

Social Criticism

Experiencing the Gospel of Mark

SOCIAL CRITICISM

Four Approaches

- 1) Social Description
- 2) Social History
- 3) Sociology of Knowledge
- 4) Models from the Social Sciences (especially Cultural Anthropology)

Material based on David Rhoads article in *Mark & Method*, chapter 6, "Social Criticism: Crossing Boundaries"

SOCIAL CRITICISM

1) Social Description

- Understanding the social setting as best as we can
- *What do we need to know if we were filming the story?*
- *What do we need to know to understand all the interactions?*

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2) Social History

- Understanding the broad sweep of change in history
- *What sociopolitical forces shaped the ministry of Jesus and the writing of the Gospels?*
- *How does early Christianity fit in the broader social history of the Roman period?*

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3) Sociology of Knowledge

- Reconstructing the worldviews of a culture ("social construction of reality")
- Understanding how that worldview legitimated and maintained order for the social organization or group
- *In Mark*
 - *Dominion of God is at hand > followers are to cross boundaries to proclaim it; mission is urgent*
 - *>>> Loose knit social network based on hospitality*

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4) Models from Cultural Anthropology

- Models to map cultural dynamics and describe phenomena that appear in many cultures
 - Kinship systems
 - Power Relations
 - Rituals
 - Purity-Pollution rules
 - Economies
- Approaches used to analyze a society
 - Structural-functional: balance, status quo
 - Conflict: struggles over power & oppression
 - Symbolic framework: shared symbols and how they change

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4) Models from Cultural Anthropology

- In Mark
 - **Honor** is key goal (not economic gain)
 - **Identity** bound with group participation (not individual autonomy and freedom)
 - **Goods are limited** (not unlimited supply)
 - **Patrilineal kinship**
 - **Purity/Pollution boundaries**

Social Criticism

Mark 1.29-34

SOCIAL CRITICISM

Mark 2.1-12

- Social Description
 - What do we need to know to film this scene? a
 - To understand the interactions? b
- Social History
 - What sociopolitical issues are involved?
- Sociology of Knowledge
 - What worldview is assumed? How is it maintained? How does it shape social order? a
- Models from Cultural Anthropology
 - Boundaries (physical and symbolic) a
 - Power b

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Mark 2.1-12: Social Description

PHYSICAL OBJECTS

- Synagogue
- House / door
- Where/how lying down
- Serving: food, meal setup and manners
- Typical dress
- Nature of diseases and demon-possessed
- Town

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Mark 2.1-12: Social Description

SOCIAL ASPECTS

- Brothers
- Friends
- Hospitality
- Mother-in-law
- What is involved with "serving"
- Understanding of disease and demon possession
- Sabbath > evening/sunset

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SOCIAL CRITICISM

Mark 2.1-12: Sociology of Knowledge

WORLDVIEW and SOCIAL ORDER

- Sabbath
- Roles of men and women
- Family, friends, and hospitality
- Understanding of disease and demon possession
- Visible world and supernatural world

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