

THE GOSPEL OF MARK AS NARRATIVE CHRISTOLOGY

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Abstract

This essay investigates the narrative composition of the Gospel of Mark, especially those aspects of composition which make it a continuous, developing story and shape this story so as to influence the anticipated readers. The significance of these aspects of composition for the Gospel's presentation of Jesus Christ is emphasized. The importance of the commissions given to Jesus and the disciples is brought out, and the role relationships of Jesus to four significant groups are investigated. These relationships are developed in Mark through reiterative enrichment or through new, sometimes surprising developments. Attention is given to patterns of related scenes and to other compositional techniques which indicate emphasis and evaluation of characters and events. This includes study of the patterned use of paradox, irony, and enticement to false hope in connection with the passion announcements and passion story. There are suggestions as to the possible function of these compositional features in the author's communication with his readers.

0.1 Jesus is the central figure in the Gospel of Mark, and the author is centrally concerned to present (or re-present) Jesus to his readers so that his significance for their lives becomes clear. He does this in the form of a story. Since this is the case, we need to take seriously the narrative form of Mark in discussing this Gospel's presentation of Jesus Christ. In other words, we need ways of understanding and appreciating Mark as narrative Christology. But what should we look for? What aspects of the Gospel's narrative composition significantly shape its

presentation of Jesus? Discerning some of the more important of these aspects is the task of this essay.

0.2 In the Gospel of Mark there is little description of the inner states of the story characters. Instead, characterization takes place through the narration of action. We learn who Jesus is through what he says and does in the context of the action of others. Therefore, the study of character (not in the sense of inner qualities but in the sense of defining characteristics as presented in the story) can only be approached through the study of plot. We must pay special attention to the main story lines which unify the Gospel, for it is not only the continuing centrality of Jesus which makes Mark a single story but also the fact that certain events can be understood as the realization or frustration of goals or tasks which are suggested early in the story. These goals or tasks (later I will use the word "commission") enable us to understand key developments as meaningful within the context of the story as a developing whole. We must also study features of composition which control the "rhetorical" dimension of the story. These features show that the story has been shaped in order to influence the readers in particular ways.

0.3 This essay is not primarily concerned with the use of Christological titles in Mark. Valuable work has already been done in this area, and I do not intend to repeat it. However, an understanding of the narrative composition of Mark may allow us to make some observations about the function of particular titles in relation to the developing narrative. For instance, the title "Son of God" does seem to have a special function in relation to Jesus' commission, as will be indicated below.

0.4 I prefer to speak of narrative composition rather than narrative structure because the latter term is increasingly associated with the methods of structuralism. While I have learned some things from structuralist analysis, this is not an essay in structuralism. Instead, I am

following a path which began with the study of forceful and imaginative language in the synoptic sayings (see Tannehill, 1975). Careful study of the literary composition of the sayings, including their rhetorical and poetic features, enables the interpreter to clarify the kind of impact which particular sayings were designed to have on the hearer. Literary composition provides clues to the nature of the act of communication which the words are to make possible. It may provide clues to the speaker's purpose, the conception of the hearers and their needs, and the anticipations of response held by the speaker. It provides clues to the type of influence which the speaker wishes to exercise with regard to the hearer. And this influence may sometimes be at a deep level, challenging the hearer to radical change, so that it is appropriate to speak of a "depth rhetoric" whose goals and methods are partly akin to poetry (see Tannehill, 1975:18-19). This approach can also be applied to the Gospels as narratives, if we find appropriate ways of analyzing narrative composition and of understanding the results in the context of communication between writer and reader, which includes the (conscious or unconscious) intention to influence the reader in particular ways. The importance and danger of stories which exercise such influence becomes clear when we recognize that we understand our own lives and the lives of others by shaping them into stories, and the shapes of our life stories can be influenced by stories which we read or hear. This process is especially important because stories are uniquely able to reflect and give meaning to significant features of our experience (see Crites). My study of narrative composition in light of these concerns began with an essay on the disciples in Mark (Tannehill, 1977), which sought to show the author's careful control of emphasis and evaluation, guiding the readers' judgments about the disciples, with possible repercussions for the readers' judgments about themselves. The present essay is an extension of that work, seeking to do greater

justice to the fact that Jesus is the central character in the Gospel, through whom the Gospel's influence is most fully felt. This requires clarification of the roles of Jesus within the Markan narrative.

0.5 The original readers (or hearers, if we think in terms of a public reading) were, of course, people of the first century. Their problems and possible responses must be understood in terms of the first century world. Therefore, the approach taken here is not opposed to historical research. Its newness consists in the use of certain literary perspectives to sharpen our understanding of what is central to the story and of the way in which the story has been shaped in order to challenge the readers. This can give us a clearer view of the interaction between the author and his first readers. It can also deepen our understanding of what it would mean for a modern reader to read this Gospel well, with full appreciation of its power to challenge.

1. Mark 1:1-8:26

1.1 If we are to understand how the author of Mark wished to present Jesus Christ to his readers, we must apprehend the statements and events recorded there as parts of a unified narrative. Mark is a unified narrative because, in spite of clear division into episodes, there are connecting threads of purpose and development which bind the story together. These appear when we clarify the dominant commissions in the story.

1.11 In my usage, the term "commission" will have a meaning similar to the term "mandate" in recent structural analysis of narrative /1/. The latter term could be used, but, since I will not be appropriating the full system that goes with it, it may be better to keep terminology distinct. For my purposes, the most important observation is that a unified narrative sequence results from the communication of a commission to a person and the acceptance

of this commission. The narrative sequence will then relate the fulfillment or nonfulfillment of the commission. The events of the narrative sequence are meaningful parts of the same sequence because they relate a movement toward the fulfillment of the commission or narrate encounters with obstacles which frustrate fulfillment. The commission provides an overarching purpose and goal which unifies the sequence and gives meaning to the parts. The sequence is over when the commission is fulfilled or is finally abandoned. The term "commission" is most appropriate when this purpose and goal are communicated from one person to another. This is not always indicated in the narrative. When it is not indicated, it may be better to speak simply of a "task." Such a task can have the same narrative function of determining the extent of a narrative sequence and bringing the events of that sequence into meaningful unity.

1.12 The Gospel of Mark is the story of the commission which Jesus received from God and of what Jesus has done (and will do) to fulfill his commission. We are probably to understand the baptism scene as the communication of this commission, for here we have a rare type of story, one in which God speaks directly to Jesus and declares who Jesus is (i.e., declares what his role is to be). Furthermore, the stories which follow show Jesus acting in ways that are meaningful in light of God's commission. It is true that the commission is not expressed as a series of instructions for action but simply by designating Jesus as "my beloved Son." However, action results: Jesus sets out on a mission /2/. If the words "You are my beloved Son" announce the commission which Jesus received from God, this should be taken into account in the interpretation of the meaning of this title in Mark. We will see that the special connection of the title Son of God with Jesus' commission from God is reinforced by later scenes in the Gospel (see 2.23 and 3.61). Since this title does serve especially to announce Jesus' commission,

its full meaning for the author can only be understood in light of the complete Markan narrative, for it is here that we are shown the content of the commission which Jesus received.

1.13 Although Jesus' commission is central in Mark, many other commissions and tasks are suggested. For each person who acts with purpose a commission or task can be assumed. Of course, many of the story characters in Mark appear only in a single episode, so it is not obvious that their commissions and tasks contribute to the unity of the Gospel as a whole. However, another commission and another task are indicated early in the Gospel and establish narrative sequences which persist until the passion story or beyond. In 1:16-20 Jesus calls four fishermen to follow him. This establishes the disciples' commission and begins a sequence of events which clarify this commission and tell the reader whether it is being fulfilled. This commission, as it is gradually clarified, will provide a norm by which the disciples' subsequent behavior can be judged. The narrative sequence which begins with the disciples' call is quite important in Mark. Furthermore, in 3:6 we are told that a group intends to destroy Jesus. This is an ongoing task in the Gospel narrative, for this intention reappears in 11:18, and Jewish leaders finally bring Jesus to the cross. These three commissions or tasks, then, have a scope which enables them to bind Mark together as a single narrative. As we shall see, each of these narrative sequences contains significant development, and the interaction between them is an important part of Mark's Gospel.

1.14 There is another task or purpose of even greater scope which stands in the background of the events which Mark narrates. The opening of Mark, with its Old Testament quotation indicating that God is sending his messenger, suggests that God also has a purpose and that his purpose lies behind the central events of the story. It is to realize God's purpose and mission that Jesus is given his

mission. From that point on, Jesus is viewed as the central actor in the fulfillment of God's purpose, and so attention centers upon him /3/.

1.2 In fulfilling his commission, Jesus assumes certain roles in relation to other persons in the narrative, and our understanding of Mark's narrative Christology will be advanced by considering these role relationships. In addition to Jesus' relation to God, from whom he receives his commission, four relationships seem most important because they involve either developing roles or prominent repeated roles. These are Jesus' relationships to his disciples, to the scribes, Pharisees, and Jerusalem leaders, to the supplicants who ask for healing, and to the demons. The narrative development of Mark's Christology begins to appear as we consider what Jesus does and who he is in relation to these important groups. We must give some attention to each of these four role relationships, but the former two, which involve significant developments affecting the story as a whole, will be studied more carefully, with attention focusing on these developments.

1.21 It is accurate to express Jesus' basic role as that of eschatological salvation bringer. In the more abstract language of narrative analysis, with religious connotations removed, we may speak of his basic role as that of ameliorator (see Bremond, 1973:282-285). However, Jesus' narrative roles in Mark are more complex than this statement reveals. Jesus is not salvation bringer or ameliorator for all groups in the story, not, for instance, for the demons. And his saving action is often not simple and direct. To a surprising degree Jesus' action, rather than replacing the action of others, calls forth the action of others. Jesus becomes the ameliorator of others in that he incites them to become ameliorators for themselves and others. In other words, Jesus functions frequently as an influencer, one who moves others to action

(see Bremond, 1970 and 1973:242-281). Jesus as influencer is closely related to Jesus as preacher and teacher. Nevertheless, there is some value in using the term influencer because (1) this calls attention to the relation of what Jesus says to action within the story, to the successful or unsuccessful results of Jesus' words upon the narrated action, and (2) it opens the possibility that Jesus may exercise influence not only by what he says but by what he does and suffers. The readers as well as persons in the story are objects of Jesus' influence. However, it is in relation to persons in the story that the author suggests the possible results of Jesus' influence.

1.3 The scenes at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry establish the basic role relationships which will be important in the Gospel. These scenes begin to clarify Jesus' commission, for what he has been commissioned to do is shown to us by what he actually does. The importance of Jesus as influencer is clear in the first two scenes, the announcement of the kingdom in Galilee (1:14-15) and the call of the first disciples (1:16-20). In the first of these Jesus seeks to move others to action by disclosing the opportunity to share in the kingdom's benefits. The recipients of these words are not specified, and the present participles suggest that the proclaiming and saying is repetitive. The influence is general. It is meant to encompass disciples, crowds, and readers. It takes place through disclosing the approach of God in his ruling power. This scene relates the whole mission of Jesus to the coming of God's kingdom.

1.31 In 1:16-20 the intended relationship between Jesus and the disciples is established. Here, in light of the kingdom's coming, the first disciples are called to their continuing task. This scene is not complete in itself but is the beginning of a story line. The commission here given and accepted is gradually clarified in following scenes (see 3:13-19, 6:7-13, 8:34-38), and the author will give clear guidance to his readers in evaluating the

disciples' behavior in relation to their commission (see Tannehill, 1977). The author emphasizes the parallel between Jesus' commission and the disciples' commission. The disciples should share in Jesus' mission and fate. They are meant to be co-ameliorators and co-influencers, subordinate to Jesus but sharing in his work /4/. In part Jesus fulfills his commission by sharing it with others. The communication of a commission to the disciples allows another story line to unfold, which becomes the locus of important negative developments within the story of Jesus and a means by which the Christian reader's complacency is challenged.

1.32 In 1:21-28 we are told for the first time of an encounter between Jesus and an unclean spirit. Several aspects of this scene indicate a concern not only to institute Jesus' role in relation to the demons but also to relate this to other aspects of Jesus' commission. The unclean spirit asks, "Have you come to destroy us?" (note the plural: the question concerns Jesus' general role in relation to the demons), and the exorcisms which follow indicate that the answer is yes. In order to be the one who brings salvation to people, Jesus must be the destroyer of the powers that oppress them. But this exorcism story is also used to underline the authority of Jesus' teaching (1:22, 27), and Jesus' authoritative teaching is contrasted with that of the scribes. This points forward to the series of controversies in 2:1-3:6.

1.33 This series of controversies strongly suggests that the scribes and Pharisees are to be understood as opponents of Jesus as he seeks to fulfill his commission. The Jewish leaders in Mark do *intend* to oppose Jesus' work. However, the reader's initial impression that they will present the main obstacle to the fulfillment of Jesus' mission will prove false (see 3.21). As a reminder of this, I will refer to the Jewish objectors and plotters in Mark as "opponents," using quotation marks. In the controversies

in 2:1-3:6 Jesus again acts as influencer, for these stories emphasize Jesus' forceful words. The influence centers on key points in understanding Jesus' own role: his mission and authority to forgive sinners (2:10, 17), the eschatological joy and freedom for new action which he brings (2:19-22), the priority of human need over the sabbath commandment and Jesus' authority to set aside sabbath observance (2:27-28, 3:4-5). The effect of Jesus' forceful words is not limited to those who have raised objections; indeed, the (negative) reaction of the Pharisees is not made clear until 3:6. Jesus' influence is meant to reach the readers. Here the readers discover what was meant when they were told that Jesus taught with authority and not as the scribes.

The series of controversies ends in 3:6 with the statement that the Pharisees wished to destroy Jesus. This immediately raises the question of whether and how this intention will be realized. We now have three commissions or tasks operating in the text which are not restricted to single episodes but which stretch across Mark's Gospel and come to resolution only with the passion story or beyond. These are the commission received by Jesus from God, the commission received by the disciples from Jesus, and the task of destroying Jesus which Jesus' "opponents" have undertaken for themselves. However, the last of these does not lead to immediate action. Although there are controversies following 3:6, the desire to destroy Jesus is not repeated until 11:18, and even then the "opponents" have great difficulty in finding a way to accomplish their purpose. The author introduces the death plot early in his narrative, but he wishes to develop the other narrative lines before continuing this one.

1.34 Between the report of the exorcism in 1:21-28 and the series of controversies in 2:1-3:6, the author reports two healings in response to requests (1:29-31, 1:40-45) and summarizes Jesus' healing and exorcising

ministry (1:32-34). The relation of Jesus to supplicants is logically distinct from the relation of Jesus to the demons. Jesus helps the supplicant in response to a request, but he destroys or breaks the power of the demon. Hence, the relation of Jesus to supplicants institutes another role relationship. Nevertheless, these two relationships may appear in a single story, as when a father requests help for his demon-possessed son (9:14-27), and the author speaks of Jesus' healing and exorcising work together (1:34) /5/.

1.4 Although the healing and exorcism stories make up an important part of Mark, they have a different status from material that emphasizes the disciples and those who try to oppose Jesus. The disciple and "opponent" material is part of developing narrative lines which come to a climax in the passion story. The healing and exorcism stories do not lead anywhere, for each is complete in itself. The need finds its resolution within a single episode. While the disciple and "opponent" material fits into progressive sequences which begin early in the Gospel and continue to its end, the healing and exorcism stories do not. They are not progressive but reiterative. Since they do not form a sequence leading toward the passion story, the narrative climax of the Gospel, they are subordinate to the material which does. Nevertheless, the repetition of similar stories emphasizes Jesus' roles as helper of supplicants and conqueror of demons. Furthermore, reiteration makes possible a different kind of development. Reiteration of a basic pattern allows and encourages variation of details. Points of emphasis can vary and various possibilities for filling the roles can be used. Thus the story of the Gerasene demoniac depicts a situation of desperate alienation with vivid detail, while the following story of the woman with a hemorrhage not only focuses on a woman instead of a man but also emphasizes her faith. Thus the reader's understanding of

the possibilities inherent in a basic pattern of roles is enriched through providing a varied sampling of the same type of story.

1.41 Enrichment through reiteration with variation also takes place in Jesus' relation to "opponents" and to the disciples. In 2:1-3:6 we find a series of controversy scenes, each of which could be complete in itself. It is only 3:6 which makes a reiterative collection part of a progressive sequence. There are also patterns of similar scenes in the narratives about the disciples, such as the three boat scenes (4:35-41, 6:45-52, 8:14-21), with their increasingly clear negative judgments, and the three passion predictions (8:31, 9:31, 10:32-34), with the teaching which follows them. However, the patterns of disciple scenes also show climactic emphasis in the final scene of the pattern. Since similar action in similar situations gives us a sense of knowing a person's "character" (that is, his or her defining characteristics), the roles of Jesus in these reiterative scenes provide stable features for the picture of Jesus which the Gospel presents.

1.42 The importance of Jesus' relationship to each of the groups discussed is indicated by the fact that the author repeatedly reminds us of each relationship throughout the first half of the Gospel (to 8:26) /6/. By 3:6 we have been introduced to the disciples, the demons, the supplicants, and Jesus' "opponents" with their plan to destroy him. Thus an important function of this first section of the Gospel is to establish the role relationships which are basic to the rest of the story. Scenes in which Jesus is related to each of these groups are repeated up through 8:26 in a rough pattern of rotation. In 3:7-12 the author returns to Jesus' ministry of healing and exorcism. This is followed by a scene in which the twelve are named and their task is specified, developing the narrative line which began with the call of the first disciples. Then there is a major controversy scene in 3:20-30. This rotation continues although it is not always

possible to classify the scenes simply and neatly. Combinations are useful to the author. Thus the controversy in 3:20-30 involves the scribes from Jerusalem, but it is a controversy about Jesus' exorcisms and contributes to our understanding of their meaning. The situation of Jesus' followers is indicated by suggesting contrast (see 4:11-12 after 3:21-35) or similarity (see 8:14-21 after 4:11-12 and 8:11-12) between them and the blind "opponents." However, none of the role relationships which have been discussed is allowed to disappear or recede in the first half of Mark. Through this rotation of scenes, developments are taking place. Although no action is taken to further the plan to destroy Jesus, successive scenes make clear the extent of the conflict and the points at issue. And significant development takes place in Jesus' relation to the disciples.

1.5 The relation of Jesus to the disciples passes through a development of considerable complexity. The author gives clear indications of how the disciples' behavior is to be evaluated at different stages of the narrative. The disciples' intended role is made clear by a series of three related scenes in the early part of Mark: the call of the first disciples (1:16-20), the choice of the twelve (3:13-19), and the sending out of the twelve (6:7-13). The nature of the disciples' commission is partly clarified in these scenes. It involves sharing in Jesus' work of preaching and exorcism. More generally, it means that they must "follow" or "come after" Jesus (1:17-18) and "be with" him (3:14). Jesus is the one who gives the disciples their commission and the one who continues to instruct them in its meaning. The author intends us to evaluate the disciples' behavior in light of what Jesus says and does. When the disciples are in harmony with Jesus, the author intends them to be viewed with approval; when they are not, with disapproval. On this basis, the three scenes just mentioned give us a positive impression of the chief followers of Jesus (with the

exception of 3:19). To this must be added the strong positive evaluation in 4:10-12. This initial positive evaluation has an important function: it encourages the natural tendency of Christian readers to identify with Jesus' followers in the story /7/.

1.51 However, a shift takes place in the relation between the disciples and Jesus. Within the first half of Mark this is most clearly seen in the three boat scenes in which Jesus is alone with his disciples (4:35-41, 6:45-52, 8:14-21). While the disciples' fear and lack of faith in the first of these scenes might appear to be a temporary lapse, the succeeding scenes suggest a consistent pattern of anxious self-concern is blinding the disciples to Jesus' power and mission. Thus the fulfillment of the disciples' commission is put in question. The anticipated and desired development has become blocked. This causes tension, and the reader naturally hopes for and expects some resolution of the problem in the rest of the narrative. It is now likely that the initial easy identification of the reader with the disciples has become a problem. The tendency to identify remains, but this now conflicts with the negative judgments which must be made about the disciples. While the disciples were called to "follow" Jesus and "be with" him, a chasm is beginning to open between Jesus and the disciples, which requires the reader to choose where he or she will stand. Perhaps the reader would like to stand with Jesus, rather than admitting a similarity with the blind and fearful disciples, but this will become increasingly difficult in the light of Jesus' demands. The implied criticism of the disciples threatens to become criticism of the reader /8/.

1.52 Jesus, on occasion, is the protector of the disciples when they get into trouble (as in 2:18-22 and 2:23-28), but when the disciples show clear signs of failing to follow Jesus, Jesus increasingly becomes their corrector. He exercises powerful influence in order to

call the disciples back to perceptive faith. This influence can be felt by the reader. We would also expect it to have an effect upon the disciples. However, the problem is not easily overcome.

1.6 In all of this the author of Mark is telling us the story of Jesus and of the commission which was given to him. The commission which Jesus received from God remains central and gives to the story its human and religious significance. But fulfilling this commission involves a struggle. Men have been called to share Jesus' work, but it is becoming doubtful whether they will fulfill the commission given them. "Opponents" not only criticize Jesus but wish to destroy him. Although nothing comes of this for the present, the intention can be revived and lead to action. The success of such an intention would seem to mean the failure of Jesus' work. Even in the miracle stories there seems to be some problem, for while Jesus demonstrates his power, the miracles are repeatedly accompanied by commands to silence, directed to the demons or to those healed. These commands to silence do not determine the actual course of events, for the author tells us that Jesus was not obeyed /9/. However, they do express Jesus' intention. Jesus does not want to be known primarily on the basis of the miracles. Why this is so is not clear in the first half of the Gospel, but the emphasis placed on Jesus' disclosure in 8:31 suggests that Jesus cannot be proclaimed until the proclaimer comes to terms with Jesus' rejection and death. This does not mean that the miracles have no importance in the author's presentation of Jesus. They are emphasized through repetition and dramatic detail. Furthermore, through much of the Gospel, as Jesus' demand becomes increasingly strong and difficult for the disciples, it is primarily in the miracle stories that Jesus appears with grace and power to save, rather than with a condemning demand.

2. Mark 8:27-10:52

2.1 In 8:27-10:52, Jesus' role in relation to his disciples becomes the dominant concern. There are only two miracle stories in this section, and even they have discipleship themes attached to them (9:14-29--the disciples fail to heal the boy and want to know why; 10:46-52--Bartimaeus follows Jesus on the way to Jerusalem). Jesus responds to hostile questioning in 10:1-9, but the principal references to the "opponents" in this section relate to the future. For Jesus speaks of his coming rejection and death in Jerusalem. So here we can expect to learn more about what Jesus means for the disciples (and for the church which they represent). This must be understood in light of the problem which has already appeared in the relationship between Jesus and the disciples. The strong but vague indications of the disciples' anxious self-concern and blindness in the previous section of the Gospel become concrete points of conflict between Jesus and the disciples.

2.2 Although the author regards Peter's confession as appropriate (see 1:1, 14:61-62), so that the problem caused by the disciples' lack of perception might seem to be solved, the narrative sequence makes clear that a major problem remains. For the confession is immediately followed by a new statement of Jesus' commission, declaring that Jesus must suffer, be rejected, be killed, and rise again, and this announcement is rejected by Peter. The repetition of this announcement in following chapters, the fear and conflict which it causes, and its close connection to the climactic events in Jerusalem show this to be the key element in 8:27-10:52.

2.21 As I indicated, this is a new statement of Jesus' commission. It announces a program of action which will be carried out in the rest of the narrative. Like the announcement in the baptism scene, it is to be understood as a commission from God, as the "must" of 8:31

suggests and as the transfiguration scene will confirm. It is remarkable that the Gospel delays the disclosure of Jesus' full commission. Information has been withheld from the readers. The readers have been allowed to form an understanding of the author's view of Jesus in which suffering and death have had no part. But this was so that the suffering and death might be emphasized more strongly and placed in tension with the attitudes of the disciples and the church. There is no indication that the words of 8:31 contain new information for Jesus. However, this is new information for the reader of Mark. Thus there is a certain surprise value to the announcement, which emphasizes it. Emphasis is also conveyed by the conflict which immediately arises through Peter's rejection of this statement, and by the repetitive pattern of three passion announcements (8:31, 9:31, 10:33-34) connected with similar reactions from the disciples and similar corrective teaching by Jesus. Furthermore, this is a prospect or anticipation of events still to come /10/, which provides a succinct summary of what is central in the story. A reader's natural interest in the outcome of the story focuses attention on this anticipation.

2.22 Jesus' commission from God at his baptism was quickly followed by the commission which the first disciples received from Jesus in their call. The new statement of Jesus' commission is quickly followed by a new statement of the disciples' commission. After Peter's objection to the passion announcement and Jesus' strong rebuke, Jesus speaks of what is required of anyone who "wishes to come after me" and of how one must "follow me" (8:34). Almost the same language was used in the call of the first disciples. Just as the work of the disciples was patterned after the work of Jesus in the first half of the Gospel, so now their commission is reformulated to conform to the new understanding of Jesus' commission. This is made clear not only in 8:34-38 but also in Jesus' teaching following the other passion announcements. The disciples

must be willing to lose their lives as Jesus will lose his and like him become self-giving servants /11/. Jesus' role as influencer and corrector of reluctant and fearful disciples is dominant in 8:31-10:45. Each passion announcement is followed by an episode in which disciples reject what Jesus has said (8:32-33) or act in a way which conflicts with the path which Jesus has chosen (9:33-34, 10:35-41). This, in turn, is followed in each case by Jesus' corrective teaching. This teaching is formulated in forceful language. The full power of Jesus' verbal influence is used, and this power is reinforced by the threefold pattern of the narrative, coming to a climax in the extended scene in 10:32-45. The pattern ends at 10:45 with Jesus' teaching, leaving open the question of whether the disciples will finally accept this teaching and follow him. This teaching provides the standard by which the reader can judge the subsequent actions of the disciples in the passion story.

2.23 Jesus' commission comes from God and the commission which Jesus gives the disciples is also divinely authorized. Since there is a struggle between Jesus and the disciples over these commissions, it is not surprising that the author chooses to emphasize their divine origin. This is done in the transfiguration scene. The divine commission which Jesus received at his baptism is now disclosed to the disciples, using the same words: "my beloved Son." This underscores Jesus' divine authority for the disciples. Therefore, the disciples must "hear him" (9:7). While this may be an allusion to Deut 18:15, we must ask why the author places these words at this point in his narrative. They must have special reference to words of Jesus in the immediate context, that is, to the teaching in 8:31 and 8:34-9:1 in which Jesus has just disclosed something new about his commission and the commission of his disciples /12/.

The baptism and transfiguration scenes show that the title Son of God is the preferred title in Mark

when the author wishes to stress Jesus' commission from God. This will be confirmed by the confession of the centurion at the cross, which is a retrospective reflection upon Jesus' commission (see 3.61). Thus in key scenes at the beginning, middle, and end of the Gospel the title Son of God has the special function of emphasizing Jesus' divine commission. Since this title is so closely associated with important scenes which report or confirm Jesus' commissioning, its meaning in Mark is influenced by the narrative which unfolds from that commissioning. That Jesus is Son of God means that he has been chosen and authorized by God to do what he is doing and thereby accomplish God's saving purpose. This is not to deny that current usage of the title in the surrounding world would influence its meaning, but the fine tuning of the title's meaning takes place through the understanding of Jesus' commission which appears in the narrative as that commission is announced and fulfilled. It therefore encompasses Jesus' conquest of demons, healing of supplicants, call to the disciples, death in Jerusalem, etc.

The two scenes in Mark which speak of a voice from heaven or from a cloud (1:11, 9:7) are both connected with Jesus' commission from God. It is not usual for the Gospels to depict God speaking or acting directly. However, there is a point at which God cannot be represented by Jesus. That is where the author wishes to make clear that Jesus received his commission from God, as in the baptism and transfiguration scenes.

2.3 Within a narrative there may be points at which a major theme of the writing is succinctly expressed. We find such points in Jesus' teaching following the three passion predictions. This is particularly true of a group of sayings which are linked by form and meaning. Beginning with *hos ean* (or *an*) or *ei tis*, these sayings set forth a fundamental rule of life which applies both to Jesus and the disciples (see 8:35, 9:35, 10:42-45). Rhetorically they are antithetical aphorisms. An antithetical

aphorism is a brief but sweeping statement containing a sharp contrast which is emphasized by using antithetical terms /13/. The antithesis contained in each of these three sayings is sharpened to the point of paradox, for they assert a necessary connection between opposite terms. The attempt to save one's life will lead to the opposite; the goal of being first can only be achieved by its opposite. The clash of words in each of these antithetical aphorisms emphasizes the conflict between this vision of life and the normal view, in which people assume that they can directly achieve the goals which their anxious self-concern sets for them. These paradoxical words intend to shake the assumptions which normally control our thinking and planning /14/.

2.31 These words are part of Jesus' new statement of the disciples' commission. However, they also reflect the commission which Jesus has accepted for himself. This is clear from the parallel drawn between Jesus' way and the way of the disciple in 8:34 and 10:45. Furthermore, the same paradox is dramatized in the mocking scenes of the passion story, where Jesus is presented as king while mocked by the soldiers (15:16-20) and as the savior who cannot save himself (15:31; note the connection with 8:35). The passion announcements make clear the external course of events and speak of the passion as rejection by the leaders of Israel. The inner meaning of Jesus' path for the one who follows it is suggested by the paradoxical sayings being discussed. Jesus, renouncing all concern for life and power, goes to the cross in service of others. Strangely, this death brings life. This is the meaning of the death of Jesus most strongly emphasized in Mark /15/.

3. Mark 11:1-16:8

3.1 Martin Kähler's famous footnote in which he speaks of the Gospels as "passion narratives with extended introductions" (80) is both insightful and misleading when applied to Mark as narrative. To speak of the first

thirteen chapters as an introduction is inadequate, not only because of the wealth of material there but also because it is these chapters which establish and develop the commissions and task which come to a climax in the passion story. Mark is a single, unified story because of its progressive narrative lines. Events in the first thirteen chapters are necessary parts of the main lines of action, rather than being preliminary to them. However, the passion is the natural point of emphasis within Mark because it is the climax of the three major narrative lines based on the commissions of Jesus and the disciples, and the task of the "opponents." Here these commissions and task lead to critical action, in which the commission is accepted or refused at high risk, and we discover the results. The three narrative lines are closely intertwined, we reach a high point of tension, and we discover the ending with which the author chooses to leave us.

3.2 The intention of the "opponents," inactive since 3:6, is repeated in 11:18. From that point on it is kept alive by a series of controversies, together with repeated reference to the threatening presence of Jesus' enemies and their destructive intent (see especially 12:12, 14:1). At the beginning of the series of controversies, the "opponents" are listed as "the chief priests and the scribes and the elders" (11:27). This group continues to be active at least through 12:13, and again in chapter 14. The list is the same as in Jesus' passion announcement in 8:31. Although Mark suggests that there is continuity between this group and Jesus' previous "opponents" (see the references to scribes "from Jerusalem" in 3:22 and 7:1), the appearance of the specific group of which Jesus spoke suggests the possibility of the fulfillment of his prophecy. However, the "opponents'" intention still leads nowhere, for they are frustrated by Jesus' powerful words (see 12:34) and the crowd's support of Jesus (11:18, 12:12, 12:37). It is only at 14:10-11 that a way is found to move forward with their plan. In chapters 11-12 Jesus appears to be beyond their power.

3.21 In Mark the high priests, scribes, and elders (and earlier the Pharisees) plot against Jesus and oppose him in controversy scenes, indicating that they view Jesus as an opponent of their essential purposes. However, while the author of Mark has firmly established the view that this group intends to oppose Jesus, he has also told us that Jesus has accepted a commission to be rejected and die in Jerusalem. This group has an essential role in fulfilling Jesus' commission. One of the interesting features of the plot of Mark is that the role relationships are not symmetrical. If Jesus is being opposed by the high priests, scribes, and elders, we would expect the relation to be reciprocal, so that Jesus must become opponent to his opponents, resisting their efforts in order to fulfill his commission. However, this is not the case with the specific commission which Jesus announced in 8:31, for the group which intends to oppose Jesus has a necessary role in the fulfillment of this commission /16/. This not only points to the strangeness of the commission which Jesus has accepted. It also reflects an ambiguity which characterizes the passion story as a whole, not only on the level of role relationships but also on the level of the reader's response to the text. For while the supporter of Jesus would naturally hope that Jesus will triumph over his enemies by escaping their plot, a hope repeatedly encouraged by the author (see 3.5-3.51), Jesus himself has chosen a different way. Thus every step toward Jesus' death is likely to have both negative and positive value for the reader, as two ways of judging struggle within. There is a strong tendency for the reader to make the opposition symmetrical, but Jesus' words and actions repeatedly conflict with this.

3.3 The congruence of Jesus' commission with their own plans is not seen by those who intend to oppose him. The result is dramatic irony. The effect of the actions of the Jerusalem leaders conflicts with their purpose. They intend to bring Jesus and his mission to an end, but

their actions have a place within Jesus' mission, and his work does not end. To be sure, rejection and death retain their strongly negative connotations in Mark. This appears most prominently in the struggle in Gethsemane and the word from the cross (15:34). In Gethsemane Jesus accepts the necessity of suffering; it is not good in itself. The way which Jesus goes is deeply unsettling, and this appears in the portrait of Jesus himself. But the author of Mark believes that the evil of death has been incorporated by Jesus into his victorious mission.

3.31 The irony of dramatic action which I have just mentioned could easily be missed. However, there is a series of scenes in the passion story which highlight the ironic relationship between Jesus and those who reject him /17/. It seems to be important to the author of Mark that unwitting confessions of Jesus appear in the very acts by which he is rejected. The rejection and scorning of Jesus, prominent in the passion announcements in chapters 8-10, are dramatized in the passion story by scenes of mocking. These scenes are systematically placed, one following each of the main events after the arrest (the trial before the Jewish council, the trial before Pilate, the crucifixion). The last two of the three scenes are vivid and emphatic. All three are ironic and suggest to the reader important affirmations about Jesus. This is easily recognized in the second of the three scenes, in which Christ is mocked by the soldiers (15:16-20). The irony here actually has two levels. The soldiers act and speak ironically; outwardly they proclaim Jesus King of the Jews but actually they are rejecting his kingship. However, the reader is meant to take the soldiers' irony ironically, i.e., as pointing to a hidden truth. This reading is supported by the repeated references to Jesus as Christ and king in the passion story /18/.

3.32 The other two mocking scenes also contain irony. In 14:65 Jesus is mistreated and commanded to prophesy. The mistreatment makes clear that the request is not meant

seriously but is intended to degrade Jesus. But again ironic truth is suggested, for the reader knows that a whole series of prophecies by Jesus is coming to fulfillment in the passion story. The prophesied rejection by the chief priests, scribes, and elders has just taken place; the prophesied denial by Peter is about to take place. The reader is intended to recognize Jesus the prophet as he is mocked. The tendency in Mark's passion story to broaden and emphasize the mocking of Jesus appears in 15:29-32, for the mockers include not only the high priests and scribes but also the passers-by and those crucified with Jesus. Again the words are ironic. The reference to the destruction and building of the temple may contain an affirmation about Jesus which the author accepts /19/. The command "Save yourself" is meant ironically, for the speaker intends to highlight Jesus' powerlessness. The thought is continued by the statement in 15:31: "Others he saved, himself he cannot save." Although intended as mockery, this statement summarizes so well Jesus' story as told in Mark that it must be regarded as one of the points at which key elements of the total development come to expression. Jesus' power to heal and rescue has been demonstrated. But the rule proclaimed to the disciples in 8:35 applies to Jesus also: "Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it." Hence, "the Christ, the King of Israel" (again ironic confession) has power to save others but no power to save himself.

So the mocking scenes in Mark's passion story are Christological. They covertly proclaim Jesus as prophet, king, and powerful savior who does not use his power for himself. In each scene this is tied to the experience of rejection and death. The truth proclaimed by irony is that Jesus fills these roles as he suffers. Thus the paradoxical sayings which speak of life through death (8:35) and greatness through lowliness (9:35, 10:42-45) become drama in the passion narrative.

3.4 Jesus has been the chief actor and speaker in Mark. At the arrest, however, he shifts to a passive role. He is the victim of the destructive action of others. To be sure, Jesus' commission is being fulfilled through these events, and Jesus' passivity expresses his basic acceptance of this commission. Although the action originates outside himself, Jesus is moving toward his goal, and this is called to the reader's attention by reminders of the passion announcements (see the Son of Man sayings in 14:21, 41) and by references or allusions to the fulfillment of scripture.

3.41 More striking is the fact that Jesus becomes almost silent after the arrest. Perhaps this portrays Jesus' acceptance of his role of suffering. However, Jesus' powerful words, emphasized by their forceful style, have been the means by which Jesus has influenced others, and the role of influencer, moving others to action, has been important in Mark's portrait of Jesus. However, Jesus' words are, for the most part, no longer necessary. Jesus' teaching in 8:31-10:45 has already made clear the meaning of the passion events. This teaching included a call to follow Jesus to suffering and death (8:34-38). This call of Jesus is all the stronger because Jesus no longer speaks about accepting death and giving oneself in service but does these things himself. Here Jesus shifts from teacher to powerful paradigm. Thus the role of Jesus as influencer vis-à-vis the readers of the Gospel is probably increased rather than reduced as the author presents this passive, silent Jesus.

3.42 The teaching in 8:34-38 was given to the disciples, as well as others, and 8:31-10:45 showed a struggle taking place between Jesus and the disciples over the proper understanding of Jesus' and the disciples' commissions. At 10:45 the conflict is still unresolved. There is hope but no assurance that the disciples will see the light. The narrative line constituted by the disciples' commission is the third narrative line which comes to a

climax in the passion story. However, in this case the outcome is negative. In chapter 14 we find repeated and dramatic emphasis on the failure of the disciples to follow Jesus in suffering. The composition of the story highlights Judas' betrayal, the flight of the disciples, and Peter's denial by the fact that Jesus predicts each of these events. Thus the reader's attention is focused on these events before they happen in the narrative line. And the author guides his readers to a strongly negative evaluation of the disciples' behavior. In 14:31 the disciples reject Jesus' prophecy of their desertion and denial and explicitly promise faithfulness to death. So the actions which follow must be evaluated not only in light of Jesus' requirements in 8:34-38 but also as a clear betrayal of an explicit promise. We are also told of the disciples' repeated failure to watch in Gethsemane (see Kelber: 47-60), and Peter's denial is juxtaposed with Jesus' confession at his trial, highlighting the contrast, and is emphasized by repetition (Peter denies Jesus three times) with a strong climax (the last denial involves a curse). The disciples' story line stops at this point of failure. Christian readers must struggle with the fact that their heroes and representatives, those who share with them the call to follow Jesus, have failed the test. A clear choice is placed before the readers, represented by Jesus, on the one hand, and the faithless disciples, on the other. Choosing to stand with Jesus means accepting Jesus' words in 8:31-10:45 and living them out as Jesus does in the passion story.

3.43 The powerful effect of this is undermined if readers are allowed to fully distinguish themselves from the disciples, regarding them as heretics with whom the readers have nothing in common. It is important, then, that it is precisely the honored leaders of the church who have this role and that Mark's account initially presents them in a very positive light (see 1:16-20, 3:13-18, 4:10-12, 6:7-13), helping the reader to view them as

representatives of the church, its calling and privileges. Furthermore, the author is not content to condemn the faithless disciples but clearly anticipates a possibility beyond failure. This can be seen in the passage which most clearly speaks of the post-resurrection situation, Mark 13. When Jesus says, "They will deliver you up to councils" and "You will stand before governors and kings for my sake" (13:9), he is speaking of what he endured and the disciples rejected in the passion story. Yet Jesus is speaking to Peter, James, John, and Andrew (13:3) about their future role. This does not mean that these once faithless disciples are securely faithful after the resurrection. They are also warned against being led astray. But this does show that the author of Mark believes in the power of Jesus' words and witness to create faithful disciples among the first followers and the church which they represent. This anticipation of faithfulness in suffering is confirmed by Jesus' statement to James and John in 10:39. I think that we should interpret 14:28 and 16:7 in light of this anticipated shift from failure to possible faithfulness. Jesus' statement in 14:28 must be understood in relation to the preceding verse. After speaking of the disciples as scattered sheep, Jesus says, "But (*alla*) after I have been raised...." This statement anticipates a shift in the disciples' situation as scattered sheep following the resurrection. Furthermore, the related message of a future meeting with Jesus in 16:7 is meant precisely for the disciples "and Peter," i.e., those who proved faithless in the preceding story. Thus the primary function of this meeting, as indicated by these verses, is to make possible the restoration of a relationship broken by the disciples' failure. To regard these verses as references to the parousia conflicts with this function and leaves unclear how Peter, James, John, and Andrew, who proved faithless at Jesus' passion, could be the ones who will suffer and preach the gospel, as indicated in Mark 13. To suppose that they could simply

continue on as disciples as if nothing had happened mitigates the seriousness of the failure emphasized so strongly in Mark 14 /20/.

Nevertheless, it is significant that the author stopped short of narrating the meeting of the risen Jesus with his disciples. Restoration of faithful discipleship is opened to the reader as gracious possibility but it is not narrated as accomplished fact. And it is a possibility which faces continuing obstacles from faithless people in the post-resurrection church (see 16:8) /21/. But the words of Jesus have been trustworthy in the past, and the author wants us to believe that the words of Jesus in 14:28, repeated and clarified in 16:7, will also prove true in spite of fear and failure. The situation with which the Gospel ends is relevant to the author's audience. It is the situation between failure and possibility, a possibility not yet understood and believed. The author may know that some of the first disciples did respond to this possibility and became faithful followers of Jesus in suffering (see 10:39, 13:9). But many of those to whom the Gospel speaks still stand between failure and unrealized possibility.

3.44 The drama of the passion story is heightened by unexpected developments in the role relationships. The opponents are both opponents and (in terms of Jesus' commission in 8:31) helpers. The disciples prove to be false helpers. However, their failure increases the impact of Mark's portrait of Jesus. Since Jesus' and the disciples' commissions are parallel, the disciples' failure makes them contrasting figures to Jesus. The choice is dramatized by showing both alternatives in action. The way of Jesus stands out starkly against the contrasting background of the disciples.

3.45 The passion story presents somewhat ambiguous evidence on the clarity of Jesus' vision and the firmness of his resolution as he approaches death. On the one hand,

the passion predictions and the related sayings in 14:21, 41, and 49 lead us to believe that Jesus is perfectly clear as to his path and firmly resolved to take it. The Gethsemane scene and the cry from the cross give a different impression. These passages significantly deepen the portrait of Jesus, helping the reader to recognize the reality of Jesus' suffering and to share in it. Gethsemane is also a point of crisis in the Gospel's story of Jesus. For a moment the outcome hangs in the balance, and the previous impression of firm resolution could prove to be false. However, the struggle of Jesus not only introduces suspense and helps the reader to recognize the reality of Jesus' suffering; it may also be relevant to situations that Mark's first readers would face. The three disciples play an important role in Mark's Gethsemane story, and the story, while indicating the disciples' failure, also indicates what they should do in such a situation: watch and pray. Christians faced with suffering or death must face their own fears and come to terms with them. Otherwise their promises will carry no more weight than those of the disciples (see 14:31). The struggle of Jesus in Gethsemane, which the disciples were meant to share, would help such readers to identify with Jesus' way and to recognize the importance of their own spiritual struggle.

3.5 The author also has another way of leading his readers to recognize their selfish hopes and fears. Christian readers in Mark's church would, of course, expect the story to lead to Jesus' death because they had heard the story before. Nevertheless, one can imagine a different outcome. The author helps his readers imagine a different outcome by repeatedly suggesting the possibility that Jesus will escape. Such possibilities are appealing in light of the powerful desire for a way around the cross rather than through it. But the story continually calls the reader back from false hope to the reality of the crucifixion.

3.51 In Gethsemane Jesus suggests that it may not be necessary to die, since all things are possible for God (14:35-36) /22/. However, this suggestion, involving a changed understanding of God's commission, is rejected, and Jesus remains committed to God's will as announced at 8:31. One avenue of escape is closed. At the arrest one person begins armed resistance (14:47). The comment of Jesus which follows is not a reprimand of this act but a protest of the manner in which he is being treated by the arresting party. Such a protest against injustice can easily lead to a call for resistance, and the preceding event suggests that some are ready to respond to such a call. But both resistance and protest are cut short by Jesus' final words: "But (this is happening) that the scriptures may be fulfilled." The possibility of escape through resistance ends as Jesus submits /23/. In the trial before the Jewish council the author builds up suspense by repeatedly referring to attempts and failures to find testimony on which to condemn Jesus. The "opponents" of Jesus have run into trouble, for they have no legal case. Even the use of false witnesses does not produce the desired result. So it appears that Jesus will have to be released. But then the high priest asks Jesus, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" At this point Jesus need only remain silent, as he has been doing, and as he commanded the disciples to do when they recognized him as the Christ (8:30). But in seeming conflict with the whole Messianic secret theme, just at the most disadvantageous time, Jesus openly acknowledges his Messianic office. The result is his condemnation to death. Jesus himself provides the crucial testimony by which he is condemned. The possibility of escape by concealment is rejected. At the trial before Pilate the crowd requests the release of one prisoner, as was customary. Pilate himself proposes that he release Jesus (15:9). The Gospel writer has repeatedly indicated that the crowd supports Jesus. That is the reason why the "opponents" have not been able

to act. Now the crowd need only agree with Pilate's proposal. But the crowd chooses Barabbas and calls for Jesus' crucifixion. A clear possibility of release is suggested but again it comes to nothing. Once more false hopes are aroused and then crushed. Finally, the possibility of escape is again suggested when Jesus is on the cross. The mockers challenge Jesus to save himself by coming down from the cross (15:30-32). This, of course, is mockery, but, as the story moves on, it plays with the idea of a last minute, miraculous rescue. This can be seen in the response to Jesus' cry of forsakenness. The cry is misunderstood as a call to Elijah for rescue from the cross (15:35-36). The listeners wait with excitement to see if the rescuer will come. But Jesus dies without a rescuer. Jesus has followed his path to the end, while a whole series of avenues of escape, representing most of the conceivable possibilities for Jesus and his followers, have been eliminated one by one. Hopes for a way around the cross for Jesus (and, by implication, for the believer) have been aroused sufficiently to be recognized and then have been crushed. This narrative pattern takes on meaning in light of the author's concern to purge the church of its desire for triumph without suffering.

3.6 The previous discussion suggests that the author intends this story of Jesus' acceptance of death for the sake of his mission to deeply color the readers' understanding of Jesus. This affects the significance of the titles applied to him in key scenes. The reservation of public announcement of Jesus' Messianic status until 14:61-62 makes the Sanhedrin trial a climactic Christological scene (see Donahue: 88-95, and Perrin). Three Christological titles which are of central importance in Mark are publicly appropriated by Jesus in his answer to the high priest. Jesus lays claim to the titles Christ, Son of the Blessed (that is, Son of God), and Son of Man as he goes to his death. Indeed, the public acknowledgment of his claim brings about his death. While previous

use of the titles Christ and Son of God occur in private or are followed by commands to silence /24/, secrecy is no longer necessary when the titles are applied to the Christ of the passion, for then they are properly used. The narrative situation in which the titles are appropriated helps to define their meaning.

3.61 The centurion's confession at the cross (15:39) must be understood in light of the narrative line which comes to a climax in the passion. We have seen that the title Son of God has special importance in the scenes which establish or confirm Jesus' commission as a commission from God (see 1:11, 9:7). That commission led Jesus to the cross. A principal function of the centurion's confession is to remind the reader that Jesus through his death has fulfilled God's commission. The reoccurrence of the title Son of God is appropriate for this purpose. This function also explains the phrasing of the centurion's confession: "*Truly* this man *was* God's Son." The past tense indicates that this is a retrospective statement. It is a comment on the story narrated to this point, declaring that Jesus has fulfilled the commission given to him by God. The use of "*truly*" fits with this, for the statement is an affirmation or confirmation of something previously stated in the commission scenes. Again it is apparent that the narrative development with its climax in the passion is important for understanding the meaning and function of Christological titles in important scenes in Mark.

4. The study of Mark as narrative reveals more unity and art in this Gospel than is commonly recognized. These appear as we consider the narrative lines which flow from the commissions or tasks of major characters and groups in the Gospel. Our understanding of these matters is enriched by study of the role relationships among Jesus and others in the story, which sometimes involve reiterative enrichment and sometimes unexpected development. The

author guides his readers' response to the story by narrative patterns which control emphasis and the evaluation of events and characters. Among the compositional techniques considered in this study were the delayed disclosure of Jesus' and the disciples' full commissions, and the repeated use of irony, paradox, and enticement to false hope. In these and other ways the author communicates with his anticipated readers concerning their life situation by means of the story of Jesus which he is telling. Studying Mark as narrative Christology provides a deeper understanding of the meaning and function of Mark's presentation of Jesus Christ.

NOTES

/1/ See Calloud (17, 25, 27) and Patte (37-44). The term "contract" is also used.

/2/ Even if we assume that the commission was given at some earlier time, the narrative function of the baptism scene would be the same: it is the point at which Jesus' commission from God is brought to the reader's attention so that the reader can understand the following events in light of it.

/3/ Structural analysis would distinguish here between a correlated sequence which has become blocked (God's purpose as revealed in the Old Testament) and a topical sequence, involving a task accepted by Jesus, which has the function of making possible the fulfillment of God's purpose announced in scripture; see Patte (37-38).

/4/ Note the parallel between the description of Jesus' ministry of preaching and exorcism in 1:38-39 and the task of the twelve as described in 3:14-15 and 6:12-13.

/5/ A suppliant comes to Jesus with a clear intention to improve his own or another's lot. Therefore, we may say (to use Bremond's language) that the suppliant is an ameliorator and Jesus is the helper or (following Patte) that the suppliant is a subject with a mandate and Jesus is the helper. However, it is important to note that rhetorically Jesus remains the dominant figure in the story. Jesus' act is presented as crucial to the realization of the goal. So the "helper" is not necessarily secondary in importance and interest in the "surface structure" of the story.

/6/ This is still true of 8:27-10:52, but to a lesser extent.

/7/ Those who, like Weeden, interpret the disciples as representatives of the writer's theological opponents face the difficulty of explaining why the first part of the Gospel emphasizes that the twelve have been specially chosen to share Jesus' work and have been given "the mystery of the Kingdom"; see Tannehill (1977:393-394). It is possible that Jesus' relatives represent theological opponents (see 3:21, 31-35; 6:1-6), but the disciples should not be lumped together with the relatives (see Crossan: 146), for the writer's attitude toward the disciples is much more complex.

/8/ For more complete discussion of the disciples in Mark and of methods by which the significance of this narrative role can be understood, see Tannehill (1977).

/9/ See 1:44-45, 7:36-37. I think 5:19-20 also demonstrates such disobedience.

/10/ One important aspect of the author's shaping of his work appears when we note the difference between the order in which events are recounted or evoked and the chronological order of the events themselves. The author may suggest the special significance of certain events through the use of prospect or retrospect; see Genette (77-121).

/11/ In 8:31-10:45 Jesus' call to accept suffering and to renounce the desire for status and domination is most strongly emphasized, but there are also other specific causes of tension between Jesus and the disciples; see Tannehill (1977:401-402).

/12/ Note that the teaching of Jesus on the way down from the mountain reemphasizes the passion and resurrection announcement (9:9, 12).

/13/ For discussion of this rhetorical form and Gospel examples, see Tannehill (1975:88-101). Mark 10:42-45 is an expanded antithetical aphorism; see Tannehill (1975:102-107).

/14/ On the importance of not dissolving the paradox in interpretation, see Tannehill (1975:99-101).

/15/ Mark 10:45 is a climactic statement, but the reference to Jesus' death as a ransom for many is a subsidiary element in that statement. Jesus' death as ransom is used to explain the nature of Jesus' self-giving service--by his death as ransom he is giving himself in service--, but it is the fact of his serving which is important to the forceful teaching in 10:42-45. The idea of Jesus' death as ransom does not appear elsewhere in Mark. Even 14:24 uses rather different language. On the other hand, the emphasis on self-renunciation is reinforced by the threefold pattern of sayings which we have been discussing.

/16/ To be sure, the parable of the murderous tenants (12:1-12) assumes that the intended opposition deserves punishment.

/17/ Donald Juel (47) calls irony "the most prominent literary feature of the passion story" in Mark.

/18/ "Christ" is explained by "King of Israel" in 15:32. "Christ" is accepted by Jesus in 14:61-62 and used by the author in 1:1. Thus the context in Mark provides a guide for understanding the irony. It is often said that in irony the actual meaning is the opposite of what is expressed. However, the relation between expression and

meaning can be more subtle and complex. Wayne C. Booth (10-12) speaks of the process of "reconstruction" required by irony. Because of some incongruity the reader must reject the surface meaning and seek an alternative interpretation, which will to some degree be in conflict with the surface meaning.

/19/ This is the view of Donald Juel (206) who says, "Jesus is the destroyer of the temple in a figurative and in an ironic sense: its destruction is a result of his death, brought about by those in charge of the temple worship"; see also Donahue (103-138).

/20/ For other arguments against the parousia interpretation of 14:28 and 16:7, see Stein. To assert, as Crossan (146) does, that Mark's empty tomb story was created to oppose the idea of resurrection appearances to Peter and the apostles requires us to declare the author of Mark to be inept. When the announcement of Jesus' resurrection is followed by a statement about Peter seeing him and this is conveyed in writing to a church which already told stories about the risen Jesus' appearance to Peter (1 Cor 15:5), the reader can hardly be blamed for taking it as a reference to a resurrection appearance.

/21/ If the women at the tomb include the mother of Jesus (see 15:40, 47; 16:1 with 6:3) and if the scenes which give a negative picture of Jesus' relatives (3:21, 31-35; 6:1-6) are criticizing a group in the writer's historical situation, 16:8 may be a part of that criticism, indicating that Jesus' family, or the Jerusalem church, has become an obstacle to God's purpose for the disciples. In any case, it is the women, not the disciples, who cause the problem at this point.

/22/ That all things are possible with God or for the believer is a repeated Markan theme, which heightens the plausibility of Jesus' request; see 9:23, 10:27.

/23/ Here I follow the interpretation of Boomer-shine. He argues, "The function of the final sentence in both speeches [14:36 and 14:48b-49] is to break unexpectedly the line of reasoning established in the rest of the speech. The use of the strongly adversative conjunction *alla* is one sign of the discontinuity of thought.... In the arrest speech, therefore, the final sentence has an adversative relationship to the first part of the speech. The possibility of resisting arrest is rejected in a climactic acceptance of God's will" (165). Furthermore, "the function of the speech is inextricably tied to its structure and context.... Its context is determined by the hostile reaction to Jesus' arrest by one of those standing by. Jesus' initial response is in direct continuity with that action. The function of the speech is, therefore,

to call forth a sympathetic reaction to expressions of hostility toward those who have arrested him and to raise the hope that Jesus may resist arrest. Jesus' sudden acceptance of arrest...destroys that hope" (166). Most of the comments on texts of the passion story in 3.51 parallel points made by Boomershine.

/24/ The voice at the baptism is a private communication to Jesus. The conversation in 5:7 may be private. In any case, it is followed by a restriction on communication in 5:19, which is disobeyed.

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