7-8; 4:1-2; 5:21; 6:34; 8:1), this delay is revealing. Gundry<sup>18</sup> suggests that 2:1 hearkens back to 1:33, in which the area outside the door holds 'the whole town'; here, it's not enough. Jesus' reputation is growing<sup>19</sup>.

When the crowd gathers, Jesus preaches 'the word'<sup>20</sup> to them. Anderson<sup>21</sup> suggests that this inclusion by Mark places the whole section (2:1-3:6) 'under the rubric of proclamation'. The following miracle, too, Mark seems to suggest to the reader, will 'give evidence for the truth of the good news'<sup>22</sup>.

V3-4 Gundry notes that the paralytic's being carried by four men underlines the severity of the man's case<sup>23</sup>. Donahue and Harrington point out that this is the only occurrence of paralysis in Mark's gospel. Although there are no occurrences of the word in the OT, elsewhere in the NT the word is closely associated with 'lameness', which was considered a form of impurity alongside blindness and being crippled<sup>24</sup>.

Most commentators point out that access to the roof of a typical Palestinian house would have been available via an exterior staircase, and that the roof would have been flat, probably constructed of crossbeams covered in branches and hardened mud. It would not have been difficult to break through such a roof, although, as Schweizer notes, it is questionable whether one could have broken through into a house so full of people without causing a great stir. The verb Mark uses here to describe the friends' activity – literally,

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<sup>18</sup> Gundry, p. 111.

<sup>19</sup> Indeed, as Mann points out (p. 223), this occurrence of the word 'crowd' is the first of thirty-seven occurrences in Mark's gospel.

<sup>20</sup> Donahue and Farrington (p. 93) suggest that 'the word' here bears the double meaning (common in Mark) of both Jesus message and Jesus himself. Also, note that the word used here for 'word' is the same as that used in the explanation of the parable of the sower in Mk. 4:13f.

<sup>21</sup> Anderson, p. 99)

<sup>22</sup> Gundry, p. 111.

<sup>23</sup> Gundry p. 111. Cf. Lane (p. 93) who proposes that the man's extreme condition is also suggested by the determination of his friends.

<sup>24</sup> Donahue and Harrington, p. 93. The authors point out that these three infirmities were specifically listed by the Qumran community as impurities preventing membership.

‘unroofed the roof’<sup>25</sup> – is noteworthy for its rarity. Also, at least one commentator<sup>26</sup> has suggested that Mark’s use of this verb suggests a tile, not mud roof, although consensus seems posed against this.

V5            Two major questions arise from this verse, perhaps the most crucial in the pericope (along with v10). First: To whose faith is Jesus referring? That of the friends, or of the paralytic? Schweizer<sup>27</sup> comments, in favor of the former option and I think rightly, that the important element here is the boldness and determination of the friends, who have radically broken through barriers (i.e., the crowd, the roof) to bring their friend to Jesus, not some inner preparation or openness to suggestion on the paralytic’s part.

Second: Who is doing the forgiving? The answer is not obvious or straightforward. For starters, one must note that there exist no instances in any gospel of Jesus saying ‘I forgive...’; the tense is most often passive (‘are forgiven’)<sup>28</sup>. Is Jesus then perhaps, like Nathan in 2 Sam 12:13 or many other prophets, simply announcing the forgiveness which has been granted wholly by God alone? That Jesus states his pronouncement in the present tense would seem to militate against this; the forgiveness, by implication, is happening *right now*, at this moment, and indeed seems to be effected by Jesus’ pronouncement. Is Jesus himself, then, the sole agent of this forgiveness? Were he to think so, and were he not God, then indeed the charge of the Pharisees would be justified. Only insofar as Jesus is more than a man – insofar, Mark would suggest, as he is the Son of Man, and insofar as he is God – can that charge be proven wrong.

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<sup>25</sup> Gundry, p. 111.

<sup>26</sup> Gundry, p. 111. Donahue and Harrington (pp. 93-4) note that Luke, almost certainly writing within a more Hellenistic milieu, specifies the roof as being made of tiles, as was common in Rome at the time.

<sup>27</sup> Schweizer, p. 61

<sup>28</sup> Mann, p. 224.

Why was this man paralyzed?<sup>29</sup> It is important to note Jesus' dissent from any Deuteronomic code that would posit a causal relation between this man's (personal) sinfulness and his paralysis (cf., Lk 13:1-5; Jn 9:2f). As Anderson suggests<sup>30</sup>, the implication of Jesus' forgiveness is broader: man's 'fallen estate', universally, is responsible for man's suffering. God wills that we, the whole human race, should be made whole, and so grants this man healing as a sign of his broader salvific mission. From the Pharisees' point of view of course, as for anyone ignorant of this broader mission, Jesus' treatment of sin must seem appallingly light and flippant<sup>31</sup>.

Yet none of this was very clear on that Galilean day, however clear it may be to Mark's readers. Several commentators have commented on the 'indirectness of revelation' in Mark's gospel; 'both a revealing and a veiling of his dignity'<sup>32</sup>. Jesus pronouncement here could mean either that he announces God's forgiveness (as a prophet), or that he, as God, effects forgiveness. Before the Resurrection, or without it, it is hard to imagine how Mark's readers, let alone those present at this scene, could resolve this ambiguity.

V6-7            Gundry<sup>33</sup> notes the contrast between the paralytic's friends, who actively seek out Jesus even from the back of the crowd, and the scribes, who remain passive, disdainful<sup>34</sup> observers despite their front row seats. Donahue and Harrington<sup>35</sup> note a subtle irony in the

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<sup>29</sup> Both Cranfield and Hooker suggest the possibility of highly psychological explanations in apparent efforts to naturalize this miracle.

<sup>30</sup> Anderson, p. 100.

<sup>31</sup> This point is made by Hooker, p. 86. She also notes that even at Qumran, a community which confessed God's mercy and grace, members were expected to undergo radical, ascetical purifications as signs of divine forgiveness.

<sup>32</sup> Quotations from Lane, pp. 95, 99

<sup>33</sup> Gundry, p. 112.

<sup>34</sup> Several commentators note the contemptuous tone of the scribes' 'this fellow'. E.g., Cranfield, p. 98.

<sup>35</sup> Donahue and Harrington, p. 95.

scribes' being seated, sitting being the typical position of authoritative teachers, which, in this setting Mark is suggesting, they certainly are not<sup>36</sup>.

Leviticus 24:15f. prescribes death by stoning as the punishment for blasphemy, which by the first century had expanded in meaning to include not only pronunciation of the tetragrammaton (YHWH) but also other, less serious offenses against God<sup>37</sup>. As noted above, the scribes would be justified in leveling this charge (which, notably, they do not level aloud) only if Jesus was merely a man, not God. The issue, as Cranfield points out<sup>38</sup>, is the difference between absolute forgiveness (of God) and relative forgiveness (of man). To the scribes, Jesus seemed to be arrogating the former to himself, a transgression better understood after making a further distinction, suggested already above: namely that distinction, within absolute forgiveness, between forgiveness *announced* (i.e., by a prophet like Nathan in 2 Sam, as noted above) and forgiveness *granted* (i.e., by God). It is unclear which of these latter two the scribes believed Jesus to be violating.

V8 Does Jesus read the scribes' faces, or their minds? The difference is that between a natural and a supernatural interpretation, and opinions clearly differ<sup>39</sup>. What seems especially notable in this verse is that Jesus knows (immediately) 'in his mind' what the scribes are thinking 'in their hearts'. Donahue and Harrington<sup>40</sup> see and implicit christological claim here that only God knows the human heart (cf. 1 Sam 16:7; 1 Kgs 8:39;

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<sup>36</sup> Later in Mark, Jesus will criticize the Pharisees for always taking the best seats in the synagogue (12:39).

<sup>37</sup> Cran, p. 98. Donahue and Farrington (p. 95) note that Plato uses 'blasphemy' generally to describe profane speech about sacred things (Republic 2:381E). The authors suggest that Mark's scribes are employed the term in this general way.

<sup>38</sup> Cranfield, p. 99.

<sup>39</sup> Anderson (p. 100-1) argues against a 'rigorist historical approach' that would deny the possibility of any supernatural explanation. Mann (p. 224) is emphatic that there is 'certainly no question of supernatural knowledge involved here, but rather discernment', arguing that the 'knew' in 'knew in his mind' carries a connotation of 'awareness arrived at by a concentration of attention'.

<sup>40</sup> Donahue and Harrington, p. 95

Ps 7:9; Jer 11:20; Acts 1:24; 15:8; Rom 8:27). Gundry<sup>41</sup> translates ‘mind’, here, as ‘spirit’, which he suggests is linked with power or potency. There is a striking contrast, Gundry notes, between the obvious, outward faith of the four friends, and the skeptical, inward reasoning of the scribes. To discern the latter of these calls for divine knowledge.

V9            Jesus poses a question to the scribes. Which is easier: to forgive sins, or to perform a healing miracle? As noted above, Jesus commonly uses counter questions to answer accusations (e.g., Mk 3:4, 11:30, 12:37). His query is more akin to a rhetorical question than to one which demands an answer, but is surely intended to stimulate hard reflection. For how indeed should the scribes respond? To say that forgiving sins is easier would be to court the same blasphemy of which they are charging Jesus. Yet, as several commentators suggest<sup>42</sup>, it is likely that the scribes, like many today, would be inclined to say healing is the harder thing. It is the ‘verifiable’ thing. Unlike the forgiveness of sin, which any charlatan can pronounce without even the possibility of empirical verification, a healing can be tested and either confirmed or shown up. The scribes are charging Jesus with ‘acting irresponsibly [as] such a dispenser of cheap grace’<sup>43</sup>. How can Jesus ‘verify’ the efficacy and validity of his pronouncement of forgiveness?

V10            Before addressing Jesus’ answer, some comments are necessary concerning this controversial verse and its reference to Jesus as the Son of Man. Some has already been said above regarding the role of the verse in debates over this pericope’s structure. Lane, in accordance with the NAB commentary, sees this verse as a commentary added by Mark, intended to make clear and explicit to his post-Easter community the christological,

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<sup>41</sup> Gundry, p. 113.

<sup>42</sup> E.g., Anderson, p. 101

<sup>43</sup> Lane, p. 96.

soteriological significance of the healing to follow<sup>44</sup>. Indeed, since the ability of the Son of Man to forgive sins is suggested nowhere else in either the synoptic or apocryphal traditions<sup>45</sup>, this claim by Mark would only make sense to a post-Resurrection community for whom the title had evolved beyond its OT connotations to become descriptive of the God-Man, Jesus. As Anderson notes<sup>46</sup>, it is unlikely, given the secret motif throughout Mark's gospel, that Jesus would have revealed this title so early, and to those hostile to his identity. Even after Caesarea Philippi, when the title enters circulation, it is used only by Jesus and only with his disciples for pedagogical purposes. Indeed if v10 (and also 2:28, discussed above) is a Marcan interpolation, then it would be the only occasion in the whole of Mark's gospel in which the term is used by someone (here, Mark) other than Jesus<sup>47</sup>. His desire to avoid this, and to place the words in the mouth of Jesus, awkwardly, may account for the disjointed transition, noted above, between vv.10-11.

V11-12        Rather than wait for the scribes' answer, Jesus acts. There being no way empirically to verify his pronouncement of forgiveness, Jesus does what he knows the scribes believe to be the 'harder thing'; he heals the man<sup>48</sup>. It is notable that this miracle is meant to astound, as it does (v12)<sup>49</sup>, and indeed there is some question concerning whether the scribes present are included in Mark's (hyperbolic?) inclusion of everyone as witnesses ('went away in the sight of *everyone* ... They were *all* astounded')<sup>50</sup>. The importance of the miracle is

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<sup>44</sup> Lane, p. 96. Lane rejects Bultmann's interpolation theory, holding that the passage was composed, originally, in its entirety, with Mark adding this one verse to the story he inherited. His discussion of the interpolation theory on pp. 96-7 is lucid and helpful.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Anderson, p. 102.

<sup>47</sup> Gundry, p. 114.

<sup>48</sup> This reading is suggested by Gundry, p. 114.

<sup>49</sup> Mann, p. 224, notes the very emphatic, strong nature of the word here translated 'astound'; Hooker (p. 88) holds that Mark wants us to see this cure as especially impressive.

<sup>50</sup> Gundry (p. 115) and Lane (p. 97) holds that even the scribes and Pharisees are included here; Anderson (p. 102) dissents from this. Schweizer (p. 60) also dissents, arguing that they couldn't possibly be included

suggested by the verb Jesus uses in commanding the paralytic to ‘rise’: it is the same verb used both to call forth Jairus’ dead daughter in 5:41, and, in the passive tense, to describe Jesus’ own resurrection (16:6)<sup>51</sup>. Clearly this particular act of Jesus is meant, by Mark and perhaps by Jesus himself, as a sign of the broad, universal restoration of new life to fallen man. In this connection it is interesting, with Nineham<sup>52</sup>, to consider whether Jesus would have performed this healing at all had he not encountered opposition from the scribes. And how should one square his performance of this sign, this ‘verification’ of both God’s forgiveness and his own messianic identity, with his refusal, in 8:12, to give any sign to ‘this generation’? Answers to these questions are not clear.

Were one to adopt Bultmann’s interpolation theory, and were one to imagine this narrative *sans* the controversy over forgiveness of sins, these final two verses would indeed make more sense. There is no specific mention of the scribes reaction, and a modern reader, at least, is left wanting one. The object of the amazement of ‘all’ is left unclear: are they amazed by the miracle, or by the Jesus’ pronouncement of forgiveness? With Cranfield<sup>53</sup>, one feels compelled to answer the former; the reaction seems indistinguishable from that to any ‘normal’ healing. Yet for Mark’s readers, living in an awareness of the Risen Christ and helped by Mark’s interpolated commentary verse (v10), the meaning of the passage is clear and multiple: (1) even this early in his ministry, Jesus found himself in the shadow of the cross; (2) Jesus was innocent of the charges brought against him, and indeed the evidence was clear for all (here including the archetypical scribes) to see; (3) forgiveness and healing are not two things but one, and in announcing the Kingdom God Jesus calls all mankind to

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and citing Mark’s all-inclusive terminology here as evidence in favor of the Bultmann’s interpolation theory.

<sup>51</sup> Donahue and Farrington, p. 95.

<sup>52</sup> Nineham, p. 91.

<sup>53</sup> Cranfield, p. 101

'rise', to be whole. This is a wholly graceful gift for which we, like the paralytic man, do utterly nothing to deserve.

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