

## PDF hosted at the Radboud Repository of the Radboud University Nijmegen

The following full text is a publisher's version.

For additional information about this publication click this link.

<http://hdl.handle.net/2066/28578>

Please be advised that this information was generated on 2019-06-20 and may be subject to change.

# ANIMADVERSIONES

## The Sun, Moon, and Stars of Mark 13,24-25 in a Greco-Roman Reading \*

... the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken ...

### I

However much interpretations differ about Mark 13, there is hardly any substantial difference of opinion about the referential aspects of vv. 24-25. In the case of Mark 13 differences relate both to the possible use of a source — and the origin, nature and extent of this<sup>(1)</sup> — and to the structure of the discourse<sup>(2)</sup>. In the case of vv. 24-25 they are limited to a number of questions relating to the content of the passage. The first question is whether αἱ δυνάμεις (the powers) refers to material heavenly bodies or to invisible celestial powers, and whether the breaking down of the heavenly bodies should be understood in a more or less literal or only in a symbolical sense<sup>(3)</sup>. The second question is which of the OT passages that provide the background to these verses is predominant, Isa 13,10 and 34,4 or Joel 2,10 and 3,4.20<sup>(4)</sup>. And the third, whether the announced phenomena introduce a scene of judgement or not<sup>(5)</sup>.

\* This contribution was presented as a short paper at the 1995 SNTS Congress in Prague.

<sup>(1)</sup> In particular: G. R. BEASLEY-MURRAY, *Jesus and the Future* (London 1956); L. HARTMAN, *Prophecy Interpreted. The Formation of some Jewish Apocalyptic Texts and of the Eschatological Discourse Mark 13 par.* (ConB NT 1; Lund 1966); J. LAMBRECHT, *Die Redaktion der Markus-Apokalypse* (AnBib 28; Roma 1967); R. PESCH, *Naherwartungen, Tradition und Redaktion in Mk 13* (Düsseldorf 1968) 203-223; E. BRANDENBURGER, *Markus 13 und die Apokalyptik* (FRLANT 134; Göttingen 1984) 21-73; D. WENHAM, *The Rediscovery of Jesus' Eschatological Discourse* (Gospel Perspectives 4; Sheffield 1984).

<sup>(2)</sup> Especially F. ROUSSEAU, "La structure de Marc 13", *Bib* 56 (1975) 157-172; LAMBRECHT, *Markus-Apokalypse*, 263-297; PESCH, *Naherwartungen*, 74-83; B. STANDAERT, *L'Évangile selon Marc, Composition et Genre Littéraire* (Brugge 1978) 231-254; BRANDENBURGER, *Markus 13*, 164-165; C. BREYTENBACH, *Nachfolge und Zukunftserwartung nach Markus* (ATANT 71; Zürich 1984) 288-302; C. MYERS, *Binding the Strong Man. A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (Maryknoll 21990) 331; M. D. HOOKER, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (Black's NT Commentary II; London-Peabody 1991) 300-302.

<sup>(3)</sup> E. P. GOULD, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (ICC; Edinburgh 1932) 230; H. B. SWETE, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London 1920) 311; C. E. B. CRANFIELD, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (Cambridge 1959) 406; P. CARRINGTON, *According to Mark* (Cambridge 1960) 281-283; HOOKER, *Mark*, 318-319; PESCH, *Naherwartungen*, 158-160.

<sup>(4)</sup> CARRINGTON, *Mark*, 281; LAMBRECHT, *Markus-Apokalypse*, 176-178; PESCH, *Naherwartungen*, 13-166; J. GNILKA, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (Zürich-Neukirchen-Vluyn 1978/9) 200; HOOKER, *Mark*, 318.

<sup>(5)</sup> PESCH, *Naherwartungen*, 166-172; F. J. MATERA, *The Kingship of Jesus*

A question hardly raised in the literature on the subject, however, is the reference of ὁ ἥλιος ἢ σελήνη, and οἱ ἀστέρες. The current commentaries and monographs assume without question that the words refer to material heavenly bodies, and that the announcement concerns natural disasters of cosmic proportions<sup>(6)</sup>. That is not surprising because in these publications the text of Mark is seen from the perspective of the author, from the sources he used, and from the OT passages incorporated in it. The same goes for authors who point out that in apocalyptic the stars are manned and controlled by angels<sup>(7)</sup>. Although this holds true of apocalyptic in general, it is difficult to see how such a representation of the angels here is compatible with what would be their likely lot when the celestial bodies break down, and consequently how their negative role in v.26 can be reconciled with the positive task allotted to them in v.27, where they are sent out to gather the elect. Be that as it may, this representation too is derived from what may be called the background perspective of the text<sup>(8)</sup>. The question of the effect of these words on the hearer or reader — which could be called the foreground perspective of the text in contrast to its background perspective — is as such not at issue in historical critical exegesis.

---

(SBLDS 66; Chicago 1982) 111-113; BRANDENBURGER, *Markus 13*, 54-65, 102-103; BREYTENBACH, *Nachfolge*, 296; C. S. MANN, *Mark* (AB 27; New York 1986) 530; T. J. GEDDERT, *Watchwords, Mark 13 in Markan Eschatology* (JSNTSS 26; Sheffield 1989) 226-229.

<sup>(6)</sup> M.-J. LAGRANGE, *Évangile selon Saint Marc* (EB; Paris 21947) 345; V. TAYLOR, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London 1952; 1957) 517-518; W. GRUNDMANN, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (THKNT 2; Berlin 1962) 268-269; F. BELO, *Lecture matérialiste de l'Évangile de Marc* (Paris 1974) 269-270; R. PESCH, *Das Markusevangelium* (HTKNT 2/II; Freiburg 1977) 302-304; BRANDENBURGER, *Markus 13*, 100-103; BREYTENBACH, *Nachfolge*, 297; D. LÜHRMANN, *Das Markusevangelium* (HNT 3; Tübingen 1987) 224; R. H. GUNDRY, *Mark, A Commentary on his Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids 1992) 745; J. P. HEIL, *The Gospel of Mark as a Model for Action. A Reader-Response Commentary* (New York 1992) 266; O. DAVIDSEN, *The Narrative Jesus, A Semiotic Reading of the Gospel of Mark* (Aarhus 1993) 123; G. R. Beasley-Murray thinks rather of the extinguishing of the celestial bodies, so that the glory of the son of man can illuminate heaven (*A Commentary on Mark Thirteen* [London 1957] 87). This, however, is difficult to reconcile with v. 25.

<sup>(7)</sup> GRUNDMANN, *Markus*, 269; D. E. NINEHAM, *The Gospel of Saint Mark* (The Pelican NT Commentaries; Harmondsworth 1963) 357; E. HAENCHEN, *Der Weg Jesu. Eine Erklärung des Markus-Evangeliums und der kanonischen Parallelen* (Sammlung Töpelmann II/6; Berlin 1966) 449; R. H. GUNDRY, *Matthew, A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids 1982) 487; id., *Mark*, 783; J. Gnilka rejects this (*Markus*, 2010). L. W. HURTADO thinks that “the language originated in ancient Israelite times when the sun, moon, and stars were believed to represent deities who controlled world affairs...” and “...in Mark’s time belief in the power of celestial bodies was still strong ... and the meaning of the statements would not be lost on his readers” (L. W. HURTADO, *Mark* [NIBC 2; Peabody, MA 1989; 1993] 222). But he does not connect this with names of deities and the implications it may have had for the first-century readers of Mark.

<sup>(8)</sup> The same goes for W. MARXSEN, *Der Evangelist Markus* (FRLANT 67; Göttingen 1956; 1959) 108-128. Like many predecessors, he regards 13,24-25 as part of an apocalyptic pamphlet, without putting the question of whether it may have received a different meaning in a Christian context.

## II

The question of the reader and what he or she makes of the text came to be considered only when exegesis turned to other auxiliary sciences besides linguistics and history. Especially textual science, semiotics, narratology, and literary criticism have helped exegetes to reflect on the reading process and the role of the reader. Finally, reader-response criticism<sup>(9)</sup> has clearly formalized this question. Meanwhile, these new methods have produced books which may be considered for interpreters of Mark, such as M. A. Tolbert's *Sowing the Gospel* and especially R. Fowler's *Let the Reader Understand*<sup>(10)</sup>.

With respect to both books I would like to observe in passing that for reader-oriented exegesis it is not enough to distinguish between the implied and the real reader<sup>(11)</sup>. There is a methodological argument to distinguish also between the original audience and all later flesh and blood readers, including the readers of today. The main argument is that the implied reader is a construct of the author derived from the image he had of his intended readers. For today's readers this construct, the implied reader, works as a system of guidelines for their reading process. Of course, the image of the original audience is likewise no more than a construct of today's analyst. And the creation of this construct, the original audience, confronts us again with the problem of the historical origin of the text but prevents us on the other hand from falling into what some consider to be the trap of deconstructivism.

## III

Holding on to the distinction between contemporary and later readers, one may wonder what 13,24-25 meant to the readers living in Rome or Syria shortly after 70, and what present-day readers with quite different cosmological ideas make of these words of Jesus. This short paper is confined to the first question: How did readers of shortly after 70 understand Mark 13,24-25? Although it does make a difference whether the first readers should be situated in Syria or, as I rather think, in Rome, in both cases we have to do with Christians of gentile origin who understood simple Greek and shared with people living in Rome or the provinces the Greco-Roman culture of the time<sup>(12)</sup>.

<sup>(9)</sup> A commentary presenting itself as a reader-response commentary is J. P. Heil's book referred to in n. 6.

<sup>(10)</sup> R. M. FOWLER, *Let the Reader Understand. Reader-Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark* (Minneapolis 1991); M. A. TOLBERT, *Sowing the Gospel. Mark's World in Literary-Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis 1989).

<sup>(11)</sup> In that respect the books by Tolbert and Fowler mentioned in n. 10 are each other's counterparts. Tolbert views Mark from the ancient novel and Fowler leaves the reading situation of the readers from Mark's period out of consideration. The contemporary reader is also left out of account by HEIL, *Mark*, who complements his comments on each episode with piestically coloured and moralising observations which bear no relation to the narrative development of Mark and the meaning of Mark's story as a whole.

<sup>(12)</sup> On the relation between Mark and Rome: B. VAN IERSEL, "De thuishaven van Marcus", *Tijdschrift voor Theologie* 32 (1992) 125-142 with some new argu-

Although any answer to the above question is somewhat hypothetical, I suspect that an audience of that description, reading or hearing what will happen to the sun, moon, and stars, thought not just of material heavenly bodies but also, and at least in case of ὁ ἥλιος and ἡ σελήνη possibly even primarily, of illustrious inhabitants of the Greco-Roman world of the gods<sup>(13)</sup>. In the preceding part of the book ὁ ἥλιος is used only in 1,32 and 4,6, and each time in the sense of a material heavenly body. Consequently, the reference to a divine figure is far from obvious. Because of the combination with ἡ σελήνη, which occurs only here in Mark, the reference of v.24 may be different. In the countries on the east side of the Mediterranean as well as in Egypt and the Roman Empire, the cult of Helios, the sun-god, and Selene, the moon-goddess, dates back to a very early period in human history. In both Syria and Rome, ὁ ἥλιος-*Sol* and his female counterpart and sister ἡ σελήνη-*Luna* had their own place in the Roman pantheon. Moreover, it was not only *Sol* and *Luna* but also the other planets that had names of deities. And irrespective of whether they were called *Mars*, *Jupiter*, *Venus*, *Saturnus*, or *Mercurius*, when hearing any of these names, people in the Roman Empire would have thought first of the deity and only then of the celestial body. Particularly in Rome, where the sun and the moon were worshipped as “gods of the chariot races”, the two deities must have been extremely popular<sup>(14)</sup>.

---

ments (summary in English on 142). That the worship of the sun-god was not unusual in Syria and sometimes had Roman features appears from F. CUMONT, *Die orientalischen Religionen im Römischen Heidentum* (Stuttgart 1959). The appendices contain some interesting illustrations. Pl. I, fig. 3, shows a Phoenician altar with an eagle (the symbol of heaven), and on the sides of the altar (not shown in the picture) Helios and Selene. Pl. 4 shows in fig. 3 the four sides of a votive offering from Palmyra. The left side (fig. 3a) portrays a young sun-god driving a chariot drawn by griffins, and bears a Palmyrian inscription. Fig. 3b shows the front, which represents a bust of the solar god surrounded with an aureole and a gloria, and holding an eagle in his hands, and which bears an inscription in Latin, beginning with the words: “*Soli Sanctissimo Sacrum...*”. Also the other two sides bear images relating to the sun-god, one of which probably that of the *Natalis Solis Invicti* at the winter solstice (fig. 3d).

<sup>(13)</sup> W. FOERSTER, “ἄστήρ, ἄστρον”, *TWNT* I, 501-502; (ἥλιος and σελήνη are missing in *TWNT*!); *LSJ* 769 s.v. ἥλιος II, and 1590 s.v. σελήνη II; F. CUMONT, *Le mysticisme astral dans l'Antiquité* (Bruxelles 1909); id., *Die orientalischen Religionen*; E. CAHEN – F. CUMONT, “*Sol*”, *Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines* (éd. Ch. DAREMBERG) (Paris 1911) IV, 1373-1386; id., *Astrology and Religion among the Greeks and Romans* (New York 1960); H. DÖRRIE, “Die Solar-Theologie in der Kaiserlichen Antike”, *Kirchengeschichte als Missionsgeschichte* (eds. H. FROHNESS–U. W. KNORR) (München 1974) I, 283-292; KEUNE, “*Sol*”, *PW* II/55.901-13; W. GRUNDEL–H. GRUNDEL, “Planeten”, *PW* XX/2.2112-21; K. LATTE, *Römische Religionsgeschichte* (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft V/4; München 1976) 132-233, 274, 281, 291, 296, 328-329, 349-351; M. P. NILSSON, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft V/2/2; München 1988) 486-519, 540; J. C. BRAM, “Moon”, *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (ed. M. ELIADE) (New York 1987) 10.83-90; id., “Sun”, *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 14.138-140. Interesting is that in the OT too the worship of sun, moon, and stars is forbidden as a pagan practice (Deut 4,19; 17,3; 2 Kgs 23,5; Job 25,5); in the dream of Joseph the sun, moon, and stars are personified (Gen 37,9).

<sup>(14)</sup> F. CUMONT, “*Sol*”, *PW* 1382; KEUNE, “*Sol*”, *PW* 903; J. C. BRAM, “Sun”, *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 139.

As for Rome it should be added that Nero, who had shed much Christian blood after the burning of Rome and had thus antagonized particularly the Roman Christians, had had a statue erected to himself, which represented him surrounded with the rays of the sun. In this form he ordered his subjects to worship him as sun god. Rising to a height of 35 m., this colossal statue dominated the *domus aurea* and was probably clearly visible to people outside. It was, moreover, the first statue of a human being of flesh and blood which had the dimensions reserved for the images of gods<sup>(15)</sup>.

But is this Greco-Roman interpretation not weakened by the announcement that the stars will be falling from heaven? If indeed the Greco-Roman audience, like the editors of Nestle-Aland, recognised the phrase as a quotation from Isa 34,4, then they also saw the falling of the stars as a cosmic disaster striking the inhabitants of the earth. That representation would, in retroaction, affect the reading of the preceding passage about the sun and the moon and characterize it likewise as a cosmic disaster. But is it really so self-evident that the original audience saw the falling stars as a cosmic event? To start with, it is noteworthy that Mark 13,24 is quite different from the LXX version of Isa 34,4. While Isaiah speaks for example of τὰ ἄστρα, Mark has οἱ ἀστέρες, which more readily evokes the image of personified stars than the neuter ἄστρα. On closer inspection it becomes clear that not even one single term has the same form in the two passages.

Isa 34,4

πάντα τὰ ἄστρα

πεσεῖται

Mark 13,24

οἱ ἀστέρες

ἔσονται ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ πίπτοντες

So there is every reason to have a look at another place in Isaiah where similar terms are used. In 14,12-15 a satirical poem on the king of Babylon says, supposedly with an allusion to an unknown astral myth:

How you are fallen from heaven, o Day Star, son of Dawn!

How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low!

You said in your heart: 'I will ascend to heaven;

above the stars of God I will set my throne on high;

I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far north;

I will ascend above the heights of the clouds.

I will make myself like the Most High'.

But you are brought down to Sheol, to the depths of the Pit ...

<sup>(15)</sup> B. H. WARMINGTON, *Nero, Reality and Legend* (London 1969) 124-126, 129-130; D. L. JONES, *Christianity and the Roman Cult* (ANRW II. 23/2) 1029; M. T. GRIFFIN, *Nero, The End of a Dynasty* (London 1984) 131. It is also clear that Nero himself thought more highly of Helios than of the other gods. He attributed the discovery of the conspiracy against his person to an intervention of Sol, and after the discovery ordered sacrifices to be made in the temple dedicated to Sol (Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.74, quoted by KEUNE, "Sol", 903, and by BRAM, "Sun", 138-139).

Through its opening words, Πῶς ἐξέπεσεν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὁ Ἑωσφορός ὁ πρῶτ' ἀνατέλλων, this passage may call attention to one of the heavenly figures who as demigods are part of the celestial household. Precisely in the Greco-Roman culture a personified meaning of the fallen stars would be obvious. Plato probably goes further than the prevailing view when, in his very influential *Timaeus*, he calls the stars visible gods (ὄρατοι θεοί)<sup>(16)</sup>. In Hellenistic folk religion the stars are important historical and mythological figures and heroes like Hercules, Castor and Pollux, who have received heavenly status and now live forever in the form of a star. An echo of that view is even found in Dan 12,3: "And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever". So, the understanding of ὁ ἥλιος καὶ ἡ σελήνη as dieties is not weakened but rather confirmed by the passage of the falling stars.

About αἱ δυνάμεις ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς I can be brief because the discussions and opinions concerned are well known. When people in the Greco-Roman world did distinguish δυνάμεις from ἀστέρες, they may have thought of them as planets. And as for the question whether they identified these δυνάμεις with cosmic phenomena rather than demonic powers, I would like to say with W. Grundmann: "Es ist ein müßiger Streit, der darum geführt wird, ob es sich hier um Engelmächte oder um kosmische Mächte handelt ... es gibt keine kosmischen Mächte, die nicht Geistermächte und Engelmächte wären"<sup>(17)</sup>.

All this would mean that for Greco-Roman audiences Mark 13,24-25 referred not only or not primarily to a cosmic catastrophe. It is probable that the Roman audience understood these words of Jesus first of all as announcing the end of the idols of the Greco-Roman pantheon, who like the deities of *Sol* and *Luna* would be made powerless, and the stars equipped with divine power and all the unnamed planetary gods would be thrown off course and flung from heaven. This is a wholly different representation and conception than that of Jewish apocalyptic which in the case of the sun and the moon and the other heavenly bodies thought of a cosmic disaster rather than gods.

#### IV

As a result a Greco-Roman audience may also have had a different impression of the prediction in Mark 13,24-27. To them the events appeared to take place in heaven rather than in the sky. Although it is not said in so many words, before v.23 all the predicted events happen without exception under the sun, on earth. In v.24, however, the scene is shifted to heaven. From what has gone before, the audience knows that heaven is the dwelling-place of God. They have heard God's voice come from the torn vault of heaven (1,11) and the intermediate station of a cloud (9,7). And elsewhere in the text heaven is marked as the house of God, directly by the

<sup>(16)</sup> *Tim.* 40 d 4.

<sup>(17)</sup> *TWNT* II, 308 s.v. δύναι/δύναμις.

way Jesus calls God “your father in heaven” (11,25), and indirectly by the way he lifts up his eyes to heaven (6,41; 7,34).

What happens in God’s dwelling in 13,24-27 divides into two scenes. The second scene is the more important of the two: the enthronement of the son of man Jesus before the eyes of those present. Who they are is not clear. The plural ὄψονται can be an impersonal plural and may be understood as referring to the inhabitants of the earth. Yet it could also refer to the elect of v. 22, the more so since they are mentioned again in v. 27. But on the basis of the assumption that a Greco-Roman reader thought primarily of deities in vv. 24-25, it is perhaps preferable to recognize in these witnesses the defeated gods who see the enthronement of the son of man take place before their eyes<sup>(18)</sup>.

Against this background the first phase, or the scene preceding the enthronement, could therefore be best characterized as the dethronement of the pagan idols. Probably we should go even further than this. The stars in v. 25 do not just fall, they fall from heaven. This evokes yet another image: The house of heaven will be cleared and thus made ready to serve as the dwelling-place of the son of man. That would be in keeping with the image of God’s kingdom as a dwelling, which sometimes forces itself upon the reader<sup>(19)</sup>. This image plays a part here too. For in this context both the phrase ἐπὶ θύραις (at the very door) (v. 29) and the short parable story about the θυρωρός (door-keeper) who is to wait for the return of the master of the house (v. 34), together with the application of the parable to the audience of Jesus (vv. 35-36) and the readers or hearers of the story (v. 37), evoke the image of the house. In a more general sense this could also explain why there is mention of “entering” and “drinking in the kingdom” (9,47; 10,23-25; 14,25).

## V

After reading ὁ ἥλιος and ἡ σελήνη as names of gods, Roman readers came in v. 31 upon the words ὁ οὐρανός και ἡ γῆ (heaven and earth), of which Jesus says that they will pass away while his words will never pass away. Since ὁ οὐρανός and ἡ γῆ, just like ὁ ἥλιος and ἡ σελήνη, have been locational references as well as names of gods, and at least ὁ οὐρανός still functioned as such at the time of the emperors<sup>(20)</sup>, we may wonder how they were understood by Mark’s Greco-Roman audience. There are several reasons to suppose that the words οὐρανός and γῆ refer to physical entities only. The first reason is that, unlike ὁ ἥλιος και ἡ σελήνη, the

<sup>(18)</sup> C. Myers regards these spectators as a proleptic representation of the Roman and Jewish powers, who, after it has grown dark, watch standing under the cross (15,31-33.39) (*Binding*, 343, 389-391). But the text never says of the temple authorities that they are looking on; and darkness falls only after they have mocked Jesus and have already passed when Jesus dies and the Roman centurion declares what he has seen.

<sup>(19)</sup> D. JUELL, *A Master of Surprise. Mark Interpreted* (Minneapolis 1994) 71-72, 79.

<sup>(20)</sup> LSJ 1273 does mention under III the use of Οὐρανός as a proper name, whereas the proper name of Earth is Γαῖα (LSJ 335).

combination ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ does not constitute a standard expression for a configuration of gods<sup>(21)</sup>. The second reason concerns the fact that the latter pair received far less attention in contemporary philosophy than the sun and the moon, which lay after all at the root of the calendar. The third, and I think the most important, reason is that both ὁ οὐρανός and ἡ γῆ have just before been used in a clearly local sense, namely where it says in v. 27 that the son of man will send out the angels to gather the elect from the four winds, ἀπὸ ἄκρου γῆς ἕως ἄκρου οὐρανοῦ.

## VI

But — and this is my last question — is it not equally possible to cite a clear argument against the interpretation that ὁ ἥλιος and ἡ σελήνη were associated with divinities? As a counterindication against the view that this understanding of Helios and Selene was obvious in the Hellenistic world, the Lukan parallel of Mark 13,24-25, Luke 21,25-26 might be adduced<sup>(22)</sup>. In the version of Luke, which must be attributed to an author probably more deeply rooted in the Hellenistic culture than the author of Mark, ὁ ἥλιος and ἡ σελήνη are difficult if not impossible to understand as referring to divine figures. The passage is concerned not so much with the sun and the moon themselves, as with unusual phenomena visible in the sun, moon and stars which are taken for ominous portents and therefore cause panic on earth. This implies that in Luke ὁ ἥλιος, ἡ σελήνη and οἱ ἀστέρες refer to the material celestial bodies. So, the question is whether this should not be seen as an indication that the author of Luke understood Mark 13,24-25 exclusively as referring to heavenly bodies, and that similarly a Greco-Roman audience did not automatically or primarily associate ὁ ἥλιος and ἡ σελήνη with the two divinities.

On closer inspection it becomes clear, however, that the passage from Luke cannot be cited as a counterindication. It is, after all, either a reproduction of another source than Mark, as has been argued by D. Wenham<sup>(23)</sup>, among others, or the result of a redactional change of Mark 13,24-25 by Luke. In the first case, the text of Luke 21,25-26 says nothing about the question how the author of Luke understood Mark at this point. If, on the other hand, Luke 21,25-26 is to be regarded as a redaction of the text of Mark, then the following two possibilities present themselves. The first is that the author of Luke had no particular reason to change the version of Mark. This would imply that he really did understand it differently from the way suggested in this paper, in which case his version

<sup>(21)</sup> LSJ 347 does not mention the use of γῆ as a proper name, although the words quoted from Homer, *Iliad*, 19, 259 γῆ ... ἥλιος ... ἐρινύες give the impression of being proper names.

<sup>(22)</sup> About Luke 21,25-27 see W. GRUNDMANN, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (THKNT 3; Berlin <sup>2</sup>1963) 384-385; I. H. MARSHALL, *The Gospel of Luke* (NIGTC; Exeter 1978) 774-778; R. MADDOX, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts* (FRLANT 126; Göttingen 1982) 121; J. A. FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV* (AB 28A; New York 1985) 1328, 1348-1350.

<sup>(23)</sup> WENHAM, *Rediscovery*, 304-323.

should certainly be regarded as a counterindication. The second possibility is that he used Mark here but redrafted it to express a different view, in which case his version cannot be accepted as a counterindication. The second possibility appears to be the case. Luke is here only interested in what will happen on earth and not in what will go on in heaven. The redaction mainly consists in three changes: a) Luke increases the distance to the preceding phase by adding the fulfillment of the times of the gentiles in v.24 and omitting ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις at the beginning of v.25; b) he changes "sun, moon and stars" and their disfunctioning into "signs that become visible in sun, moon and stars"; c) he adds the element of panic which the sight of the signs in the heavenly bodies struck into the inhabitants of the earth in v.25b-26<sup>(24)</sup>. So, the version of Luke cannot be seen as a counterindication of the proposed meaning.

My provisional conclusion is that, unless valid counterindications present themselves, I intend to hold on to the thesis proposed in this short paper, namely, that between 65 and 100 Greco-Roman readers or hearers of Mark 13,24-25 thought primarily of traditional divine figures who played a significant role in the Greco-Roman culture of the time.

Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen  
 Postbus 9103  
 6500 HD Nijmegen  
 The Netherlands

Bas VAN IERSEL

<sup>(24)</sup> Only when this is compared with Mark 13,25-26 does it strike one that in Mark the events happening to the sun, moon and stars are not represented as being observed by humans; nor are they represented as being watched by whoever is the subject of ὄψονται in v.26, which would have been possible. They are, on the contrary, represented as if they were objective facts which are announced to take place in the future and whose importance and function is not dependent on whether people observe them or not.