

Return from Exile: The Sequel to Black Liberation Theology and Its Implications for Mark's Use of the Son of Man

Dr. Tyran T. Laws

Introduction

This paper seeks to offer Mark's appropriation of the Hebrew Bible's Return from Exile motif as a sequel to Black Liberation Theology (BLT). Granting the well-known fact that BLT leans heavily on the Hebrew Bible's Exodus motif for its hermeneutic, it seems fitting to use the New Exodus/ Return from Exile motif as a logical extension of BLT's use of the Biblical Exodus metaphor. In this vein, the Return from Exile motif, which as we will see, is often expressed Biblically in recapitulated Exodus language, (or a "New Exodus"). As such, it is therefore necessary and expedient for the Return from Exile motif in Scripture to be seen as a natural extension of BLT. Thus, BLT's model of using the Exodus motif as a paradigm for Black self-understanding could be profitably enhanced by (1) adding Return from Exile as an additional narrative, allowing for (2) a vision in which Israel as an independent counter community to its Egyptian oppressors, often paralleled in BLT's construction with the Black

church's effort of self-empowerment, goes a step further—taking the lead in reconfiguring racial power dynamics, by enfolded in to the Return from Exile movement, her oppressors (white Christian American hegemonic structures), sometimes reflected in white evangelical church's approach to race relations. This is demonstrable in two steps: 1) Return from Exile, properly understood, includes the exiled tribes of Israel, with the Gentiles (therefore it justifies Gentile mission). 2) The Gospel of Mark uses Return from Exile as a major category for its explication of Jesus' significance. Therefore, if the equation between the Black Church and Israel is valid, then this narrative must go further than a self-identity/empowerment only oriented around an Exodus motif in which the "creative construction of relatively independent counter communities" are formed—but a motif that is in sync with the New Exodus/Return from Exile motif, in which there is a convergence of the white and Black Church community under the reign of The Son of Man.¹ Moreover, the New Exodus/Return from Exile motif provides fresh answers to one of the major concerns for Black Liberation Theology—the concern for the Black² church's response to white racism.³ It should be understood, however, that, by convergence, I am not referring to superficial convergence that often happens in "multi-cultural" churches, in which Blacks migrate to predominantly white churches, whose solution to white racism towards Blacks is getting whites and Blacks to worship under the same roof—sharing

¹ Rather than "convergence" sometimes the phrase "racial reconciliation" is used. The term has become muddled (as Willie James Jennings have asserted in his book, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and The Origins of Race* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010], 10) But, more importantly, the term, even in all of its positive connotation, may still allow for a degree "aloofness." For an example, in war, two nations could be at "peace" politically, without converging identities. On the other hand, the NT presumes a reality of formerly opposing communities, can now, in Christ, be made one, as a result of the dividing wall of hostility being brought down in his flesh (cf. Eph 2:14).

² The term "Black" when used as an epithet for a race of people will be capitalized in this document. Therefore, in some ways this grammatical maneuvering has an implicit anti-imperial connotation to it.

³ By delimiting this study to the conversation of racism, I am not trying to misrepresent Black Liberation Theology. Black Liberation Theology, over the years, has been a framework that encompasses various types of oppression, such as classism and sexism (see Dale P. Andrews and Robert London Smith, Jr, *Black Practical Theology*, [Waco, Tx: Baylor University Press, 2015] 130; Alastair Kee, *The Rise and Demise of Black Theology* [Hants, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006], 168–78).

membership in the same local church, and at best only condemning the more overt forms of racism. The convergence to which I am referring, is not a mere spatial convergence in which the Black church and white church occupy the same space; it's a theological convergence—a functional convergence, in which our shared theological presuppositions produce a convergence of concerns and methodology for addressing those concerns.

Methodically, this treatise will be integrative, engaging both in the historical-literary method of Biblical Studies, while giving adept attention to some of the concerns of Black Liberation theologians with perhaps, at times, a more focused attention on James H. Cone. This means that some of the “allegorizing” that BLT uses as method of biblical interpretation will be employed,⁴ but only as a way wrestling with *implications* for the text for a contemporary audience and only after attention is given to the historical and literary context of each passage. Alastair Kee has indirectly critiqued this allegorizing hermeneutic when he says, “Exodus is repeatedly alluded to as if its message is so self-evident that no exegesis is necessary. ‘God frees slaves.’ But this claim is so patently false that it surely requires some explanation . . . God does not liberate slaves. The chosen people happen to be slaves, but God did not oppose slavery as such. Exodus 21 begins with God's laws concerning the treatment of slaves.”⁵ For Kee, then, the problem with this hermeneutic is the pre-mature allegorizing of the Biblical text with contemporary contexts. Similarly, John M. Yoder in his article “Exodus and Exile: The Faces of Liberation,” shows how too hastily drawn parallels from the text can produce contradictory interpretations with the same text—a problematic process, in which he labels as “biblical selectivity.” To illustrate this, Yoder

challenges some of the interpretations of liberation theologians of Latin America such as Ruben Alvez or Gustavo Gutierrez whom he intimates uses the Exodus narrative as biblical justification for “a minority group to seize sovereignty within the land within which they are oppressed, taking that sovereignty away from a foreign power or from a feudal minority in their own society.”⁶ Yoder purports, if, however, the Exodus narrative was taken seriously, “It would point far more clearly to the creative construction of relatively independent counter communities, and less to a seizure of power in the existing society.”⁷ Obviously, liberation theologians, whether Black or Latin, would reject this interpretation on hermeneutical and moral ground—such interpretation would only serve to reinforce the status quo of imperial power in Latin America and white racism in the U.S. Nevertheless, what Kee and Yoder have demonstrated in their respective contributions is the need for the consideration of the historical-literary context of biblical motifs before they are appropriated as the cornerstone of various contextual theologies. Therefore, my integrative methods of BLT will happen at the level of utilizing questions and concerns that Black liberation framework may propose to various texts that I am using, and on the level of allegorizing, but only as a way of adjudicating pertinent axioms with regards to white racism in its effects on the Black community in America. Therefore, after a brief section that highlights the importance of the Exodus motif in BLT, I will accentuate the relevant tenets of the Exodus-New Exodus/ “Return from Exile” motif, in the Hebrew Bible, after which, I will present as the hermeneutical background to Mark's Return from Exile motif. The delimitation of the number of words permitted for this project will not allow me to do extensive exegetical work in the

⁴ Kee, *The Rise and Demise of Black Theology*, vii.

⁵ *Ibid.*, vii.

⁶ John M. Yoder, “Exodus and Exile: The Faces of Liberation,” *CrossCurrents* 23 (1973): 297–309.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 300.

Hebrew Bible, but I hope to do sufficient exegetical work in the Gospel of Mark, in a way that shows integrity to how Mark is appropriating the Hebrew Bibles' focus on exile and return from exile. Whereas I also understand that there are various tenets of the exile motif that could be under consideration,⁸ my exegetical work in the Gospel of Mark will only focus on two themes that have an integral part of the exile/return from exile motif: spiritual sensory malfunction (i.e. having ears and not hearing, eyes and not seeing), and the conflation of Israel's to the Gentiles and the ingathering of the tribes, both of which presumes as a precursor, the scattering of Israel among the nations "Gentiles." In an attempt to not just have a descriptive presentation of these two themes in Mark, I will seek to pinpoint how these two themes relate to Mark's use of the Son of Man; for I believe, it is Mark's Christology, especially as it relates to the Son of Man, in which the ingathering of the tribes from exile and the mission to the Gentiles are most explicitly seen. Therefore, the passages in Mark to which I will attend will be limited to those which are narratively connected to the Son of Man passages. The aim of this study, then, is to offer the gospel of Mark as a case study for racial convergence, and a way forward to Black Liberation theology.

The Exodus Motif in Black Liberation Theology

The Hebrew Bible's Exodus motif has

been an integral part of BLT probably from its very inception. While some may attribute the commencement of BLT with the civil rights movement, and or James H. Cone, the first author to publish a book on the subject, Blacks have had an "Exodus-liberation theology" since the days of Antebellum South when Blacks learned to read the Holy Scriptures for themselves in their oppressor's language (English). This is evidenced by the fact that Harriett Tubman, a slave woman who mastermind the freedom and liberation of enslaved Blacks through a system that would later be deemed "the Underground Railroad," was viewed as a Moses-like figure who lead a redeemed people to "the promised land."⁹ As Charles Lattimore Howard has noted, "The movement for liberation from the institution of slavery was fought on many fronts and in many different ways. Some fought for freedom through armed revolt—revolts led by people like Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner." What often goes underemphasized is the that both Vesey and Turner were preachers who *first* shaped the thinking of their followers with a "Black Liberation Theology" before their *actual* "Exodus" from slavery could take place. Thus, as long as Black Folks have had, even a basic understanding of the Scriptures, they immediately began to migrate to the Exodus motifs of the Bible. From Harriett Tubman, an escaped slave from Maryland, who earned the nick name, Moses, to Jacob Stroyer, whose story is told in the book *Sketches of My life in the South*—recasting the history of the African

⁸ Scholars have described the ideological core of exilic theology to contain the following: eschatological regathering of the tribes (e.g., Ezek 36; Zech 14; Craig A. Evans, "Jesus and the Continuing Exile of Israel," in *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N.T. Wright's Jesus and the Victory of God*, ed. C. C. Newman [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1999], 77–91), reestablishing the temple, repentance and forgiving of national sin (N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God. Christian Origins and the Question of God* [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996], 248–49; Dan 9:24–27), eradicating or converting the Gentile—the primary culprits of Israelite oppression and suffering, and implementing measures to maintain purity and

holiness (E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985], 79–88, 95–98, 106–108; idem., *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE–66CE* [London: SCM Press, 1992: 290–98; Andrew M. Mbuvi, *Temple, Exile and Identity in 1 Peter*, LNTS 345 [Bloombsbury: T & T Clark, 2007], 20). The majority of scholarly conversations about exile hinges on the idea of whether or not Second Temple literature reflects a Jewish consciousness of being in a state of ongoing exile (Nicholas Piotrowski, "The Concept of Exile in Late Second Temple Judaism: A Review of Recent Scholarship," *Currents in Biblical Scholarship* [2017]: 214–47).

⁹ Charles Lattimore Howard *Black Theology as Mass Movement*, (New York: Palegrave MacMillan, 2014), 26.

American experience as a type of Exodus experience, asserting that the voice of the Lord was heard from the North—that John Brown (a contemporary of Harriet Tubman) was to go to set my prison-bound people free, while simultaneously hardening the heart of Jefferson Davis that God may show him and his followers his power.¹⁰ Thus from Harriet Tubman, Jacob Stroyer, to Dr. Martin Luther King, who on the day before his infamous assassination, would almost ominously declare, “There are some difficult days ahead of us. But, we as a people will get to ‘the promised-land’. . . Now, I may not get there with you. But I’m not worried. Because I have been to the mountain-top, and I’ve seen the promised-land, and we will get there”—The Exodus imagery has consistently pervaded the liberation framework of the Black Christians in America. In King’s sermon, he almost ominously depicts himself as a Moses-figure who views the Promised-land of justice from a Mount Pisgah-like pinnacle of his civil rights career. The next day King would be assassinated, sealing his fate to not enter the “promised-land,” as he predicted. Even though King died, the Exodus motif that was so instrumental for mobilizing Blacks did not. The Exodus motif would serve as a cornerstone of James H. Cone’s hermeneutical methodology. Cone would later write,

It seems clear to me that whatever else we may say about Scripture, it is first and foremost a story of Israelite people who believe that Yahweh was involved in their history. . . The story begins with the first Exodus of Hebrew slaves from Egypt and continues through the second Exodus from Babylon and the rebuilding of the temple. To be sure there are many ways to look at this story, but the import of the biblical message is clear on this point; God’s salvation is revealed in the liberation of

slaves from sociopolitical bondage.¹¹

Interestingly, Cone himself recognizes the importance of the return from exile (second Exodus) in his construction for Black liberation. However, one can argue that much of his conceptual framework focuses on the first Exodus. Yet, Cone is correct the Exodus motif is not just recapitulated in the story of African-American’s experience. Itself, as a motif, has a robust recapitulation in the Israel’s story.

The Return from Exile Hermeneutic in Isaiah 40–55

The “Return from Exile/ New Exodus” motif in Scripture, serves a great hermeneutical springboard for creating a sequel to Black Liberation Theology. In that regard, “sequel” is a very intentional word for my theological treatise within this paper. To start, the motif of “Return from Exile” is grounded in Scripture and serves as a logical line of progression in the Exodus trajectory. One passage that comes to mind is Isa. 43:16–21. There the prophet says,

16 Thus says the LORD, Who makes a way through the sea And a path through the mighty waters, 17 Who brings forth the chariot and the horse, The army and the mighty man (They will lie down together and not rise again; They have been quenched and extinguished like a wick): 18 "Do not call to mind the former things, Or ponder things of the past. 19 "Behold, I will do something new, Now it will spring forth; Will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, Rivers in the desert. 20 "The beasts of the field will glorify Me; The jackals and the ostriches; Because I have given waters in the wilderness And rivers in the desert, To give drink to My chosen people. 21 "The people whom I formed for Myself, Will

¹⁰ Jacob Stroyer, *Sketches of My Life in The South, Part I* (Salem, Mass: Salem Press, 1879), 47.

¹¹ James H. Cone, *Speaking the Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 5.

declare My praise. (Isa 43:16–21 NAS).

Granted, there has been some recent resistance on the part of various Isaiah scholars regarding the tendency within biblical scholarship to unnecessarily presume a “return from exile” language on “Exodus/New Exodus” language in Isaiah 40–55. Nevertheless, there are a couple of passages that are more tenable than others—passages such as Isa. 43:16–21 and Isa. 48:20–21—passages that do at least speak of a plausible possibility of interpreting the Exodus motif in these passages, as having implications for a return from exile.

However, on the other hand, I should say some of the critiques against interpreting the Exodus motif as having implications for a theology of the Return from Exile, run the risk of being overly reductionistic, in that, it wants to limit the motif of exile/return from exile to a literal return from Babylon. One example of this type of argumentation can be seen in Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer treatise on Isa 40–55.¹² Tiemeyer rightfully pushes back that “the occurrence of Exodus imagery in Isa 40–55 does not always demand the motif of a literal Second Exodus.”¹³ Yet, Tiemeyer doesn’t seem to allow for an interpretation of exile as a theological motif, that could be employed figuratively and not necessarily literary, which is ironic, since this is essentially the type of interpretation she is giving when she says, “It is better understood figuratively, serving as a typology for the transition from slavery to freedom and from death to life.”¹⁴ This quote is an integral part of her treatment of Isa 43:16–21, in which she challenges the presumption that this passage alludes to a literal Second Exodus out of Babylon but asserts that the “Exodus motif serves as a word of doom for Babylon.”¹⁵ She then clarifies this by saying, “The motif is used

for rhetorical emphasis, indeed as a rhetorical proof, in seeking to convince the audience that God will act anew on behalf of his chosen people...Read metaphorically, Isa 43:16–21 denotes the miserable situation, both mentally and physically of the people of Israel after the fall of Jerusalem in 586. B.C.”¹⁶

It seems odd to me that Tiemeyer does not apply this same logic to a figurative understanding of exile. The Israelites experience with exile as foretold in Deuteronomy encompasses more than just a physical scattering; although, this is obviously one of the bedrock components of the exile motif. The physical “scattering” is metonymic for a larger reality. So, the fact that Isa 40–55 may or may not necessarily be grounded in Babylonian setting, does not in of itself preclude an exilic theme; mainly because, the exile that Israel experienced is more so about being exiled from God, and the covenant and its community, which is an integral part of being physically exiled from a particular space but not limited to physical exile. This is precisely the message of Ezekiel 10–11. It highlights the glory of the Lord departing from the temple. After the glory of the Lord departs from the temple in chapter 10, Ezekiel is shown the city of Jerusalem and the temple complex. The people have obviously thought themselves to be the remnant who were quarantined from effects of exile, especially since they were still in Jerusalem (cf. Ezek 11:13)—since they had not been physically exiled liked some of their brothers (11:15–16). Yet, the glory of the Lord departing from the temple was a way to say to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, “You could experience exile, without ever leaving.” Conversely, the Lord tells Ezekiel that he was *miqdāsh*, a “sacred space” for a little while (11:16), for those who had been physically removed from the land. Ironically, those left

¹²Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, *For the Comfort of Zion: The Geographical and Theological Location of Isaiah 40–55* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 155–204.

¹³ Emphasis mine. *Ibid.*, 155.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 155.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 183.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 183–84.

behind in Jerusalem thought themselves to be the righteous remnant. However, they were not the righteous remnant. Contrastingly, there was a righteous remnant who had been physically exiled, yet “whose *hearts* had not gone after detestable things” (11:21). It is them that will be gathered to receive a new heart and God’s Spirit upon them, solidifying their status as returnees, while the Jerusalem inhabitants by contrast are still in exile. Therefore, the addressees in Isa 43:16–21 could very much be situated in Judah, but their shared experience of experiencing the destruction of the temple, foreign domination, and a decentralized community—an experience that other Israelites who are exiled to Babylon share,¹⁷ cautions the modern interpreter of dismissing too easily the idea that exile is a metonymic reality that encompasses more than the physical scattering of the people.

Since Israel’s life and community is a theocracy, which was intended to mirror the communal reality of their God-king (i.e., You shall be holy as I am holy), then their idolatry inadvertently results in fragmentation of their community, viz., scattered in exile. In that regard, the punishment fits the crime. Given that their idolatry challenges the unicity of God, then their communities are no longer able to operate under the spiritual-political cohesion that is afforded to them by God’s presence.¹⁸ In that regard, Israel must “return in their heart” from exile, if they want to return to the land.¹⁹ No wonder that much of the language of being scattered is often followed up with and you shall seek the Lord Your God.”²⁰ Thus, the notion of the metonymic understanding of exile has

tremendous implications for providing a way forward from the idolatrous practices of racism that also challenges the unicity of God, causing the fragmentation between the Black and White Evangelical Church—a point to which I will return later.

Why is The Return from Exile a *Sequel* to Black Liberation Theology

The word sequel carries with it a connotation that give the New Exodus/ Return from Exile a natural trajectory within Black Liberation Theology. Therefore, I do not offer in this paper, a substitution for Black Liberation Theology; on the contrary—just as the biblical exile of the Israelite people was grounded in Exodus motifs, so it is with my treatise. The Black twentieth century prophets, who spoke truth to power in their clarion call to anathematize racism (in all of its forms), are still as relevant today, as they were in their fight for the demarginalization of Blacks in America, yesterday. Therefore, it is not my intent, neither is it my responsibility to mitigate the deleterious effects of their rhetoric on those who may not have “ears to hear” what the Spirit of the Lord was speaking through them. Moreover, in regard to thinking of the “Return to Exile” motif as a sequel to Black Liberation theology, it is important to understand that much of the objective of the exodus was for Israel to separate themselves to concentrate on building a self-identity with regard to holiness of their God. Similarly, Black Liberation Theology has largely focused on self-empowerment of the Black

¹⁷ cf. Isa 48:20.

¹⁸ Nicholas Perrin, “Reading Climax of the Covenant

¹⁹ Deut 4:27–30.

²⁰ Neh 1:8-9, Deut 4:27–29. Also, by saying this, I am not making an argument for their repentance being prior to their “possession of the Land. I am only asserting that Israel’s possession or “inhabiting” of the land comes with the expectation of obedience and exclusive worship to Yahweh on the land.

community.²¹ Rhondda Robinson Thomas writes, during “The Second Great Awakening, a religious revival that swept the United States from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century . . . Editors of antislavery and black newspapers further encouraged the development of black Exodus stories by publishing articles instructing a national black audience how to transform the language of Exodus into abolitionist and reform rhetoric essential for community building in the African diaspora.”²² This Exodus oriented construction of the Black community allowed the Black community to wrestle with their self-identity apart from overt pressures from the ethnic majority. It is precisely that motif that would foreshadow another stage of “Black redemptive history”, in which the Black Church, along with the larger Black community, participated in a lot of constructive self-talk: “Black is Beautiful,” “Black Power.”, and the search for the Black Jesus.²³ However, just as in the biblical corpus, the Exodus motif are recapitulated in Scripture to construct a New Exodus/ Return from Exile motif as a way of completing Israel’s story, Black Liberation theology can likewise benefit from a New Exodus hermeneutic.

An Early Judaism Hermeneutic of Interpreting Israel’s Return from Exile with the Gentile Inclusion

Arguably, the place in the NT, in which

we see the Gentile inclusion as an integral part of the Return from Exile motif, most explicitly, is within Paul’s hermeneutics. In Romans 9:24–26, Paul quotes Hosea’s word to the northern kingdom to apply to the Gentile conclusion in the church. Thus, he says,

even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles. As He says also in Hosea, "I will call those who were not My people, 'My people,' And her who was not beloved, 'beloved.'" (Rom 9:24-25 NAS)

Jason Staples has noticed that God sent Hosea to tell the northern kingdom that “it has been mixed upon peoples,”—a term that Staples interprets to be ethnic mixture.²⁴ The result is Ephraim has become “not my people”—that is they have become Gentiles.²⁵ Paul’s treatment of the Hosea message to Ephraim seems already to be a possible implication of Jacob’s prophecy to Ephraim’s descendants in Gen 48:19—in which Jacob says that he will become “full of nations.” The possible implications of this reading can be inferred from how the Targums treat this passage. The targums Gen 48 says “the younger brother will be greater than him, and his sons ‘will be kings’ (יְהוֹן מַלְכִין) ruling among the nations.” The targum obvious take the opportunity to reinterpret מְלֵא־הַגּוֹיִם (“he will be full of nations”), which could have the implications of the Gentiles coming from among Ephraim, to Ephraim ruling over the Gentiles.²⁶

²¹ Kee, *Rise and Demise of Black Theology*, 37.

²² Rhonda Robinson Thomas, *Claiming Exodus: A Cultural History of Afro-Atlantic Identity, 1774–1903* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013), 33.

²³ J. Deotis Roberts, *Black Religion, Black Theology*, ed. David Emmanuel Goatley (Harrisburg, PA; London: Trinity Press International, 2003), 62; Andrews and Smith, *Black Practical Theology*, 164; James Cone, “Black Theology and the Black Church: Where Do We Go from Here?” *CrossCurrents* 27:2 (1977): 147–156, specifically 147–49.

²⁴ Jason A. Staples, “What Do the Gentiles Have to Do with ‘All Israel’? A Fresh Look at Rom 11:25–27,” *JBL* 130 (2011): 371–90, n. 50.

²⁵ Staples rightfully asked, “what does not my people mean if not Gentiles,” 381. His question causes one to think about the figurative use of the term Gentile in Scripture. Just as epithets for Israel can be referred to theological to refer to no ethnic Israelites (cf. Rom 9:6, Gentile obviously can be used to talk to Israelites who are categorically considered to be Gentiles.

²⁶ The redaction activity on the part of the scribes demonstrates a resistance for certain type of interpretation that would have no doubt been attractive to Early Christian Palenstinian Jews—the place, in which the majority of Targum scholars say the Targum Onkelos originated. See Moses Aberbach and Bernard Grossfeld, *Targum Onkelos to Genesis: A Critical Analysis Together with An English Translation of the Text* (Denver: Center for Judaic Studies;

However, Mark's Jesus seems also to use a similar hermeneutic. In Mark 13:26–27, the Markan Jesus says,²⁶ “And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send forth the angels and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth, to the farthest end of heaven” (Mar 13:26–27 NAS). The background, in my opinion, is most likely Ezekiel 37:9, 21–23. There, Ezekiel, first introduced as a priest (cf. Eze. 1:3), but more prominently as a prophet, is told to prophesy to the valley of dry bones, which is metonymic of exiled tribes. Ezekiel is told, “Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, ‘Thus says the Lord God, ‘Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they come to life (Eze. 37:9 NAS). Later in that chapter, the fact that Ezekiel is speaking to exiles will become clearer when he says,

²¹ “And say to them, thus says the Lord God, ‘Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land;²² and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations, and they will no longer be divided into two kingdoms.’ ” (Eze 37:21–22 NAS).

Ezekiel's prophecy is obviously addressed to the tribes of Israel and not the Gentiles.

However, Mark's Jesus combines imagery of the Son of Man from Daniel 7 with an allusion

of the return of the northern tribes of Israel from Eze. 37—both of which have references to the “four winds—to apply the “return from exile,” motif to the Son of Man's gathering of his elect—the church, which is made up of both Jews and Gentiles.²⁷ There are a couple of observations that can be made cumulatively to support this claim. First the verbal and conceptual parallels of “gathering the elect from the farthest ends of the earth in Mark 13:26, with the “return from exile” motifs in the Hebrew Bible, are too strong to deny a “return from exile” framework for Mark 13:26.²⁸ Secondly, Mark has already applied a text that explicitly mentions the Gentile inclusion among the returnees from exile, within the Mark 11–15 chapters—chapters that are thematically connected through Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.²⁹ In the cleansing of the temple scene in Mark 11:17, Jesus quotes a verse from Isa. 56:7—a scripture which allows the Gentile's worship to be on equal footing, within the same temple as the ingathered tribes. There, Yahweh says, “For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples, (Isa 56:7 NAS). This verse has somewhat of a consummative force, synthesizing Yahweh's appeal to the “son of the foreigner” and the eunuch, that he would indeed accept them. Thus, in verse four and verse six, the eunuch and the foreigner are told that they are accepted if they keep the covenant. It is in that context that verse seven states, “I will bring them to my holy mountain.” The antecedent to the masculine plural pronominal object (them) is most likely the 'abodîm, “the servants” of which the eunuch and the foreigner, as covenant

KTAV Publishing House), 9. They also acknowledge that literal meaning of MT could be misconstrued as implying an intermixture of non-Israelite peoples with the tribe of Ephraim, 278 n. 11.

²⁷This last point is strengthened by the fact that in the *Similitudes of Enoch* Son of Man's ministry to the elect and the Gentiles are integral parts of one another. In *I Enoch* 48, The Son of Man is a messiah (48:2) who is linked with the remnant.

²⁸ Deut 30:4; Ps 107:2–3; Isa 43:5–7; 56:8; Jer 29:14; 31:8; 32:37; Zec 8:7–8.

²⁹ Some have argued that the temple motif is common thread throughout these chapters. See Timothy Gray, “The Temple and the Gospel of Mark; John Paul Heil, “The Narrative Strategy and Pragmatics of the Temple Theme in Mark,” CBQ 59 (1997): 76–100. John R. Donahue argues that the motif of the temple extends to chapter 16 (“Temple, Trial and Royal Christology” in *The Passion in Mark: Studies on Mark 14–16*, ed. W. H. Kelber [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976], 61–79).

keepers consist of. Therefore, it is clear that the quote of Isaiah 56:7, “My house shall be a house of prayer for all peoples,” includes the ingathering of Gentiles. One will notice that similar language is also used of the scattered tribes in Neh. 1:9.³⁰ Furthermore, what is noteworthy about the Mark 13:26 and Isaiah 56:7 connection is, in Mark 13, Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple, which means the gathering of the elect that was expected to happen at the temple, according to Isaiah 56:5–8, will now occur in association with a new sacred space, of which Jesus is the chief cornerstone.³¹ This makes sense, given the fact that earlier in Mark 1:2–3, Mark cites a partial quotation from Exodus 23:20 and Mal 3:1, followed by a quotation from Isa.40:3, in the second verse. Together, these verses allow Mark to shape Jesus’s mission as a priestly figure who is “preparing the way” by means of removing impurities and thereby cleansing what will be considered the eschatological sacred space of the Kingdom of God, since Mal 3:1–3, makes it clear that the messenger is clearing the way for the Lord to enter into his temple to serve as a refiner and source of purification.*³² Thus, the “preparation of the way” by the messenger in Mark 1:2–3, simultaneously looks back to Mal 3:1–3’s “temple cleansing” and Isa 40’s restoration from exile motif, while also anticipating Jesus’ own cleansing of the temple, in Mark 11, and related prophecy of destruction in Mark 13. The difference however, between the Mark 1:2–3’s citations and Jesus’ own ministry, is that his ministry of gathering of the exiles to the sacred space of himself, will include Gentiles.

Thirdly, Mark 13:14 mentions the Abomination of Desolation, which has to have its background to Daniel’s message to the exiles in Dan. 12:1. Interestingly, the disciples’ question about “things signaling the end of the ages” echoes Dan 12:6 in which there is a similar question regarding their end of exile/end of the age.³³ All of these aforementioned components create a cumulative argument for framing the events foretold in Mark 13 as having an exilic-implications, in which the eschatological culmination is seen to be in the Son of Man’s gathering of his elect.

The Convergence of the Return from Exile Motif and the Gentile Mission under the Son of Man’s Ministry

What will be of special interest with Mark’s use of the Son of Man, is how Mark ties Israel’s “return from exile” motif to Son of Man’s mission to the Gentiles together, in a way that not only defragments the scattering effect that would occur as a result of being in exile, but intensifies the restored unicity of God’s people by integrating Jesus’ mission to both the Jews and Gentiles with his own mission on the cross.

To start, we have already alluded to the fact that in Mark 13:26, the Son of Man’s gathering his elect include the Gentiles. However, perhaps what should be noted is that the literary context of Mark 10–11 contains allusions to Jesus’s ministry to the Gentiles, which is quintessentially expressed in the Son of Man’s ministry in 13:26.

The Son of Man’s Ministry to the

³⁰ “. . . But if you return to Me and keep My commandments and do them, though those of you who have been scattered were in the most remote part of the heavens, I will gather them from there and will bring them to the place where I have chosen to cause My name to dwell” (Neh 1:9 NAS).

³¹ Mark 12:10.

³² For a detailed analysis, see Tyran T. Laws, “The Unveiling of a Royal-Priestly Figure: A Narrative-Critical

Look at Mark’s Use of the Son of Man,” 96–99, Ph.D. diss. Wheaton College, 2022.

³³ Also see Brant Pitre, who argues in great length for a context of interpreting the Abomination of Desolation in Mark 13 and its consequent judgment, as the event that will enact a second exodus, in which the exiles will return (*The Tribulation, the Messiah, and the End of Exile* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; Grand Rapids, 2005], 292–377).

Gentiles in Mark 10:33

Thus, in Mark 10:33, the SOM's ministry is narratively connected to Jesus' ministry to the Gentiles. This can be seen by two things: the function of Mark 10:33 in the narrative context of Mark 8:22–10:52—"the way section," and thematic and linguistic connection of Mark 10:33 with Mark 13:9–13. To start, "the way section" is shaped via *inclusio* of the healing of an unnamed blind man at the beginning of this unit (Mark 8:22–26), and Blind Bartimaeus at the end of this unit (Mark 10:46–52). The first healing story of the blind man (Mark 8:22–26) come right in the middle of the Markan Jesus fourth mission (Mark 8:22–9:30) to the Gentiles.³⁴ Kelly Iverson in his dissertation, published in 2007, lays out the narrative function of the Gentile engagement with Jesus with the Gospel of Mark. Within that framework, he also addresses the four excursions of Jesus into Gentile territory: the first journey—5 :1–20, which opens the door for Jesus' ministry to be expanded in other Gentile regions. (cf. Mark 5:20); the second journey (6:45–53), which ends prematurely; the third journey (7:24–8:9); and the fourth journey (8:22–9:30). So, whereas the first healing of the blind man is in Gentile territory, and thus most likely of a Gentile man, the last healing of is right outside of Jerusalem of a man by the name of Bartimaeus, whose explicit messianic expectations of Jesus as the Son of David, most likely betrays him as Jewish. Thus, this unit of thought then is framed by Jesus opening the eyes of both Jew and Gentiles.

Additionally, in between the *inclusio* of two healings of blind men are three subunits, of which are all introduced with conversations regarding the Son of Man.³⁵ Even though the three units are equally divided by the Son of

Man three passion predictions, it should be noted that there are seven Son of Man sayings in this unit (See the diagram below). Thus, a major part of the blindness of the disciples is regarding the ministry and identity of the Son of Man. The disciples' blindness in this unit of thought recalls Jesus's statement of the disciples having eyes and not seeing, and ears and hearing in Mark 8:17–18, just a few verses earlier. The disciples are here described in terms that are reflective of Israel's exile experience (cf. Jer 5:21; Isa 6:9–10; Isa 43:8–9; Jer 31:8; Deut 28:28–29. However, one of the things that Mark 10:33 shows the reader, is how blind the disciples are to the reality that both Jews and Gentiles are equally in need of the Son of Man's ministry. Both Jews and Gentiles are blind. And the Son of Man will be handed over *παραδοθήσεται* to Jewish leadership and they will in turn hand him *παραδώσουσιν* over to the Gentiles.

See Diagram

³⁴See the published dissertation of Kelly R. Iverson, *Gentiles in the Gospel of Mark: Even the Dogs Under the Table Eat the Children's Crumbs* (New York; London: T&T Clark International, 2007).

³⁵Additionally, as the diagram shows, the Mark 8:22–10:52 unit of thought is accented by five Son of Man sayings. Thus, a major part of the disciples' blindness.

| | | |
|---|---|--------------------|
| 8:22–26 4 th Gentile 8:22 | Healing of the Blind Man of Bethsaida | Son of Man Sayings |
| Mission 9:30 | 8:27–31 First Son of Man passion Prediction | Mk 8:31 |
| | 8:32–23 Partial understanding | |
| | | Mk 8:38 |
| | | Mk 9:9 |
| | | Mk 9:12 |
| | 9:30–31 Second Son of Man Passion Prediction | |
| | 9:32 No understanding | Mk 9:31 |
| | | |
| | 10:32–34 Third Son of Man Passion Prediction | Mk 10:33 |
| | 10:35–45 Partial understanding | Mk 10:45 |
| 10:46–52 | Healing of Blind Bartimaeus | |
| Figure: Structural Analysis of 4 th Gentile Mission & the SOM sayings within the Discipleship Section of Mark (adopted from Iverson with minor variations) | | |

Additionally, it is not by chance that upon mentioning being handed over to the *Gentiles*, that James and John come asking for a place of power in the Jesus coming kingdom. Darrell Bock notices, “In Matt 19:28, before he relates this event in Matt 20, Jesus has given them the promise of sitting on twelve thrones and judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”¹ When Jesus mentions this in Mark 10:33, the current context, and its parallel with Matthew suggests that James and John are concerned about the restoration of the kingdom of Israel.² However, while James and John are thinking of restoration in terms of a kingdom distinct from the Gentiles, Mark intimates that part of the disciple’s blindness, is that they don’t understand that the Son of Man’s ministry will be as such, that both Jews and Gentiles will be subsumed under one entity. In

that regard, the Son of Man’s ministry to the Jews and Gentiles, will be the quintessential sign that God is leading Israel out of their exile-like blindness.³ One way to think about it is this: in exile, Israel would be dominated by the nations, but in their return from exile, a remnant of the nations will be conjoined to Israel not as those who lord over Israel, but as those who surrender to Israel’s Lord.⁴

This argument is strengthened by tracing the thematic and linguistic parallels of Mark 10:33 and Mark 13:9–13. Therefore, first I want to show the connection between the two passages. Secondly, I want to show how the themes in Mark 13:9–13 are tied to the exile motif Return from Exile motif. Regarding the connections between the two passages, Jesus’ warning to his disciples to be on guard, because “they will be handed

¹ Darrell Bock, *Mark* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 280.

² This is something for which they are apparently concerned even after the Jesus’ resurrection (cf. Acts 1:6).

³ Jer 31:8–10; Isa 43:8–9; Isa 29:18–20.

⁴ Zech 14:16 is one of the passages in the Hebrew Bible that anticipates a conflation of Jews and Gentiles

worshipping in the same space, after Israel’s return from exile. A point of interest between Mark 8:22–10:52 unit of thought is that it serves as a transition to Jesus Triumphal procession, which will draw from messianic themes of the literary unit of Zech 9–14.

over” παραδώσουσιν to be flogged in Jewish synagogues and will have to stand before Gentile governors and kings, recapitulates the experience of the Son of Man who will also be handed over παραδοθήσεται to Jews and Gentiles to undergo his own trial. Additionally, there is a hint of irony between the two passages. In Mark 10:33 Jesus will be handed over τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, “the Gentiles,” but in Mark 13:9–13, the disciples are to proclaim the good news to πάντα τὰ ἔθνη. A closer look at this passage (Mark 13:9–13), demonstrates that the disciples, as an extension of the Son of Man’s ministry in Mark 10:33, are to proclaim the good news to the Gentiles—that, in the return of the scattered tribes of Israel, the Son of Man has provided a way for them (Gentiles) to be saved also. This could be seen by the fact that the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Judaism have as an expectation that as the tribes receive their good news—a message that announces the end of exile—that same message will in some way be “good news” to Gentiles also.⁵

The Ingathering of the Gentiles in Mark 11–13: The Context of Mark 13:26

The climactic expression of the Son of Man gathering an elect group unto himself is contextually alluded at key points in Mark 11–13. First, we see that the cleansing of the temple scene in Mark 11:17 is an integral part of ingathering of the Gentiles motif, that will be ultimately expressed in the Son of Man’s ministry in Mark 13:26. In Mark 11:1 Jesus enters into Jerusalem (Mark 11:1–10). The first

thing Mark reports Jesus doing thereafter is entering the temple (11:11), which shows that Jesus’s entrance into Jerusalem and his temple dealings are interconnected.⁶

The next day, Jesus enters the temple, preventing anyone from carrying goods into it (Mark 11:15). There, as already stated, Jesus quotes Isa 56:7, which allows the Gentiles’ worship to be on equal footing with the ingathered tribes: “For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples” (Isa 56:7).

Not unrelated, then is the scene in Mark 12, in which Jesus tells the parable of vineyard workers (12:1–11), whose stewardship will be taken away (12:9). Jesus tells this parable not only as a way of assessing his ministry and the Jewish leaders’ rejection of him but also in response to the temple leaders’ questioning his authority (cf. Mark 11:28 with 11:33).⁷ Thus, in chap. 11, while in the temple, Jesus quotes from Isaiah referring to a renewed elect community consisting not only of Jews but also foreigners—viz., “a house for all peoples.” Then in chap. 12 Jesus tells a parable, making explicit the transfer of stewardship from the current temple leaders to another group.

In Mark 13. Jesus predicted the destruction of the temple. In Mark 13:26, amid the Olivet Discourse, Jesus says, “And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.” The specific event to which Jesus is referring is debated. Is it the Parousia or the literal destruction of Jerusalem (and thereby the temple)?⁸ While valid arguments can be made on both sides, our view

⁵ By arguing for a conceptual background, I want to be clear that I am not making an argument that Mark is intentionally alluding to the passage in Joel; there could be other passages that equally communicate the same ideas. Yet, I am saying that some of the ideas that Mark’s Jesus presents in Mark 13:9–13 may presume other ideas that are more explicit in Joel.

⁶ The temple is the main setting for Jesus’s actions in Jerusalem. Heil, “The Narrative Strategy,” 76–100. Donahue argues that the motif of the temple extends to chap. 16 (“Temple, Trial,” 61–79).

⁷ C.S. Mann, *Mark: A New Translation and Commentary*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1986), 467.

⁸ For a parousia interpretation, see e.g., William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 474; Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark*, BNTC (London: Continuum, 1991), 158; 3; Idem., “Trial and Tribulation in Mark XIII,” BJRL 65 (1982): 93; Adams, “Son of Man,” 40–61; John T. Carroll, “The Parousia of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts,” in *The Return of Jesus in Early Christianity*, ed. John T. Carroll, et al. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000), 5–45; Bock, *Mark*, 355 n. 703. For a destruction of Jerusalem/temple interpretation, see

is that in Mark 13:24–27 Jesus combines figurative language referring to the ideological/political destruction of a temple (not unrelated to the physical destruction; 13:24–25) with SOM imagery (13:26) and language of the return from exile (13:27) to communicate the restructuring of Israel’s cultic space from a temple edifice to a temple community, made up of Jews and Gentiles.⁹

Mark 13:24–25 notes that “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken.” Hatina has shown that, in their literary context, OT passages that allude to cosmic portents often signify the literal destructions of cities.¹⁰ More specifically, the cities’ physical destruction refers to a political/religious entity’s demise within a historical framework. In this way, the physical destruction of the cities is a metonymic representation of the collapse of an empire/regime. Mark has already signified the dismantling of the stewardship of the priesthood, which in the context of Roman occupancy was a religious-political entity (12:1–12). Moreover, the Markan Jesus has also already foretold the destruction of the temple (13:2), which, according to the OT prophetic framework, is inextricable from the destruction of Jerusalem.²⁹ Thus, it would appear that the Markan Jesus uses this motif to predict the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, more specifically the deconstruction of its political structure, via., a transfer of a stewardship from the priests to

Christ’s elect.

In this way, the narrative flow of Mark 11–13 would suggest a gathering of the elect alluded to earlier (cf. Mark 11:17; Isa 56:5–8) is no longer feasible because of the profaning acts of the temple authorities and the anticipated destruction of the temple. We will see, then, what would have taken place in the temple will now occur in association with a new sacred space consisting of a temple community, of which Jesus is the chief cornerstone (Mark 12:10).

Brant Pitre in his book, *Jesus, The Tribulation and the Exile* has noted at least three passages to that end: Isa 52:7–12; Isa 66:7–13; Pss Sol 11:1–4. In Isaiah 52:7–12,¹¹ the same message announced by the one who announces good things εὐαγγελιζόμενος ἀγαθά, which it the reign of God and his return to Zion” (52:7–8), is the same message to see the salvation of the Lord. However, whereas Isaiah passage just envisions the Gentiles *seeing* the salvation of the Lord, just a few passages earlier the prophet speaks of that same salvation as not only raising up the tribes of Jacob and restoring the preserved ones of Israel, but also being a light of the ἔθνη, the *Gentiles* (cf. Isa 49:6). In Pss Sol. 11:1–4, we see a similar argument. A voice of one “bringing good news” (εὐαγγελιζομένου) to the exiles who are to be assembled in Jerusalem because God has pitied them. However, a few psalms later, in Pss Sol 17:30–32 the author predicts that Jerusalem will be cleansed, and the Gentiles will come to see its glory, resulting in Israel’s king

e.g. R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids; Carlisle, Eerdmans: Paternoster, 2002), 530–33; Joel Marcus, *Mark 8–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 27A, AB (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2009), 906; T. R. Hatina, “The Focus of Mark 13:24–27: The Parousia, or the Destruction of the Temple?” BBR 6 (1996): 43–66. This same kind of argument is also relevant to Mark 14:62 (see e.g., Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, vol. 34B, WBC [Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2001], 451); Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 1009; Lane, *Mark*, 537). Evans speaks of an event after 70 CE, which leans towards interpreting this passage as a reference to the parousia (Evans, *Mark*, 328–29).

⁹ Hatina and Lane argue similarly (“The Focus of Mark 13:24–27,” 43–66; Lane, *Mark*, 475). The motif fits the parameters of 2 Sam 7:5–16, in which the notion of building a physical house (temple) gives way to a community (household): The Davidic son builds Yahweh a house (i.e., temple; 7:13), and Yahweh in turn builds promised longevity for the Davidic son’s house (i.e., household; 7:16).

¹⁰ E.g., the disruption of “stars of heaven” and “darkening of the sun/moon,” allude to the destruction of cities (e.g., Babylon: Isa 13:1, 10; Edom: Isa 34:4–5; Egypt: Ezek 32:7–8; Tyre, Sidon: Joel 2:10, 31; 3:5, 15); Hatina, “The Focus of Mark 13:24–27,” 53–57.

¹¹ Pitre, *Jesus, the Tribulation and the End of Exile*, 256–59.

becoming their king also.¹² What is interesting, is that what is presented cumulatively with the two Isaiah passages and the two Psalms of Solomon passages are united almost explicitly in one passage—the Isa 66:18–21 passage.¹³ There are numerous parallels with the Isa 66:18–21 passage with the Mark 13:9–13 passage. As Pitre has noticed, it not only follows the oracle for the sake of the name (Isa 66:5; Mark 13:9, 13) and the birth pangs (Isa 66:7–14; Mark 13:17), but Isaiah explicitly depicts a mission of proclamation to the Gentiles (Isa 66:19; Mark 13:10), and according to Pitre, the rationale for why Jesus says it is necessary for the gospel to be preached to the Gentiles.¹⁴ It should be noticed that in Isa 66:20, after the Gentiles have heard the proclamation, they (the Gentiles) will bring back the scattered Israelite of Zion. I believe Pitre is correct when he says, “In this way, the end of Israel’s exiled will also mean the end of the Gentiles separation from Zion and the worship of YHWH.”¹⁵

Thus, in this section, we have sought to present that Son of Man’s ministry as reflected in Mark 13:26, the narrative function of Mark 10:33, and indirectly through disciples’ ministry being an extension of the Son of Man’s ministry, that the Son of Man’s ministry envisioned the gathering of the tribes with the ingathering of the Gentiles, both of which together signals the quintessential sign of the return/ end of exile. In the larger context of this paper we have sought to establish the Hebrew Bible’s “return from exile” as a launching point for a sequel to Black Liberation Theology. Assuming I have done semblance of sufficient work to lay the foundation, the last section will talk more explicitly about the implications of what I have argued above for a Black Liberation Theology

sequel.

The Implications of the Return from Exile for Black Liberation Theology

By situating the locus of this study within the prophets and the Gospel of Mark, this study presents itself in step with traditional Black Liberation Theology, in that it offers a reversal motif—one that goes contrary to the theologizing that happens in white evangelical circles when evangelicals talk about the Jews and Gentile convergence. Usually, when white evangelicals use the NT Jews and Gentiles convergence motif (cf. Eph 2. Gal 3.) the focus is on the “in vs. out,” which is a viable paradigm. By analogy, white evangelicals are the “in crowd”, and by comparison black evangelicals are the Gentiles. Within the Pauline corpus, this is a legitimate form of application, because in the context of Paul’s ministry Jewish Christians are the “power brokers,” for the Christian movement is grounded in Jerusalem. However, in the gospels, the Jews and Gentile relationship is seen from the context of Gentile domination, in which Jews have to wrestle with the domination of Gentile powers (the Romans), until the Lord consummates the Second Exodus, their return from exile. Similarly, the first Exodus created a paradigm for BLT to advocate for the separation of Blacks from their oppressors—a motif grounded in “let my people go.” This was an important motif for Israel and for BLT, because oppressed religious communities often need sacred space away from their oppressors to develop their own self-identities. In many ways, one could say that the first century Jews never really abandoned that motif, so that even in the days of Jesus, the messiah was expected to rid

¹² Pitre also connects these two with Pss of Sol. However, he doesn’t connect them in the way that I have above.

¹³ Almost all the important themes of the aforementioned passages are in this passage: “Gentiles seeing the glory” (Isa. 66:18), the proclamation to the Gentiles

(66:19), the assembling in Jerusalem and the Gentiles’ “worship” along the Tribes (66:20).

¹⁴ Brant Pitre, *Jesus the Tribulation and the End of Exile*, 263.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 263.

Jerusalem of the foreign powers, looking forward to a coming Kingdom, in which the formation of the kingdom of Israel would happen apart from the Gentiles. However, an important theme of the Return of the Exile motif, is that God would rid the Israel of its domination of foreign powers, but not by destroying them per se, but by converting them, and conjoining them to the worship of Israel's God. As a sequel to Exodus, the Return from Exile motif focuses not just on the "liberation" of one people from the other, but the spiritual convergence of one people with the other. In response to the information presented in this section, one might ask the question, "If the restoration of the tribes, blends Jews and Gentiles into a convergence, does it matter who lines up with Jews and who lines up with Gentiles?" My answer to that is, yes. To be consistent with BLT theology it has to. Secondly, there is a cognitive environment, in which white Christians appropriate way more of the Jewish identity motif that they want to acknowledge.¹⁶ The problem is it is often more implicit than it is explicit. This allows white Christians to deflect culpability in their sometimes misappropriation of the motif, but the implicit connection of white Christians with the Jewish identity does not evade notice from ethnic minority Christians. We see through it.

To start, it's hard to believe that within a conversation of racial reconciliation between Blacks and whites, that a group of Christians who have historically and contemporarily seen/see Jews to be for all intents and purposes, "white" and by extension Jesus as also "white", to not *implicitly* associate themselves as the "Jews" in Gal 3:28, by analogy. Even if that was not the case (and I actually think a viable argument could be made from the text to make white Christians the Jews by analogy in Pauline discourse), the "neither Jew nor Greek" language in Gal 3:28, is definitely used more often to

support a more "white-oriented" solution to racism—a solution that finds justification in Gal 3:28 for the rhetoric of "racial colorblindness," since purportedly, according to Gal 3:28, race does not matter. The problem with this type of proof-texting is just because "race" did not/does not matter in regard to Christians becoming children of Abraham, according to the promise, does not mean that race, today, is not and has not been a factor by which some ethnic groups have been negatively affected, nor does it mean that somehow salvation in Christ has eroded away all social distinction between Jewish and Gentile groups, and by analogy Black and white Christians (cf. Gal 2:11–14). Perhaps the absurdity of such rationale could be seen if we took that same logic and applied it to Acts 6, in which there was discrimination with the allocation of resources to "Native" and Hellenistic Jews. It would be absurd to say to those neglected Hellenistic Jewish widows, "Let's not talk about this 'ethnic' discrimination." There is neither Hellenistic nor Native Hebrew, "For in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek." In such instance, the evoking of the Gal 3:28 would only serve to evade the issue.

But, apart from the aforementioned forecasting, one could argue more importantly that the white Christian's appropriation of the Jewish identity motif is a real phenomenon and can be traced back to the early establishing of our country. As L. Daniel Hawk says, "The Puritan colonist of New England believed that God has guided them through the sea to New Canaan, where they had been given the mandate to expand Christendom . . . they thought themselves to be a chosen, covenant people, new Israel in a 'land promised to be reconquered and reworked for the glory of the Lord, by his select

¹⁶ See Mark Charles and Soong-Chan Rah's treatment on how white Christian theology's hijacking of Jewish identity under its doctrine of Manifest Destiny

(*Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery* [Downers Grove, IL, IVP, 2019], 137–40, 158–62, 199–200.

forces, the saving remnant in the wilderness”¹⁷ Since then, one could argue that the white Christian’s appropriation of the Jewish identity motif has been a little more subtle, especially on the issue of race, given the well-known fact that race is still a “hot topic” to bring up in white evangelical churches. Even if white Christians do not *explicitly* contextualize themselves as “Jews” in the Gal. 3:28 discussion, it is hard to deny the significance of the Return from Exile motif, in which the Black church, analogically speaking, appropriates the Jewish identity motifs (i.e., Return from Exile) into their theology of racial convergence with the white Christian church. For the Black church, it allows us to reclaim ownership of defining for ourselves the boundaries of the conversation on race relations. One in which, white Christians, who have been historically complicit in the marginalization of the Blacks (even Black Christians) are conjoined to Black congregations, with that congregation’s respective theology to race relations. So much of conversations regarding race relations has been delimited by the need to tip-toe around white Christian sensitivities to the issue. This particular appropriation of the Return from Exile motif would curve that.

Finally, the majority of this paper, has dealt with the scattering motif, giving only a minor treatment to the sensory malfunction component of exile as is reflected in “the way section” of Mark. To remind the reader, that was intentional, because I only sought to deal with the passages in which the Son of Man was connected to these themes. The implication of the sensory malfunction—the spiritual blindness of the disciples regarding the ingathering of the

Gentiles with the return of the scattered tribes—has tremendous implications for Black Liberation theology, particularly as it related to the Black and White Evangelical churches.

Just as Israel is described as “having eyes, and not seeing; ears and not hearing,” or being scattered among the nations,” implies a two-fold punishment, which is comparable to their crime of idolatry—idolatry challenges the unicity of God resulting in their own “scattering,” worshipping “eyeless and earless” results in their spiritual blindness and deafness,¹⁸ Then the idolatry of racism has created a spiritual “blindness” within American Evangelical Christianity, and a “divisiveness” that challenges the unicity of God, and exudes itself in the “scattering” of God’s church. If the “return from exile motif” envisions a community in which there is a convergence of racial identities in the New Kingdom, the lack of convergence of the Black and White church, as a result of racism, may intimate the church in America is still in exile. As I mentioned earlier the convergence is not just a matter of the White church and Black Church occupying the same space and worshipping together. Convergence on the issue of racism means that Whites and Blacks *suffering together* in the struggle against racism, mainly because a major part of the Son of Man’s ministry involves suffering,¹⁹ and as argued above, much of what it meant for the disciples to carry out the Son of Man’s ministry involved suffering.²⁰

Moreover, perhaps something is also to be said that in the “Return from Exile,” the ingathering of the Gentiles is envisioned as a “conversion,” in which the Gentiles, the former

¹⁷ L. Daniel Hawk, *Joshua in 3-D: A Commentary on Biblical Conquest and Manifest Destiny*, 166. See also Anders Stephanson, *Manifest destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996), 6; Charles M. Segal, *Puritans, Indians, and Manifest Destiny* (New York: Putnam Publishing Group, 1977), 25–39; George E. Tinker, *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide* (Minneapolis: MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 21–41.

¹⁸ Cf. Psalm 135:17–19. Also cf. G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008).

¹⁹ Mark 8:31; Mark 9:12; Mark 9:31; Mark 10:33.

²⁰ See my treatise on the connection between Mark 10:33 and Mark 13:9–13 above.

power brokers, are grafted into an orientation in which their power is neutralized, because Yahweh is their King.²¹ Racism is mainly about a power differential afforded to one race over the other. The white evangelical church has en masse failed to “have eyes to see” this. Instead, it would rather contextualize racism as hate oriented disposition. However, there is no evidence Gentiles nations hated the Jews that they oppressed, especially not in the sense that whites hated blacks during American chattel slavery. They may have thought that the Jews were weird in their refusal to eat pork, and some of their other beliefs, but there is no evidence that they hated the Jews. Roman imperialism was not about hatred, but it was about a superiority motif. Things like given Jews privileged status of *religio licita* could imply that Romans had no animus towards the Jews, just as, long as, the Jews ‘stayed in their place.’ While this too is problematic, my point is to make an analogy

that, similarly, contemporary racism perpetuated by whites on Blacks, only in very rare cases, exudes itself from a place of hatred. More so often, than not, it exudes itself in the perceptual and pragmatism of power over another race. As I said above, the ingathering of the Gentiles with the scattered tribes, envisioned the Gentile experience as a “conversion,” in which the Gentiles, the former power brokers, are grafted into an orientation in which their power is neutralized. If the white Evangelical Church are by analogy, the Gentiles, then they must surrender to the idea that coming out of exile means that their “whiteness” has to be dethroned so that Christ, the exiled one, can take his rightful place. Similarly, in Paul’s letters, when the Jewish Christian are the power brokers, they are challenged in their Jewishness (cf. Rom 3:1). When the power brokers abdicate their ethnic “power,” in this vein, then, and only then, could it be said, “there is no Jew nor Greek.”

²¹ Pss Sol 17:30-32; Eze 37:21–22.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aberbach, Moses, and Bernard Grossfeld. *Targum Onkelos to Genesis: A Critical Analysis Together with an English Translation of the Text*. New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1982.

Andrews, Dale P. and Robert London Smith, Jr. *Black Practical Theology*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015.

Beale, G. K. *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008.

Bock, Darrell. *Mark*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Charles, Mark and Soong-Chan Rah. *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery*. Downers Grove, IL, IVP, 2019.

Cone, James H. *Speaking the Truth*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 1986.

_____. *A Black Theology of Liberation*. Orbis Books, 1970.

_____. "Black Theology and the Black Church: Where Do We Go from Here?" *CrossCurrents* 27:2 (1977): 147–156.

Deotis, Roberts, J. and David Emmanuel Goatley. *Black Religion, Black Theology: The Collected Essays of J. Deotis Roberts*. Edited by David Emmanuel Goatley. Harrisburg, PA; London: Trinity Press International, 2003.

Deotis, Roberts, J. and Michael Battle, eds. *The Quest for Liberation and Reconciliation: Essays in Honor of J. Deotis Roberts*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005.

Donahue, John R. "Temple, Trial and Royal Christology (Mark 14: 53–65)." in *The Passion in Mark: Studies on Mark 14–16*. Edited by W. H. Kelber. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976.

Evans, Craig A. *Mark 8:27–16:20*, vol. 34B, Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2001.

_____. "Jesus and the Continuing Exile of Israel," in *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N.T. Wright's Jesus and the Victory of God*. Edited by C. C. Newman. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 1999.

France, R. T. *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids; Carlisle, Eerdmans: Paternoster, 2002.

- Gray, Timothy C. *The Temple in the Gospel of Mark: A Study in its Narrative Role*. Vol. 242. Mohr Siebeck, 2008.
- Hatina, T. R. "The Focus of Mark 13:24–27: The Parousia, or the Destruction of the Temple?" *Bulletin Biblical Research* 6 (1996): 43–66.
- Hawk, L. Daniel. *Joshua in 3-D: A Commentary on Biblical Conquest and Manifest Destiny*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010.
- Heil, John Paul. "The Narrative Strategy and Pragmatics of the Temple Theme in Mark." *CBQ* 59 (1997): 76–100.
- Howard, Charles. *Black Theology as Mass Movement*. Springer, 2014.
- Iverson, Kelly. *Gentiles in the Gospel of Mark: Even the Dogs Under the Table Eat the Children's Crumbs*, vol. 339. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007.
- Jennings, Willie James. *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race*. New Haven, Connecticut. Yale University Press, 2010.
- Kee, Alistair. *The Rise and Demise of Black Theology*. America: Ashgate Publishing, 2006; London: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008.
- Laws, Tyran T. "The Unveiling of a Royal-Priestly Figure: A Narrative-Critical Look at Mark's Use of the Son of Man." 96–99. Ph.D. diss., Wheaton College, 2022.
- Lane, William L. *The Gospel of Mark*. New International Commentary New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974.
- Mann, C.S. *Mark: A New Translation and Commentary*. Anchor Bible. New York: Doubleday, 1986.
- Marcus, Joel. *Mark 8–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 27A. AB. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2009.
- Mbuvi, Andrew M. *Temple, Exile and Identity in 1 Peter*. Library New Testament Studies 345. Bloomsbury: T & T Clark, 2007.
- Paul, Shalom M. *Isaiah 40–66: Translation and Commentary*. ECC. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2012.
- Nicholas Perrin, "Reading Climax of the Covenant with John: Return from Exile, Monotheism and the One People of God in the Fourth Gospel." Edited by John Anthony Dunn and Eric Lewellen, *One God, One People, One Future: Essays in Honor of NT Wright*. London: SPCK, 2018.

- Piotrowski, Nicholas. "The Concept of Exile in Late Second Temple Judaism: A Review of Recent Scholarship," *Currents in Biblical Scholarship* (2017): 214–47.
- Pitre, Brant. *Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of the Exile: Restoration Eschatology and the Origin of the Atonement*. Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2005.
- Robinson, Rhonda Thomas. *Claiming Exodus: A Cultural History of Afro-Atlantic Identity, 1774–1903*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013.
- Sanders, E. P. *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE–66CE*. London: SCM Press, 1992.
- _____. *Jesus and Judaism*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985.
- Segal, Charles M. *Puritans, Indians, and Manifest Destiny*. New York: Putnam Publishing Group, 1977.
- Smith, Gary V. *Isaiah 40–66*. NAC. Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing, 2009.
- Staples, Jason A. "What Do the Gentiles Have to Do with 'All Israel'?" A Fresh Look at Romans 11: 25–27." *JBL* 130 (2011): 371–390.
- Stephanson, Anders. *Manifest destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1996.
- Stroyer, Jacob. *Sketches of My Life in the South*. Salem, Massachusetts: Salem Press, 1879.
- Thomas, Rhondda Robinson. *Claiming Exodus: A Cultural History of Afro-Atlantic Identity, 1774–1903*. Waco, Tx: Baylor University Press, 2013.
- Tiemeyer, Lena-Sofia. *For the Comfort of Zion: The Geographical and Theological Location of Isaiah 40–55*. Leiden: Brill, 2010.
- Tinker, George E. *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide*. Minneapolis: MN: Fortress Press, 1993.
- Watts, Rikki E. *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark*. WUNT 88 Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997; reprint, *Biblical Studies Library*; Grand Rapids. Baker Books, 2000.
- Wright, N. T. *Jesus and the Victory of God. Christian Origins and the Question of God*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996.
- Yoder, John M., and John H. Yoder. "Exodus and Exile: The Two Faces of Liberation." *CrossCurrents* 23 (1973): 297–309.