

Fixer
Mark 9:14-29
Dr. Pierre Cannings

I. Unfixed vs. 14-19

- a. Scribes arguing with disciples
 - i. What are you discussing- 'dispute with'
 - 1. *Scribes disputing against them*. The prep. denotes the hostility of the Scribes
 - 2. An argument had erupted between them and some scribes. The argument may very well have had to do with what means were necessary to effect a successful exorcism
 - a. The Scribes already had skepticism of Jesus their failure didn't help.. Mark 3:22
 - i. Other's skepticism is not answered by our lack of faith.
 - ii. The lesson here, then, derives from a spectacular failure to fulfil the commission to cast out demons which has been given to the Twelve in 3:15 and 6:7, and which they have already begun to undertake successfully (6:13).
 - 1. The disciples' failure has given them further grounds for skepticism.
 - 2. Our lack of ability to function only provides more skepticism to a powerful God
 - 3. Our past successes often make us believe we will have present success
 - 4. People often debate with us not because of our lack of self confidence because of the lack of faith in God and power in our lives. **In other words People won't believe in a God that you don't have confidence in.**
 - a. Why would they believe in your Jesus if you can't even fix your marriage...
 - iii. The crowd was amazed. The transfiguration had to be evident. It is amazing that his power was physically evident but they were an unbelieving generation.
- b. Teacher
 - i. Teacher
 - 1. ordained person but usually refers to prominent citizens. This informal usage is consistent with what we observe with respect to

Jesus. (Jesus had been called Rabbi by Peter in the earlier transfiguration episode.)

- ii. Brought my Son possessed with Spirit
 - 1. Brought - The man's aim had been to enlist Jesus' help in person but in Jesus' absence he has had to be content with the 'second team'. Nonetheless he expected the disciples to be able to effect a complete deliverance of his son
 - 2. Slams to ground, foams, grinds, stiffens
 - a. These terms, and the behavior described in vv. 20, 26, indicate a temporary physical seizure caused sporadically by the 'resident' demon rather than a permanent condition
- c. Disciples Could Not Cast
 - i. Unbelieving Generations
 - 1. Unbelieving- without trust or confidence, unworthy of credence
 - a. The significance of the OT view of faith may be seen in the fact that, as an expression of the particular being and life of the people of God which stands both individually and collectively in the dimension of a vital divine relationship, it embraces the whole span of this form of life
 - b. NT- trust as well as obedience
 - c. More generally faith signifies in the Synoptists confidence in God's miraculous help or even in one's own miraculous power
 - d. if so, ΠΙΣΤΙΣ is confidence in the fulfilment of the divine promise
 - e. lack of confidence in one's own miraculous power
 - f. Jesus wonders how long he must put up with this unbelief, a query that may hint at his expectation of death.
 - 2. Generations - - *generation, men of that time, the sum total of those born at the same time, expanded to include all those living at a given time and defined in terms of specific characteristics, generation, contemporaries*
 - a. Jesus' reply is not addressed to the man, who seems not to have shown any lack of faith, but to the disciples, who have just been mentioned by the father, and to whom the words specially apply, since it was their unbelief that led to the fiasco
 - b. intolerable nature of his intercourse with a generation so spiritually dull and unsympathetic
 - ii. How long shall I be with you
 - 1. How Long shall I put up with you

II. Can't Fix vs. 20-22

- a. The Spirit threw the boy to the ground
- b. Has happened since Childhood
 - i. Childhood- This was no recent or temporary condition. The father's reply adds further cause for concern in that the seizures brought about by the demonic presence rendered the boy helpless and thus vulnerable to injury or death through fire or water
 - ii. That is, this is no passing condition but one that has plagued the man's son from early childhood. The implication is not only that this condition is "harder to break" (Gundry, 490) but that in all probability other exorcists besides Jesus' disciples had failed in attempts to rid the boy of the spirit. Jesus' ability to cast it out is therefore all the more impressive.
 - iii. Woman with the bleeding problem Luke 8:43
 - iv. Take pity on us and Help us
 - 1. Seeking Jesus' compassion and mercy
 - 2. This boy doesn't deserve anything but Jesus has compassion
- c. If You Can?
 - i. If you Can - this man seems to doubt his ability. In the light of the disciples' recent failure the father is understandably cautious in asking for deliverance even by Jesus. This is clearly a difficult case, and not even Jesus may have the power to tackle it.
 - 1. "If you can!" repeats the father's words and stems from his frustration with his generation's lack of faith
 - 2. Jesus repeats the father's words in order to call attention to them, and to the doubt expressed in them, which would stand in the way of his petition.
 - a. Often previous failures dictate our current faith level. We say God if you Can
 - b. Often man's failure, including church leadership dictates our faith level.
 - ii. All things are possible
 - 1. That the power which the disciples receive is the power of Christ, and that as such it is the power of God, which they possess only in personal faith,
 - 2. In this faith the believer shares in the rule of God and therefore, either actively or passively, experiences miraculous power. Here we have the uniqueness of NT miracles.
 - 3. for God's ability to do the impossible see further on 11:22-23
 - 4. the unlimited power of God in whom faith is placed; it rules out the suggestion that any force, certainly not the present demonic opponent, can be too much for God.
 - 5. the converse of this statement, is also true: little is possible for him who has no faith.

- iii. To Him who believes
 1. Believes- A special kind of this faith is the confidence that God or Christ is in a position to help suppliants out of their distress, *have confidence*
 2. Here, however, it is the faith of the father rather than that of the exorcist which is in question; faith is not a mechanical aid to the exorcist, but rather the attitude, or better the relationship with God, required of all concerned if the force of evil is to be defeated.

III. He Fixes vs. 23-26

- a. Father
 - i. I do believe
 - ii. Help my Unbelief
 1. help me to turn my unbelief into belief," but "help me out of my trouble, in spite of any unbelief that you may find in me." He claims at first, that he does believe, notwithstanding any appearance to the contrary in his language. And yet, he does not rest his case there, but pleads with Jesus to show him mercy in any case. He pleads the compassion of Jesus, instead of his own faith, and so unconsciously showed a genuine faith.
- b. Jesus heals
 - i. I command you
 1. Jesus commands the demon in the first person: ἐγὼ ἐπιτάσσω σοι, "I command you." In the narrative the contrast with the disciples' earlier unsuccessful attempt is thus underscored: they had given commands, which the demon had ignored; this time it is Jesus himself who is giving the commands, which the demon cannot ignore.
 - ii. Come out and do not enter again
 - iii. Jesus raise him up and he got up
 1. The account of Jesus' taking his hand and raising him up echoes the language used of the raising of Jairus's daughter (5:41-42), but here we are left in no doubt that the impression of death was temporary and mistaken. This is not another resuscitation, but the restoration of the boy to normality after a traumatic experience of exorcism.
 2. Compounds the already astounding deed. The boy is able to stand on his own, thus demonstrating his restoration to health.

IV. Fix our Eyes vs. 28-29 James 5:13; John 14:13-14 Matthew 7:7

- a. His disciples questioned their inability
- b. This kind cannot come
 - i. anything but prayer
 - 1. and though the explicit answer to their question in v. 29 is about prayer, the two concepts are closely related: the effectiveness of prayer depends on the faith of the one praying (11:22–24).
 - 2. But the disciples' authority was always derivative, and prayer is an appropriate recognition of that fact in any encounter with spiritual evil. Perhaps, then, **ΤΟῦΤΟ Τὸ γένος** is not after all intended to place this particular demon into a special class, but denotes demons in general as a **γένος** which can never be tackled in merely human strength. The disciples' problem, on this understanding, has been a loss of the sense of dependence on Jesus' unique **ἐξουσία** which had undergirded their earlier exorcistic success. They have become blasé and thought of themselves as now the natural experts in such a case, and they must learn that in spiritual conflict there is no such automatic power. Their public humiliation has been a necessary part of their re-education to the principles of the kingdom of God
 - 3. But what was lacking was prayer, which is the expression of faith considered as dependence on the Divine power and confidence in that. It is the sense of God that conveys all kinds of spiritual power. But this power was not subjective, it did not reside in themselves, but was power to move God

Exegetical Outline

- V. The Impossible v.14-19
 - a. Scribes arguing with disciples
 - i. What are you discussing- 'dispute with'
 - 1. *Scribes disputing against them*. The prep. denotes the hostility of the Scribes
 - 2. we are reminded of other occasions when hostile criticism has come not from the crowd but from a group of scribes (2:6, 16; 3:22; 7:1).
 - 3. The disciples' failure has given them further grounds for skepticism.
 - 4. An argument had erupted between them and some scribes. The argument may very well have had to do with what means were necessary to effect a successful exorcism
 - ii. The lesson here, then, derives from a spectacular failure to fulfil the commission to cast out demons which has been given to the Twelve in 3:15 and 6:7, and which they have already begun to undertake successfully (6:13).
 - b. Teacher
 - i. Teacher
 - 1. ordained person but usually refers to prominent citizens. This informal usage is consistent with what we observe with respect to Jesus. (Jesus had been called Rabbi by Peter in the earlier transfiguration episode.)
 - ii. Brought my Son possessed with Spirit
 - 1. Brought - The man's aim had been to enlist Jesus' help in person (πρὸς σέ), but in Jesus' absence he has had to be content with the 'second team'. Nonetheless he expected the disciples to be able to effect a complete deliverance of his son (ἵνα αὐτὸ ἐκβάλωσιν), and has been disappointed at their failure.
 - 2. Slams to ground, foams, grinds, stiffens
 - a. The symptoms described in ἀφρίζω (foam [at the mouth]) and τρίζω τοὺς ὀδόντας (gnash the teeth) are clear enough, and ξηραίνομαι (to harden, grow stiff) probably denotes a seizure of the whole body which has a paralysing effect (cf. the use of the same verb for a paralysed arm in 3:1). These terms, and the behaviour described in vv. 20, 26, indicate a temporary physical seizure caused sporadically by the 'resident' demon rather than a permanent condition
 - c. Disciples Could Not Cast
 - i. Unbelieving Generations

1. Unbelieving- without trust or confidence, unworthy of credence
 - a. The significance of the OT view of faith may be seen in the fact that, as an expression of the particular being and life of the people of God which stands both individually and collectively in the dimension of a vital divine relationship, it embraces the whole span of this form of life
 - b. NT- should be trust as well as obedience
 - c. More generally faith signifies in the Synoptists confidence in God's miraculous help or even in one's own miraculous power
 - d. if so, ΠΙΣΤΙΣ is confidence in the fulfilment of the divine promise
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 - f. Jesus wonders how long he must put up with this unbelief, a query that may hint at his expectation of death.
 2. Generations - - *generation, men of that time, the sum total of those born at the same time, expanded to include all those living at a given time and defined in terms of specific characteristics, generation, contemporaries*
 - a. Jesus' reply is not addressed to the man, who seems not to have shown any lack of faith, but to the disciples, who have just been mentioned by the father, and to whom the words specially apply, since it was their unbelief that led to the fiasco
 - b. intolerable nature of his intercourse with a generation so spiritually dull and unsympathetic
- ii. How long shall I be with you
 - iii. How Long shall I put up with you
 - iv. Bring Him to me

VI. All Things are Possible v.20-27

- a. The Spirit threw the boy to the ground
- b. Has happened since Childhood
 - i. Childhood- This was no recent or temporary condition. The father's reply adds further cause for concern in that the seizures brought about by the demonic presence rendered the boy helpless and thus vulnerable to injury or death through fire or water
 - ii. That is, this is no passing condition but one that has plagued the man's son from early childhood. The implication is not only that this condition is "harder to break" (Gundry, 490) but that in all probability other exorcists besides Jesus' disciples had failed in attempts to rid the boy of the spirit. Jesus' ability to cast it out is therefore all the more impressive.
 - iii. Take pity on us and Help us
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 1. "If you can!" repeats the father's words and stems from his frustration with his generation's lack of faith
 2. Jesus repeats the father's words in order to call attention to them, and to the doubt expressed in them, which would stand in the way of his petition.
 3. The waning faith of the father is easily explained as the result of the disciples' failure to exorcise the demon in the first place. The father may have reasoned that if Jesus' disciples could not overpower the spirit, then perhaps Jesus himself would not be able to either.
- ii. All things are possible
 1. That the power which the disciples receive is the power of Christ, and that as such it is the power of God, which they possess only in personal faith, is shown by the general Synoptic account of the healing of the epileptic boy in Mk. 9:14 ff
 2. In this faith the believer shares in the rule of God and therefore, either actively or passively, experiences miraculous power. Here we have the uniqueness of NT miracles.
 3. Hence there is no place for magic. It is not the knowledge of magic media and formulae, but the personal relationship between God and Jesus on the one side and Jesus and men on the other which works the miracle with no magical compulsion. In faith all things are possible and therefore there is all power: Πάντα δυνατόν τῷ πιστεύοντι. In this faith the believer shares in the rule of God and therefore, either actively or passively, experiences miraculous power. Here we have the uniqueness of NT miracles
 4. for God's ability to do the impossible see further on 11:22–23
 5. the emphasis where it should be, on the unlimited power of God in whom faith is placed; it rules out the suggestion that any force, certainly not the present demonic opponent, can be too much for God.
 6. the converse of this statement, is also true: little is possible for him who has no faith.
- iii. To Him who believes
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exorcist, but rather the attitude, or better the relationship with God, required of all concerned if the force of evil is to be defeated.

d. Father

i. I do believe

ii. Help my Unbelief

1. help me to turn my unbelief into belief,” but “help me out of my trouble, in spite of any unbelief that you may find in me.” He claims at first, that he does believe, notwithstanding any appearance to the contrary in his language. And yet, he does not rest his case there, but pleads with Jesus to show him mercy in any case. He pleads the compassion of Jesus, instead of his own faith, and so unconsciously showed a genuine faith.

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VII. Anything with Prayer v.28-29

a. His disciples questioned their inability

b. This kind cannot come

i. anything but prayer

1. and though the explicit answer to their question in v. 29 is about prayer, the two concepts are closely related: the effectiveness of prayer depends on the faith of the one praying (11:22–24).
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understanding, has been a loss of the sense of dependence on Jesus' unique ἐξουσία which had undergirded their earlier exorcistic success. They have become blasé and thought of themselves as now the natural experts in such a case, and they must learn that in spiritual conflict there is no such automatic power. Their public humiliation has been a necessary part of their re-education to the principles of the kingdom of God

3. But what was lacking was prayer, which is the expression of faith considered as dependence on the Divine power and confidence in that. It is the sense of God that conveys all kinds of spiritual power. But this power was not subjective, it did not reside in themselves, but was power to move God

The lesson here, then, derives from a spectacular failure to fulfil the commission to cast out demons which has been given to the Twelve in 3:15 and 6:7, and which they have already begun to undertake successfully (6:13). In the light of that earlier success, this failure has come as an unwelcome surprise to them, as well as to the watching crowd. Was that earlier commission to exorcise only temporary? What had they done wrong? Was it because they had been left on their own without Jesus (but surely the exorcisms of 6:13 were also performed in his absence)? Such reflections no doubt lie behind the question which they pose to Jesus in v. 28, 'Why could we not cast it out?' It is with Jesus' answer to that question that Mark's pericope closes, showing his reason for including this story at this point in his gospel.

The pericope consists of the exorcism/healing, which serves as the occasion for a lesson on faith. Healings or exorcisms that occasion dialogues are found elsewhere in Mark (1:40–45; 2:1–12; 3:1–6; 5:1–14, 21–43; 7:24–30). This case is intriguing because the disciples themselves require instruction, for they had been unable to cast out the unclean spirit.

The episode also gives Jesus the opportunity to speak on the theme of faith: in the first instance, the lack of faith of his own disciples, and in the second, the lack of faith in Jesus' ability on the part of the child's father.

Word Studies

Commentary Studies

Form/Structure/Setting

At first blush the healing of the boy with an unclean spirit seems to fit more naturally in the context of the first half of Mark's Gospel, that is, in the part characterized by miracles (1:20–8:26). The pericope consists of the exorcism/healing, which serves as the occasion for a lesson on faith. Healings or exorcisms that occasion dialogues are found elsewhere in Mark (1:40–45; 2:1–12; 3:1–6; 5:1–14, 21–43; 7:24–30). This case is intriguing because the disciples themselves require instruction, for they had been unable to cast out the unclean spirit.

Why has the Markan evangelist placed this story here? Two details at the beginning of the story draw the pericope to its present location. First, the story presupposes that the disciples had for a time been separated. This was the case because in the transfiguration Jesus was accompanied by only Peter, James, and John. The implication is that the remainder of the disciples were not on the mountain but with a crowd of people, perhaps in a nearby village. Second, the evangelist says that “immediately all the crowd, seeing him, were greatly amazed.” What amazed (ἐξεθαμβήθησαν) them? Gundry (487–88) plausibly suggests that Jesus' garments still glistened from the transfiguration experience. He may be correct, for the evangelist gives no indication that Jesus' clothing returned to its pretransfiguration appearance. In the story's present location there is nothing else to account for the crowd's reaction to Jesus' approach. Yet there is another reason, a literary and thematic one, that draws the pericope to its present position. The boy with the unclean spirit, after being terribly convulsed, lay so still, so corpselike, that people thought that he was dead, “but Jesus, taking him by the hand, raised him up; and he stood” (9:27). It is possible that the appearance of death, followed by being raised up, foreshadows the impending death and resurrection of Jesus. After all, Jesus has predicted his death and resurrection in 8:31–33, alluded to it after the transfiguration in 9:9, 12b, and will predict his passion again in the very next pericope (9:30–32). Jesus' plaintive cry, “O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you?” hints at the nearness of his passion and the fecklessness of his disciples on the night of his arrest.

Bultmann (*History*, 211–12) thinks our story is a composite, consisting of an account of the failure of the disciples in vv 14–20 and an account of an agitated father in vv 21–27. Evidence for this, Bultmann thinks, is found in the fading of the disciples from the scene, in the twofold description of the boy's malady (in vv 18 and 21–22), and in the twofold appearance of the crowd (in vv 15 and 25). Schmidt (Rahmen, 228–29) thinks the awkwardness of vv 14–15 results from a clumsy joining of materials. It is more probable, however, that the story was originally one, which the Markan evangelist has introduced and in places has edited. Mark's redundancies result largely from the addition of vv 14–15, which introduce the story, and most of the latter part of v 20, which graphically illustrates and anticipates the father's subsequent description of his son's serious condition (vv 21–22).

The Matthean and Lukan evangelists abbreviate the story (Matt 17:14–20; Luke 9:37–43a). Most of the confusing and redundant details found in Mark 9:14–15 have been omitted. Matthew enhances the theme of faith (in 17:20, by placing here material taken from Mark 11:22–23). He also increases the respect shown for Jesus, for the man kneels before Jesus and addresses him as “lord” (17:15) in place of Mark’s “teacher.” Luke enhances the pathos of the scene, for the child is described as the man’s “only child” (9:38), who is convulsed and shattered by the spirit, which “will hardly leave him” (9:39). Moreover, the man has not merely “asked” the disciples to heal his son but has “begged” them (9:40). The Lukan version ends on a doxological note (9:43).

Comment

Jesus’ healing of the boy with the unclean spirit once again offers dramatic evidence of Jesus’ awesome power. What his several disciples could not achieve, Jesus could easily do. The episode also gives Jesus the opportunity to speak on the theme of faith: in the first instance, the lack of faith of his own disciples, and in the second, the lack of faith in Jesus’ ability on the part of the child’s father.

14 ἐλθόντες πρὸς τοὺς μαθητὰς εἶδον ὄχλον πολὺν περὶ αὐτοὺς καὶ γραμματεῖς συζητοῦντας πρὸς αὐτούς, “approaching the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes debating with them.” While Jesus had been up on the mountain in 9:2–13, a crowd had gathered around several of his disciples. An argument had erupted between them and some scribes. The argument may very well have had to do with what means were necessary to effect a successful exorcism (and apparently not with whether Jesus employed the aid of Satan, as in Mark 3:23–30). The subject is treated in a variety of sources. One immediately thinks of the man named Eleazar who followed the incantations attributed to Solomon and who could draw out demons through a person’s nostrils by use of the Baaras root (see Josephus, *J.W.* 7.6.3 §§180–85; *Ant.* 8.2.5 §§46–49). Josephus explains that God gave Solomon “knowledge of the art used against demons for the benefit and healing of humans. He also composed incantations by which illnesses are relieved, and left behind forms of exorcisms with which those possessed by demons drive them out, never to return” (*Ant.* 8.2.5 §45; for an example of the rigmarole exorcists of antiquity went through, see the excerpt of the Greek Magical Papyrus discussed by A. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* [New York: Harper & Row, 1927] 259–63; the opening lines of one text read: “For those possessed by demons, an approved charm by Pibechis. Take oil made from unripe olives ... and boil it with marjoram, saying: ‘Joel, Ossarthiomi ... come out [ἐξελθε] of such an one ...’”). The tradition of Solomon as exorcist par excellence was widespread in late antiquity. The tradition began in 1 Kgs 4:29–34 and was enhanced in later traditions such as Wis 7:17–21 and the *Testament of Solomon*. As “son of David” (Mark 10:47, 48), Jesus would have been expected in some circles to effect cures paralleling those effected by David’s famous son Solomon (see *Comment* on 10:46–52). In Mark’s Gospel itself an anonymous exorcist is noted (9:38–41).

The γραμματεῖς, “scribes,” have appeared before in the Markan narrative. Jesus’ teaching is said to be authoritative, unlike that of the scribes (1:22). On the occasion that Jesus heals the paralyzed man, “some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts” the legitimacy of Jesus’ pronouncement of forgiveness of sins (2:6). Scribes are critical of Jesus’

table fellowship with “sinners and tax collectors” (2:16). Scribes suggest that Jesus is in league with Satan (3:22). Scribes, who have come from Jerusalem, take part in the complaint that Jesus’ disciples eat with unwashed hands in disregard of the tradition of the elders (7:1, 5). Only a few pericopes earlier, the scribes are named in the company of “elders and ruling priests” who will kill Jesus (8:31). In the immediately preceding pericope it is the scribes who teach that “Elijah must come first” (9:11). The scribes appear again in the third passion prediction (10:33). After the temple incident, the scribes join the ruling priests in their desire to kill Jesus (11:18). The scribes are again in the company of the ruling priests when they approach Jesus and demand by what authority he does what he does (11:27). In the temple precincts a scribe asks Jesus which commandment is the greatest (12:28). This same scribe admits that Jesus’ answer is correct (12:32). Jesus openly challenges the scribes’ habit of referring to the Messiah under the rubric of “son of David” (12:35). Jesus warns of avaricious scribes who prey on the poor and defenseless (12:38). The scribes take part in the plot to arrest Jesus (14:1). The thugs who arrest Jesus are said to be “from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders” (14:43). The scribes assemble with Jesus’ accusers (14:53; 15:1). And finally, the scribes join in with the ruling priests in mocking Jesus on the cross (15:31; for more on the scribes, see *Comment* on 11:18).

Up to this point in the Markan narrative, the scribes are critical but not dangerous. As the review of the material just undertaken shows, the scribes become increasingly threatening as Jesus enters Judea and especially Jerusalem.

15 καὶ εὐθὺς πᾶς ὁ ὄχλος ἰδόντες αὐτὸν ἐξεθαμβήθησαν καὶ προστρέχοντες ἡσπάζοντο αὐτόν, “And immediately all the crowd, seeing him, were greatly amazed, and running up to him, they greeted him.” Apparently the crowd is “greatly amazed” (according to Torrey [*Our Translated Gospels*, 11–31] the underlying Aramaic ܬܝܬܝܬܐ *tēwahū* should have been rendered “they were *much excited*”) when they see Jesus because his garments still shine. This is possible, but the Greek of Mark’s text still makes perfectly good sense as it stands, especially if the amazement of the crowd is occasioned by the lingering effects of Jesus’ transfiguration. Recognizing him, the crowd runs up to him and greets him. The impression one gains from this scene is that Jesus’ fame and power are such that he immediately attracts crowds of people, many of them hoping for healing and blessing.

16 τί συζητεῖτε πρὸς αὐτούς; “What are you debating with them?” It is not clear to whom Jesus addressed his question. One would think that Jesus would have asked his disciples what they were discussing with the scribes. As explained in the textual note above, some MSS have Jesus direct his question to the scribes. But this seems unlikely. Why would Jesus ask a question challenging the scribes concerning what they have been discussing with his own disciples? It is more probable that Jesus is speaking to his disciples, even if someone in the crowd shouts out an answer.

17 καὶ ἀπεκρίθη αὐτῷ εἷς ἐκ τοῦ ὄχλου, διδάσκαλε, ἤνεγκα τὸν υἱόν μου πρὸς σέ, ἔχοντα πνεῦμα ἄλαλον, “And one of the crowd answered him, ‘Teacher, I brought to you my son, who has a mute spirit.’” The εἷς ἐκ τοῦ ὄχλου, “one of the crowd,” who answers Jesus is none other than the father of the boy who is afflicted with the unclean spirit. His anxiety overrides the details of the debate that occupy the attention of the scribes and Jesus’ disciples. The father cares for none of the finer points of theology; he desperately seeks help for his son.

Διδάσκαλε, “Teacher,” is the dynamic equivalent of רַבִּי *rabbî*, “Rabbi” (see John 1:38). S. Cohen has collected some fifty-seven inscriptions in which *Rabbi* occurs, either in Greek or in

Hebrew/Aramaic (“Epigraphical Rabbis,” *JQR* 72 [1981/82] 1–17). Of these, fifty are from Palestine. He and P. W. van der Horst (*Ancient Jewish Epitaphs: An Introductory Survey of a Millennium of Jewish Funerary Epigraphy* [300 B.C.E.–700 C.E.] [Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1991] 97–98, 133–34) have concluded that the title rarely refers to an ordained person but usually refers to prominent citizens. This informal usage is consistent with what we observe with respect to Jesus. (Jesus had been called Rabbi by Peter in the earlier transfiguration episode.)

The father says ἤνεγκα τὸν υἱόν μου πρὸς σέ, “I brought to you my son.” But he did not bring him directly to Jesus; rather he brought the child to the disciples who had not accompanied Jesus to the mountain. Nonetheless, Jesus will assume a measure of responsibility in the sense that if someone has reached out to his disciples, it is as though they have reached out to him (see 6:7–13, where the disciples are commissioned and granted authority over unclean spirits). This may in part explain Jesus’ personal annoyance with his disciples. The father further says that his son “has a mute spirit.” By this he means that the spirit impairs his son’s speech.

18 ὅπου ἐὰν αὐτὸν καταλάβῃ ῥήσσει αὐτόν, καὶ ἀφρίζει καὶ τρίζει τοὺς ὀδόντας καὶ ξηραίνεται· καὶ εἶπα τοῖς μαθηταῖς σου ἵνα αὐτὸ ἐκβάλωσιν, καὶ οὐκ ἴσχυσαν, “whenever it seizes him, it knocks him down; and he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. And I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they were not able.” The effects, or symptoms, of the mute spirit resemble epilepsy (and the malady is explicitly referred to as such in Matt 17:15). Falling to the ground, foaming at the mouth, and grinding teeth are all symptomatic of the “falling down” syndrome, as people in late antiquity thought of it. One of the more famous persons with this affliction was Julius Caesar. The condition was sometimes thought to be the result of contact with spirits or deities. The case of the stricken boy falls loosely in this category, though Jesus’ contemporaries regard it as demonic possession.

The father of the boy had asked Jesus’ disciples to cast out the spirit, “but they were not able,” or more literally, “they lacked the strength” (οὐκ ἴσχυσαν). The disciples’ inability sets the stage for Jesus’ superior display of strength as the “stronger one” (3:27) whom John had predicted (1:7; rightly Gundry, 488–89).

19 Jesus’ outburst, ὦ γενεὰ ἄπιστος, “O unbelieving generation,” underscores the need for faith, a theme touched upon elsewhere in Mark (cf. 2:5; 4:40; 5:34, 36; 10:52; 11:22–23). Perhaps more importantly, Jesus’ description of his generation as “unbelieving” is meant to remind readers of the original summons to repent and “believe” in the gospel (Mark 1:15). The implication is that this generation is not simply a generation of skeptics but a generation that has failed to respond to the good news of the presence of the kingdom, a presence attested by Jesus’ power over Satan and his unholy allies. Because of a lack of faith in Jesus’ proclamation, gaining freedom from Satan’s oppression is hindered.

Jesus’ questions, ἕως πότε πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἔσομαι; ἕως πότε ἀνέξομαι ὑμῶν; “How long shall I be with you? How long am I to bear with you?” underscore how antithetical unbelief is to Jesus’ message and his own faith in God. Indeed, it shows how Jesus has adopted God’s viewpoint (Martin, *Mark: Evangelist and Theologian*, 118). Unbelief causes him distress and even hinders his ministry (cf. 6:5). Jesus wonders how long he must put up with this unbelief, a query that may hint at his expectation of death. However, it is also possible that Jesus

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anticipated a general awakening of faith in Israel and with it the appearance of the kingdom of God in its fullness.

φέρετε αὐτὸν πρὸς με, “bring him to me,” portrays Jesus’ superior power. His disciples lacked the strength, but Jesus does not. If the father will bring his afflicted son to Jesus, he will be healed.

20 ἤνεγκαν αὐτὸν πρὸς αὐτόν. καὶ ἰδὼν αὐτὸν τὸ πνεῦμα εὐθύς συνεσπάραξεν αὐτόν, καὶ πεσὼν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐκυλίετο ἀφρίζων, “they brought the boy to him. And seeing him, the spirit immediately convulsed the boy, and falling on the ground, he rolled about, foaming at the mouth.” The reaction of the spirit to the presence of Jesus is reminiscent of the violent reactions, usually verbal, that other unclean spirits have had when they encountered him (cf. 1:23–26, 34; 3:11–12; 5:6–13). The spirit is said to have seen Jesus, and it is the spirit that is said to have convulsed the boy. The symptoms may have been those usually associated with epilepsy, but the Markan evangelist makes it clear that it was an evil spirit, something distinct from the boy himself, that caused his illness.

21 πόσος χρόνος ἐστὶν ὡς τοῦτο γέγονεν αὐτῷ; “How long has this been happening to him?” The question about how long the boy had suffered from his condition underscores the seriousness of it. ἐκ παιδιόθεν, “since childhood,” Jesus is told. That is, this is no passing condition but one that has plagued the man’s son from early childhood. The implication is not only that this condition is “harder to break” (Gundry, 490) but that in all probability other exorcists besides Jesus’ disciples had failed in attempts to rid the boy of the spirit. Jesus’ ability to cast it out is therefore all the more impressive.

22 πολλάκις καὶ εἰς πῦρ αὐτὸν ἔβαλεν καὶ εἰς ὕδατα ἵνα ἀπολέσῃ αὐτόν· ἀλλ’ εἴ τι δύνῃ, βοήθησον ἡμῖν σπλαγχνισθεὶς ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς, “indeed often it even casts him into the fire and into the water, so that it might destroy him. But if you can, help us by having pity on us!” The grim summary of what this evil spirit has done to the boy clarifies the desperation felt by the father. The demonic possession is not only disruptive and oppressive but dangerous and potentially fatal. The boy is thrown sometimes into the fire and sometimes into water, ἵνα ἀπολέσῃ αὐτόν, “so that it might destroy him.” The problem is so severe that the father is not at all confident that Jesus, despite his remarkable reputation, can do anything to help. Again, this implies that others have tried and have failed. However, the boy has never been attended by Jesus.

23 ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῷ, τὸ εἰ δύνῃ, “Jesus said to him, ‘If you can!’” Jesus’ exasperated response, εἰ δύνῃ, “If you can!” repeats the father’s words and stems from his frustration with his generation’s lack of faith. πάντα δυνατὰ τῷ πιστεύοντι, “all things are possible for the one who has faith,” the converse of this statement, is also true: little is possible for him who has no faith. A further lesson on the possibility of faith will be given in 11:22–24.

24 The father responds to Jesus’ teaching: πιστεύω· βοήθει μου τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ, “I believe; help my unbelief!” In a certain sense, then, Jesus provides enablement for both the father and his son: for the father, the needed faith, for the son, the needed deliverance from an evil spirit. The plea for faith, even if admittedly weak (lit. “faithlessness”), was all that was necessary. The waning faith of the father is easily explained as the result of the disciples’ failure to exorcise the demon in the first place. The father may have reasoned that if Jesus’ disciples could not overpower the spirit, then perhaps Jesus himself would not be able to either.

25 ἰδὼν δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι ἐπισυντρέχει ὄχλος, ἐπετίμησεν τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἀκαθάρτῳ λέγων αὐτῷ, τὸ ἄλαλον καὶ κωφὸν πνεῦμα, ἐγὼ ἐπιτάσσω σοι, ἔξελθε ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ μηκέτι

εἰσέλθης εἰς αὐτόν, “But Jesus, seeing that a crowd was gathering, rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, ‘Mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again!’ ” When Jesus sees the crowd gathering (ἐπισυντρέχει, “is running together,” or “is converging”), he brings the exorcism to a speedy conclusion. The press of the crowd may have interfered with what was clearly a difficult exorcism. It is not likely that the crowd was converging upon the boy himself, perhaps to attack him, as has been suggested. Nor is it likely that secrecy plays a role, as it does elsewhere (cf. 1:25, 34, 44; 3:11–12; 5:43), for no command to secrecy is given in the present pericope; the explanation to the disciples is given “privately” (v 28), and that has nothing to do with secrecy.

Jesus commands the demon in the first person: ἐγὼ ἐπιτάσσω σοι, “I command you.” In the narrative the contrast with the disciples’ earlier unsuccessful attempt is thus underscored: they had given commands, which the demon had ignored; this time it is Jesus himself who is giving the commands, which the demon cannot ignore. The charge that the unclean spirit μηκέτι εἰσέλθης εἰς αὐτόν, “never enter him again!” parallels Josephus’s claims about the success of certain exorcists of his day (see *Comment* on v 14 above). Comparison with the exorcistic lore in the *Testament of Solomon* is instructive. There, King Solomon disputes with various demons, sometimes (as in 13:1–3) complying with their requests in order to obtain the desired information. In Jesus’ exorcisms demons are silenced and cast out.

26–27 κράξας καὶ πολλὰ σπαράξας ἐξῆλθεν, “After crying and convulsing him violently, he came out.” The violence (as implied by πολλά, lit. “many times”) serves as tangible evidence of the success of the exorcism. Jesus’ command did not go unheeded but caused an upheaval. According to Josephus, the Jewish exorcist Eleazar commanded an exorcised demon to tip over a wash basin as evidence of his actual eviction (*Ant.* 8.2.5 §48). In his imaginative and apologetic biography of Apollonius of Tyana, Philostratus of Athens relates similar details (*Vit. Apoll.* 4.20, where a demon knocks over a statue as it exits a young man).

In sharp contrast to the great violence, the boy now suddenly stops moving and lies so still that τοὺς πολλοὺς λέγειν ὅτι ἀπέθανεν, “many were saying that he had died.” The unusual stillness of the boy offered additional proof of the eviction of the demon, which had consistently manifested itself by throwing the boy in water and fire and, when confronted by Jesus, by violent convulsions. The evangelist does not in fact contradict the opinion of those who thought that the boy had died; perhaps he had. If so, Jesus’ raising him up (κρατήσας τῆς χειρὸς αὐτοῦ ἤγειρεν αὐτόν, καὶ ἀνέστη, “taking him by the hand, raised him up; and he stood”) only compounds the already astounding deed. The boy is able to stand on his own, thus demonstrating his restoration to health.

28 καὶ εἰσελθόντος αὐτοῦ εἰς οἶκον οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ κατ’ ἰδίαν ἐπηρώτων αὐτόν, “And when he had entered the house, his disciples privately asked him.” Elsewhere in Mark the disciples receive private instruction (cf. 4:34; 7:17–23; 13:3), and in other cases Jesus heals people in private (5:37–42; 7:33). The disciples want to know why they were unable to cast out the demon. Their question is understandable, given the fact that Jesus had earlier given them “authority over unclean spirits” (6:7).

ὅτι ἡμεῖς οὐκ ἠδυνήθημεν ἐκβαλεῖν αὐτό, “Why were we unable to cast it out?” The disciples’ question implies that normally they were able to cast out demons, having been authorized earlier by Jesus to do so (6:7). On the interrogative ὅτι (usually “that,” but here “why”), see Field, *Notes*, 33 (and *Comment* on 9:11).

29 Jesus explains to his disciples that τοῦτο τὸ γένος ἐν οὐδενὶ δύναται ἐξελεῖν εἰ μὴ ἐν προσευχῇ, “this kind [of evil spirit] cannot come out by any means except by prayer.” Torrey (*Our Translated Gospels*, 129–31) thinks that the phrase εἰ μὴ ἐν προσευχῇ, “except by prayer,” had understood the Aramaic as אִלּ לֹא *’il lā*, “if not,” when in all probability it originally read אִלּ אַפּ *’ap lā*, “not even,” by prayer. But this proposal does not make good sense in the present context. Is Jesus really telling his disciples that this kind of demon cannot be cast out “by any means ... not even by prayer”? Jesus himself was able to cast it out. Or has he told his disciples that only he can cast out the difficult demons and his disciples cannot. If the latter is true, then the earlier assertion that Jesus gave his disciples “authority over the unclean spirits” (6:7) is called into question and creates an unlikely tension within the Markan narrative. On the historical level also it is not likely that Jesus, who could “cast out demons by the finger of God” (Luke 11:20), believed that there was a class of demons that his disciples could not cast out by any means, not even by prayer.

Explanation

In the healing of the boy with the unclean spirit we again witness the unmatched power of Jesus. Still exuding the radiance of his transfiguration, Jesus enters a scene of controversy and chaos, and quickly takes charge of the situation. Reauthorized by the divine voice that had commanded his disciples to “listen to him!” (9:7), Jesus commands, perhaps ironically, a deaf-mute spirit, and the spirit obeys. Jesus’ power and authority are undiminished, even after the announcement of his passion in 8:31 and 9:9. The distance between Jesus and his disciples continues to widen (cf. 6:51; 8:14–21).

The story also underscores the importance of faith, for along with repentance it is the prerequisite for unleashing the power of the kingdom of God. When faith is present, God works.²

² Craig A. Evans, [Mark 8:27–16:20](#), vol. 34B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2001), 47–54.

SUCCESS AND FAILURE IN EXORCISM (9:14–29)

TEXTUAL NOTES

14. It seems likely that Mark wrote the plural ἐλθόντες ... εἶδον, continuing the account of the four men who went up the mountain, and that the verbs were altered to the singulars found in most MSS and versions in order to focus attention on Jesus, thus providing an antecedent for αὐτόν (v. 15) and the singular verbs which follow.

23. The abrupt and probably unfamiliar idiom Τὸ εἰ δύνῃ (see notes ad loc.) has been ‘improved’ in the alternative readings (and by the correctors of κ), which offer a smoother but redundant clause by taking δύναιμι to refer to the father’s ability to believe rather than as an echo of his apparent questioning of Jesus’ ability to help in the preceding sentence.

24. MSS evidence strongly supports the omission of μετὰ θακρύνων, which appears to be an early Western storytelling embellishment.

29. The words καὶ νηστεία are found in the vast majority of witnesses, both MS and versional (and accordingly also included in this verse where it occurs in MSS of Mt. 17:21). Their omission in κ* B has persuaded most critics to omit them, influenced by the fact that in 1 Cor. 7:5 the same addition to προσευχῇ, though in a far less impressive range of witnesses, is generally agreed to be secondary, and to reflect early church devotional practice (cf. Acts 10:30 for a similar variant). In this context, however, where the issue is not general devotion but exorcistic practice, there is less reason to detect the influence of later conventional terminology. While the words might have been added to promote a current ascetic spirituality, they might equally have been omitted to discourage a current overemphasis on fasting, or perhaps because a scribe felt them to be incompatible with the dismissal of fasting in 2:19. In the light of the massive external evidence for the inclusion of καὶ νηστεία, they should perhaps be retained, despite the confident A-rating in UB³S⁴⁴ (unless it is believed that κ and B together can never be wrong!). Huck-Greeven retains.

Mark’s narrative, which in Act One was full of miracles, has changed in its emphasis. Apart from the two healings of the blind which ‘frame’ the journey to Jerusalem, this is the only other ‘normal’ miracle recorded in the gospel after Act One. There is of course also the cursing of the fig tree in chapter 11, but that is, as we shall see, a symbolic act of power quite unlike the miracles of Act One, in which Jesus’ special ἐξουσία is deployed to meet human need. Here we are on more familiar ground, and the pericope is in broad terms similar to Mark’s other specific accounts of exorcism: a serious case of demon possession is graphically described, and a preliminary dialogue (with the demon, 1:23–25, 5:7–10; with the parent of the possessed, 7:25–29 and here) leads to a word of command resulting in the immediate expulsion of the demon and the restoration to normality of the possessed person. What distinguishes this narrative from the others is the previous failure of the disciples (vv. 14–18) and their subsequent question about why they had failed (vv. 28–29). It is this feature which gives this

³UBS *The Greek New Testament*, 4th rev. edn., ed. B. Aland, K. Aland, et al. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/United Bible Societies, 1993

⁴⁴ *The Greek New Testament*, 4th rev. edn., ed. B. Aland, K. Aland, et al. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/United Bible Societies, 1993

story a special appropriateness for Act Two. While Jesus' power is again clearly displayed, as in Act One, the focus now is not on the impression made on the crowd but on the lesson which the experience taught the disciples. It thus belongs appropriately with the verbal teaching which predominates in Act Two, as an object lesson on discipleship and faith. It is an element in the gradual reorientation which the disciples are undergoing as they discover what it means to follow Jesus, and this lesson, like so many others in this part of the gospel, derives from the display of their own inadequacy.³⁵⁷

This pericope thus takes its place in the sequence of events and teaching which were set in motion at Caesarea Philippi. The high point reached in the declaration of Jesus' Messiahship has led immediately into bewildering and discouraging words about suffering and death, not only for Jesus but for those who follow him. This anticlimax has then been counterbalanced both by the promise of 9:1 and by the privilege of Peter, James, and John on the mountain. Already, however, that experience has led to further talk about suffering and death, and now the mountain is left behind and we re-enter the real world below where the other disciples have proved unable to rise to the demand made of them. They still have a lot to learn, and the rest of chapters 9 and 10 will be devoted to their instruction and preparation for responsibilities ahead.

The lesson here, then, derives from a spectacular failure to fulfil the commission to cast out demons which has been given to the Twelve in 3:15 and 6:7, and which they have already begun to undertake successfully (6:13). In the light of that earlier success, this failure has come as an unwelcome surprise to them, as well as to the watching crowd. Was that earlier commission to exorcise only temporary? What had they done wrong? Was it because they had been left on their own without Jesus (but surely the exorcisms of 6:13 were also performed in his absence)? Such reflections no doubt lie behind the question which they pose to Jesus in v. 28, 'Why could we not cast it out?' It is with Jesus' answer to that question that Mark's pericope closes, showing his reason for including this story at this point in his gospel.

But for all that it remains a dramatic account of an exorcism by Jesus, and Mark tells it with gusto. It is one of the more impressive examples of Mark's tendency to tell at greater length and with fuller circumstantial detail a story which Matthew and Luke can deal with much more concisely.³⁶⁸ Mk. 9:14–29 consists of 272 words, whereas Lk. 9:37–43a tells the same story in 144 words, and Mt. 17:14–20a in a mere 110 (to which he appends in v. 20b one of two parallel sayings about faith which correspond to Mark 11:22–23 rather than belonging to this story as Mark records it).

The symptoms described are in many ways similar to those of an epileptic fit, and many versions and commentators have simply labelled the story as that of the 'Epileptic Boy'. All three evangelists, however, narrate it unambiguously as an exorcism, and Mark and Luke offer no term comparable to our 'epilepsy'. Matthew includes the verb *σεληνιάζεται* which is often

⁵³⁷ It is this different orientation which accounts for some of the peculiarities of this pericope as compared with other miracle stories. D. W. Chapman, *Orphan*, 110–17, rightly notes these differences, but accounts for them instead by the theory that Mark has written this story as an allegory of the salvation Jesus brings to Israel by casting out the 'rebellious spirit' which has been the root of the nation's problems from the beginning.

⁶³⁸ J. F. Williams, *Followers*, 138–39 n. 1, shows how the apparently repetitive nature of the narration serves 'to enrich Mark's characterization of the people in the story'.

understood to correspond to our 'epilepsy', and is sometimes even simply translated as such. But the term is not so specific; it denotes a condition connected with the moon (hence AV, 'lunatic'), but it can be connected with epilepsy only by the prior assumption that Mt. 17:14–20 describes an epileptic. In the ancient world knowledge of brain function was limited, and we know that the symptoms of epilepsy could be attributed to a supernatural force (it was known among pagans as the 'sacred disease'). There are ancient texts which link it with the moon,³⁷⁹ but σεληνιάζομαι does not in itself denote epilepsy.⁴⁸⁰

Ancient accounts of medical conditions are seldom precise, and the terminology used differs from ours. It seems not unlikely that the personality disorder associated with demon possession could result in violent symptoms similar to those produced by the electrical disturbance in the brain which we call epilepsy,⁴⁹¹ but that is by no means to equate the two. In the circumstances it seems wiser to avoid the word 'epilepsy' here, and to interpret the story, as all three evangelists tell it, as one of exorcism.⁴¹⁰² This may help to avoid two opposite and unhelpful extremes, on the one hand the reductionist assumption that all biblical accounts of demon possessions are merely primitive ways of describing malfunction of the brain, and on the other hand the simplistic attribution of epilepsy as we know it to demonic causes.

14–15 Neither the crowd nor the scribes play any further part in the story, beyond a brief crowd reaction in v. 26b. But their mention, in a section of the gospel which focuses primarily on the private conversations of Jesus and his disciples, serves to heighten the drama of the occasion and the embarrassingly public nature of the disciples' failure. συζητέω (especially when followed by πρός) sometimes carries a hostile sense, 'dispute with', and here, where the grammatical subject of συζητούντας is specifically the γραμματεῖς, we are reminded of other occasions when hostile criticism has come not from the crowd but from a group of scribes (2:6, 16; 3:22; 7:1). The disciples' failure has given them further grounds for scepticism. The crowd, on the other hand, appears to be well disposed, at least in the welcome they give to Jesus, perhaps already hoping for a more successful treatment of the boy's condition. Their leaving the disciples and running up to greet Jesus emphasises the distinction between the Master and his followers.

⁷³⁹ Galen 9.903 is the most explicit: (ἡ σελήνη) τὰς τῶν ἐπιλήπτων τηρεῖ περιόδους. Lucian, *Toxaris* 24, mentions a deformed woman of whom it was said that she used to 'fall down' (καταπίπτειν) when the moon was waxing, though the complaint is not otherwise identified as epilepsy. In *Philopseudes* 16 Lucian refers to demon-possessed people who 'fall down in the light of the moon, and roll their eyes and fill their mouths with foam', though again without a specific mention of epilepsy (these are the only two references given in LSJ for καταπίπτω as meaning 'to have the falling sickness').

⁸⁴⁰ An interesting account of the treatment of epilepsy by Rufus of Ephesus in the second century A.D. in H. C. Kee, *Medicine*, 48–50, indicates a purely physical understanding of both cause and treatment.

⁹⁴¹ Cf. the careful discussion from a medical perspective by J. Wilkinson, *ExpTim* 79 (1967/ 8) 39–42. Wilkinson concludes that the symptoms are those of 'the major form of epilepsy' but goes on to argue that such symptoms might be caused by demon possession.

¹⁰⁴² P. J. Achtemeier, *CBQ* 37 (1975) 481 n. 35, gives reasons for not identifying this as a case of epilepsy.

But ἐξεθαμβήθησαν is unexpected. Normally verbs of astonishment (see on 1:22) denote the crowd's reaction to a miracle or to some striking teaching, but they have seen and heard nothing yet, nor has the narrative given us reason to believe that they had any inkling of what has happened on the mountain. It is tempting to detect an echo of the Israelites' awe before Moses when he came down from the mountain with his face shining (Ex. 34:29–35),⁴¹¹³ but we have noted that Mark has avoided any clear allusion to that narrative. Verse 8 suggests an immediate return to normality, and the secrecy demanded in v. 9 would be strange if the 'transfiguration' of Jesus remained visible for all to see. More likely Mark uses the verb rather extravagantly to denote the powerful impression which Jesus' personal presence by now created; 'this authority emanates from him even before he speaks or acts' (Schweizer).⁴¹²⁴

16–18 In view of the subject of the participle in v. 14, and the repetition here of the same verb, the αὐτούς to whom Jesus addresses his question must be the scribes, even though the crowd are the nearer antecedent. Τί συζητεῖτε πρὸς αὐτούς echoes συζητοῦντας πρὸς αὐτούς in v. 14, and refers to the scribes' dispute with the disciples, not to their (or the crowd's) questioning among themselves (cf. 1:27; 9:10 for this sense of συζητέω).⁴¹³⁵ The answer, however, comes not from the scribes but from the man whose request has precipitated the problem. The address διδάσκαλε is used in Mark both by disciples (see on 4:38) and by those outside the group who seek Jesus' help or opinion (cf. 5:35; 10:17; 12:14, 19, 32); 5:35 and 14:14 suggest that he was popularly known as ὁ διδάσκαλος. The man's aim had been to enlist Jesus' help in person (πρὸς σέ), but in Jesus' absence he has had to be content with the 'second team'. Nonetheless he expected the disciples to be able to effect a complete deliverance of his son (ἵνα αὐτὸ ἐκβάλωσιν), and has been disappointed at their failure. The use of οὐκ ἴσχυσαν rather than merely οὐκ ἐδύναντο increases their discomfiture: they proved too weak, and have been defeated in a power struggle (cf. the use of ἰσχύω in 5:4 in another exorcism narrative: no one had the strength to tame him).

The boy's condition is consistently described as demon possession rather than a medical complaint (ἔχοντα πνεῦμα, καταλάβη, ῥήσσει αὐτόν, αὐτὸ ἐκβάλωσιν), and the rest of the pericope will maintain this perspective. But the symptoms described (and further developed in vv. 20, 22, and 26) are similar to those of an epileptic seizure. See the introduction to this pericope for the problem of diagnosis. ῥήσσω is usually understood to be a less common 'by-form' of ῥήγνυμι, which normally means to 'tear' or 'break', a suitably violent word in this context, but not easy to visualise in physical terms; there is evidence, however, that ῥήσσω also

¹¹⁴³ J. Marcus, *Way*, 82–83; Hooker, 222–23. Gundry, 487–88, does not suggest a reference to Ex. 34, but explains the crowd's astonishment by the supposition that Jesus' clothes were still glistening.

¹²⁴⁴ T. Dwyer, *Wonder*, 147, lists a wide range of different explanations of the use of ἐκθαμβέομαι here, noting that the verb (which occurs in Mark also in 14:33; 16:5, 6) is unusual and intensive. He explains the function of the verb here in terms of Mark's desire to prepare the reader for the approaching passion, but offers no explanation for it in this narrative setting other than simply that 'it is Jesus himself who is amazing' (149).

¹³⁴⁵ Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 100 (with 616), apparently assumes a reflexive sense here.

occurs as a poetic word for ‘throw down’, ‘dash to the ground’ (see BAG¹⁴D, 735b), and in the light of v. 20 this seems a more likely sense here. The symptoms described in ἀφρίζω (foam [at the mouth]) and τρίζω τοὺς ὀδόντας (gnash the teeth) are clear enough, and ξηραίνομαι (to harden, grow stiff) probably denotes a seizure of the whole body which has a paralysing effect (cf. the use of the same verb for a paralysed arm in 3:1). These terms, and the behaviour described in vv. 20, 26, indicate a temporary physical seizure caused sporadically by the ‘resident’ demon rather than a permanent condition (note v. 18, ὅπου ἔαν αὐτὸν καταλάβῃ).

It is surprising, therefore, to find that the demon is described as πνεῦμα ἄλαλον. The same characteristic is picked up by Jesus’ address to the demon in v. 25, τὸ ἄλαλον καὶ κωφὸν πνεῦμα. While there is nothing improbable in this combination of problems, it is interesting that neither Matthew nor Luke mentions a speech defect, and Mark’s narrative focuses on the ‘epileptic’ symptoms rather than on the restoration of speech. The fact that the boy was also dumb seems to be one of those ‘irrelevant’ narrative details which Mark so often preserves even though it is not where his interest is centred.

19 The antecedent of αὐτοῖς (and therefore the identity of the γενεὰ ἄπιστος) is not clear. Is it the last speaker (the father, with his son), the disciples (whose failure is the last element in the preceding speech), the crowd in general, or the scribes whose dispute with the disciples had been the subject of Jesus’ previous question? Or is Jesus’ exclamation a more general expression of exasperation, addressed not to a specific αὐτοῖς but to his whole human environment? It is not possible, and probably it is unnecessary, to answer these questions with confidence. If anyone has displayed a lack of faith so far in this pericope, it is presumably the disciples in their failure to exorcise; Matthew certainly so understood it (διὰ τὴν ὀλιγοπιστίαν ὑμῶν, Mt. 17:20). So they are at least included in the rebuke (see on 8:12), even if it is not aimed at them alone.⁴¹⁵⁶ But the nine disciples who were left behind hardly constitute a whole γενεά. Their faithlessness is symptomatic of the wider human condition, as Jesus in his ministry so often encountered it, an unwillingness to take God at his word and a horizon limited to merely human possibilities. As in 8:12 (and more frequently in Matthew), Jesus’ frustration with human ‘tunnel vision’ erupts into a rare diatribe (echoing Dt. 32:5) against the whole contemporary γενεά to whom his ministry was addressed (see on 8:12).⁴¹⁶⁷ The rhetorical questions, ἕως πότε πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἔσομαι; ἕως πότε ἀνέξομαι ὑμῶν; need be no more than idiomatic expressions of frustration. In the light of a developed incarnational theology they might be understood to express the concept of a temporary period on earth which was to be ended by an anticipated return to Jesus’ true home in heaven, but even at the time of Mark’s writing this would be to press more specific content out of the terms used than the idiom

¹⁴BAGD *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, by W. Bauer, trans. and rev. by W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich; 2d edn. rev. by F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979

¹⁵⁴⁶ Gundry, 489 (cf. 497), argues that the disciples are not included, and that ‘Jesus is condemning the crowd, including the father and the scribes in it, for making the disciples’ failure a reason to dispute the power of Jesus himself’; this seems rather abstruse.

¹⁶⁴⁷ This exclamation, with its echo of Moses’ characterisation of Israel as a rebellious generation, is perhaps the strongest element in the argument of D. W. Chapman (see above, p. 361 n. 37) that the whole pericope is intended to be an allegory of Israel’s ‘rebellious spirit’.

requires. πρὸς ὑμᾶς denotes merely association or involvement with (cf. 6:3; 14:49), while ἀνέχομαι (to put up with) shows that that association was not a happy one for the speaker. Jesus has had enough of unbelief.

But the remedy is not at this point further teaching for the crowd or even for the disciples, but a visible demonstration of his own ἐξουσία and of the liberating power of God. With the command φέρετε αὐτὸν πρὸς με (which is just what the father had originally tried to do, v. 17) the reader is put on the alert to see the disciples' failure overturned.

20 As usual in describing demon possession and exorcism, Mark speaks of the agency of the demon rather than of the victim (though the latter part of the sentence describes the resultant behaviour of the boy: πεσὼν ... ἐκυλίετο). It is the demon which 'sees' Jesus and reacts to him immediately by convulsing its 'host'.¹⁷⁴⁸ On this occasion, however, as in 7:24–30, no dialogue with the demon is recorded, merely a word of command. The demon expresses its response to Jesus not verbally (which was presumably impossible for a πνεῦμα ἄλαλον) but physically through the behaviour of the 'host'. συσπαράσσω (cf. σπαράσσω in v. 26 and in 1:26) roughly corresponds to ῥήσσει in the father's description in v. 18 (Lk. 9:42 combines the two verbs). The simple form of the verb, while originally used for such violent action as a dog tearing up a carcass (and thus closer to the meaning of ῥήγνυμι; see on v. 18), came to be used medically for retching or convulsion, and this seems the most likely sense here. The description of the boy rolling around on the ground foaming at the mouth is more dramatic than ξηραίνεται in v. 18, but it is not difficult to understand both the convulsions and the paralytic seizure as parts of the same 'epileptic' condition.

21–22 For Jesus' (or the evangelists') interest in the duration of a condition cf. 5:25; Lk. 13:11, 16; Jn. 5:5; 9:1.¹⁸⁴⁹ To mention it serves to heighten the impressiveness of an immediate deliverance, but in this case the enquiry may also be part of Jesus' 'diagnosis' of the problem to be confronted. This was no recent or temporary condition. The father's reply adds further cause for concern in that the seizures brought about by the demonic presence rendered the boy helpless and thus vulnerable to injury or death through fire or water. The personal verb ἔβαλεν (with the πνεῦμα as the unexpressed subject) followed by ἵνα suggests that such injury or death is not just a collateral hazard, but the malevolent intention of the demon (though in 5:13 the drowning of the new 'hosts' of the expelled demons does not seem to have been to their advantage).

In 1:40 the leper had apparently expressed uncertainty over Jesus' willingness to help (ἐὰν θέλῃς); this man seems to doubt his ability (εἴ τι δύνῃ). If, as we suggested in 1:40, the leper's ἐὰν θέλῃς was no more than polite diffidence, the same cannot be said here. In the light of the disciples' recent failure the father is understandably cautious in asking for deliverance even by Jesus. This is clearly a difficult case, and not even Jesus may have the power to tackle it. But even a little help is better than none: εἴ τι δύνῃ. If that is the implication, it is hardly surprising that the man's words draw a sharp reaction from Jesus in v. 23. For σπλαγχνίζομαι see on 6:34.

¹⁷⁴⁸ The masculine participle ἰδὼν with the neuter subject (τὸ πνεῦμα) is presumably a *constructio ad sensum*, in that it was through the boy's eyes that the demon 'saw'. See further on 5:10, where the host and the demons are interwoven as subjects and objects of the verbs, and cf. 1:24, where the demon's speech is reported as that of the host.

¹⁸⁴⁹ The use of ὥς is strange: it is possibly a variant of ἕως. See BDF 455(2, 3).

23–24 These verses highlight the significance of faith for the reception of divine power.⁵¹⁹⁰ The disciples' failure has already been implicitly attributed to unbelief (γενεὰ ἄπιστος, v. 19), and though the explicit answer to their question in v. 29 is about prayer, the two concepts are closely related: the effectiveness of prayer depends on the faith of the one praying (11:22–24). Here, however, it is the faith of the father rather than that of the exorcist which is in question; faith is not a mechanical aid to the exorcist, but rather the attitude, or better the relationship with God, required of all concerned if the force of evil is to be defeated.⁵²⁰¹

The neuter of the article is sometimes used to introduce a quoted word or phrase (e.g., Mt. 19:18; Rom. 13:9; 1 Cor. 4:6?; Gal. 5:14), sometimes as here picking up a word or phrase from the preceding sentence (Gal. 4:25; Eph. 4:9; Heb. 12:27). In all other such NT uses, however, the phrase so formed takes its place in a full sentence (except in Mt. 19:18, where it stands as the reply to the question Ποίᾳς;). Here a complete sentence can be found only by the rather cumbersome expedient of postulating an elliptical sense, 'So far as the εἰ δύνῃ is concerned [I tell you]' (BD²¹F 267[1]).⁵²²² The phrase is better taken here as syntactically independent, and read as an idiomatic exclamation, Τὸ εἰ δύνῃ!, echoing the man's tentative request in a tone of ironical rebuke: '“If you can” indeed!' How dare he express any doubt on the matter? Grammatically it is rough but effective, but scribal attempts to smooth it out into a proper sentence (see Textual Note) suggest that the idiom was not readily recognised as acceptable syntax.⁵²³³

A new sentence then begins with πάντα, affirming the contrary to the man's presumed scepticism (for God's ability to do the impossible see further on 11:22–23). It is debated whether τῷ πιστεύοντι here refers to the father or to Jesus the healer, but in the context both meanings are probably in view: Jesus has the ability to heal because of his faith, and the healing may be expected to be granted in response to the faith of the petitioner (as in 2:5; 5:34, 36).⁵²⁴⁴ It is the latter sense that is picked up in the father's reply. The apparent *carte blanche* offered by πάντα δυνατὰ τῷ πιστεύοντι, as of many other NT assurances about prayer, may need to be tempered by pastoral advice,⁵²⁵⁵ but it puts the emphasis where it should be, on the unlimited power of God in whom faith is placed; it rules out the suggestion that any force, certainly not the present demonic opponent, can be too much for God. But such assurances naturally promote an introspective concern as to how real the petitioner's faith is, and the father's

¹⁹⁵⁰ See above on 2:5; 5:34, and more fully S. E. Dowd, *Prayer*, 96–117.

²⁰⁵¹ C. D. Marshall, *Faith*, 116–18, argues that the father of the patient is specifically included in the general faithlessness of which Jesus complained in v. 19, so that in vv. 21–24 we see 'an initial coming to faith by the suppliant'.

²¹BDF *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, by F. Blass and A. Debrunner, trans. and rev. by R. W. Funk. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961

²²⁵² Cf. Cranfield, 'As to your "If you can", ...'

²³⁵³ See Schweizer, 186, for a translation reflecting such a 'smoother' flow to the dialogue, apparently ignoring the τό: '“Have pity on us and help us, if you possibly can!” “Yes,” said Jesus, “if *you* can! Everything is possible for the person who has faith.”'

²⁴⁵⁴ C. D. Marshall, *Faith*, 118–20.

²⁵⁵⁵ S. E. Dowd, *Prayer* 133–62, discusses the problem of theodicy in the context of unanswered prayer, with special reference to Jesus' 'unanswered' prayer in Gethsemane.

famously paradoxical reply captures the tortured self-doubt of many sincere prayers. Belief and unbelief are mixed in most of us, and perhaps Mark would encourage us to notice that this common condition proved in the event to be no obstacle to his request being granted. At least he put his ἀπιστία in the right perspective by not dwelling on it but asking Jesus to help with it.⁵²⁶⁶ His belief, however uncertain, was all that was needed, and from this point he plays no further part in the narrative, so that all the attention falls where it should, on the power of Jesus.⁵²⁷⁷

25 There is no need to assume that a different ὄχλος is introduced here. Either the crowd of v. 14 is still growing as new spectators arrive, or perhaps Jesus' consultation with the father and his son has been aside from the crowd, and now people are closing in on them again, so that it is time to act. For ἐπιτιμάω in a context of exorcism see on 1:25 (cf. 3:12). The demon, previously described as πνεῦμα ἄλαλον or just τὸ πνεῦμα, is now described by Mark's regular term τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἀκάθαρτον (used in every account of exorcism in this gospel), clearly marking the boy's condition, for all its distinctive traits of dumbness and 'epilepsy', as one of demon possession.

The word of command to the demon is fuller in this case than in other exorcisms, including a description of the nature of the spirit, a statement of the identity of the exorcist, and a specific command not only to leave the boy but also not to return. The use of κωφόν with ἄλαλον (v. 17) probably adds little, since the two words can be virtually synonymous, though κωφός is a broader term, and may indicate that the boy was deaf as well as dumb (see on 7:32); the doubling of adjectives is typical of Mark's prolix style of storytelling. The inclusion of the pronoun ἐγώ suggests that ἐγὼ ἐπιτάσσω σοι (unparalleled in the gospels in such a context) is not a redundant piece of 'padding', but draws attention to the person issuing the order: 'It is I who command it'. The demon may have been able to resist the lesser authority of the disciples, but has now met its match (cf. the recognition of Jesus and of his authority by demons in 1:24; 3:11; 5:7, 10). The command to come out is normal, but the addition of καὶ μηκέτι εἰσέλθης εἰς αὐτόν is unique in the gospels. Josephus (*An²⁸t.* 8.47), however, tells how Eleazar, after expelling a demon, adjured it μηκέτ' εἰς αὐτόν ἐπανήξειν, and Philostratus (*V²⁹A* 4.20) records the command of Apollonius of Tyana to 'leave the young boy and never possess anyone else'. Mt. 12:43–45 envisages the possibility of the return of an expelled demon, and the request of Legion's demons for an alternative home (5:12) indicates the problem of homelessness for an evicted demon, a problem which an exorcist had to take into account, hence this specific command not to return. For the father it is a much-needed reassurance that a condition which has persisted ἐκ παιδιόθεν is now at an end.

²⁶⁵⁶ J. F. Williams, *Followers*, 139–41, helpfully analyses Mark's account of the father as included in the faithlessness to which Jesus referred in v. 19, but progressing from there through doubt (v. 22) to 'believing and unbelieving at the same time'. Williams emphasises that the father, though weak in faith, was at least, unlike the disciples, aware of his problem.

²⁷⁵⁷ For fuller discussion of the 'ambiguity' of the father's faith/unbelief see S. E. Dowd, *Prayer*, 110–14.

²⁸ *Ant Jewish Antiquities*

²⁹ *VA Vita Apollonii*

26–27 For the cry of the expelled demon cf. 1:26 and notes on 1:23; the verb σπαράσσω (cf. on v. 20 above) also occurs in 1:26. The departure of the demon, which has been responsible for the boy's violent movements, leaves him inert. The account of Jesus' taking his hand and raising him up echoes the language used of the raising of Jairus's daughter (5:41–42), but here we are left in no doubt that the impression of death was temporary and mistaken. This is not another resuscitation, but the restoration of the boy to normality after a traumatic experience of exorcism.

28–29 For the οἶκος as the place of private questioning and instruction after a public event or pronouncement see also 7:17; 10:10 (cf. 4:10). For the same connotation in κατ' ἰδίαν cf. 4:34 and the similar κατὰ μόνας in 4:10. Still smarting, no doubt, from their public humiliation, the disciples are genuinely puzzled as to the reason for their failure, after their initial successes in exorcism (6:13). For ὅτι as an interrogative 'Why?' see on 2:16; 9:11.

Jesus' reply is surprising, both in that it appears to differentiate demons into categories of 'difficulty', and also (particularly if καὶ νηστεία is not part of the text; see Textual Note) in that it implies that the disciples did not pray.

To take the latter point first, were the disciples so confident in their own authority that they had attempted an exorcism without turning to God for help? The situation presumably did not allow them the luxury of an extended time of prayer before making the attempt, but the simple phrase ἐν προσευχῇ does not specify the duration or quality of the prayer, and an immediate and instinctive appeal for divine power might be expected to be the natural response of those who have been with Jesus.⁵³⁰⁸ If, however, καὶ νηστεία is part of the text (see Textual Note), the situation is rather different, since fasting is not achieved in a moment: 'prayer and fasting' suggests a régime rather than the immediate response to a crisis. While Jesus has ruled out obligatory fasting for the disciples while he is still with them (2:19), this reading would suggest (as does Mt. 6:16–18) that they were still permitted, and even encouraged, to fast and pray on occasion, and that this would have been an appropriate preparation for the spiritual conflict involved in exorcism.

To return to the other surprising element in Jesus' reply, τοῦτο τὸ γένος apparently classifies the πνεῦμα ἄλαλον as making exceptional demands on the exorcist (and therefore perhaps as more difficult to expel than those they have previously encountered, 6:13). The NT does not elsewhere differentiate demons in this way, though Mark has gone out of his way in 5:3–5 to depict the demons which possessed Legion as particularly intractable. In Jesus' encounters with demons, however threatening, a simple word of command has sufficed in every case, and the present narrative has not depicted Jesus himself as engaging in a special régime of prayer (and fasting). But the disciples' authority was always derivative, and prayer is an appropriate recognition of that fact in any encounter with spiritual evil. Perhaps, then, τοῦτο τὸ γένος is not after all intended to place this particular demon into a special class, but denotes demons in general as a γένος which can never be tackled in merely human strength. The disciples' problem, on this understanding, has been a loss of the sense of dependence on Jesus' unique ἐξουσία which had undergirded their earlier exorcistic success. They have become blasé and thought of themselves as now the natural experts in such a case, and they must learn that

⁵³⁰⁸ For the link between faith and prayer in this context see C. D. Marshall, *Faith*, 222–23; S. E. Dowd, *Prayer*, 116–21.

in spiritual conflict there is no such automatic power. Their public humiliation has been a necessary part of their re-education to the principles of the kingdom of God.³¹

A DEMONIAK HEALED

14–29. *Healing of a demoniac, on the return from the mountain, whom the disciples left behind had failed to heal, owing to their lack of faith.*

On his return from the mountain, Jesus finds a multitude gathered, and a dispute going on between his disciples and some Scribes about a failure of the disciples to heal a demoniac boy, whom his father had brought to them. Jesus cries out against the unbelief which had caused this failure, and orders the boy to be brought to him. After some inquiries about the case, prompted apparently only by his interest in it, Jesus assures him that all things are possible to faith, which draws from the father the pathetic plea that he believes, but begs for help even in case of his unbelief. Whereupon Jesus orders the unclean spirit to leave his victim, which he does with a final convulsion, which seemed like death. But Jesus took him by the hand, and raised him up.

14. καὶ ἐλθόντες ... εἶδον (-δαν)—*and having come, they saw.*

ἐλθόντες ... εἶδον (WH³². -δαν), instead of ἐλθὼν ... εἶδεν, *having come, he saw*, Tisch³³. Treg³⁴. WH³⁵. RV³⁶. ³⁷ⲭ ³⁸Ⲑ³⁹Ⲛ⁴⁰ Δ one ms. Lat. Vet⁴¹.

καὶ γραμματεῖς συζητοῦντας πρὸς αὐτούς—*and Scribes disputing against them.* The prep. denotes the hostility of the Scribes better than the dat.

³¹ R. T. France, [*The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*](#), New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2002), 360–370.

³² WH. Westcott and Hort.

³³ Tisch. Tischendorf.

³⁴ Treg. Tregelles.

³⁵ WH. Westcott and Hort.

³⁶ RV. Revised Version.

³⁷ ⲭ *Codex Sinaiticus*.

³⁸ Ⲑ *Codex Vaticanus*.

³⁹ Ⲛ *Codex Regius*.

⁴⁰ Δ *Codex Sangallensis*

⁴¹ Lat. Vet. *Vetus Latina*.

πρὸς αὐτούς, instead of αὐτοῖς, *with them*, Tisch⁴². Treg⁴³. WH⁴⁴. RV⁴⁵. ⁴⁶ⲭ*et c.
⁴⁷B⁴⁸ C⁴⁹ G⁵⁰ L⁵¹ Δ⁵² 1, 2⁵³ 8, 118, 124, most *mss.* Lat. Vet⁵⁴. Vulg⁵⁵.

This incident of the Scribes is introduced by Mk. alone, who, as usual, brings the scene before us, and not the bare event. The cause of the dispute was the failure of the disciples to cure the demoniac, which gave the Scribes a chance to throw doubt on their healing power.

15. πᾶς ὁ ὄχλος ἰδόντες αὐτόν, ἐξεθαμβήθησαν—*all the crowd, having seen them, were utterly astonished.*⁵⁶¹

⁴²Tisch. Tischendorf.

⁴³Treg. Tregelles.

⁴⁴WH. Westcott and Hort.

⁴⁵RV. Revised Version.

⁴⁶ⲭ *Codex Sinaiticus*.

⁴⁷B *Codex Vaticanus*.

⁴⁸C *Codex Ephraemi*.

⁴⁹G *Codex Wolfi A*.

⁵⁰L *Codex Regius*.

⁵¹Δ *Codex Sangallensis*

⁵²1 *Codex Basiliensis*.

⁵³28 *Codex Regius*.

⁵⁴Lat. Vet. *Vetus Latina*.

⁵⁵Vulg. Vulgate.

⁵⁶¹ See on ἔκφοβοι, v. 6.

ιδόντες ἐξεθαμβήθησαν, instead of ἰδὼν, ἐξεθαμβήθη Tisch⁵⁷. Treg⁵⁸. WH⁵⁹. ⁶⁰ⲭ⁶¹ B⁶² C⁶³ D⁶⁴ L⁶⁵ Δ⁶⁶ 1, 1⁶⁷ 3, 27, 2⁶⁸ 8, 3⁶⁹ 3, 6⁷⁰ 9, 124, 20⁷¹ 9, 34⁷² 6, mss. Lat. Vet⁷³. Memph⁷⁴. Pesh⁷⁵. Harcl⁷⁶. *marg.*

Different reasons are given for this astonishment. Either Jesus' person still retained some of the glory of the transfiguration, or the people were astonished at his sudden and opportune appearance. Against the former it seems conclusive that he treats the transfiguration as an esoteric event, which would not have permitted him to make his appearance among the people until the effect had entirely passed away. Their surprise was a joyous surprise at this unexpected coming, so that they ran and greeted him.

16. ἐπηρώτησεν αὐτούς—*he asked them*. The pronoun evidently refers to the multitude just mentioned.

⁵⁷Tisch. Tischendorf.

⁵⁸Treg. Tregelles.

⁵⁹WH. Westcott and Hort.

⁶⁰ⲭ *Codex Sinaiticus*.

⁶¹B *Codex Vaticanus*.

⁶²C *Codex Ephraemi*.

⁶³D *Codex Bezae*.

⁶⁴L *Codex Regius*.

⁶⁵Δ *Codex Sangallensis*

⁶⁶1 *Codex Basiliensis*.

⁶⁷13 *Codex Regius*.

⁶⁸28 *Codex Regius*.

⁶⁹33 *Codex Regius*.

⁷⁰69 *Codex Leicestrensis*.

⁷¹209 An unnamed, valuable manuscript.

⁷²346 *Codex Ambrosianus*.

⁷³Lat. Vet. *Vetus Latina*.

⁷⁴Memph. Memphitic.

⁷⁵Pesh. *Peshito*.

⁷⁶Harcl. Harclean.

αὐτούς, instead of τοὺς γραμματεῖς, Tisch⁷⁷. Treg⁷⁸. WH⁷⁹. RV⁸⁰. ⁸¹ⲭ ⁸²B⁸³D⁸⁴L ⁸⁵Δ ⁸⁶1, 2⁸⁷8, 20⁸⁸9, *mss.* Lat. Vet⁸⁹. Vulg⁹⁰. Memph⁹¹.

Τί συνζητεῖτε πρὸς αὐτούς;—*What are you disputing with them?* αὐτούς here refers to the disciples.

17. καὶ ἀπεκρίθη αὐτῷ εἷς—*And one ... answered him.* εἷς—one made answer, though the question was addressed to the crowd. εἷς is not like the indefinite τις, but calls attention to the number.

ἀπεκρίθη αὐτῷ, instead of ἀποκριθεὶς ... εἶπε, Tisch⁹². Treg⁹³. WH⁹⁴. RV⁹⁵. ⁹⁶ⲭ ⁹⁷B⁹⁸D⁹⁹L ¹⁰⁰Δ 2¹⁰¹8, 3¹⁰²3, *mss.* Lat. Vet¹⁰³. Memph¹⁰⁴.

πνεῦμα ἄλαλον—*a dumb spirit.* For other instances of this accompaniment of the disease, see Mt. 9:32, 12:22.

18. ὅπου ἔαν—*wherever.*

⁷⁷Tisch. Tischendorf.

⁷⁸Treg. Tregelles.

⁷⁹WH. Westcott and Hort.

⁸⁰RV. Revised Version.

⁸¹ⲭ *Codex Sinaiticus.*

⁸²B *Codex Vaticanus.*

⁸³D *Codex Bezae.*

⁸⁴L *Codex Regius.*

⁸⁵Δ *Codex Sangallensis*

⁸⁶1 *Codex Basiliensis.*

⁸⁷28 *Codex Regius.*

⁸⁸209 An unnamed, valuable manuscript.

⁸⁹Lat. Vet. *Vetus Latina.*

⁹⁰Vulg. Vulgate.

⁹¹Memph. Memphitic.

⁹²Tisch. Tischendorf.

⁹³Treg. Tregelles.

⁹⁴WH. Westcott and Hort.

⁹⁵RV. Revised Version.

⁹⁶ⲭ *Codex Sinaiticus.*

⁹⁷B *Codex Vaticanus.*

⁹⁸D *Codex Bezae.*

⁹⁹L *Codex Regius.*

¹⁰⁰Δ *Codex Sangallensis*

¹⁰¹28 *Codex Regius.*

¹⁰²33 *Codex Regius.*

¹⁰³Lat. Vet. *Vetus Latina.*

¹⁰⁴Memph. Memphitic.

ἐὰν,¹⁰⁵² instead of ἄν, Tisch¹⁰⁶. Treg¹⁰⁷. WH¹⁰⁸. ¹⁰⁹κ^c ¹¹⁰A¹¹¹B¹¹²K¹¹³Δ¹¹⁴Π.

ῥήσσει—*convulses*. This meaning of the word is not very well established, but in σπαράσσω, the meaning *tear* passes over into that of *convulse*, and it is so used in v. 20. This establishes a precedent for the like transformation in this word. The congenital relation of these two verbs makes it improbable that they would be employed in a different sense about the same matter, and is so far against the Revisers' Translation, *dasheth him down*. **ξηραίνεται**—*is wasting away*. The symptoms mentioned are those of epilepsy. The ῥήσσει, κ. ἀφρίζει κ. τρίζει are connected with ὅπου ἐὰν καταλάβῃ; but ξηραίνεται is a general symptom of the disease. The Eng. Ver. connects ἀφρίζει, κ. τρίζει, κ. ξηραίνεται, and puts ῥήσσει by itself. It should read, *whenever it seizes him, it convulses him, and he foams and gnashes his teeth; and he is wasting away*. τοῖς μαθηταῖς—As the man did not find Jesus, he brought him to the disciples. See v. 17.

Omit αὐτοῦ after ὀδόντας, Tisch¹¹⁵. Treg¹¹⁶. WH¹¹⁷. RV¹¹⁸. ¹¹⁹κ¹²⁰B¹²¹C*¹²²D¹²³L¹²⁴Δ¹²⁵1,¹²⁶3, 3¹²⁷3, 59, 6¹²⁸9, 73, 20¹²⁹9, mss. Lat. Vet¹³⁰. Vulg¹³¹.

¹⁰⁵² On this use of ἐὰν, instead of ἄν, see on 8:38.

¹⁰⁶ Tisch. Tischendorf.

¹⁰⁷ Treg. Tregelles.

¹⁰⁸ WH. Westcott and Hort.

¹⁰⁹ κ *Codex Sinaiticus*.

¹¹⁰ A *Codex Alexandrinus*.

¹¹¹ B *Codex Vaticanus*.

¹¹² K *Codex Cyprius*.

¹¹³ Δ *Codex Sangallensis*

¹¹⁴ Π *Codex Petropolitanus*

¹¹⁵ Tisch. Tischendorf.

¹¹⁶ Treg. Tregelles.

¹¹⁷ WH. Westcott and Hort.

¹¹⁸ RV. Revised Version.

¹¹⁹ κ *Codex Sinaiticus*.

¹²⁰ B *Codex Vaticanus*.

¹²¹ C *Codex Ephraemi*.

¹²² D *Codex Bezae*.

¹²³ L *Codex Regius*.

¹²⁴ Δ *Codex Sangallensis*

¹²⁵ 1 *Codex Basiliensis*.

¹²⁶ 13 *Codex Regius*.

¹²⁷ 33 *Codex Regius*.

¹²⁸ 69 *Codex Leicestrensis*.

¹²⁹ 209 An unnamed, valuable manuscript.

¹³⁰ Lat. Vet. *Vetus Latina*.

¹³¹ Vulg. Vulgate.

καὶ εἶπα τοῖς μαθηταῖς σου ἵνα αὐτὸ ἐκβαλῶσι—and I spoke to thy disciples that they should cast it out.¹³²¹

εἶπα, instead of εἶπον, Tisch¹³³. Treg¹³⁴. WH¹³⁵. ¹³⁶κ¹³⁷ B¹³⁸ F¹³⁹ L¹⁴⁰ 1, 2¹⁴¹ 8, 20¹⁴² 9.

19. Ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς αὐτοῖς, λέγει—And he answering them, says.

αὐτοῖς, instead of αὐτῷ, *him*, Tisch¹⁴³. Treg¹⁴⁴. WH¹⁴⁵. RV¹⁴⁶. ¹⁴⁷κ¹⁴⁸ A¹⁴⁹ B¹⁵⁰ D¹⁵¹ L¹⁵² Δ¹⁵³ Π*¹⁵⁴ 1, 2¹⁵⁵ 8, 3¹⁵⁶ 3, most *mss.* Lat. Vet¹⁵⁷. Vulg¹⁵⁸. Memph¹⁵⁹. Syrr¹⁶⁰.

αὐτοῖς—to *them*. Jesus' reply is not addressed to the man, who seems not to have shown any lack of faith, but to the disciples, who have just been mentioned by the father, and to whom the words specially apply, since it was their unbelief that led to the fiasco. Later, the man seems to have lost heart over the failure of the disciples, so that he puts an *if you can* into his appeal to Jesus (v. 22).

¹³²¹ On the use of ἵνα after a verb of entreaty, see Burton, 200.

¹³³ Tisch. Tischendorf.

¹³⁴ Treg. Tregelles.

¹³⁵ WH. Westcott and Hort.

¹³⁶ κ *Codex Sinaiticus*.

¹³⁷ B *Codex Vaticanus*.

¹³⁸ F *Codex Borelli*.

¹³⁹ L *Codex Regius*.

¹⁴⁰ 1 *Codex Basiliensis*.

¹⁴¹ 28 *Codex Regius*.

¹⁴² 209 An unnamed, valuable manuscript.

¹⁴³ Tisch. Tischendorf.

¹⁴⁴ Treg. Tregelles.

¹⁴⁵ WH. Westcott and Hort.

¹⁴⁶ RV. Revised Version.

¹⁴⁷ κ *Codex Sinaiticus*.

¹⁴⁸ A *Codex Alexandrinus*.

¹⁴⁹ B *Codex Vaticanus*.

¹⁵⁰ D *Codex Bezae*.

¹⁵¹ L *Codex Regius*.

¹⁵² Δ *Codex Sangallensis*

¹⁵³ Π *Codex Petropolitianus*

¹⁵⁴ 1 *Codex Basiliensis*.

¹⁵⁵ 28 *Codex Regius*.

¹⁵⁶ 33 *Codex Regius*.

¹⁵⁷ Lat. Vet. *Vetus Latina*.

¹⁵⁸ Vulg. Vulgate.

¹⁵⁹ Memph. Memphitic.

¹⁶⁰ Syrr. Syriac Versions.

Ἦ ὦ γενεὰ ἄπιστος, ἕως πότε πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἔσομαι; ἕως πότε ἀνέξομαι ὑμῶν;—Ο
unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?

ΓΕΝΕΑ—It is possible to translate this *race*, meaning men of a certain stock or family; but it is more in accordance with almost invariable N.T. usage to translate it *generation, men of that time*. **ἄπιστος**—the translation *faithless*, EV., means generally *unfaithful, perfidious*, and is therefore ambiguous. It should be translated *unbelieving*. **ἕως πότε**—literally, *until when*.¹⁶¹² **πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἔσομαι;—shall I be with you?** The question, as appears from the next question, arises from the almost intolerable nature of his intercourse with a generation so spiritually dull and unsympathetic. It is the question of one who feels that his surroundings have become almost unbearable, and who wonders how long they are going to last. **ἀνέξομαι ὑμῶν;**¹⁶²³—*shall I bear with you?*

20. ἰδὼν—*having seen*. Regularly, the part. agrees with neither τὸ πνεῦμα, nor αὐτόν after συνεσπάραξεν. According to the sense, since the action of the verb belongs to the spirit, and is occasioned by the action denoted by the participle, it would be the spirit which is described as having seen Jesus. But he does this with the eyes of the man, and hence the masc. form of the part.

In all these stories, the man and the evil spirit get mixed up in this way. The outward acts belong to the man, but the informing spirit is sometimes that of the man, and sometimes the evil spirit. συνεσπάραξεν—*convulsed him*.¹⁶³¹

συνεσπάραξεν, instead of ἐσπάραξεν, Tisch¹⁶⁴. Treg¹⁶⁵. *marg.* ¹⁶⁶ⲭ ¹⁶⁷B¹⁶⁸C¹⁶⁹L ¹⁷⁰Δ 3¹⁷¹3,
mss. Lat. Vet¹⁷². Memph¹⁷³. Syrr¹⁷⁴.

ἐκυλίετο—*he rolled around*. Wallow suggests things not implied in this verb.

21. ὥς τοῦτο γέγονεν αὐτῷ—*since this has come to him*. This conversation with the father has been preserved by Mk. alone, with his customary fulness in the narration of events. All attempts to discover special motives for this question of Jesus, aside from the general

¹⁶¹² This use of ἕως with a temporal adverb is rare in classical Greek. Win. 54, 6.

¹⁶²³ The acc. is the regular construction after ἀνέχομαι.

¹⁶³¹ See on v. 18. The compound verb is found elsewhere only in Maximus Tyrius, a writer of the second century B.C.

¹⁶⁴ Tisch. Tischendorf.

¹⁶⁵ Treg. Tregelles.

¹⁶⁶ ⲭ Codex Sinaiticus.

¹⁶⁷ B Codex Vaticanus.

¹⁶⁸ C Codex Ephraemi.

¹⁶⁹ L Codex Regius.

¹⁷⁰ Δ Codex Sangallensis

¹⁷¹ 33 Codex Regius.

¹⁷² Lat. Vet. Vetus Latina.

¹⁷³ Memph. Memphitic.

¹⁷⁴ Syrr. Syriac Versions.

interest of a sympathetic person in the case, are unavailing. It has no special bearing on the cure to be performed. Ἐκ παιδιόθεν—from childhood.¹⁷⁵²

Insert ἔκ before παιδιόθεν, Tisch¹⁷⁶. Treg¹⁷⁷. WH¹⁷⁸. RV¹⁷⁹. ¹⁸⁰ⲕ ¹⁸¹B ¹⁸²C ¹⁸³D ¹⁸⁴G ¹⁸⁵L ¹⁸⁶N ¹⁸⁷Δ ¹⁸⁸1, ¹⁸⁹3, 118, 20¹⁹⁰9.

22. καὶ εἰς πῦρ ... κ. εἰς ὕδατα—both into fire and into waters. The plur. = *bodies of water*. εἴ τι δύνῃ—if you are at all able. There is no inf. implied here, the pronoun being construed with the verb immediately according to the Greek idiom.¹⁹¹³

23. Τὸ εἰ δύνῃ¹⁹²⁴—(omit πιστεῦσαι). *If thou canst*. Jesus repeats the father's words in order to call attention to them, and to the doubt expressed in them, which would stand in the way of his petition. The art. adds to the emphasis with which he points to these words, as we say, *That "if you can."* πάντα δυνατὰ τῷ πιστεύοντι—Over against the father's doubt, the Lord puts the omnipotence of faith, which places at man's disposition the Divine power.

¹⁷⁵² On the pleonasm, see Win. 65, 2. παιδιόθεν is a late word. The Greeks said ἐκ παιδός.

¹⁷⁶Tisch. Tischendorf.

¹⁷⁷Treg. Tregelles.

¹⁷⁸WH. Westcott and Hort.

¹⁷⁹RV. Revised Version.

¹⁸⁰ⲕ *Codex Sinaiticus*.

¹⁸¹B *Codex Vaticanus*.

¹⁸²C *Codex Ephraemi*.

¹⁸³D *Codex Bezae*.

¹⁸⁴G *Codex Wolfi A*.

¹⁸⁵L *Codex Regius*.

¹⁸⁶N *Codex Purpureus*.

¹⁸⁷Δ *Codex Sangallensis*

¹⁸⁸1 *Codex Basiliensis*.

¹⁸⁹33 *Codex Regius*.

¹⁹⁰209 An unnamed, valuable manuscript.

¹⁹¹³ See Win. 64, 4. δύνῃ is a rare poetical and later form for δύνασαι.

¹⁹²⁴ On the use of the art. with εἰ δύνῃ, see Win. 18 a, 3.

Omit πιστεῦσαι, Tisch¹⁹³. Treg¹⁹⁴. WH¹⁹⁵. RV¹⁹⁶. 197^κ 198^B 199^{C*} 200^L 201^Δ 202¹, 118, 20²⁰³9, 244, one *ms.* Lat. Vet²⁰⁴. Memph²⁰⁵.

24. Εὐθύς κράξας ὁ πατήρ τοῦ παιδίου ἔλεγε, πιστεύω, βοήθει μου τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ—*Immediately the father of the boy cried out and said, I believe; help my unbelief.* This does not mean “help me to turn my unbelief into belief,” but “help me out of my trouble, in spite of any unbelief that you may find in me.” He claims at first, that he does believe, notwithstanding any appearance to the contrary in his language. And yet, he does not rest his case there, but pleads with Jesus to show him mercy in any case. He pleads the compassion of Jesus, instead of his own faith, and so unconsciously showed a genuine faith.

Omit καὶ Tisch²⁰⁶. (Treg²⁰⁷.) WH²⁰⁸. RV²⁰⁹. 210^{κ^c} 211^B 212^L 213^Δ one *ms.* Lat. Vet²¹⁴. Memph²¹⁵.
Omit μετὰ δακρύων, *with tears*, 216^κ 217^{A*} 218^B 219^{C*} 220^L 221^Δ 222⁸, one *ms.* Lat. Vet²²³.

¹⁹³Tisch. Tischendorf.

¹⁹⁴Treg. Tregelles.

¹⁹⁵WH. Westcott and Hort.

¹⁹⁶RV. Revised Version.

¹⁹⁷κ *Codex Sinaiticus.*

¹⁹⁸B *Codex Vaticanus.*

¹⁹⁹C *Codex Ephraemi.*

²⁰⁰L *Codex Regius.*

²⁰¹Δ *Codex Sangallensis*

²⁰²1 *Codex Basiliensis.*

²⁰³209 An unnamed, valuable manuscript.

²⁰⁴Lat. Vet. *Vetus Latina.*

²⁰⁵Memph. Memphitic.

²⁰⁶Tisch. Tischendorf.

²⁰⁷Treg. Tregelles.

²⁰⁸WH. Westcott and Hort.

²⁰⁹RV. Revised Version.

²¹⁰κ *Codex Sinaiticus.*

²¹¹B *Codex Vaticanus.*

²¹²L *Codex Regius.*

²¹³Δ *Codex Sangallensis*

²¹⁴Lat. Vet. *Vetus Latina.*

²¹⁵Memph. Memphitic.

²¹⁶κ *Codex Sinaiticus.*

²¹⁷A *Codex Alexandrinus.*

²¹⁸B *Codex Vaticanus.*

²¹⁹C *Codex Ephraemi.*

²²⁰L *Codex Regius.*

²²¹Δ *Codex Sangallensis*

²²²28 *Codex Regius.*

²²³Lat. Vet. *Vetus Latina.*

Memph²²⁴. Omit Κύριε, *lord*, Tisch²²⁵. Treg²²⁶. WH²²⁷. RV²²⁸. 229^κ 230^A 231^B 232^{C*} 233^D 234^L 34²³⁵ 6²³⁵
mss. Lat. Vet²³⁶. one *ms.* Vulg²³⁷. Syrr²³⁸.

25. ὅτι ἐπισυντρέχει (ὁ) ὄχλος—*that a (the) crowd is running together besides (those already gathered)*. The evidence for the insertion or omission of the art. is evenly divided. The anarthrous noun is more consistent with the meaning of ἐπισυντρέχει. ἐπι—adds to συντρέχει, *is running together*, the meaning *besides*, *i.e.* in addition to those already collected.²³⁹¹ The part. ἰδὼν is causal; it was because Jesus saw this, that he rebuked the demon. He did not wish to attract a larger crowd by prolonging the scene, and so, without any further delay, he proceeded with the cure. It is his usual avoidance of any notoriety in his miracles. τὸ ἄλαλον καὶ κωφὸν πνεῦμα—*thou dumb and deaf spirit*. The story has grown by so much, since the first mention of the spirit. Then it was dumb, which was more than the other Gospels tell us, now it has become deaf and dumb.

²²⁴Memph. Memphitic.

²²⁵Tisch. Tischendorf.

²²⁶Treg. Tregelles.

²²⁷WH. Westcott and Hort.

²²⁸RV. Revised Version.

²²⁹κ *Codex Sinaiticus*.

²³⁰A *Codex Alexandrinus*.

²³¹B *Codex Vaticanus*.

²³²C *Codex Ephraemi*.

²³³D *Codex Bezae*.

²³⁴L *Codex Regius*.

²³⁵346 *Codex Ambrosianus*.

²³⁶Lat. Vet. *Vetus Latina*.

²³⁷Vulg. Vulgate.

²³⁸Syrr. Syriac Versions.

²³⁹¹ This compound occurs only here in the N.T. and nowhere in profane authors.

τὸ ἄλαλον καὶ κωφὸν πνεῦμα, instead of τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἄλαλον καὶ κωφὸν, Tisch²⁴⁰. Treg²⁴¹. WH²⁴². ²⁴³ⲭ ²⁴⁴B²⁴⁵C* ²⁴⁶D²⁴⁷L ²⁴⁸Δ ²⁴⁹1, 3²⁵⁰3, 73, 118, Latt²⁵¹. Memph²⁵².

26. καὶ κράξας καὶ πολλὰ σπαράξας, ἐξῆλθε—*And having cried out and convulsed (him) violently, he came out.*

κράξας καὶ. σπαράξας, instead of the neuter, Tisch²⁵³. Treg²⁵⁴. WH²⁵⁵. RV²⁵⁶. ²⁵⁷ⲭ ²⁵⁸B²⁵⁹C* ²⁶⁰D²⁶¹L (²⁶²Δ). Omit αὐτόν, *him*, Tisch²⁶³. Treg²⁶⁴. WH²⁶⁵. RV²⁶⁶. ²⁶⁷ⲭ^{corr.} ²⁶⁸B²⁶⁹C* ²⁷⁰D²⁷¹L ²⁷²Δ mss. Lat. Vet²⁷³.

²⁴⁰Tisch. Tischendorf.

²⁴¹Treg. Tregelles.

²⁴²WH. Westcott and Hort.

²⁴³ⲭ *Codex Sinaiticus*.

²⁴⁴B *Codex Vaticanus*.

²⁴⁵C *Codex Ephraemi*.

²⁴⁶D *Codex Bezae*.

²⁴⁷L *Codex Regius*.

²⁴⁸Δ *Codex Sangallensis*

²⁴⁹1 *Codex Basiliensis*.

²⁵⁰33 *Codex Regius*.

²⁵¹Latt. Latin Versions.

²⁵²Memph. Memphitic.

²⁵³Tisch. Tischendorf.

²⁵⁴Treg. Tregelles.

²⁵⁵WH. Westcott and Hort.

²⁵⁶RV. Revised Version.

²⁵⁷ⲭ *Codex Sinaiticus*.

²⁵⁸B *Codex Vaticanus*.

²⁵⁹C *Codex Ephraemi*.

²⁶⁰D *Codex Bezae*.

²⁶¹L *Codex Regius*.

²⁶²Δ *Codex Sangallensis*

²⁶³Tisch. Tischendorf.

²⁶⁴Treg. Tregelles.

²⁶⁵WH. Westcott and Hort.

²⁶⁶RV. Revised Version.

²⁶⁷ⲭ *Codex Sinaiticus*.

²⁶⁸B *Codex Vaticanus*.

²⁶⁹C *Codex Ephraemi*.

²⁷⁰D *Codex Bezae*.

²⁷¹L *Codex Regius*.

²⁷²Δ *Codex Sangallensis*

²⁷³Lat. Vet. *Vetus Latina*.

κράξας κ. σπαράξας—The masc. gender shows that the writer thought of the spirit as a person.

ἐγένετο ὡσεὶ νεκρός—*he became as if dead*. It is impossible to account for this final convulsion. If Jesus, *e.g.*, were restoring a drowned person, would the horrible feelings attending a natural restoration be avoided? And whether any such violent wrench of mind and body would attend a sudden cure of insanity, we do not know.

ὥστε τοὺς πολλοὺς λέγειν²⁷⁴²—*so that the most said*.

Insert τοὺς before πολλοὺς Tisch²⁷⁵. Treg²⁷⁶. WH²⁷⁷. RV²⁷⁸. ²⁷⁹κ²⁸⁰ A²⁸¹ B²⁸² L²⁸³ Δ²⁸⁴ 3.

27. κρατήσας τῆς χειρὸς αὐτοῦ—*having taken his hand*.

τῆς χειρὸς αὐτοῦ, instead of αὐτὸν τῆς χειρός, *him by the hand*, Tisch²⁸⁵. Treg²⁸⁶. WH²⁸⁷. RV²⁸⁸. ²⁸⁹κ²⁹⁰ B²⁹¹ D²⁹² L²⁹³ Δ²⁹⁴ 1, 1²⁹⁵ 3, 2²⁹⁶ 8, 53, 6²⁹⁷ 9, 118, 20²⁹⁸ 9, Latt²⁹⁹. Memph³⁰⁰.

²⁷⁴² On the preference of N.T. Grk. for the inf. to express result after ὥστε, see Burton, 235, 369–371.

²⁷⁵ Tisch. Tischendorf.

²⁷⁶ Treg. Tregelles.

²⁷⁷ WH. Westcott and Hort.

²⁷⁸ RV. Revised Version.

²⁷⁹ κ Codex Sinaiticus.

²⁸⁰ A Codex Alexandrinus.

²⁸¹ B Codex Vaticanus.

²⁸² L Codex Regius.

²⁸³ Δ Codex Sangallensis

²⁸⁴ 33 Codex Regius.

²⁸⁵ Tisch. Tischendorf.

²⁸⁶ Treg. Tregelles.

²⁸⁷ WH. Westcott and Hort.

²⁸⁸ RV. Revised Version.

²⁸⁹ κ Codex Sinaiticus.

²⁹⁰ B Codex Vaticanus.

²⁹¹ D Codex Bezae.

²⁹² L Codex Regius.

²⁹³ Δ Codex Sangallensis

²⁹⁴ 1 Codex Basilienensis.

²⁹⁵ 13 Codex Regius.

²⁹⁶ 28 Codex Regius.

²⁹⁷ 69 Codex Leicestrensis.

²⁹⁸ 209 An unnamed, valuable manuscript.

²⁹⁹ Latt. Latin Versions.

³⁰⁰ Memph. Memphitic.

28. καὶ εἰσελθόντος αὐτοῦ³⁰¹¹—*And he having entered.*

εἰσελθόντος αὐτοῦ, instead of the acc., Tisch³⁰². Treg³⁰³. WH³⁰⁴. RV³⁰⁵. ³⁰⁶ⲭ ³⁰⁷B ³⁰⁸C ³⁰⁹D ³¹⁰L
³¹¹Δ ³¹²1, 1³¹³3, 2³¹⁴8, 6³¹⁵9, 118, 20³¹⁶9, 34³¹⁷6 (Latt³¹⁸.).

ὅτι ἡμεῖς οὐκ ἠδυνήθημεν—*Why could not we?* On the use of ὅτι, see on v. 11. There seems to be no reason whatever here for supposing that this is a statement, instead of a question. There is a kind of challenge in the statement, that is evidently not in their minds. They mean simply to ask the question, why they could not perform this miracle, when Jesus had given them power over unclean spirits.

29. τοῦτο τὸ γένος—*this kind of thing, i.e. the genus evil spirit; not this kind of spirit, as if this was a specially vicious kind of spirit, that it took a good deal to exorcise. ἐν προσευχῇ—in prayer. καὶ νηστεία, and fasting, is an evident gloss. It is one of the things that a later asceticism imported into the spiritual teaching of Jesus. It seems to be implied in the question of the disciples that they had expected to cast out the demon, so that their lack of faith in the matter had not taken the shape of doubt of their power. But what was lacking was prayer, which is the expression of faith considered as dependence on the Divine power and confidence in that. It is the sense of God that conveys all kinds of spiritual power. But this power was not subjective, it did not reside in themselves, but was power to move God, and this precludes the idea that a special degree of this power was necessary in the case of so stubborn a demon as this. But it is a general statement that miracles of any kind are possible only to him who prays.*³¹⁹

³⁰¹¹ On this use of the gen. abs., instead of the participle agreeing with its noun or pronoun found elsewhere in the sentence, see Win. 30, 11, Note.

³⁰²Tisch. Tischendorf.

³⁰³Treg. Tregelles.

³⁰⁴WH. Westcott and Hort.

³⁰⁵RV. Revised Version.

³⁰⁶ⲭ *Codex Sinaiticus.*

³⁰⁷B *Codex Vaticanus.*

³⁰⁸C *Codex Ephraemi.*

³⁰⁹D *Codex Bezae.*

³¹⁰L *Codex Regius.*

³¹¹Δ *Codex Sangallensis*

³¹²1 *Codex Basiliensis.*

³¹³13 *Codex Regius.*

³¹⁴28 *Codex Regius.*

³¹⁵69 *Codex Leicestrensis.*

³¹⁶209 An unnamed, valuable manuscript.

³¹⁷346 *Codex Ambrosianus.*

³¹⁸Latt. Latin Versions.

³¹⁹ Ezra Palmer Gould, [*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Mark*](#), International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1922), 166–171.

FRAIL FAITH IN A STRONG SAVIOR (9:14–29)

The interplay between the journey inward to God and the journey outward to the world is common to Scripture (see the comment on 1:35–39). Moses descends from his hallowed sojourn on Mt. Sinai to confront rebellion and idolatry (Exodus 32); Elijah leaves the quiet strength of Horeb to face the paganism of Jezebel and Ahab (1 Kings 19); Jesus himself is driven from the unction of baptism to temptation in the wilderness (1:9–13). Similarly, on the descent from the Mount of Transfiguration with Peter, James, and John, Jesus is immediately confronted by a dispute between the scribes and his disciples, and by a lonely father struggling desperately for both the life of his son and the existence of his faith. Mark 9:14–29 is more than twice as long as the parallel accounts in Matt 17:14–20 and Luke 9:37–43. The flurry of activity and wealth of human interest detail in Mark’s account leave the impression of a firsthand account, again perhaps from Peter.

14–15 In the absence of Jesus, Peter, James, and John, the remaining disciples, have not been idle. The circumstances of their sojourn at the base of the mountain are obscured until the moment they are rejoined by Jesus and the three disciples—a circumstance that is explainable if Peter, who was absent from them, is Mark’s source for the story. Jesus and the three disciples discover their colleagues beset with crowds, scribes, and the demon-possessed—the same three groups that have attended Jesus’ ministry all along. Thus the remaining disciples are continuing Jesus’ ministry—but without Jesus present (a condition that more than one minister of the gospel has experienced!). As we noted at 6:45–52, whenever the disciples are separated from Jesus they fall into crises.

The absence of Jesus is sorely felt, for when “all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.” In Mark, the astonishment of the crowds normally comes at the conclusion of Jesus’ teaching or healing activity, whereas here it comes at the beginning. The reason the crowd is “overwhelmed with wonder” is not immediately apparent. This expression translates a single Greek word (*ekthambeomai*) that occurs only in Mark (9:15; 14:33; 16:5, 6), meaning trembling astonishment that verges on alarm. It is sometimes suggested that the amazement is owing to the glory of Jesus’ countenance, like the radiance of Moses’ face after returning from Mt. Sinai (Exod 34:29). Mark’s syntax could be taken to support this interpretation, that is, the people were astonished because of what they saw in Jesus. On the other hand, if Jesus’ countenance still radiates the glory of the transfiguration, the command “not to tell anyone” (v. 9) seems rather pointless. Moreover, if Jesus’ countenance is substantially affected, we might expect the crowd to retreat in fear (Exod 34:30) rather than advance in avid pursuit. Again, the suggestion that *ekthambeomai* is Mark’s way of portraying “the coming of Jesus as an epiphany of the Lord for believers”⁹³²⁰⁷ seems overstated, for there seems to be no explanation why Jesus should appear epiphanous here and not elsewhere? On balance, the astonishment of the crowd appears to owe to Jesus’ unexpected appearance and the hopes it raised. The crowd’s wholesale shift of attention from the scribes to Jesus once again accentuates his authority over the scribes, who are

³²⁰⁹⁷ G. Bertram, “*thambos*,” TDNT 3.6.

cross-examining the disciples. The crowd's dissatisfaction with the disciples is offset by its hopes and satisfaction at seeing Jesus.⁹³²¹⁸ This unusual introduction to the pericope may remind Mark's readers that Jesus is competent to satisfy whatever longings remain unsatisfied by the church.

16–18 9:14–15 describe a scene without focus: crowd, scribes, and disciples intermingle inchoately and without purpose. But as soon as Jesus arrives he immediately commands attention by asking the scribes, “‘What are you arguing with [the disciples] about?’” The word for “argue” (Gk. *syzētein*) carries combative connotations and is often used by Mark of altercations with religious authorities (8:11; 9:14, 16; 12:28). He commands the scribes to direct their questions to him rather than to the disciples.

A confrontation between Jesus and the scribes is preempted, however, by a desperate father who brings to Jesus his son “possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech” (similarly, 7:37). The father's description of the malady carries all the pathos of a parent's fear and dismay for his child's safety. His son is not simply ill but assaulted. The attacks on the defenseless boy are recounted four times in the ensuing account (vv. 18, 20, 22, and 26). Convulsions, foaming at the mouth, outcries, lockjaw, and bodily rigidity followed by loss of consciousness are the symptoms of tonic-clonic (grand mal) seizures, rightly identified as epilepsy in Matt 17:15.⁹³²²⁹ Mark's terminology is not as medically objective as Matthew's, but his description of both the boy's plight and the father's distress is more graphic and empathetic.¹⁰³²³⁰ Even the disciples are powerless in the face of the child's condition. Again in Mark, when all human hopes are exhausted, hope can be expected from Jesus.

19–20 At the father's report, Jesus exclaims in exasperation, “‘O unbelieving generation, how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you?’” The confusion and unbelief

³²¹⁹⁸ The references to the disciples' inability to heal the possessed boy (vv. 18, 28) are a strong argument for the historicity of the account, for the later church is unlikely to have invented a story that cast the apostles in a negative light. For two studies that defend the essential historicity of 9:14–29, see P. J. Achtemeier, “Miracles and the Historical Jesus,” *CBQ* 37 (1975): 471–91; and especially the comprehensive analysis of G. Sterling, “Jesus as Exorcist: An Analysis of Matthew 17:14–20; Mark 9:14–29; Luke 9:37–43a,” *CBQ* 55 (1993): 467–93.

³²²⁹⁹ Matthew 17:15 identifies the boy's affliction as epilepsy, but 17:18–19 also calls it a *daimonion* (“demon”). Again, Matthew's account can be explained assuming his use of Mark, for the reference to epilepsy improves Mark, whereas the retention of demon preserves Mark's original reading. For further evidence of Matthew's use of Mark's version of the narrative, see Sterling, “Jesus as Exorcist,” *CBQ* 55 (1993): 477.

³²³¹⁰⁰ A long account of a demon-possessed boy in Philostratus's *Life Apoll.* 3.38 provides an instructive contrast to Mark 9:14–29. In the Philostratus account, the demon is of primary concern and the possessed child is incidental. Thus Philostratus provides a complete history of the demon and the circumstances contributing to its habitation of the child. But the child is of interest only as a host of the demon. Indeed, the child is not even present, but is exorcised by a letter from Apollonius! Mark's story, by contrast, is not essentially concerned with the demon but with human need, i.e., the wretched straits of the boy and the anxiety of the father. Philostratus did not publish his work until the early part of the third century A.D., so the Gospel accounts cannot have been influenced by it.

of the crowd parallels that of the disciples earlier (8:14–21). But, despite Jesus’ prior rebuke of the disciples, the present judgment of Jesus does not appear to include them. The “unbelieving generation” is ostensibly a reference to the crowd apart from the disciples, for “generation” (Gk. *genea*) occurs five times in Mark (8:12 [2x], 38; 9:19; 13:30), but never with reference to the disciples. Even though the disciples are insufficient for the task of healing the demon-possessed boy (vv. 18, 28), Jesus does not chastise them. Inability is simply a limitation, not a fault, as are hardness of heart (3:5; 6:52) and misunderstanding (8:14–21). The crowd is included in the latter, however. How reminiscent is Jesus’ lament of the prophetic grievances against unbelieving Israel (Deut 32:5, 20; Num 14:11; Isa 65:2).

The doubts and disbelief of the crowd do not determine Jesus’ willingness or ability to act, however. On the contrary, the authority of Jesus’ mission and person exerts sovereign influence in human affairs; “Let God be true, and every man a liar” (Rom 3:4). Jesus calls for the child. When the boy is brought, the condition described by the father becomes reality before Jesus’ eyes: he is seized with convulsions and thrown to the ground, writhing and foaming at the mouth. The seizure is not coincidental, for Mark reports that “when the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion.” The boy may indeed be epileptic, but the epilepsy is portrayed as a front or vehicle of a malevolent engineering force. The language approximates earlier episodes in the Gospel where the demonic erupts in fits in the presence of Jesus (1:26; 5:6–10), or when natural phenomena are conceived as hosts of demonic opposition (4:39; 6:48). The present episode again testifies to the mission of Jesus to confront and to defeat the powers of evil, whether manifested in penultimate conditions or ultimate causes. Since the temptation by Satan in the wilderness (1:12–13), Jesus appears as the More Powerful One (1:7) whose chief mission is to bind the strong man and liberate the captives (3:27; 1 John 3:8). The initial result of the effective presence of Jesus is not peace, however, but conflict; not resurrection, but suffering. Eduard Schweizer’s insight is correct: “This indicates how the presence of God can produce storm and stress before anything constructive is accomplished.”¹⁰³²⁴¹

21–24 The important conversation between Jesus and the father in 9:21–24 is omitted by Matthew’s and Luke’s versions of the narrative. For the latter two Gospels the significance of the narrative is the miraculous, whereas for Mark the miraculous is penultimate to faith, and faith to discipleship. For Mark the significance of Jesus cannot be fully conveyed by *what* he does, but only by *who* he is. One can be amazed by a miracle, but one can only trust and believe a person.

The father’s tremulous pilgrimage to faith begins in a simple dialogue that is triggered by Jesus’ question, “ ‘How long has he been like this?’ ” The question allows the father to tell his story that the boy has been afflicted since childhood, with near fatal effect. But it also allows the father to declare his heart. The question of Jesus invites the father to come to him as a total person, with hard facts and with human hopes. The father stakes his existence on the latter: “ ‘If you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.’ ” The original Greek reads, “ ‘Help us and have compassion on us.’ ” Help is the object of the father’s request, but the source of his hope is rooted in the compassion of Jesus. The Greek word for “compassion” (*splangnizesthai*) points to the deepest reserves of Jesus (see further on the term at 1:41).

³²⁴¹⁰¹ *The Good News According to Mark*, 188.

Jesus can expel demonic forces at a word, but the evoking of faith is a much harder matter. Disbelief of Jesus, whether from scribes, crowds, disciples, or desperate fathers, is both a greater opposition and more serious obstacle than all the hosts of pandemonium. The father has only the mustard-seed beginnings of faith. “‘If you can’?” replies Jesus in surprise!¹⁰³²⁵² The problem is not divine unwillingness (1:40) or divine inability but human unbelief! What is impossible to humans is possible to God (10:27). “‘Everything is possible to him who believes.’” What Jesus commands of the father is what he earlier commanded of the hemorrhaging woman (5:34) and the synagogue ruler (5:36). The sole bridge between frail humanity and the all-sufficiency of God is *faith*. The means by which the *exousia* of Jesus, his divine authority and legitimacy, becomes effective in human life is faith. The statement that “‘everything is possible to him who believes’” must appear to the father as an elusive hope, however, for the faith he needs to heal his son is a faith he does not have—or so he thinks.

True faith is always aware how small and inadequate it is. The father becomes a believer not when he amasses a sufficient quantum of faith but when he risks everything on what little faith he has, when he yields his insufficiency to the true sufficiency of Jesus, “‘I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!’” The risk of faith is more costly to the father than bringing his son to Jesus, for he can talk about his son but he must “cry out” (Gk. *krazein*) for faith.¹⁰³²⁶³ True faith takes no confidence in itself, nor does it judge Jesus by the weakness of his followers. It looks to the More Powerful One (1:7) who stands in the place of God, whose authoritative word restores life from chaos. True faith is unconditional openness to God, a decision in the face of all to the contrary that *Jesus is able*.

25–27 Seeing the crowd gather and not wishing to make a display of his power, Jesus “rebuked” (Gk. *epitiman*) and “commanded” (Gk. *epitassein*) the evil spirit to leave the lad and never return. These two verbs express Jesus’ authority, particularly over demonic forces.¹⁰³²⁷⁴ In contrast to earlier exorcisms in 1:25–26 and 5:6–10, the demonic asserts itself violently, though no more successfully, against Jesus. The evil spirit abandons the boy in a deathlike condition, and onlookers take him for dead. The intervention of Jesus, in other words, has made things worse rather than better. Is the result of the father’s fledgling faith the death of his son? Salvation is a process in which things must sometimes become worse before they become better (e.g., Exod 5:21–6:1). The first test of the father’s faith is to trust the word and promise of

³²⁵¹⁰² The Greek manuscript tradition is very disparate in v. 23. The compressed response of Jesus troubled copyists, who added “to believe,” i.e., “‘If you are able to believe.’” This addition entirely alters the meaning of the response. Whereas in the best tradition (followed by NIV) Jesus repeats the father’s words in order to remind him that with God all things are possible, the various alterations make for a burdensome moralism, requiring of the father what he confesses he lacks—greater belief. See Metzger, *TCGNT*, 100.

³²⁶¹⁰³ The NIV’s “exclaimed” is insufficiently emphatic. *Krazein* appears eleven times in Mark, and in no instance can it be translated with less emphasis than “shout” or “cry out.” According to several later manuscripts, the father “cried out *with tears*,” thus heightening his emotional outburst. The addition is probably not original, however, for there is no adequate reason to explain why a copyist would delete it. See Metzger, *TCGNT*, 100.

³²⁷¹⁰⁴ On *epitiman* (“rebuke”), see at 4:39; on *epitassein* (“command”), at 1:27; 9:25.

28–29 The story closes with Jesus gathered privately in a house with the disciples. In Mark’s Gospel, private gatherings in houses are typically settings of further instruction and revelation for the benefit of disciples.¹⁰³²⁹⁵ In the present instance the disciples ask why they could not expel the demon. “ ‘This kind can come out only by prayer,’ ” says Jesus.¹⁰³³⁰⁶ This is the first injunction to **prayer** in the Gospel of Mark. There are three references to Jesus praying in Mark (1:35; 6:46; 14:32–39); in each he is alone and facing critical junctures in his ministry (see further at 6:46). Otherwise in Mark there are only passing references to prayer as a constituent element of faith. Prayer is twice commended to disciples for spiritual strength against temptation (13:33; 14:38). Other references include prayer against adverse circumstances (13:18), warnings against ostentation and pride in prayer (12:40), and Jesus’ pronouncement that the purpose of the temple is for prayer (11:17). The most important passage devoted to prayer in Mark is the snippet in 11:24–25 where Jesus teaches that prayer must be accompanied by faith (v. 24) and by forgiveness (v. 25). The present passage also introduces prayer in the context of faith, connecting it with spiritual power. Grundmann correctly notes that “prayer is faith turned to God.”¹⁰³³¹⁷ Prayer is the focusing and directing of faith in specific requests to God. Both faith and prayer testify that spiritual power is not in oneself but in God alone, and both wait in trust upon his promise to save.

³²⁸lit. literally

³³⁰¹⁰⁶ A large number of manuscripts add “prayer *and fasting*” (ⲡ⁴⁵ ⲕ Ⲁ Ⲙ ⲉ Ⲕ ⲗ ⲙ ⲭ ⲁ ⲓ ⲛ ⲧ ⲱ ⲩ). Noting a similar textual tendency in 1 Cor 7:5, Metzger (*TCGNT*, 101) attributes the addition to the stress on fasting in the early church. Given Jesus’ negative teaching on fasting earlier (2:19), it would be surprising if fasting were included in his teaching here. Despite the heavy manuscript tradition in its favor, internal factors argue against the originality of *and fasting*.

³³² James R. Edwards, [*The Gospel according to Mark*](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 276–281.

This is the last exorcism in Mark, but it is not simply another miracle story with the primary purpose of demonstrating the power of Jesus. Just as the miracles that introduce (8:22–26) and conclude (10:46–52) the second major division have a theological purpose, so does this one. Actually there are several purposes. One is to give another example of the inability of the disciples. This time it is not inability to understand but inability to act. Another purpose is to stress the necessity and give insight into the nature of faith in discipleship. Another is to instruct the church about its ministry after the departure of Jesus. (In this connection note v. 19.) Yet another is to prefigure Jesus' death and resurrection.

The wealth of detail may indicate a personal recollection, possibly that of Peter. Some technical scholars, however, think that the existing account has come from the combination of two originally independent miracle stories. The reasons given include the two references to a crowd (vv. 14, 25), the different descriptions of the problem (vv. 17, 25 on the one hand and vv. 18, 20, 22, 26 on the other), and the shift of emphasis from the disciples to the father. The theory is not impossible, but it is improbable. None of the elements in the story is irreconcilable with the others, and confusion is a major element in the event itself.

Some have tried to find an analogy between what Moses found when he came down from the mountain (Exod 32) and what Jesus found. The scribes are thought to take the place of the rebellious Israelites. However, the situations are quite different. Moses found gross immorality; Jesus found unbelief, inability to heal, and controversy.

Preachers have often contrasted the glories of the mountain and the agonies of the valley. Such an application is appropriate. Mark no doubt indicated not only what was the ministry of Jesus but also what should be that of the disciples. As wonderful and important as mountaintop experiences can be, the disciple's primary occupation is in the valley of service.

9:14 The textual witnesses vary between the plural "they came" and "they saw" and the singular "he came" and "he saw" (KJV, NKJV), but the context and perhaps Mark's style favor the former. If in fact the transfiguration took place on Mt. Hermon (see the comments on 9:2), the presence of the "teachers of the law" is surprising, but not impossible. They may have pursued Jesus in order to gather evidence against him. Of course, the transfiguration may not have taken place on Mt. Hermon, and Mark may have employed topical rather than chronological arrangement.

9:15 Some have claimed that the crowd's astonishment was due to Jesus' face shining like that of Moses (Exod 34:29–35). This is not impossible, but none of the Evangelists makes any such claim; and it is best not to read into the text what is not there. The astonishment probably was due to the unexpected arrival of Jesus. Mark may have wanted his readers to contrast the "wonder" of the crowd with the disciples' slow recognition.

9:16 It is difficult to determine whether the antecedent of "you" is the teachers of the law or the disciples. If it is the teachers of the law, the word "them" would refer to the disciples; if it is the disciples, the word "them" would refer to the teachers of the law. Clearly there had been

a dispute between the two groups. It is also difficult to see the relation between the disciples' inability to heal and the scribes' accusations. Perhaps the scribes took advantage of the situation and reproached the disciples for their impotence. In any event the former disappear from the story after v. 16.

9:17–18 In v. 17 the child's malady is described as both demon possession and inability to speak. In v. 25 deafness is also included. In vv. 18, 20, 22, however, the symptoms are those of epilepsy. There is no reason the same person could not have been the victim of all these. The meaning of the second verb in v. 18 (*rhēssō*) is uncertain. Most translations understand it to mean *throw down*, but it could also mean *tear apart* (cf. KJV). Likewise the verb translated "becomes rigid" (*xērainomai*) in the NI³³³V and most other contemporary translations can also mean *to dehydrate* or *exhaust*.

9:19 In 8:12, 38 the word "generation" is applied to unbelievers who oppose Jesus, but here it probably refers to the disciples. Jesus soon would be gone and then his disciples would take his place and do what he had been doing. This they had failed to do during a temporary absence. Having previously been able to exorcise demons (6:13), the disciples assumed they could do so whenever they wished. They failed, however, because of their lack of faith. Spiritual power is not something which once possessed will always be available. It must be maintained and renewed. Disciples then and now must constantly learn and relearn this lesson.

9:20–22a Most of Mark's detail is omitted by Matt 17:14–21 and Luke 9:37–43a, in part because it is repetitious and in part simply to save space for other accounts. The repetition heightens the greatness of the cure.

9:22b The inability of the disciples to cast out the demon appears to have shaken the faith of the father. In v. 24 the father confessed his unbelief.

9:23 The Greek text is awkward and created problems for ancient copyists. A very literal translation would be, "The 'if you can.'" Some scribes omitted the article "the," and others added "believe." The article, however, merely serves to introduce a quotation. The construction could be paraphrased, "With reference to your statement, 'If you can.'" Up to this point the emphasis has been on the lack of faith of the would-be healers (i.e., the disciples), but here it begins to shift to the father who brought the child to be healed. (Evidently the boy was not capable of exercising faith.) There is little or no problem with this shift. All need faith: those who would heal or perform any other ministry and those who would be healed or have someone else healed or in some other way be blessed.

9:24 This time the NI³³⁴V translates the key Markan word "immediately" (*euthys*). Mark wanted to emphasize that faith should be exercised at once. Although there is tension, no contradiction exists between an affirmation of faith and a confession of unbelief. Both are the frequent experience of disciples of all times.

9:25 As on other occasions, Jesus avoided unnecessary publicity and acted before the crowd grew larger or got out of hand. Mark alone emphasized the permanence of the cure.

9:26–27 Whether the boy actually died, Mark's description suggests the idea of resurrection. The second and third verbs in v. 27 are often used in connection with resurrection. The account has much in common with the raising of Jairus's daughter (5:41–42). Therefore the

³³³NIV New International Version

³³⁴NIV New International Version

exorcism constitutes a preview of Jesus' own death and resurrection and the resurrection of believers.

9:28 This is the second of four times where Mark indicated that Jesus withdrew to a house in order to instruct the disciples privately (also 7:17; 9:33; 10:10; cf. 4:10; 7:24).

9:29 Up to this point the account has emphasized the necessity of faith. Here the idea of prayer is injected. The two are closely related. Prayer, especially a whole life of prayer, is the avenue to faith. All except the two earliest and generally regarded best Greek manuscripts, two early versions, and one early Christian writer add "and fasting" (KJV, NKJV), no doubt because of the prevalence of fasting in the early and medieval church (a similar addition is in Acts 10:30; 1 Cor 7:5). The idea is completely out of place, however, in a passage that stresses the necessity of dependence on God instead of human resources of any kind.³³⁵

³³⁵ James A. Brooks, [Mark](#), vol. 23, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 145–148.