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Slave of All

The Paradox of Authority and Servanthood in the Gospel of Mark

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The Gospel of Mark is described as a paradoxical gospel,\(^1\) a riddle that teases its readers' response, and a narrative that possesses an enigmatic and puzzling character.\(^2\) The present study contends that this paradoxical and puzzling character is seen clearly in the paradox of authority and servanthood in the Gospel. In order to investigate the paradox throughout the Markan narrative, this study seeks to develop a literary method in the study of paradox (Chapter 2). After applying this method to the paradox of authority and servanthood in Mark (Chapters 3–5), this study then discusses key contributions of the paradox to the three Markan issues of the disciples' role in the Gospel, the Messianic Secret and a profile of the Markan community (Chapter 6).

In this introductory chapter, I define and describe paradox, the function of paradox, the motifs of authority and servanthood, and the paradox of authority and servanthood in the Gospel (Chapter 1). I contend that in Mark the christological motif of authority and the discipleship motif of servant-

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1. Paradox is evident in the New Testament. In the gospels, examples of paradox are found in Mt. 5.39; 10.39; 16.25; 20.16; 18.9; Mk 8.18; Lk. 5.26 ("we have seen \(\textit{paradoxa}\ [\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\delta\omicron\alpha\varsigma]\) today"); 9.6 and Jn 12.24. In Paul’s epistles, examples are seen in 1 Cor. 1.25 (‘God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom’ [1 Cor. 1.20]); 2 Cor. 6.9-10; 12.10; Phil. 2.12-13 and Gal. 2.20. These examples show how paradox reverses old values, exalts the lonely, brings down the exalted, and turns poverty, suffering, meekness, ignorance and ostracism into virtues (W.K. Stewart, ‘Christianity as Paradox’, \textit{HibJ} 27 [1929], pp. 220-30 [221]). For more examples of paradoxes in the New Testament, see Stewart, ‘Christianity as Paradox’, pp. 221-22, for Jesus’ paradoxes and pp. 223-24 for Paul’s paradoxes. Stewart states that the ‘paradoxes of the Bible are to be found largely in the New Testament, for the most part in the reported sayings of Jesus and in the epistles of St Paul’ (Stewart, ‘Christianity as Paradox’, p. 220).

hood are paradoxical. To appreciate the paradoxical relationship of these two motifs, there is a need to clarify how paradox is used in this study.

**Definition of Paradox**

Since the term ‘paradox’ has been used ambiguously by theologians, there is a need to clarify its meaning. As used in this study, paradox is taken in terms of its twofold nuance: (1) a statement that departs from accepted opinion, which is the etymological nuance, and (2) an apparently self-contradictory or absurd statement, which is the derivational nuance. Thus, the


5. Etymological nuance refers to the original or basic meaning of the word ‘paradox’.

6. Derivational nuance refers to the shift in meaning later in the eighteenth
term ‘paradox’ is an unusual and apparently self-contradictory rhetorical statement or concept that departs dramatically from accepted opinion.

In relation to the paradox of authority and servanthood in the Gospel, I contend that the paradox is a rhetorical device used by Mark throughout the narrative dramatically to jolt and challenge his readers to depart from the accepted opinion that servanthood is incompatible with authority.

Paradox as a Deviation from Accepted Opinion
The term ‘paradox’ etymologically comes from the Greek word paradoXos (παράδοξος). It is basically a combination of the preposition para (παρά), which can mean ‘contrary to’, and the noun doxa (δόξα), which means ‘opinion’; thus, producing in its earliest stages the meaning of ‘contrary to opinion or expectation’, ‘marvelous’, or ‘incredible’. Moreover, the early Greeks call any statement a paradox that is at once true to some people, but which is considered to be less than true by others. In the Koine Greek of the New Testament, the word means ‘contrary to opinion’, but it can also mean ‘strange’, ‘wonderful’, ‘remarkable’, even ‘unexpected’ or ‘uncommon’.

century through the influence of Renaissance poets and Christian theologians since Kierkegaard.

7. G. Kittel, ‘παράδοξος’, TDNT, II, p. 255. Kittel writes that paradoXos (παράδοξος) is ‘quite common in secular Greek, Philo, Josephus and the Septuagint. It always denotes an “unusual event contrary to belief and expectation”’.

8. BAGD, p. 609. Bauer adds that doxa (δόξα) can be used as an adversative, meaning ‘against, contrary to’.


As a legitimate English term, the word ‘paradox’ has been extant for more than 400 years, but it seems to be only within the previous century that paradox has become a popular term of everyday language. Some scholars have even claimed that the ‘contrary-to-opinion’ sense of paradox was generally used in English until the eighteenth century. It was in this century that the basic meaning of paradox was gradually supplanted by the other meaning of self-contradiction, which prevails today.

Thus, the first and basic meaning of paradox is that it is a statement or tenet contrary to received opinion or belief, sometimes with unfavorable or discordant connotation to what is held as established truth. It refers to any surprising deviation from, qualification of, common perception or commonplace opinion, or any statement that is ‘past belief’ or contrary

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T. & T. Clark, 4th edn, 1951), p. 481. In the New Testament, the only use of paradoxos is in Lk. 5.26 where the neuter plural form of the word was used with the meaning of ‘strange things’ according to most English translations. Literally, part of this verse could be read, ‘We have seen paradoxes today’ (cf. J. Finegan, Beginnings in Theology [New York: Association Press, 1956], p. 10).


20. M.H. Abrams, ‘Paradox’, in A Glossary of Literary Terms (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 4th edn, 1957), p. 127. It must be noted that the paradox which runs counter to general opinion may be subtle and of many guises and is thoroughly elusive. To detect it, one must assume a body of accepted beliefs, or posit a norm of common sense’ (cf. Stewart, ‘Study of Paradox’, pp. 2-3).
to received opinion. As such, it departs from the prevailing opinion in society.

In his Gospel narrative, Mark has included various examples that indicate the prevailing opinion on authority and servanthood during his day. For example, he addresses his audience through the lips of Jesus. ‘You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them’ (10.42). Using Jesus’ words again, Mark challenges the readers to depart from society’s prevailing principle on authority (i.e. the persons of authority are the ones who are to rule over the ones with little or no authority): ‘But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant’ (10.43). Mark dramatically presents his readers with the challenge to become servants by means of the jolting verbal paradox of authority and servanthood.

In an earlier account in the narrative (9.33-37), Mark reveals the accepted high opinion regarding authority, by using the disciples’ heated dispute about who among them is the greatest (9.34). Mark again challenges his readers to depart from this excessive self-preference. With a verbal paradox in the following verse, he writes, ‘Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all’ (9.35). Indeed, the contrary-to-accepted-opinion of paradox is definitely present in the Markan narrative.

Paradox as an Apparently Self-Contradictory Concept
Aside from its etymological meaning (i.e. departure from commonplace opinion), paradox is also understood in its derivational sense. This derivational sense is merely an extension of the etymological meaning.

Since the eighteenth century, paradox has been extended to mean a self-contradictory concept or ‘statement which seems on its face to be self-contradictory or absurd, yet turns out to make good sense’. It is apparently incredible or contrary to what is taken for granted. But on closer inspection, the apparently self-contradicting statement or ‘seeming contradiction’ is well-founded, containing truth that reconciles the conflicting opposites.

22. Other examples that show Mark’s exposure of the prevailing opinion on authority are found in 10.35 (in contrast to 10.36) and 12.38-40 (in contrast to 12.42).
The expressions ‘self-contradicting statements’ and ‘conflicting opposites’, in relation to their apparent self-contradictions and their reconciliation of opposites, bring out the two aspects of paradox’s derivational meaning. These two aspects are the antinomic meaning (i.e. divergence of the two opposing assertions) and polaric meaning (i.e. convergence of the two opposing assertions).

**Divergence of Two Opposing Assertions.** Antinomy, or ‘intellectual contradictoriness’, originally means a contradiction in a law or between two equally binding laws. It has later come to mean a contradiction between conclusions that seem equally logical, reasonable or necessary. It also ‘simultaneously admits the truth of two, contradictory, logically incompatible, but ontologically equally necessary assertions’.

The contrariness of the equally necessary assertions in the Gospel of Mark are evident in the verbal paradox of authority and servanthood: ‘save his life’ (8.35a) and ‘lose his life’ (8.35b); ‘first’ (9.35a; 10.31a) and ‘last’ (9.35b; 10.31b); ‘great’ (10.43a) and ‘servant’ (10.43b); ‘first’ (10.44a) and ‘slave of all’ (10.44b). These intentional Markan opposites emphasize the divergence of the contrariness between authority and servanthood.

**Convergence of Two Opposing Assertions.** When the contrariness between two assertions is considered positively rather than negatively, the resultant aspect of paradox is described as polaric, rather than antinomic. In this situation, the direction of the opposition is reversed, and the convergence of the contradictories is stressed, rather than their divergence. It can then be said that ‘a paradox is a unity of opposites’ or that there is ‘paradoxical unity of opposites’. Scharlemann comments, ‘Truth often comes in twins, separate from, yet complementing, each other.’


1. *Introduction*

two statements that taken together make up one truth. It is called the convergence of the contradictories.\(^{30}\)

In relation to the Gospel of Mark, I see that Mark intends for his readers to resolve the paradox of authority and servanthood. By tracing the disciples’ failure to resolve the paradoxical nature of Jesus and his work by themselves, Mark is urging the readers not to commit the same miscomprehension of the paradox. The audience must understand that the authoritative ones are they who serve, and that the proof of their authority is evident in their service for the interest of others. Such is the unity of contrariness in the authority–servanthood paradox in the Gospel of Mark.

In summary, paradox is to be understood in light of both its etymological meaning (i.e. departure from common opinion) and its derivational meaning (i.e. apparent self-contradiction). In addition, the derivational nuance of paradox must be seen in both its antinomic aspect (i.e. emphasis on the divergence of two opposite assertions) and its polaric aspect (i.e. emphasis on the convergence of two opposite assertions).

H. Kerr ably capsulates this twofold sense of paradox:

Paradox (literally, contrary to opinion) suggests a statement or point of view at odds with common sense and popular, prevalent opinion, which nevertheless is deserving of serious attention, since it may be true. Paradox tends to be in conflict with preconceived notions of what is reasonable or possible.\(^{31}\)

S.H. Mellone surfaces an implication of this nuance of paradox:

The implication is not necessarily that the ‘paradoxical’ proposition is true—‘true though it sounds false’—but that the proposition is not necessarily false, because of its ‘paradoxical’ character.\(^{32}\)

further comments, ‘Contrasting pairs and polar opposites are in fact complementary and not contradictory.’ This expression ‘polar opposite’ is a helpful one, suggesting that there is a ‘creative tension’ that shows itself, not in stress but in balance, not in fragmentation but in wholeness, not in division but in unity. Such polarization sometimes appears in the form of a paradox, but here again the apparent contradiction embodies a unity that is of the very nature of God himself and of the gospel.

Description of Paradox

Having defined what paradox is, this section now describes further the key elements that make paradox recognizable. There are five recognizable elements of paradox used in this study: (1) ‘both–and’ propositions; (2) tension and/or conflict situations; (3) surprise, wonder and amazement encounters; (4) rhetorical or stylistic figure; and (5) the need for an audience.

Paradox as Both–And Propositions

Paradox is not a statement or concept in an ‘either–or’ form, but in a ‘both–and’ type of proposition. Its two antithetical sides have equal weight, and one must not be permitted to outrank the other. R. Hazelton observes that paradox shows ‘the truth of two contradictory but necessary propositions having equal rational force’. 33

Aside from the propositions being contradictory but necessary, each side of the paradox is incomplete and false without the other. Thus, only when taken together can each side of the paradox say what must be said. What each side has to say is this: one side of the paradox shows one truth that upsets its hearers, and the other side shows another truth that balances it. The second truth does not restrict the first, but only places it in the proper perspective. 34

The important balance of both sides in a paradox is exemplified in the Markan paradox of authority and servanthood. Mark presents the presence of both authority and servanthood throughout his structure of the narrative. He even emphasizes certain aspects of the paradox in the major sections: (1) the first section of the Gospel highlights the authority of Jesus (1.1–8.21); (2) the second section contains the key instances of the verbal paradox of authority and servanthood (8.22–10.52); and (3) the third section stresses the motif of servanthood (11.1–16.8), culminating in Jesus’ passion and death, which is his highest form of servanthood.

Paradox as Tension and/or Conflict Situations

Because of the ‘both–and’ nature of paradox, it inevitably involves tension, 35 bringing together two assertions that logically conflict. 36 The tension
or conflict in paradox is the element by which the mind is at first troubled.\textsuperscript{37} J. Phelan writes about the role of conflicts found in the Gospel genre, ‘The Gospel is a story of powerful conflicts. These conflicts give the narrative its necessary tension and direction and create suspense for the reader.’\textsuperscript{38}

Conflict is very important in the narrative of Mark. In fact, paradox is seen in the tension played out through the conflicts of the Markan story.\textsuperscript{39} As J. Kingsbury comments, ‘Mark’s story is one of conflict, and conflict is the force that propels the story forward.’\textsuperscript{40} In the story level of the Markan narrative, the conflicts and tensions indicate the failure of the characters to understand the paradoxical nature of Jesus (i.e. he is the authoritative one who serves) and his teaching on authority and servanthood. In the dis-

‘In all organic life there is a ceaseless but varying struggle between opposite forces, and without such struggle the organism would be dead. “Strife is the common condition,” Heraclitus remarks, “and if strife were to vanish amongst gods and men, then their very existence would cease”. In man the basic organic strife shows itself in various tensions, of which he may be unconscious or at most only partly conscious—the tension between self and other persons, between self and physical environment, between love and antagonism, between one’s impulses and the decisions of rational thought, between the life-urge and the dark fascination of death… His life oscillates between contrary pulls’ (Metaphor and Reality, pp. 45-46). He also adds this about the tensile language, ‘Language that strives toward adequacy is characteristically tense to some degree and in some manner or other (Metaphor and Reality, p. 46).


37. De Lubac, Paradoxes of Faith, p. 13; Ching, ‘Compact Verbal Paradox’, p. 252. Ching writes that the troubling effect in the mind of the paradox occurs when ‘the reader intuitively feels much more inclined to reject the initial reading of a paradoxical statement or an oxymoron which gives the sense of contradiction and to search beyond the initial encounter for another meaning’.


39. Tension and suspense are concretized in the narrative through Mark’s invitation for the readers to make shifts and reversals in their value system. He implicitly urges them to make the shifts, even though the disciples themselves struggled to make the shift. The disciples struggled because their existing situation was less threatening. For them, paradox threatened their comfortable condition; thus producing more tension and conflict.

course level of the narrative, the conflicts and tensions are indicators for the readers to spot the presence of the authority—servanthood paradox.

Thus, the conflicts are rhetorically aimed by Mark for the readers to realize that the characters fail to grasp either the authority motif or servanthood motif, because they do not comprehend that the two motifs are paradoxically related. In light of this failure by the characters, Mark urges the readers not to commit the same misunderstanding into which the characters of the story fell.

One group of characters in the storyline that misunderstands the authority of Jesus is the religious leaders.41 I observe that the conflict between the religious leaders and Jesus is a result of their misunderstanding of Jesus’ paradoxical nature and his teaching on authority and servanthood. They not only misunderstand the concept of authority in Jesus, they also miss the necessary concept of servanthood. They oppose Jesus because they wish to cling to the authority that they really do not have. They struggle to cling to this authority in order that they might be served and not serve.

Aside from the tension between the religious leaders and Jesus (which leads to Jesus’ death), conflict in the Gospel of Mark also occurs in the relationship between the disciples and Jesus. Mark portrays this tense relationship through the disciples’ motif of incomprehension. This motif is observed in their sincere struggle to serve and yet maintain authority.

At the story level, the disciples both value the importance of authority (9.34; 10.35-37) and struggle with the demands of servanthood. They are not able to discern the harmonious welding of the two paradoxical concepts. As a result, they also misunderstand Jesus. They wrestle with the meaning of servanthood, and they become overly concerned with the high demand and inconvenience of service.

Despite their willingness to follow Jesus, the disciples do not comprehend Jesus’ words and examples of service as proof of his authority. Thus, they continue to misunderstand, even to the point of abandoning him (14.50). Simply put, their incomprehension exists in the narrative because of their misunderstanding of Jesus and his teaching on authority and servanthood.

Paradox as Surprise, Wonder and Amazement Encounters
Paradox does not only involve the ‘both—and’ propositions and tensive situations, but also the element of surprise or wonder.42 M. Ching com-

42. Cf. K. Lowith, ‘On the Historical Understanding of Kierkegaard’, Review of
ments, 'The feeling of shock, strangeness or mystery upon meeting the contradiction produces wonder in the reader or listener.' It is this idea of wonder produced in the readers that has caused the English rhetorician G. Puttenham to give the name 'the wonderer' to paradox.44

Aside from the element of wonder and surprise, paradox also produces a sense of awe. Awe is an ambivalent emotion, compounded of wonder and humility; the wonder keeps the emotion alive and the mind open, while the humility restrains the wonder from slipping into idle curiosity.45

In the context of the Gospel of Mark, the 'amazement–marvel' response of the crowds (1.27; 2.12) who witness Jesus' exorcisms and healings demonstrate the shock of the people regarding the tremendous display of Jesus' power and authority. Their amazement in the narrative is again triggered by who Jesus is and the paradoxical nature of his person.

The crowds, who initially see Jesus as man, are now seeing the same human Jesus doing acts that are not merely human. Such incidents are paradoxical for them, so that they respond in amazement. Their amazement, along with the other reactions of fright46 (3.15) and astonishment (5.42; 7.37), also speaks of their struggle to make sense of Jesus' mighty acts, on the one hand, and humble deeds of service, on the other hand.

Like the crowds, the disciples are also amazed at Jesus (10.32), because it is to them that Jesus presents the paradoxical nature of his person the most. The disciples consider him as their human leader and teacher, yet he also displays before them traits that exhibit his more than human nature. At the story level, Mark explores the sense of wonder and amazement of the crowds and disciples as a result of their struggle to perceive the paradoxical Jesus. At the level of discourse, he prepares the readers for the

Religion 7 (1943), pp. 227-41 (235). Lowith said that which in Christianity is truth is an existing wonder or a paradox. Cf. Schröer, Denkform der Paradoxalität, p. 29.


45. Colie, Paradoxia Epidemica, p. 47.

46. H.L. Swartz, 'Fear and Amazement Responses: A Key to the Concept of Faith in the Gospel of Mark, a Redacational/Literary Study' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto, 1988). Swartz explores the relation of fear–amazement with the concept of faith. I extend Swartz's observation by contending that the fear–amazement instances in the narrative are also indicators of the authority–servanthood paradox.
authority—servanthood paradox that deals with how they need to respond to the discipleship challenge of Jesus himself.

Paradox as a Rhetorical or Stylistic Figure
Along with the three elements of ‘both–and’ propositions, tensive situations and surprise—amazement encounters, this study recognizes a fourth element of paradox, namely, the rhetorical or stylistic nature of paradox. As rhetorical device, paradox demonstrates an achievement of human intelligence and speech that represents a serious effort to give voice to needed truth.47

The presence of paradox in any literary or theological work is intentional in the sense that there is always a calculated and slight alteration of language, and juxtaposition of words in new and sudden combinations.48 In fact, the juxtaposition of opposing combinations demonstrates the rhetorical nature of paradox in illuminating, as with a sudden flash of light, a neglected aspect of any subject49 or in clinching an argument with a memorable phrase.50 Paradox also works as a rhetorical device used to attract attention, to secure emphasis51 and to rivet attention on a crucial point.52

In relation to the Gospel of Mark, this study views the paradox of authority and servanthood as an intentional rhetorical device by Mark not only to make the juxtaposition of the two sides of the paradox memorable, but also to emphasize the neglected aspect of servanthood in faithful discipleship. It must be noted that Mark uses this paradox at both the story and discourse levels of the narrative. In the story line of the Gospel, he capitalizes on Jesus’ pedagogic use of paradox, in order to urge the readers implicitly to identify themselves with the value system of Jesus (which

49. Seat, ‘Meaning of Paradox’, p. 56. Seat observes that in paradox is found ‘a legitimate and effective device for illuminating neglected aspects of truth and opening new paths of thought’.
involves a reversal of the world’s values or standards). In addition to the story line, Mark employs paradox rhetorically in the discourse level. At this level, he uses the paradox of authority and servanthood to rivet his readers’ attention to the important fact that servanthood is more significant than authority in the exercise of Christian duty and ministry.

How does Mark lay out his thought-provoking rhetoric of paradox? He uses an approach that starts with where the readers are, that is, on their premise that authority is important. Then he shifts to present servanthood in a way that jolts them. However, the authority–servanthood paradox challenges and leads the readers to leave their existing lifestyle that emphasizes authority and to adopt a new lifestyle that emphasizes servanthood. Paradoxically, it is in the context of servanthood that Jesus’ disciples can exercise their authority in the fullest sense.53

Need for an Audience in Paradox
In order for the above four elements of paradox to be appreciated, paradox demands an audience. This audience is the kind that desires to be surprised. As R. Colie reiterates:

In reality, paradox requires an audience, demands attention, solicits reactions on the part of hearers or readers, and if successful, elicits specifically admiration, amazement and wonder. Though directed toward frustrating conventional expectation, at unsettling ‘normal’ reactions and normal constellations of thought and feeling, the paradox is itself paradoxical in requiring the cooperation of the audience it seeks to frustrate. For its own existence, paradox requires active social participation among men.54

Participation of the audience requires that the one using paradox make certain assumptions about the audience’s values, which would then be questioned, undermined or overthrown by means of paradox.

Since the role of an audience is crucial in understanding paradox, this study explores the way the characters in the story comprehend or miscomprehend Jesus, and the way the readers are meant to comprehend Jesus. This study also deals in its last chapter with how Mark’s original readers would have understood the authority–servanthood paradox, as the narrative gradually unfolded before them. Tracing how these early readers

53. For example, Jesus has given the disciples the authority to cast out the demons (3.15) and ‘over the unclean spirits’ (6.7b). This authority over demons and unclean spirits is given to be exercised in the context of serving the demon-possessed ones. The more the disciples serve these needy ones, the more their authority is recognized.
of Christianity would have responded to the paradox provides helpful clues of their perspectives, priorities and preferences in relation to Christianity.

To conclude this section, a proper general view of paradox involves its twofold meaning of: (1) a statement or concept that departs from a common opinion, which needs to be reversed in terms of its value system; and (2) an apparently self-contradicting statement or concept that can convey unified truth, despite the existing contrariness of two opposing assertions. Paradox is described in this study in relation to five elements: (1) the equal recognition of both sides of the paradox, in order to appreciate its significance; (2) the tensive nature of conflict within the paradox; (3) the resulting display of awe—surprise—amazement from the recipients of the paradox; (4) the intentional rhetorical or stylistic discourse device, which seeks to influence the readers to live with servanthood in the exercise of authority; and (5) the need for an audience not only to recognize the paradox and be jolted by it, but also to affirm their need to reflect on its significance and then undergo a reversal of standards that are consistent with the values of Jesus.

**Function of Paradox**

Having described the five key elements of paradox, it is now important to determine the function of paradox. W. Stewart succinctly presents its purpose:

> The true purpose of the self-contradictory paradox is to bring out some hidden or neglected aspect of the question; to reveal a new facet of truth; to stimulate a fresh idea by touching the nerve of surprise; to challenge and provoke by contradiction and thereby arouse the sluggish mind; to clinch an argument by a memorable phrase. It is the legitimate weapon of the innovator, the iconoclast, the blazer of new paths. It is also the natural instrument of anyone who has a fresh spiritual insight.  

Similarly, Colie summarizes the goal of paradox: ‘By its seeming self-contradiction a paradox challenges sluggish minds, by its apparent absurdity it provokes that skepticism which is the matrix of study, and by touching the nerve of surprise it stimulates fresh insights.’ Since paradox stimulates fresh insights, it inextricably has an impact on the audience. Its impact is seen when paradox incites its audience to wonder, when it dazzles by its mental gymnastics and manipulation of ideas.

56. Colie, *Paradoxia Epidemica*, p. 34.
However, paradox is not simply meant to dazzle by mental gymnastics nor to convey ‘truth standing on its head to attract attention’\(^{57}\) nor to merely display word-juggling or verbal play. It is also meant to communicate truth that is fraught with thought-provoking significance.\(^{58}\) Moreover, paradox is intended to draw attention to what is usually disregarded. As a rational and logical device, it seeks to draw attention to ideas and truths that may otherwise be obscure or neglected. The discussion of these neglected truths makes paradox startling and amusing, with the result that it seriously jolts the readers into re-examining the relation between a pair of ideas that they have taken for granted.\(^{59}\)

In light of the multi-faceted purpose of paradox, a word of caution needs to be stated: ‘Paradox is not the last word, but the first word. It is not the destination of the inquiry, but its starting-point… it is a summons to more precise definition, a call to more discerning, discriminating and decisive thinking.’\(^{60}\) Thus, paradox ultimately leads hearers or readers to more reflection with a view toward a wise decision.

The function of the authority-servanthood paradox in the Gospel of Mark is to provoke its readers to decisive reflection. Since Jesus, the authoritative one, has served the insignificant ones in the Markan story with his selfless miraculous deeds and significant sacrifice on the cross, the readers themselves must follow their Master in demonstrating selfless service, whether they be men and women of authority or not. As a result of the readers’ reflection, Mark expects them to make a decision for life-change. This decision is to be reflected in their acts of servanthood that affirm God’s authority in their lives.

It would be jolting for Mark’s readers to hear him appeal for service on behalf of the insignificant ones (9.37; 10.14-15), since such service is not the accepted option for those in authority. For them, those in authority are the ones who lord it over the insignificant ones. Therefore, the paradox of authority and servanthood in the narrative brings out the neglected aspect of servanthood, reveals its significance throughout the Gospel, stimulates the surprising idea of the need to exercise it, challenges and provokes reflection by means of the authority-servanthood contradiction and thereby arouses the sluggish mind that is content simply to exercise authority

\(^{57}\) Stewart, ‘Study of Paradox’, p. 4.
\(^{58}\) Colie, Paradoxia Epidemica, p. 37.
\(^{59}\) Wheelwright, Burning Fountain, p. 97.
\(^{60}\) Van Dusen, ‘Abuse of Paradox’, p. 17.
without servanthood, and clinches the paradoxical argument by using a memorable clause: to be first is to be last; to be great is to be the servant of all.

Through the dazzling, startling and amusing medium of the paradox, the readers are led to re-examine their value system. Through the thought-provoking rhetoric of paradox in Mark, they are encouraged to align themselves with the value system of Jesus, to disassociate themselves with the values of the religious leaders, and to identify themselves with the lot of the disciples as they struggle to follow Jesus. In turn, such re-examination enables the readers to appreciate the decisive role of the authority–servanthood paradox not only within the narrative, but much more in their own lives, as they exercise service within their community of faith and beyond. In summary, a paradox functions in a dramatic way to attract the readers' attention, to communicate to them a neglected truth and to challenge them to re-evaluate their value system in a thought-provoking and decisive way.

Overview of the Authority–Servanthood Paradox in the Gospel of Mark

Having described how the term 'paradox' is used and how it functions in this study, this section discusses the close relationship between Christology and discipleship, and the paradoxical relationship between the christological motif of authority and the discipleship motif of servanthood in the Gospel of Mark. I observe that Mark links the two motifs of authority and servanthood throughout the Gospel in a paradoxical way. I also see that this paradoxical link between the two motifs is reflected in the paradox of authority and servanthood that Mark develops throughout the Markan narrative. This section surveys how the two motifs are observed in the Gospel and how their paradoxical relationship is recognized.

Relationship between Christology and Discipleship in Mark

Markan scholars have recognized the existing close relationship between Christology and discipleship in the Gospel. E. Best argues that a true

61. Colie, Paradoxa Epidemica, p. 22. Colie writes about the double aim of dazzling the audience in paradox; namely: (1) to arrest thought altogether in the possessive experience of wonder; and (2) to stimulate further questions, speculation and qualification, even contradiction on the part of that wondering audience.
understanding of discipleship depends on a true understanding of Jesus. F. Matera argues for a close link between Christology and discipleship:

There is an intimate connection between Christology and discipleship in the Gospel of Mark. Both meet at the cross. Just as one cannot understand who Jesus is apart from the cross, so one cannot grasp the true meaning of discipleship unless he or she is willing to follow Jesus ‘on the way’. That way, of course, leads to the cross.  

In addition, E. Schweizer contends that people cannot understand Jesus until they learn that Jesus’ sonship reveals itself in his rejection, suffering and death. The person who follows this way ‘will be able to experience also the power of his signs and miracles’. J. Donahue also describes the saved community as ‘one which has been freed by Jesus, but freed for a deeper level of mutual service done in solidarity with Jesus, who by the paradoxical renunciation of power, became the source of liberation of others’.  

These scholars rightly acknowledge that Christology and discipleship are intimately related. Discipleship comes from a clear understanding of Christology, and Christology naturally leads to faithful discipleship. The way that Jesus walked must be the same way that the disciples must follow, for just as Jesus, the Lord of all, has shown his lordship only through paradoxical paths of suffering and rejection, so those who follow him must also carry that out in the same paradoxical way.  

However, I contend that the two Markan concepts of Christology and discipleship do not only meet at the paradoxical paths of suffering and rejection, which culminate in the cross, but that these two concepts interact intricately throughout the whole Markan narrative. In fact, this interaction can be observed in the paradoxical relationship of two Markan motifs: the christological ‘authority’ motif and the discipleship ‘servanthood’ motif.  

66. Matera, 'What Are They Saying?', p. 54.  
67. The paradox of authority and servanthood has been phrased similarly. Two similar ways of phrasing the paradox are: (1) the paradox of authority and passion; and
Authority and Servanthood Motifs in the Gospel of Mark

The relationship between authority and servanthood in the Gospel of Mark is paradoxical. By paradoxical it is meant that the paradox of authority and servanthood is used as a Markan rhetorical device that presents the person of Jesus in tension, that is, Jesus, the ‘authoritative one’, is the one who

(2) the paradox of power and weakness. These two paradoxes have also been recognized by scholars to be present in the Gospels. D. Trakatellis, in his book Authority and Passion (Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1987), discusses the anatomy of these two christological concepts. F.H. Borsch, in his book Power in Weakness: New Hearing for Gospel Stories of Healing and Discipleship (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983) explores eight stories in the Gospels that tell of how power was demonstrated by Jesus in the weakness of the people healed and confronted. In addition, F. Watson, in his article ‘Ambiguity in the Markan Narrative’ (King’s Theological Review 10 [1987], pp. 11-12), claims that the fundamental tension in Mark is between power and weakness, or to put it another way, between revelation and secrecy. This polarity is expressed in the division of the Gospel into two halves by Jesus’ dialogue with Peter at Caesarea Philippi. At this place, the two elements are juxtaposed with extraordinary harshness (Watson, ‘Ambiguity’, pp. 11-12). This christological paradox describes that Jesus, whose power identifies him as the Christ, is at the same time the Son of Man whose destiny is to suffer (cf. M. Hengel, Christ and Power [Belfast: Christian Journals, 1977], pp. 23-32, for his chapter on the ‘Power and Powerlessness in the Early Church’ and for the terms ‘theology of glory’ and ‘theology of the cross’ [p. 28]). This is an early and profound expression of what later became the classical ‘two natures’ Christology. Mark is not trying to replace a Christology of power with a Christology of suffering. Mark’s thought is genuinely dialectical; power and weakness must somehow be held together. The tension between power and weakness is not only expressed in the juxtaposition of the two halves of the Gospel, it is also present within each of them individually. In the first half, the Son of God, whose power is manifested in his miracles, is also misunderstood and rejected; his destiny of suffering is already secretly present. In the second half, the Son of Man, who is bound for the cross, is still seen as the powerful Son of God. Although power is the dominant element in the first half of the Gospel, and weakness in the second, weakness is also present in the second. Thus, this dialectic must be seen as the key to Mark’s whole presentation of Jesus. I recognize the similarities in the phrasing of the two paradoxes (i.e. the paradox of authority and passion, and the paradox of power and weakness) with the paradox of authority and servanthood. These two paradoxes play a discipleship function in the narrative. But I think that the paradox of authority and servanthood is more important than the two, because it emphasizes more precisely what is needed to understand the paradoxical nature of the Gospel. The servanthood motif of the authority—servanthood paradox not only stresses the passive nature of powerlessness and passion (which is also seen in the paradox of authority and passion, and the paradox of power and weakness), but also highlights the active nature of actual acts of service (which is seen only in the paradox of authority and servanthood).
serves. Likewise, the paradox extends to the characterization of the disciples, who, as the delegated recipients of Jesus’ authority, are called to become servants.

In other words, the Markan christological concept of authority (i.e. that of Jesus and that which he delegates to his disciples) needs to be reflected in the Markan discipleship concept of servanthood (i.e. that of serving Jesus and his community of faithful ones). This reflection of authority in servanthood dramatically teaches Mark’s readers that true authority in the community of faith is genuinely authenticated by servanthood.

At this point, it is profitable to briefly define authority and servanthood and then list some key indicators that show the presence in the Gospel of these two motifs, respectively. This list of indicators exposes the Markan use of these motifs and how they function paradoxically within the whole narrative.

**Authority as a Markan Christological Motif.** Mark demonstrates throughout the narrative that Jesus is the ‘authoritative one’. As used in this study, ‘authority’ refers to the christological motif of power and rule that are exercised by Jesus and later delegated to the disciples by virtue of Jesus’ high position and relationship with the heavenly Father.

Some of the key indicators in recognizing Jesus’ authority are: (1) Mark’s lexical use of the word ‘authority’ and its cognates; (2) Jesus’ exorcisms, healings and miracles; (3) some minor characters’ deeds of worship.

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68. BAGD, p. 278.
69. Jesus’ delegation of authority to the disciples is seen in 3.13-19; 6.7-13, 30-31; 10.28-30.
70. The term ‘authority’ (ἐξουσία) occurs ten times in the Gospel of Mark. The cognate form ἐξουσία appears thrice (11.28a, 29, 33), while the form ἐξουσίαν appears seven times (1.22, 27; 2.10; 3.15; 6.7; 11.28b; 13.34). All these occurrences of ‘authority’, except one (10.42), directly relate to the authority of Jesus. His authority is seen in his teaching with authority (1.22, 27; cf. 7.14), which is proven in his exorcisms (1.22-26, 27), in his ‘authority to forgive sins’ (2.10), in his delegation to the disciples of the authority to exorcize (3.15; 6.7) and in his response to the religious leaders about the source of his authority (11.28-29, 33).
71. The Markan narrative includes four actual instances of exorcisms (1.21-28; 5.1-20; 7.24-30; 9.14-29; cf. 9.38) and three ‘summary statements’ that tell of his casting out unclean spirits (1.32-34, 39; 6.13).
72. The Markan narrative includes nine actual instances of healings (1.29-31; 1.40-45; 2.1-12; 3.1-5; 5.21-24, 35-43; 5.25-34; 7.31-37; 8.22-26; 10.46-52) and five ‘summary statements’ that tell of his healings (1.32-34; 3.10; 6.5, 13, 55-56). In response, those who are healed react differently. Some serve (1.28), proclaim freely (1.45; 7.36),
(4) other characters’ testimony about the authority of Jesus in the narrative; (5) Mark’s editorial comments; and (6) some crucial events in the story line of the Gospel.

Servanthood as a Markan Discipleship Motif. Added to the motif of authority in the Markan narrative is the portrayal of Jesus as the servant (10.45) who, renouncing all concern for life and power, goes to the cross

fear and tremble (5.33) and follow Jesus (10.52). The people who also witness the healings respond in amazement (2.12; 7.37). On the other hand, the religious authorities react in antagonism (3.6).

73. The Markan narrative includes five actual instances of other kinds of miracles (4.35-41; 6.32-44; 45-52; 8.1-9; 11.12-14, 20-24). The miracle of the stilling of the sea results in the disciples feeling afraid (4.41). Jesus’ walking on water results in the disciples being greatly astonished, along with their lack of insight and hardiness of heart (6.51-52).

74. A handful of participants in the stories express some form of worship, respect, or reverence to Jesus, which reveal his authoritative status. A leper beseeches Jesus and falls on his knees before the miracle-working one (1.40); those who witnessed Jesus heal a paralytic and forgive his sins ‘were glorifying God’ (2.12); a Gerasene man with unclean spirits ‘bowed down before Jesus’ (5.6); a woman healed from hemorrhage feared and trembled and ‘fell down before him’ (5.33).

75. The following characters in the story line of Mark affirm and testify of Jesus’ authority through their explicit statements: (1) the ‘voice from heaven’ (1.11; 9.7); (2) John the baptizer (1.7); (3) the unclean spirits (3.11; 5.7); (4) King Herod (6.14; 6.16; cf. 8.28a); (5) the crowds (6.15a; 8.18b; 8.15b; 8.28c); (6) Peter (8.29); (7) Bartimaeus (10.47-48); (8) the high priest (14.61); (9) Pilate (15.2; 15.12); (10) the centurion (15.39); and (11) Jesus himself (2.28; 11.3; cf. 11.17; 12.35-37).

76. The following editorial comments, descriptions and choice of words reinforce such a high regard for Jesus and his authority: (1) prologue statement (1.1); (2) ‘amazement–marvel’ responses of the crowds who witness Jesus’ exorcisms and healing (1.27; 2.12; 3.15; 5.42; 7.37); (3) the ‘immediate spread of the news’ about Jesus’ exorcisms and healings and the ‘further flocking’ of the crowds to him as a result (1.28, 32-34, 45; 3.7-12; 5.14, 20; 6.53-56); and (4) the key use of the term ‘follow’ (ακολουθέω), referring to various groups (e.g. crowds [3.7; 5.24; 11.9]; named disciples [1.18; 2.14; 10.28]; unnamed disciples [2.15; 6.1; 10.32]; women [15.41]; cf. E.S. Malbon, ‘Disciples/Crowds/Whoever: Markan Characters and Readers’, NovT 28 (1986), pp. 104-30 (124). In addition, Jesus challenges the ‘rich, young ruler’ to follow him (10.21), extends the invitation to ‘anyone’ (8.34) and does not exclude one who does not follow him (9.38).

77. At least three key events in the Markan story show the authority of Jesus: (1) the call (1.16-18; 1.19-20; 2.13-14) and commission of the disciples (3.13-19; 6.7-13, 30-31); (2) the transfiguration of Jesus (9.1-8); and (3) the predicted return of Jesus (13.24-27; 14.62).
in the service of others. In this study, ‘servanthood’ refers to the discipleship motif of ‘renouncing domineering power’ and exercising service on behalf of others. As the essence of Jesus’ ministry, servanthood is to be practiced by those who are for him or the followers of Jesus, who are characterized by action on behalf of others—whether a mighty act (e.g. exorcism) or the giving of a simple cup of water.

Moreover, servanthood is characterized by ‘mutual service’, by ‘humility in discipleship’ and by ‘becoming free to give oneself to others’. Though it appears contrary to all general rules and all normal experiences, and even to all accepted opinion, having a serving heart actually commits a follower of Jesus to ‘a life of service to others’.

Mark highlights the servanthood motif in the narrative by using the following key indicators: (1) Mark’s lexical use of terms ‘servant’ and ‘slave’, (2) the Markan motif of doing God’s will, (3) Jesus’ servanthood teaching in the three discipleship discourses.

78. Donahue, Theology and Discipleship, p. 43.
80. Kingsbury, Conflict in Mark, p. 114. In the section called ‘Discipleship as Servanthood’, Kingsbury writes, ‘Mark traces the failure of the disciples to comprehend that the essence of discipleship is servanthood to their failure to comprehend that servanthood is also Jesus’ focus in ministry.’
82. Donahue, Theology and Discipleship, p. 43.
85. The term ‘servant’ and its various forms occur seven times (1.13, 31; 9.35; 10.43, 45 [2x]; 15.41) in Mark. The two instances of the noun-form ‘servant’, which are both found in the discipleship discourses of Mk 8-10, occur in a similarly phrased paradoxical statement (9.35; 10.43). Of the remaining five occurrences of the word’s verb form (i.e. ‘serve’ [διακονεῖν]), three are used to demonstrate the actual service to Jesus by the angels (1.13), Peter’s mother-in-law (1.31) and the women disciples (15.41). The last two occurrences of the verb are placed side by side in 10.45 to refer to Jesus’ servanthood. Aside from the word ‘servant’, the term ‘slave’ (δοῦλος) is used in the Markan narrative, occurring five times (10.44; 12.2, 4; 13.34; 14.47). Three of these instances appear in a parable that involves slaves as characters (12.1-12; 13.34-37). In addition, one instance refers to the high priest’s slave whose ear was cut off (14.47). The last instance occurs as part of a paradoxical statement between being ‘first’ and being ‘slave of all’ (10.43).
86. In 3.31-35, Jesus calls one who does ‘the will of God’ his brother or sister or mother. In Gethsemane, he submits to God’s will (14.36). Early in the narrative, a voice from heaven declares an affirming statement about Jesus’ well-pleasing status (1.11b).
10.33-45); (4) Jesus’ service to the needy and unimportant;87 (5) Jesus’ servanthood expressions (i.e. ‘I do choose’ [1.41]; ‘What is it you want me to do for you?’ [10.36, 51]); (6) the disciples’ role as ‘mediatory ministers’ between Jesus and the crowds;88 and (7) some characters’ acts of service in the narrative.89

**Need for the Study of Paradox in the Gospel**

As the previous section has determined, there are sufficient lines of evidence to show that the christological motif of authority and the discipleship motif of servanthood are clearly present, strategically juxtaposed and paradoxically linked by Mark in the Gospel narrative. There is a need to study this paradox of authority and servanthood, because it serves as a strategic Markan rhetorical device that urges the readers to show servanthood in exercising authority within the community of believers and beyond. Moreover, the paradox functions as an important tool to help deter-

87. The frequency of occurrence of the following words and the connection of some words to Jesus’ service to the people intensify the servanthood motif in the narrative: (1) ‘child’ (παιδίου [5.39, 40, 41; 7.28, 30; 9.21, 36, 37; 10.13, 14, 15]; τέκνων [7.17; 10.24, 29, 30; 12.19; 13.12]); (2) ‘widow’ (χήρα [12.40, 42, 43]); (3) ‘wife’ (γυναίκα [6.17, 18; 10.11; 12.19, 20, 23]); (4) ‘woman’ (γυνή [5.25, 33; 7.25, 26; 12.22; 14.3; 15.40]); (5) ‘Gentiles’ (the word ΕΛΛΗΝΙΣ occurs once in 7.26, and the word ἔθνος occurs twice in 10.33, 42); (6) ‘sick’ (the word κατάκειμαι occurs once in 1.30; κακῶς twice in 2.17; 6.55; δέρματος twice in 6.5, 13; ἀσθενέω once in 6.56, and νόσος in 1.34); (7) ‘leper’ (λέπρος [1.40, 42; 14.3]); and (8) ‘poor’ (πτωχος [10.21; 12.42, 43; 14.5, 7]).

88. When the disciples are mediating between Jesus and the crowds, they appear as ‘ministers’ or ‘officials’ (Best, ‘Role of Disciples in Mark’, p. 396). The disciples’ role to the crowds is to be servants to them (6.32-44; 8.1-9), as representatives of Jesus (3.13-19; 6.7) and as extensions of his ministry (6.8-13, 30).

89. The characters who have shown servant-like attitudes and actions are: (1) John the baptizer (1.7); (2) the angels (1.13); (3) Peter’s mother-in-law (1.31); (4) the disciples (6.32-44; 8.1-9); (5) ‘poor widow’ (12.44); (6) the woman who anointed Jesus (14.1-9); (7) Simon of Cyrene (15.21); (8) the ‘ministering’ women (15.41); (9) Joseph of Arimathea (15.42-47); (10) ‘young man wearing a white robe’ (16.5-7); and (11) Jesus himself, the ‘paradigm of Christian experience’ (D.J. Hawkin, ‘The Incomprehension of the Disciples in the Markan Redaction’, *JBL* 91 [1972], pp. 491-500 [500]). Two other characters may be included here. They are: (1) Bartimaeus (10.52), who followed Jesus on the road after being healed; and (2) the ‘unnamed exorcist’ (though he does not actually appear as a character in the story but was cited by John), who was casting out demons in the name of Jesus (9.38).
mine insights on the disciples’ role throughout the narrative, the Messianic Secret and the profile of the Markan community.

However, despite the previous section’s observations on the presence of the Markan paradox of authority and servanthood, and the obvious recognition by biblical scholars of the paradoxical nature of the Markan Gospel (in relation to the important themes of the kingdom of God, reversal motif and passion narrative) and the paradoxical nature of the

90. Mark challenges his readers to face the conflict between the way of Jesus and their own desire for security, a desire that would make them like the faith-struggling disciples. This tension is heightened by presenting Jesus’ way as paradox and as triumph by irony (R.C. Tannehill, ‘Tension in Synoptic Sayings and Stories’, Int 34 [1980], pp. 138-50 [150]; cf. W.A. Beardslee, ‘Uses of the Proverb in the Synoptic Gospels’, Int 24 [1970], pp. 61-73). Moreover, in Mark 14–16, Jesus completes his characteristic role as paradoxical model through the ultimate act of transformation (i.e. that of death into life). Virtually all major Markan themes and a large variety of characters are centripetally organized around the cross and drawn into the process of reversal. The world is turned upside down; the disciples stand exposed as struggling models; the temple is turned into a negative symbol; the Son of God is sanctioned by Jesus’ suffering and the silence of God; the Kingdom is consummated by crucifixion; death is reversed by life. Thus, these three paradoxical examples show the theologically profound character of the Gospel. In addition, Hengel states, ‘The crucifixion of Jesus seems to be a brutal defeat but the reader of Mark knows that through this apparent powerlessness the very ransom of the world is being effected’ (D. Senior, “With Swords and Clubs…”—the Setting of Mark’s Community and his Critique of Abusive Power, BTB 17 [1987], pp. 10-20 [17]). Davies also comments, ‘If one regards the presence of unanswered questions, enigmas and paradoxes as signs of profundity, then Mark is indeed theologically profound… The theological profundity of Mark is seen primarily in its acceptance of paradox. Mark’s thought is dialectical: that is, it holds together opposing elements in tension, without attempting any easy resolution’ (P. Davies, ‘Mark’s Christological Paradox’, JSNT 35 [1989], pp. 3-18 [6]).

91. The Markan presentation of the Kingdom of God is paradoxical. What works in the Kingdom runs counter to man’s expected preference. The Kingdom is gained by the truly powerful ones, who do not walk off with the spoils (8.34-38), but who show compassion to the weak (10.14-15), and who use their strength to right the wrongs that plague the weak (9.43, 45, 47). The first in society’s eyes are considered last in God’s eyes, and the last first (9.35; cf. 10.44). As U.C. von Wahlde comments, ‘He who would be first in the eyes of God must be last in the eyes of worldly society and he must be the servant… The Kingdom is attained by paradox’ (U.C. von Wahlde, ‘Mark 9.33-50—Discipleship: The Authority That Serves’, BZ 29 [1985], pp. 49-67 [54]; cf. A. Boesak, ‘The Eye of the Needle’, International Review of Missions 72 [1983], pp. 7-10 [8-9]).

92. The Markan motif of reversal is paradoxical. The literary motif of reversal of values serves as a Markan indicator of paradox. This motif introduces Mark’s ‘readership to a new scheme of things, in which ordinary values are reversed and reasonable
Markan Jesus, there has been little research done on paradox in the Gospel of Mark. In fact, there has been no thorough biblical literary study judgments disqualified (Hawkin, ‘Incomprehension of the Disciples’, p. 500). Three key value reversals are found in the second discipleship discourse (9.33-50): (1) becoming ‘servant of all’ (9.36b), in order to become ‘first’ (9.36a); (2) ‘receiving’ the least significant (i.e. a child [9.37a]; cf. Kingsbury, Conflict in Mark, p. 108), in order to receive the most significant (i.e. Jesus and the one who sent him [9.37b]); and (3) doing an insignificant act (i.e. giving a cup of water [9.41a]) for others, in order to be significantly rewarded (9.40b). The third discipleship discourse (10.35-45) has one key value reversal (i.e. the way of Gentile power [10.42] is not really the way of God’s rule [10.43-45]).

93. Mark’s passion narrative is paradoxical. In the passion story, the mocking scenes show paradox and irony. Tannehill finds the following dramatic ironies and paradoxes in the mocking scenes (‘Narrative Christology’, pp. 57-95): (1) Jesus is mistreated and commanded to prophesy (14.65), though he is the prophet who already prophesied about his passion and death; (2) though the soldiers actually rejected Jesus’ kingship (15.16-20), they outwardly proclaimed him as king (which he actually is); and (3) the command ‘save yourself’ (15.30; cf. 15.31, ‘He saved others; he cannot save himself’) is an ironic statement of the powerlessness of Jesus, though he is indeed the appointed Savior (i.e. by his death he brings life). What is ironic here is that Jesus’ powerlessness to save himself on the cross is itself the power that is able to save not himself but those who mocked him and did not understand his authority and servanthood.

94. The Markan christological concept is also paradoxical. Christology, which lies at or near the heart of Mark’s theological scheme, presents Jesus both as paradox-maker and paradox. As the master paradox-maker, Jesus is the ‘greatest overturner, the supreme maker of paradoxes, radical and without fear’ (Stewart, ‘Christianity as Paradox’, p. 222). The paradoxical sayings of Jesus aptly exemplify his ability as paradox-maker: ‘Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear?’ (8.17); ‘For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s shall save it’ (8.35); and ‘whoever wishes to be first among you shall be last of all’ (10.44). Through the use of paradox, Jesus has found a legitimate and effective device for illuminating neglected aspects of truth, opening new paths of thought and for finding dazzling similarity in apparent difference (E. Trueblood, The Humor of Christ [New York: Harper & Row, 1964], pp. 42-43). As L. Ryken observes, ‘It becomes evident that paradox was rooted in the nature of Christ’s message, which challenged conventional attitudes at so many points’ (L. Ryken, The Literature of the Bible [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974], p. 292; cf. idem, The New Testament in Literary Criticism [New York: Frederick Ungar, 1984], pp.162-63). However, Jesus is not only the master paradox-maker, he himself is paradox. Kelber comments on the paradoxical nature of Jesus (W.H. Kelber, ‘Conclusion: From Passion Narrative to Gospel’, in W.H. Kelber (ed.), The Passion in Mark: Studies on Mark 14–16 [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976], p. 176): ‘He is the speaker of a Messianic confession who also veils himself in enigmatic silence. He is the King who dies a criminal’s death.
made on this crucial issue. Such a paucity of biblical work on paradox further affirms the need for this study. This study offers new insights in

He is a figure of power, who achieves victory through powerlessness. He is a Messiah who dies but rises from death. Even his confession lacks definitive clarity for it points proleptically into an open-ended future. Despite resurrection his final victory is not celebrated because the completion of his role hinges on still future aspects. In the wake of his paradoxical performance the world around him is turned upside down... He upsets the disciples' conventional concept of Messiah, and reverses the traditional symbols of Jerusalem and Galilee, friend and enemy, insider and outsider, disciple and persecutor, power and weakness, life and death. As one who rose from death he promises life to those who lose it.'

Kelber adds more significant observations regarding Jesus as paradox. His additional description is worth quoting in full (Kelber, 'Passion Narrative', p. 179): 'If one refrains from reducing the Jesus figure by organizing seemingly contradictory features on two opposite sides, a character emerges who is fraught with ambiguity and steeped in paradox. Jesus announces the kingdom but opts for the cross; he is King of the Jews but condemned by the Jewish establishment; he asks for followers but speaks in riddles; he is identified as Nazarene but rejected in Nazareth; he makes public pronouncements but also hides behind a screen of secrecy; he saves others but not himself; he promises return but has not returned; he performs miracles but suffers a non-miraculous death; he is a successful exorciser but dies abandoned by God in powerlessness; he dies but rises from death. His beginning is nebulous and his future status is indefinite, and at the moment of Messianic disclosure he still speaks enigmatically of himself in the third person (14.62; cf. 8.31; 9.31; 10.33-34). If there is one single feature which characterizes the Markan Jesus it is contradiction or paradox. It might therefore be argued that "Mark presents not two conflicting views of Jesus" but one complex "paradoxical view".'

Moreover, Jesus is himself viewed as paradox in the sense that his person and works are enigmatic and paradoxical. Within the Gospel's framework, Jesus is the one who comes out of nowhere; whose teaching is calculated to confound, not to clarify; whose disciples are thoroughly briefed yet completely stupefied; whose true identity is hidden, yet exposed by all sorts of characters who either fail to recognize or refuse to accept the truth they espouse; whose godly sonship is revealed on a criminal's cross and whose vindication is verified by sepulchral emptiness and frightened silence (C.C. Black, 'Ministry in Mystery: One Evangelist's Vision', Christian Ministry 22 [1991], pp. 15-18 [17]).

95. The few Markan scholars who have discussed paradox have treated this issue in a generally cursory manner. These scholars and their works are R. Fowler, Let the Reader Understand: Reader-Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1991), pp. 184-94; Davis, 'Mark's Christological Paradox', pp. 3-18; D.A. Lee-Pollard, 'Powerlessness as Power: A Key Emphasis in the Gospel of Mark', SJT 40 (1987), pp. 73-88; Trakatellis, Authority and Passion; M.I. Wegener, Cruciformed: The Literary Impact of Mark's Story of Jesus and his Disciples (Lanham,
tracing throughout the narrative the rhetorically jolting tool of paradox, particularly the paradox of authority and servanthood in the Gospel of Mark.

In the next chapter, I discuss a proposed literary method that aims to trace the development of the authority–servanthood paradox throughout the narrative of Mark. This proposed method presents an eclectic approach, encompassing the relevant features of reader-response criticism, narrative criticism and rhetorical criticism. The method also focuses on the readers’ experience in encountering the various instances of paradox in the Gospel.