Chapter One

CHRISTOLOGY AND MIMESIS

En ho metro metreite metrethesetai umin kai prostethesetai umin. (Mark 4.24)

The Economy of Response

No commentator has adequately been able to 'explain' it. 'The difficulty about 4.24 still remains; [Mark] must have brought it in, though it is hardly relevant, because he wished to use the latter saying [v.25]'.[1] Most commentators look outside the text to an alleged source in the scattered sayings of Q in order to expand upon their difficulty in commentating upon it and their difficulty in understanding it within its context.[2] A number of commentators have drawn attention to its obscurity.[3] Several have assumed that its rewrite in Matthew 7.2 and Luke 6.38, where it is understood as a proverb about judgement, is the closest we get to understanding Mark's original intention.[4] So that, overall, this verse could be said to sum up Mark's clumsiness as an editor.[5]

What I wish to draw attention to are three ambiguities in this verse and how the writer relates (and represses) them through his style. For the verse has a distinct rhythm that arises from the writer's use of assonance, alliteration and balanced clausing.

First, there is the problem of understanding the character of the *en*, which is often interpreted as an instrumental dative. But I would suggest that the *en* bears something of a locative connotation also – that the measure (or the

1 E. Best, *Mark: The Gospel as Story* (Edinburgh: T. &. T. Clark, 1983), p. 126.

2 See Hugh Anderson, *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1981); Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, Teil 1 (Freidburg: Herder, 1976).

3 D.E. Nineham, *The Gospel of Mark* (London: A. & C. Black, 1963); Eduard Schweitzer, *The Good News According to Mark*, tr. Donald H. Maduig (London: SPCK, 1971).

4 C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to St Mark*, rev. edn (Cambridge University Press, 1972); Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel According to St Mark* (London: A. & C. Black, 1991).

5 'Mark is not sufficiently master of his material to be able to venture on a systematic construction himself'; R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, tr. John Marsh (Oxford: Blackwell, 1963), p. 350. This is partly true, but for reasons other than Bultmann considers, as we shall see.

measuring) is understood both instrumentally and as a state or condition that can be inhabited.[6] The measure is not simply an object to be applied (in order to facilitate judgement), it is a state within which we are already located. It is an active state which, should we continue to participate in it, will affect where and who we will be.

Secondly, there is the difficulty of identifying the *umin*, the you that is the subject of the sentence. The *umin* is always already within the process of a measuring that is locating and identifying it. Who are the *umin*? Jesus, who is set apart (*kata monas*), is speaking in the midst of his twelve appointed ones, but at the request of 'those around him with [*sun*] the twelve' (4.10). *Umin* could then refer to several communities of listeners, including the congregation of the church listening to the reading of the gospel. The Markan text is scattered throughout with what might be called suspended pronouns, pronouns referring to subjects that are not stably identified (see 1.45, 2.15 and 3.2 for others). This *umin* reaches out concentrically, passing through and beyond several referents. It is always being added to (and *prostethesetai* carries with it the sense of 'to continue to do something').

Thirdly, there is the question of the verb 'to measure'. What is the act of measuring within the context of understanding parables; within the context also of listening as an act of obedience (*akouete*)? Listening for what, to what? We hear not a proposition but a carefully orchestrated set of phonemes. The verse performs far more than it states. What we obey is the call to perform (by listening) the rhythm of the sentence. What we obey is the call to participate in, by responding to, a poetic economy, a metre. *Metron* can, of course mean 'metre' – metre in the context of *melos* (tune) and *rhythmos* (time) in classical poetics. And the sentence has a distinctive anapaestic rhythm.

The effect of these three ambiguities is to render prepositional logic subservient to (because subverted by) rhetoric.[7] Of course the sentence refers to

[6] In *The Greek of the Gospel of Mark* (Philadelphia, Penn.: Scholar Press, 1961), John Charles Doudna draws attention to Mark's 'extensive use of the local sense' (p. 25) of *en* and the dative. In 1.23 and 5.2 it is used with the sense of 'in the power of …' or 'in the possession of …'. Though he does not include 4.24 (which he classifies as an instrumental dative), within the context of the Gospel, where there is a correspondence between the Spirit that drives forward and the pace of the narrative, perhaps we can see in 4.24 that the involvement with 'measuring' and its promotion is driven by a power (an important Markan word) both beyond and within the 'measuring' itself.

[7] The first commentary in English, as far as I am aware, that analysed Mark's gospel in terms of its 'rhythm' was Austen Farrer's *A Study in Mark* (London: Dacre Press, 1951). It is a complex study of cycles, patterns and numbers, which sometimes makes highly tenuous connections, but nevertheless it remains important and insightful. It anticipates by almost thirty years Jean-François Lyotard's observation in *The Postmodern Condition* (Manchester University Press, 1986), that 'Narrative form follows a rhythm; it is the synthesis of a metre beating time in regular periods and of accent modifying the length and amplitude of certain of those periods' (p. 21).

an intelligible object and process; it is not nonsense. But its reference is neither simple nor single and, in the absence of a determinative context, its semantic openness promotes a crisis of representation. For its meaning cannot be decoded; we understand nothing specific beyond the fact that it seems to describe an apodictic law (moral? spiritual? existential?) of response, of responding. It points to, without elaborating, an economy of response. It presents and performs the experience of circling back upon oneself, of being caught up with a repetition of what one is already familiar with. We are already 'measuring', we have already measured, as we participate in the ongoing process of Mark's narrative that bears us towards some promised eschatological judgement – that future, final and absolute measurement.

What we have in this little phrase, I suggest, is a parable of the readers of/listeners to the Gospel, who correspond to the ones who sat and listened to Jesus himself. It is, in cameo, the mimetic process whereby the hermeneut, the one engaged in hearing and re-creating the story, moves out towards that which has already been given and will now be reappropriated anew. The 'measuring' is the act of engagement in an economy of response. The 'measure' is the rhythm of the mimetic process (linked to metre) that enables one to judge and to understand, but not as one who is outside; only as one who is inside, who, by participating, moves towards that which will be given to him or her. Mimesis is the measure. Jesus *kata monas* does not simply speak but generates the call to be involved, to interpret, interpret from within the process. The call is therefore an empowering – of the twelve, those vaguely suggested ones who are with the twelve, the writer himself, Mark's own listeners (the Christian Church in its local particularity and its universal extension). We are all caught up in the representational process, within a mimetic schema that calls forth and calls for interpretation and reinterpretation. Mimesis, I suggest, is the nature of revelation itself (a revelation inseparable from its mediation).

What follows in this chapter is an argument for the rootedness of both the character of Mark's Christ (who has been sent as God's representative) and the character of Mark's Gospel in a theology of mimesis and *poiesis*.[8]

[8] Past readers have identified some correlation between Christology and narration. R.H. Lightfoot, in his suggestive *The Gospel Message of St Mark* (Oxford University Press, 1950), repeats a phrase used in connection both with Christ and with the Gospel. For, while acknowledging that 'the Person [of Jesus Christ] and the portrait [is] deeply human it is true, but also profoundly mysterious and baffling' (p. 3), he also recognises that 'the book ends as it began, with extreme abruptness; and indeed from first to last it is mysterious and baffling' (p. 14). Nevertheless, Lightfoot, like many others, failed to follow through and delineate this correlation. The Gospel itself identifies the correlation far more explicitly in 8.35 (*emou kai tou euangeliou*) and 8.38 (*me kai tous emous logous*).

Mimesis and Narrative

The approach being adopted needs some clarification, at this point. Mimesis has the body of an eel and a literary/reader–response analysis of the Gospel is far from original.[9]

Mimesis concerns the character of representation. That character can be understood in three inseparable ways: the kind of world presented in the narrative; the way that world is portrayed and communicated to the readers/listeners; and the way that kind of world and its portrayal is reconstituted and reportrayed in the minds and imaginations of those who read/listen.[10] Mimesis is, then, both a literary and a social praxis. Aristotle already saw this: 'imitation' was both what the text did vis-à-vis the world 'out there' (*Poetics* 1448a) and an anthropological *a priori* whereby human beings were educated and socialised (*Poetics* 1448b5). It is the nature of the correspondence between aesthetic/rhetorical activity and social activity that has provoked so much debate over the centuries since Aristotle. The work today of René Girard, Paul Ricœur, Jean-François Lyotard and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe indicates that mimesis remains at the forefront of contemporary debates on representation or the symbolic process. For Aristotle, there was an analogical relationship whereby words referred to a world distinct from them and so – 'art … imitates the works of nature' (*Physics* II) – it represents them. But Aristotle also saw that 'art … completes that which nature is unable to bring to completion' (ibid.). Art, therefore, idealises and, in this sense, does not strictly mirror what is but imitates what should be or will be. Art here presents rather than represents, for it moves beyond what it repre-

[9] Literary approaches to Mark's Gospel began to proliferate from the early 1970s, in the wake of and partly as a reaction to redaction criticism. At the same time, historico-critical scholars revisiting the historical Jesus question began to examine closely the community in which and for whom the Gospels were being written (see H.C. Kee's attempt to reconstruct Mark's community in *Community of the New Age*, London: SCM, 1977). The extent of how established and interrelated these approaches now are can be seen from studies of Mark executed in the late 1980s. Mary Ann Beavis's *Mark's Audience* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1989) employs reader–response criticism to identify the kind of audience Mark is writing for. Christopher D. Marshall's *Faith as a Theme in Mark's Narrative* (Cambridge University Press, 1989) uses literary analysis to show how the text's representation of the disciples speaks also for and to all subsequent followers of Christ. Morna Hooker's commentary on Mark (which appeared in 1991) repeatedly draws attention to literary aspects of the text and its effect upon readers/listeners, although in 1950 R.H. Lightfoot was already calling for an appreciation of the Gospel's literary language, ordering of the *pericopae* and use of rhythm. In 1951, as we have already noted, Austin Farrer published *his* literary appreciation of Mark (building, in part, on the earlier work of Lightfoot).

[10] These three aspects correspond, to some extent, to Ricœur's anaysis of what he terms mimesis 1, mimesis 2 and mimesis 3. See *Time and Narrative* vol. I, tr. Kathleen Blamey (University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 52–8. The extent of that correspondence can be judged by referring to footnote 42.

sents to the presentation of an ideal form that is otherwise unavailable. The complex character of mimesis begins here – for the aesthetic/rhetorical activity mediates between presentation, representation and absence. Language (or whatever the artistic medium) mediates the natural, the ideal and the unnameable. It mediates several orders of the real.

Mimesis, the character of this mediation, is, then, associated with knowledge and the process whereby we come to know (Aristotle's imitation). It is also associated with form, for all representation (or presentation) is the representation *of something*. The form represents an object, but an object caught between the way it acts upon (the one who represents it) and the way it is acted upon (by the one who represents it). The object is always and only imitated through the twin activities of reception and projection – that is, within the economy of response. The form is always of an action, and is, therefore, an element in a narrative. Hence in *Poetics* all the roads of representation lead into a discussion about drama. Mimesis is inseparable from *muthos* and *poiesis* (the process whereby language bodies forth its representation). Some philosophers would take this further and claim narrative as a fundamental category for epistemology – that there is no knowledge that is not mediated and part of 'the way we tell the story' of what we know. As John Milbank put it towards the end of his *magnum opus*: 'narrative is simply the mode in which the entirety of reality presents itself to us: without the story of the tree, there is no distinguishable, abiding tree'.[11] This is a shift in part away from Aristotle who, at one level, maintained that language *referred* to nature, it did not invent it.[12] But it is also a development of Aristotle's notion that art presents what is otherwise unavailable to us (the idealised reality). It presents by performing, and the negotiation between performance and reception facilitates a discovery, a disclosure of what is otherwise absent.

Mimesis is, therefore, a slippery term, but by foregrounding the mimetic operation in Mark's Gospel I wish to show how the narrative as a whole not only imitates the character and teaching of the Christ within it, but through the economy of response it provokes and engages *our* imitation of that character and teaching of Christ (our discipleship). Furthermore, I wish to show how this 'imitation' is one of the most comprehensive understandings of the Gospel. For it relates Jesus's role (and subsequently our role) as the representative and presentation of the Gospel, to the Gospel as a representation and presentation of Jesus and the process of following him.

This is not, therefore, simply another reader–response analysis of Mark's

[11] *Theology and Social Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 358.

[12] Though it has to be emphasised here that John Milbank is no linguistic idealist, as he himself makes plain in the introduction to his book.

Gospel. It is not primarily concerned with Christology as a story or narrative theology. Others have already done that and I enter into their labours.[13] I wish to build upon the awareness that narrative theology provides for us; that parables and stories always generate a surplus of meaning and that any final grasp of Mark's Christology is always beyond us because of that. I wish to engage theologically with the way the narrative has conscious designs upon its readers/listeners, calling them to participate in its telling, and how Mark's awareness of this informs his Christology, informs his understanding and presentation of the economies of response, discipleship and salvation. Robert Scharlemann has distinguished between theoretical, practical aesthetic and acoluthetic forms of reason. He equates acoluthetic reason with Christological reason. 'Christological reason is … that form of reason in which the inward I is related to the existential I through the authority [*exousia*] that enables the following.'[14] My argument is that there is a relationship between this acoluthetic reason and Mark's narrative. Scharlemann defines aesthetic reason as similar to acoluthetic reason in that both perform relations within an exstantial I, but aesthetic reason identifies so completely with this exstantial I that it forgets itself. Acoluthetic reason maintains this tension between the inward I and the exstantial I. I would argue that in Mark's Gospel there is a continual movement between Scharlemann's acoluthetic and aesthetic reason, Christological reason and mimesis; that it becomes impossible to separate the two. The nature of narrative and mimesis, I wish to argue, is being read by Mark Christologically. The sending, the

[13] Several of the literary analyses of the text have pointed to the mimetic character of the narrative. The acuity of the perception and yet the limits of its detailed examination are evident in David Rhoads's and Donald Michie's pioneering *Mark as Story* (Philadephia, Penn.: Fortress Press, 1982). Here the recognition that 'the writer has told the story in such a way as to have certain effects upon the reader. The reader experiences much of the same bafflement and reversals as do the characters' (p. 1) is analysed in terms of the poetics of narrative, the rhetorical techniques employed by the author. The reader's experience is again foregrounded in the Conclusion, which expands the observation that 'The reader experiences a story-world in which God's ways are hidden' (p. 137) and 'the narrative leads the reader to be a faithful follower of Jesus' (p. 139). But these observations are not examined theologically in relation to the Christology that is the main focus of the Gospel and what Morna Hooker describes as 'Mark's story [a]s a story about the meaning of discipleship' (*The Gospel According to St Mark*, 1991, p. 21). The same can be said of observations such as Christopher D. Marshall's: 'By the use of irony, paradox, chiasmus and intercalation, framing verses and duplication, suspense, shock, surprise, riddles, rhetorical questions, ambiguity and double meaning, foreshadowing and allusion, the narrator is able to tell his stories in a way that communicates both the rational content of faith and the experienced feel of such a disposition' (pp. 132–3). Mimesis, in both these analyses, is an end in itself. What I wish to ask in this essay is why mimesis is so important to the writer of Mark's Gospel – what theological end does it serve?

[14] *The Reason of Following: Christology and the Ecstatic I* (University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 124. 'Acoluthetic' comes from the Greek verb 'to follow'. The 'I' who is summoned by the command 'to follow' lives byond itself. It is in this sense that Scharlemann speaks of the 'exstantial I'.

mediation of Jesus Christ, provides grounds for the very possibility of the Church. What I arguing for is not a narrative theology but a theology of narrative (which is also a theology of reading and interpreting).

We now need to examine how mimesis is the measure of Mark.

Mediation and the Kingdom of the In-between

The opening of Mark's Gospel draws attention to the fact that it is no beginning at all. The first word, *Arche*, is anarthrous, and the noun (or its verbal form) recurs throughout the narrative (31 times in Mark compared to 17 in the much longer Gospel of Matthew). One could either say the narrative is always trying to define a beginning (and cannot), or that all beginnings are pragmatic for Mark (i.e. there is no true beginning at all). In the opening 14 verses of the Gospel there are no fewer than five beginnings. First there are the opening words about 'beginning', and then there is an opening pre-text (Isaiah's prophecy) that frames our understanding of what is to follow. There is to be a path (*odos* – also 'journey', 'way') prepared, upon which Christ will tread and along which he will subsequently walk. In the beginning, then, there is the narrative and the narrative records a past speaking proleptically about the present. The past is re-presented. The opening words of Mark's Gospel are outside time, their perspective is omniscient and so able to relate pasts to presents, types to their final fulfilment. Hence there is no main verb in that opening sentence – as the RSV translation makes plain. In the beginning there is representation and without representation nothing can be said to have begun. The 'beginning' appeals to all that has come before it, which it re-presents as it also moves forward with the temporal flow of continuation.

We begin Mark's Gospel, then, *in medias res*; it is this mimesis that constitutes the realm of the in-between, which (as will become evident) governs the thematic and geographical structure of the gospel/Gospel.[15] Thus there

[15] There is a difference between gospel as 'the good news' and Gospel as a technical term for the verbal transmission of that 'good news'. Morna Hooker dismisses the notion that Mark's use of *evangelion* is purposefully ambivalent (see p. 35 of her commentary) and then draws attention to its use as a technical word (p. 243). E. Best is, I believe, much closer to the truth when he distinguishes between the gospel of Jesus Christ (subjective genitive) – that is, the good news proclaimed by Jesus – and the gospel of Jesus Christ (objective genitive) – that is, the good news about Jesus. Furthermore, Best hints at, but does not develop in his book, an association between this subjective and objective genitive: 'the risen Jesus may be said to speak in the Gospel; through his words and actions as reported in the Gospel Jesus lives again and speaks to and acts among men' (*Mark: The Gospel as Story*, p. 39). This association between the subjective and the objective genitive in 'the Gospel of Jesus Christ' is central to my thesis that there is a correlation between the mimetic-representation and the Christology in Mark.

are no origins for this Christ, no birth narratives and no genealogies, but instead the abrupt appearance of a voice from the past (the voice of one who sends, the voice of God speaking through the flesh of human words and his representative, Isaiah), followed by the equally abrupt appearance of a figure on an empty stage. The story now begins for the third time: '*egeneto Johannes ho baptizon en te eremo*' (1.4). The River Jordan is a place of liminality, between the wilderness and the Promised Land, and baptism is a rite of passage through the zone of that liminality. John's name means 'gift'. Before the beginning God gives and in the beginning we represent. John too represents, and not just God's word to his representative Isaiah. He is an echo of other ancient prophets – Elijah, for example. In the same way Jesus is an echo of Joshua (and Elijah). He is caught, and so are we as readers/listeners, within the mirroring folds of time and representation. John stalks through the no-man's-land of the desert and commandeers the geographical in-between. It is an in-between where the brute contingencies of the historical moment cross the transcendent significance of typology.

John acts out the gift he represents in the gift of baptism, and in doing so performs the rite of a prologue, an initiation. In the beginning, then, there is a narrative and the narrative is a liturgy. 'Prepare ye' (*etoimasate*) stands at the portal of the good news which is the message of Jesus Christ presented as the story of Jesus Christ. The ritual of baptism (the prefigurement of the sacrament of baptism, itself a prefigurement of the eschatological redemption) brings us to a fourth beginning of the Gospel, when Jesus enters. It prepares 'the way of the Lord' (a double genitive, meaning both the Lord's way and the way about the Lord, or the narrative).[16] It prepares the way by announcing repentance (*metanoia*) that leads into (*eis*) the state of being forgiven, a new beginning. This involves two processes: the confession of sins, which is the retelling of one's life story, the representation of one's past; and the famous 'change of mind'. The way is prepared and paved by people laying down their lives as they later lay down their clothes (11.8). *Metanoia* is not simply a moral category but an epistemological one. It is a compound of *noeo*, like *eunoeo* ('to be well-disposed towards'), *katanoeo* ('to observe attentively'), *pronoeo* ('to foresee') and *uponoeo* ('to surmise'). What John's liturgy calls for, and what the reader's/listener's engagement with the narrative provides, is an epistemological transformation. From seeing the world in one way (which is often the literal, material way) one will begin to see the world in an entirely new way (which is often the symbolic and transfigured way). This is what John's baptism introduces, this is what Jesus's ministry teaches,

[16] Though the way is to be made straight, the only straight way in the Gospel is the narrative movement itself. Jesus's way criss-crosses through Galilee and only becomes straight when the direction is uniform and purposed (on the way to the cross).

this is what the reader's/listener's involvement in the story-world promotes. The measure of one's engagement with the mimetic operations of the Gospel is the economy of salvation itself. There is a close association, I would argue, between one's capacity for *metanoia* and one's capacity to engage imaginatively, entering the economy of response; just as, in the Gospel, there is a close association between teaching, exorcism, healing and redemption.

'*Erchetai … Kai egeneto … elthen Jesous*' (1.7–9). A third person now enters, a person who has stepped into the in-between and the place of transitions *apo Nazareth tes Galilaias*, and who will carry the narrative out of the in-between, back into the geographically and historically specific. Jesus here is Joshua entering the Promised Land. The narrative will not enter the realm of specifics, nor will the gospel be proclaimed, until Jesus has had his experience of the nature of the in-between deepened. The Spirit, that divine propelling and compelling agency whose presence the narrative traces through time and history, drives him into the wilderness, and he will emerge into his ministry from the wilderness as John did before him. The wilderness is the experience of living with ambivalence, of battling with cosmological divisions and uncertainties. Caught between the demonic and the angelic, between chaos and order, there is no resolution or final victory in Mark's temptation scene. Jesus will continue to experience the wilderness and the battle throughout the text, with the spiritual and institutional conflicts he will encounter. There are other in-between places (what Michel Foucault would call 'heterotopias') throughout the narrative – the sea, the mountain tops and being 'on the way'; the *eremon topon* will reappear in 1.35, on the mountain of 6.46 and in the isolation of Gethsemane. The realm of the in-between is the realm where prayer and spiritual discipline and illumination are brought to birth. The specific teaching to the disciples will take place 'on the way', between Caesarea Philippi and Jerusalem (8.27–10.52). In terms of narrative time and plot correlation, Jesus will not be allowed to emerge from that wilderness and into ministry until John is incarcerated. When he emerges in verse 14 we have our fifth beginning to the story; already there is a foreshadowing of the end. For John's betrayal (*paradothenai*) is a prophecy of Jesus's own destiny.

In the beginning, therefore, there is repetition, mirroring and typology.[17]

[17] The observation substantiates (it does not depend upon) Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's conclusion that 'Everything "begins" *also* by representation, and religion, in one way or another, cannot be done with it'; *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 117. Theology must confront, and in Mark's Gospel does confront, its own rhetorical strategies. See David Jasper's "Wherever I said Aristotle I meant St. Paul" in Martin Warner ed., *The Bible as Rhetoric* (London: Routledge, 1990), for an examination of the community constituted by and entextualised in Mark's rhetoric. Jasper makes the profound theological observation, central to this reading of Mark's Gospel, that 'The Church is continually stirred into radical reflection by that which, standing outside, necessitates and engenders its rhetoric, its entextualising' (p. 149).

There is a complex inter-association of memory, event and prediction. 1.14 is the fifth attempt to begin the story, the fifth echo of a sending out, a representation that is part of an evolving clarification or fulfilment. It is a representation and fulfilment not simply of the opening prophecy, but more particularly of the original sender of 'salvation' (*apostello ton angelon*) – which is the Hebrew meaning of the name 'Isaiah'. It is a representation of the one who is the origin of the 'gift' – which is the Hebrew meaning of the name 'John': the voice of God who instituted the unlocatable *arche*.

As we have all come to see, in the end there is no ending. The dead do not die, the tomb gapes into an ominous but silent future and the narrative focus returns us to Galilee. An apocalyptic urgency directs us towards a final manifestation that is not represented, whose representation is deferred, suspended. The resurrection can have its prefigurements, but its fulfilment is as unrepresentable as the Hebrew God. The second coming is postponed yet imminent – for Galilee is only a few days' journey away. Our reading passes into an ambiguous silence in which there is a reversal of expectation: not the joy and release of finally understanding, nor the recognition of the fulfilment that promotes obedience and crystallises faith. The silence is both the women's dumbstruck fear and their refusal to pass on the message. The silence is also the reader's response to that concentrated perplexity that concludes the narrative with the broken and elliptical *ephebounto gar*. These silences are taut with paradox – for the Gospel of Mark has been written and what we have read cannot logically exist if the women had remained silent. Unless, that is, the narrator is God himself and the narrative a product of his omniscience.

At the 'end' as in the 'beginning' there is a question about origins and authorship. And the final 'ending' is deferred and doubled.[18] Narrative, which is always governed by a teleology, is cheated of its apocalyptic telos, and so is the reading experience. In the end there is a crisis (a prefigurement of the final crisis which has already been prefigured in chapter 13) from which faith must emerge. It is the crisis of interpretation and response – for how was the gospel proclaimed, has the Christ risen, have the signs been read properly, has the lesson of the fig tree been learnt? It is a crisis of representation – and paradox, like irony, is the condensing of such a crisis – in two senses: first, because there is no representation of the risenness, the completion of the narrative process; secondly, because the meaning of what

[18] Parallels between chapter 13 and the Passion narrative were identified by Lightfoot, but with Norman Perrin's observation that Mark's Gospel closes with a 'twin climax' – the apocalptyic discourse and the Passion narrative – we appreciate Mark's spliced 'ending' (*The New Testament: An Introduction*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974, p. 159).

has been represented throughout (that this carpenter from Nazareth is the Christ), without the final revelation, is put in doubt. It is the crisis of representation, in its two senses, that perpetuates the need for continually reinterpreting, continually rereading the text, the representation of Jesus as the Christ. It is this crisis of representation that is the focus of the Gospel (as both literary form and *kerygma*) and the very character of the reading experience created by the Gospel. Confronting the crisis of representation is, as we shall see, the very character of Mark's mimesis.

At the 'end' the narrative folds back upon its mirroring depths. There is no end-stopping corpse nor any end-stopping apotheosis. Rather, there is a young man (*neaniskos*), dressed in white and sitting at the right side of the tomb. We are returned to the transfiguration with the white robe and the three witnesses (women this time). We are returned also to the night of the arrest and two prophecies. For the words the young man utters are a repetition of Jesus's words to the disciples after the Last Supper (14.28). And it was Jesus (or was it the Psalmist and Jesus was quoting, and so Mark quotes Jesus quoting what God had spoken to the Psalmist? a familiar pattern in the narrative as we have seen) who said: 'you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power' (14.62). And these words follow the arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane which ends with the flight, and the first appearance of a young man. There, in a scene echoing Joseph's flight from Potiphar's wife, the young man prefigures the risen Christ.[19] For he leaves behind a linen sheet (*sindon*) – the same word used to describe Jesus's grave-clothes in 15.46 – and evades (*ephugen*) the religious authorities. Here, clothed like the new man – *nean-iskos* – in the community of the baptised, he sits enthroned in glory. Is this a fulfilment of Jesus's prophecy? Do we read this representation aright? Do the women? We are left, in the end, to rethink the whole narrative again. For what cannot be represented is prefigured and this prefigurement of the resurrection stands at the end of a series of such prefigurements – Jairus's daughter, the repetition of the very word *egeiro*, each healing and exorcism narrated. We close the story with another substitution for the true event, with a representation of the unrepresentable. We end in a complex but highly suggestive weave of questions that riddle the Gospel and generate hermeneutic enigmas.

The enigma of the final scene only parallels enigmas throughout the text – the enigma of the young man in the garden, the enigma of the parable

[19] The specific reference to Christ's resurrection here can be seen more clearly when 14.52 is compared with the Septuagint account of Jospeh and Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39.12. There we have '*katalipon ta himatia autou … ephugen*' and in Mark '*katalipon ten sindona … ephugen*'. Thus Mark deliberately wishes to use *sindon* prefiguratively rather than as an allusion back to *himatia*.

of the fig tree and the parables more generally (prototypically 4.24), the enigma of Jesus walking upon the water and meaning to pass them by (6.48) when the disciples faced a head wind, and the enigma of the Messianic secret.[20]

It is the crisis of representation that constitutes such enigmas. Morna Hooker's commentary often describes the hermeneutical somersaulting as one encounters such an enigma and, without pressing further, at one point observes the very source of the crisis. On 14.51–2 about the young man who flees from the garden, she writes: 'Mark gives no hint as to the identity of the young man – or if he does, we do not recognise it.'[21] The crisis of representation issues from what we have already observed about Mark's way of telling the story: his frequent refusal to identify, his refusal to link a sign with a single signified. We see this with his use of suspended pronouns, we will see this again with the parables. By not framing the reference (for example, to the young man) with a context whereby the appearance of the young man becomes comprehensible, we can read about the incident and we can understand the incident *qua* description, but we cannot interpret what we have understood. We then experience (and fulfil) Jesus's words in 4.12 – seeing but not perceiving, hearing but not understanding. The meaning of the incident is suspended. It is not given a conclusiveness, a fixed point of reference. By doing this Mark frequently creates the effect known as semiosis – where an object, incident or statement is imbued with the possibility of many meanings or none at all; no single possibility remains definitive. Semiosis is the crisis of representation – for it suggests that the representation is meaningful while simultaneously refusing to define its meaning. We have to create the meaning and when we are left to do that there is always the possibility of eisegesis (rather than exegesis) and paranoia. The representation is both meaningful and meaningless. What the crisis of representation does is to generate the need and the desire to interpret, to engage with the text, to participate in its telling – as the flowering of commentaries and the spawning of interpretative methods for resolving these enigmas in Mark's Gospel are ample witness. The shortcut here is to say that this is an example of Mark the clumsy editor or Mark the preserver of traditions. But it is the highly sophisticated way in which these incidents (such as the appearance of the young man) are woven into the language of the text, the verbal echoes and rhythms which riddle the text, that continually suggest the possibility of

[20] See in this context John Drury's fine display of interpretative acumen when trying to resolve the riddle of the bread in 8.14–21: 'Mark' in Robert Alter and Frank Kermode eds., *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (London: Collins, 1987), pp. 414–16.

[21] *The Gospel According to St Mark*, p. 352.

meaningfulness, of these events being symbolic. The crisis of representation, the mimetic crux (and cross) of the narrative, calls in Mark's Gospel for a response of faith and therefore discipleship. It could otherwise generate a sense of paranoia.[22]

There is in the 'end' no final release from the rhythm of the narrative. The book cannot be closed and put away as if the telling of the tale has finished. We, like the disciples and contemporary representations of discipleship, return to Galilee to learn again, to reinterpret. We, like the disciples, remain caught within the nets of the Christian story (and its telling and retelling). And in doing so we continue the story, rewrite it anew in our own lives and so generate further acts of signification. Like the three women, we take flight from the sheer intractability of comprehending that there is no end, no finality, there is only and ever perdurance and continuation. We too cannot stare for too long into the dark hole of the eternal. But we have to take note that without either an identifiable beginning or a resolved ending, there are only the ambiguities and ephemeralities of the in-between. The Gospel of Mark concentrates upon, is a theology of, the in-between – of mediation (understood as Christology) and representation (understood as rhetoric). The Gospel's other themes – faith, discipleship, the polarisation governing institutional and cosmological conflicts – are tangents of this circle of Christology and mimesis, as we are beginning to see.

The In-between and the Economy of Faith

The realm of the in-between concentrates its narrative attention upon what is done rather than on the space itself. In-between is a process before being

[22] We arrive here at the portals of Kafka's castle and the auction-room in Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*. Mimesis is established with the crisis of representation, where Jesus's question to the disciples 'Do you still not understand?' (8.12) echoes endlessly, and endlessly cannot be answered. When is something understood? When do we know we have now understood? The crisis of representation (a crisis which representation is always in, for representation is forever seeking for the ground, the *arche*, the origin that would allow it to understand itself and to be legitimate) leads either to faith or madness. Again, the other side of mimesis provoking faith is the provocation of paranoia. Postmodern thinkers like Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe wish to stress *this* side of mimetic activity: 'madness is a matter of mimesis' (*Typography*, p. 138). He points out that 'Possession … is the monstrous, dangerous form of a *passive mimesis*, uncontrolled and unmanageable' (p. 264). The two sides of the crisis of representation are evident in Mark's Gospel in the polarisation between the Kingdom of God and the chaotic madness of the demonic realm. The victims of possession and the unpredictable storms are portrayals of the instability of meaning that mimesis as representation in crisis provokes. The religious and political institutions in the narrative offer a pragmatic but arbitrary order which the presence of Jesus renders illegitimate. In the crisis of representation only faith in God as the *arche* and origin will suffice.

a place. That process is the process of representation. Discipleship could be described as learning (that is being subject to, disciplined by participation in what is being mediated) how to represent aright. The recognition of one's own participation is also the recognition of being inscribed within what is being mediated of the Father through the Son, Jesus Christ. We are written into a story, a metanarrative. Our recognition is that we are always only in-between. Similarly, one reads of Andrew and Simon entering into a discipleship, but a discipleship that is a continuation of what they have been doing formerly. The verbs of 1.16–18 – *paragon*, *amphiballontas*, *poieso umas genesthai* and *aphentes* – are all verbs emphasising transition and movement. Fishers they were and fishers they will remain, for it is while they engage in the narrative of their occupation that they issue into the narrative of Jesus Christ.[23] It is not that narrative meets metanarrative, but that narrative is always complicit with metanarrative – and it is that complicity that Jesus calls his disciples to understand. To become fishers of human souls is to enter the narrative of their occupation from another perspective. It is to be taught the metaphorical association between two forms of activity; to enter into the crisis of representation that the metaphorical always engenders. But within that crisis there is also the entrance, through the parabolic and figural, into new articulations of identities and the configuration of the world. And so they must recognise that, in being part of this new narrative, they are not just fishers (those in control, those mastering their own economic destinies), they are fish (servants) caught by Christ in the nets of a narrative within which he too has been and is being and will be caught, by God the Father, the unrepresentable origin of the *arche*, the Sender, the Giver.[24] The disciples, while plying their trade, are informed of the fact that they are woven into God's meta-text, a story of Trinitarian inscription

[23] See Robert Scharlemann, *The Reason of Following*, particularly chapter 6, 'Explication of Acolutethetic Reason', in which he outlines the phenomenological relation between the first-order self and the second-order self as they adhere to the process of following.

[24] In the section of the Gospel which treats discipleship (8.27–10.52) there is a story of the man of great wealth who addresses Jesus as 'Good'. Jesus's reply, 'No one is good except God alone' (10.18), indicates, as Morna Hooker observes, that 'Jesus makes no claims to independent authorship,' as God's representative he 'point[s] away from himself to the character and demands of God' (*The Gospel According to St Mark*, p. 241). His being a representative is part of his nature as a son. James Dunn, in the second edition of his book *Christology in the Making* (London: SCM, 1989), points out the relation between this representative sonship and the sonship of those who follow him. '[T]here is sufficiently good testimony that Jesus taught his disciples to regard themselves as God's sons in the same intimate way, but also that he regarded their sonship as somehow *dependent* upon his own, that he thought of their sonship as somehow "derivative" of his' (p. 32). The relationship between Christology and mimesis that I am attempting to uncover here provides a better description of the nature of that 'somehow' in Dunn.

where God is author, Christ is performer and the Holy Spirit is the performance.[25] We, as readers/listeners, are not external and excluded. For our act of reading 'concretises' another performance.[26] We too are caught by the power of the story-telling. Being held by the story is analogous to being part of the liturgy. Our participation is then a liturgical praxis of sacramental and soteriological significance.

Christology: The Performer and the Performance

Framing the calling of the first four disciples (1.16–20) are accounts of the cosmological importance of Jesus's work – the unresolved conflict with Satan in the wilderness and the casting out of the unclean spirit from the man in the synagogue at Capernaum. Framing the ordaining (*epoiesen*) of the Twelve (3.13–19) are accounts again of the cosmological importance of Jesus's work – the unclean spirits reveal that he is the Son of God and the accusation by the Jerusalem scribes that he is the agent of Beelzebub (which issues into the parable of binding the strong man). Personal histories are

[25] Austin Farrer has observed that 'the control of the Spirit is visible and evident; it issues in precisely that shaping and patterning, that unfolding of symbol and doctrine, which the Gospel exhibits' (*A Study in Mark*, p. 9). My thesis would agree with this – what I am suggesting, and requiring, is an appreciation of the operation of the Trinity in Mark's Gospel. Not that there is an explicit doctrine of the Trinity in the Gospel, but there needs to be some awareness of the interrelationship between Father, Son and Holy Spirit for the association between Christology and mimesis to be coherent. Certainly Mark insists upon the singleness of God (10.18; 12.29, 32), Jesus as God's representative (and therefore dependent on the Father) and the Holy Spirit as mediating the power by which Jesus's representativeness can be substantiated. The baptism scene, as Walter Kasper observes, 'has a clear Trinitarian structure' (*The God of Jesus Christ*, London: SCM, 1984, p. 245). There is no analysis of the Trinity in Mark's Gospel because no analysis is possible. The key relationship in such an analysis is the relationship between Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus the Christ and the Godhead. That is, the Christological relationship. And it is the impossibility of completely understanding that relationship which is the burden of Mark's Gospel.

[26] See Wolfgang Iser's influential concluding chapter – 'The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach' – in his book *The Implied Reader* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974). He takes up the concept of 'concretising' from the work of Roman Ingarden. Ricœur, in volume I of *Time and Narrative*, relates this reader–response approach to the Aristotelian categories of mimesis and *muthos*. 'Mimesis … as an activity, the mimetic activity, does not reach its intended term through the dynamism of the poetic text alone' (p. 46). In 'concretising' the textual performance, then, the reader completes the mimetic operation within the text. The narrative's mimetic activity is a net within which the reader is caught. See Terence R. Wright's 'Margaret Atwood and St Mark: The Shape of the Gaps' in Robert Detweiler and William G. Doty eds., *The Daemonic Imagination: Biblical Text and Sacred Story* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholar's Press, 1990) for an analysis of what the implied reader in Mark's Gospel is expected to supply in the account of the healing of the demoniac.

translated into a cosmological story being worked out in the kingdom of the in-between: the in-between the polarity of good and evil, God and Satan, order and chaos, being inside and being outside. It is this process of translation which is important; this process of transfiguration which is related to the initial call for *metanoia* – the movement into an alternative epistemology. It is a translation associated with imitating the teacher, the performer.

The disciples' commission is the extension of Jesus's own mission: they too are given authority 'to cast out demons'. And *ekballein* echoes throughout the latter part of chapter 3, as it does throughout the latter part of chapter 1 and in chapter 9 – two other chapters important for the calling and commissioning of the disciples. But Jesus Christ is not just the teacher/performer, in commissioning others he is also the author (*poieo*)[27] of a continuing performance. He both acts and directs the action; he is both a representative (as the Father's agent, as God's performer) and author of the representational. There is created, then, in this story, through this story, a chain of substitutions – from the Father to the Son, from the Son to the Twelve, from the Twelve to the Church. Christ comes to initiate this chain and, as Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe has observed, 'the "essence" of mimesis [is] precisely about vicariousness, carried to the limit … endless and groundless – something like an infinity of substitution and *circulation* …: the very lapse "itself" of essence'.[28] Without any beginning and without any end, there is only substitution, there is only the chain of representation. This chain *is* the mimesis and the *poiesis*; this chain *is* the nature of narrative; this chain, in Mark's narrative, *is* Christological.

For Christology, like narration and mimesis, concerns representation in two interrelated forms. First, it is about constitutional representation – the standing-in of an official substitute for the actual presence of another. In this case, Jesus enacts a double constitutional role, the first properly ascribed to God the Father by the Jewish authorities and the unclean spirits. Jesus acts not in his own name, but in the name of God. In this connection see 1.24 and the double genitive of the title Holy (Person) of God; and 2.7 where God is the sole forgiver of sins. Jesus, in this sense, is the outward and mediating sign of a God and an author who cannot be represented; just as the Gospel (as text) is the mediating and substituting chain of signifiers for the absent Jesus Christ – the one who is ascended. But he also represents us – humankind – before the Father. If the first constitutional act is the basis for

[27] The Word in this Gospel bears something of the power and creativity of the classical notion of *poiesis*, which Aristotle associates directly with mimesis in *Poetics*. For an examination of this association see Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. I, pp. 45–51.

[28] *Typography*, p. 116.

our understanding of the incarnation, the second constitutional act is the basis for our understanding of atonement. Secondly, Christology is about literary representation – the employment of language to represent the nature of that constitutional representation, to enquire into its character. Jesus's life is the performance within which the salvation promised by God is made effective for all; just as the narration of Jesus's life, work and teaching is the performance (re-enacted by each reader/listener) by which the salvation effected by God in Christ is made available to all. Both these forms of representation are associated through the doctrine of incarnation. Each is the Word made flesh, though the discursive representational activity only receives its power and creative authority on the basis of the prior incarnation of God. There is an analogical relation between these two forms of representation.

Characters are transformed in the text (just as readers/listeners are by the text) through assuming their new identity as representatives, as paradigms. Simon becomes Peter, James and John become Boanerges, and the restitution of sight to a blind Jew on the road to Jerusalem becomes parabolic of epistemological change. The same occurs within the language performing the representation. Words are transfigured and given new, more ambivalent meanings. The encounter with the scribes from Jerusalem and the subsequent clarification of Jesus's mission to bind Satan, concludes with Jesus's natural family 'standing outside' (with the added irony of them sending [*aposteilan*] for him). But Jesus turns to those he had appointed 'that he might send them out' (3.14) and informs them that *they* are his mother and brothers. 'Whoever does [*poiese*] the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother' (3.35). Words become dislodged from their conventional settings – and we are now at the crux of Mark's Christology: Jesus the teacher, Jesus the performer, Jesus the teller of parables and a parable himself.

When signifiers become detached from, and assume more importance than, identifiable signifieds, or when signifiers hang only loosely related to a signified, only two responses are possible. One is to have faith which believes the two are related in some hidden way; a faith which participates in the crisis of meaning that Jesus Christ has come to heal. (We see this in the way the Syro-Phoenician woman enters into the kind of discourse Jesus is employing. She does not seek to understand the new symbolic relations being drawn between 'children', 'bread', 'dogs' and their conventional meanings. She does not attempt to interpret or resolve the enigma at all. She takes up the mode of thinking and speaking (and perceiving the world) that Jesus performs.) The other possible response is to dismiss the detaching that is being done, the *poiesis*, as madness. (We see this in attempts to claim Jesus is possessed and the observation by his friends (the irony!) that 'he is beside

himself' (3.21).) The parabolic teaching (*haggadah*) stands directly opposed to the Pharisiac literalism (of what Lacan would call 'the discourse of knowledge') of their *halacha*. Items and actions and roles commonly understood by a community – lamps and wine-skins, seed and grapes, crop growing and vineyard management, physicans and bridegrooms – become dislodged from conventional contexts, their meaning set afloat on the tides of story-telling. They become part of a performance that draws disciples and readers into their suggestive depths. It is not so much a way of life that Jesus is teaching – we cannot reduce the parables to a simply ethical or *halachic* content. Jesus teaches a way of thinking and perceiving, a *meta-noia*, a way of reading and understanding (or living without possession of total understanding). The parables follow and foster conflict.

The parables are forms of testing, or temptation, that draw the reader/listener away from the towns and cities of familiarity and into the wilderness, the storms at sea, the place in-between and under-defined. The question that surfaces – for us as readers, for Mark who sews his traditions together, for those disciples listening to the teacher – Jesus perceives in his spirit and pronounces (while refraining from answering): 'How are you going to understand all the parables?' (4.13). For in a world of floating signifiers, where meaning is only potential and where the lesson of the fig tree must be learnt in order to be saved, a hermeneutic must be found to stabilise the vertigo of semiosis. Jesus as historical person destabilises, deconstitutes the familiar world – this is the character and effect of his performance. As the Christ, the performer, he will bring salvation from this effect. It is his authority as the Son of God that controls the raging storms, the dark thrashing of the sea of chaos which the parables issue into (4.36–41). Christ sent from God as God's representation, rescues readers from the turmoil of endless interpretation. He is salvation because he is the hermeneutic. He performs, for us who participate in the jostling crowds and the fevers of possible meaning, an act of healing which is an act of judgement.[29] Reading/listening/interpreting becomes a form of ongoing exorcism; it performs an increasingly realised, but never finalised, eschatology. The one who reads is being and will be saved.

The performer is inseparable from the performance, the person from the

[29] For Karl Barth, Jesus Christ is 'the judge judged in our place', but he recognises also that this judgement is not simply negative: to make a judgement is to bring order and understanding. For Barth the essence of the sin for which Christ came to atone is the human belief in the freedom of judgement – that unaided by the grace of God, we can read aright and understand the situations that confront us truly. See *Die Kirkliche Dogmatik*, IV.1 (Zürich/Zollikon: Evangelischer Verlag, 1953), pp. 231–311; *Church Dogmatics*, IV.1, tr. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), pp. 211–83.

work done. The telling of the parable is inseparable from the telling of that telling. And Jesus Christ as the representation of God is inseparable from the narrative's representation that makes that representation possible. The power of the parabolic cannot be contained, it overflows the teaching of Jesus and informs the whole of the Gospel of Mark. For the power of the parabolic is the drive towards death and resurrection – the death and the resurrection of one's understanding, one's understanding of oneself and the events of the world. And so the storm at the end of chapter 4 is not only a prefiguration of Christ's entrance into death and exit into the post-apocalyptic calm. It is a prefiguration also of baptism – our entrance into death and exit into the parabolic realm, the realm of the liminal, where *noeo* is transformed (*meta*) into *metanoia*. Serious readers must take up the cross that operates within the mimesis.[30]

It is a cross that operates within the Christology also – and not simply in terms of the historical crucifixion of Christ. The historical is always emblematic in a world where the parabolic is the order of the true. The question emerges "Who then is this …?' (4.41) – *outos* being yet another indefinite demonstrative pronoun. The question is a response by both the disciples and the readers/listeners to the parables and to an engagement in the performance of Christ as the ruler of creation. The question articulates the crisis at the heart of Christology in Mark: who is this man, this Christ? This is a crisis without textual resolution. The nature of Christ receives no unambivalent definition. Any Christology issues only in and through the economy of response, with representation providing the basis for engagement. The crisis is promoted by two means: first, the Christological titles; secondly, Mark's 'scandalous' presentation of Jesus. Again, what is foregrounded in both means is Christology as an enigma to be drawn into, worked at, but never mastered.

The titles and allusions to identity are always ambivalent. Hence there are papers and books on the meaning of the 'Son of Man' and whether Jesus did or did not intend to allude to himself as the I AM in 6.50, 13.6 and 14.62. There are shifting Christological perspectives throughout the narrative – Jesus the Son of Man, the Son of God, the *theios aner*, the Son of David, the king, the apocalyptic teacher and the Messiah. There is no single overarching focus for these perspectives. There is no single unambivalent presentation of Jesus Christ. Ambivalence is essentially what Mark is aiming

[30] This is a theme that could well relate to the historical *Sitz im Leben* proposed by Martin Hengel in his *Studies in the Gospel of Mark* (London: SCM, 1985). The Gospel 'was written in a time of severe affliction in Rome after the persecution of Nero and before the destruction of Jerusalem, probably during AD 69' (p. 30).

for, because it fosters the crisis of representation which the coming of Christ, God's representation, engenders. The mystery of Christ's nature cannot ever be resolved and so theological investigations into this nature (beyond the bare markers set out in the Nicean and Chalcedonian creeds) are exercises in speculation, in imagination. One Christological model is qualified by another, as T.J. Weeden's thesis – that Hellenistic Christology is at odds with 'Mark's own suffering Christology presented in his *theologia crucis*'[31] – demonstrates. One Christological model is contextualised, modified, even ironised by another: see the way the suffering Son of Man is played out in parallel with the clearer presentation of the Son of God in the Passion narrative, and the way the Messianic and Royal Christologies are both foregrounded and undermined in the closing chapters.[32] But each model, crystallising in a title, stands. Jesus Christ is the focus for them all. He promoted them and the narrative now keeps them in play. The Christology is not explained nor defined, and, in this sense, Mark's narrator shows that he is not the master of his material; that there is no human position possible whereby one could understand, explain and define the representative nature of Jesus Christ.

In the same way, Mark's representation of Jesus Christ is graphic and sharp-edged, but often puzzling because it disrupts and scandalises our expectations. Jesus is passionately and emotionally human – feeling anger and hunger and grief. Yet he is also in possession of prophetic insight and supernatural abilities. Mark continually surprises us by the actions and reactions of this character. Jesus is never the man we expect. His behaviour is not predictable. We are not given a character the logic of whose motivation and reasoning is made evident. There is no stated reason (although commentators are forever trying to supply one) why Jesus tells one man to say nothing about his healing (1.44) and another to go and proclaim it (5.19). There is no stated reason why Jesus asked the blind man, 'Can you see anything?' (8.23), as if he doubted his own ability to heal. There is no evident explanation why

[31] 'The Heresy that Necessitated Mark's Gospel' in W. Telford ed., *The Interpretation of Mark's Gospel* (London: SPCK, 1985).

[32] My argument here challenges that of Jack Dean Kingsbury in his book *The Christology of Mark* (Philadelphia, Penn.: Fortress Press, 1983). He defined two main Christological lines in Mark: the first is a confessional and secret identity (encompassing the titles of Davidic Kingship, the Messiah and the Son of God); the second is a public identity (encompassing the title of Son of Man). These two Christologies 'do not infringe upon, or undermine' each other (p. 175), they are complimentary. The reading I am proposing suggests there is more irony, tension and ambivalence in the use and treatment of these titles. Nevertheless Kingsbury recognises the concern in Mark to engage the reader/auditor and the relationship of that concern to Christology: 'hearing aright the gospel-story of the divinely wrought destiny of Jesus … is indispensable for understanding aright his identity' (p. 174). Unfortunately he does not pursue this in any depth.

Jesus should be so abrupt and rude to the Syro-Phoenician woman; or why he should turn so viciously on what is at worst a naïve remark by Peter (8.33); or why he should be so tolerant to someone driving out demons in his name when he is not a follower (9.39). There is no evident explanation why Jesus should curse the fig tree for something it was unable to do. Again, commentators are not slow at putting forward an explanation for all these irregularities, but that is the point – the irregularities foster and encourage comment, engagement in an economy of response. They make the character of Jesus hard to grasp because his actions and reactions do not adapt easily to our conventions (and the conventional readings and portraits we have created of him). Just when we think we are getting somewhere, understanding the identity of this Christ, we are continually confronted with an enigma, narrative aporia and seeming inconsistency.[33]

Christology, which is attempting to fathom the nature and work of Christ as the representation of God, is and remains a riddle in Mark. It is a riddle that is part of and encourages the crisis of representation, the character of mimesis, evident throughout the Gospel and pre-eminent in the parables. The power of the parabolic, that gave authority to the teaching of Christ, continually spills over into the Gospel as a whole and the parable of Jesus Christ that Mark is narrating. So the parables and the narrative events have a curious way of impacting upon each other – the man among the Gadarene swine is prefigured in Jesus's parable of the strong man who needs to be bound. Parable-telling and the chronicling of events are both forms of story-telling and representation. The stories told and enacted, like Christ the performer and the work of Christ as the performance, cannot be made distinct. Each echoes the other. In such a mirroring maze of imitation, it is the intimate relationship between the way *of* Jesus Christ and the way *of* Mark's Gospel and the way in which the readers/listeners/followers must listen and to which they must conform (or be conformed) that legitimises the authorship and canonises the text. The genitives are always double-sided.

Eschatology and the Economy of Desire

Mimesis (like allegory and irony) always functions through mirroring – repetition that creates significances and, by associating one object or event

[33] This is a good place to introduce a book whose presence has been, for the most part, subliminal throughout this study: Frank Kermode's *The Genesis of Secrecy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979). Kermode's fundamental observation about Mark's Gospel – 'a good deal of the story seems concerned with failure to understand the story' (p. 69) – is axiomatic for this theological analysis.

with another, opens up alternative readings. Repetition displaces chronological time. What has been called the 'rhetoric of temporality'[34] disturbs temporality, driving it into semiosis. *Chronos* (twice mentioned in Mark) is transfigured by *kairos* (mentioned five times in Mark), just as Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter (or his son?) is transfigured by his Messiahship. A theology of history invests the geographical and historical contingency with transcendental significance. Thus, as one commentator has put it, 'the plot as a whole is eschatological time'.[35] The 'sea' is not just a stretch of water, eating 'bread' is not just the satisfaction of a physical appetite, and being 'healed' is not just the restoration to biological health. Critical time (*kairos*) is narrative time (which is mimetic time) – and it always poses both an eschatological fulfilment and an eschatology question. There is an eschatological fulfilment because critical time says 'now' is significant. Jesus begins his preaching with, 'The time [*kairos*] is fulfilled [*peplerotai*]' (1.15). But this 'fulfilled' is an ambivalent Greek perfect – it has already been fulfilled in an unpresented past with present implications. When, then, was it fulfilled? The realised eschatology of the *kairos* is past and unpresentable in the same way as the future *eschaton* is unpresentable. There is a post-fulfilment announcement here just as there is a pre-fulfilment announcement in chapter 13; but it is a representation that mediates and substitutes for what cannot be presented. Representation is haunted by intimations of the apocalyptic that act as a consciousness of its own limitations and imminent crisis. Chapter 13 is a proleptic representation of the final crisis, the ruin of all that has been the vehicle for the narrative's symbolism. There we have the breakdown of the family and the Temple, the collapse of the universal and created order, the destruction of the house, the abandonment of clothes and children and the proliferation of signs and wonders which are false and misleading. The movement is towards dissolution, the dissolution of meaning. It is a dissolution the reverberations of which reach back into the present writing and the narrative's semiosis.

Kairos appears again, significantly, at the end of the eschatological discourse and in the negative: 'You do not know when the time is.' Again, when one cannot tell the time, the beginning and endings become arbitrary. The eschatological paradox is the paradox of representation itself – always

[34] Paul de Man, 'The Rhetoric of Temporality' in *Blindness and Insight* (London: Methuen, 1983), pp. 187–228.

[35] Dan O. Via Jr. in *The Ethics of Mark's Gospel – in the Middle of Time* (Philadelphia, Penn.: Fortress Press, 1985), p. 32. Through his analysis of the apocalyptic in Mark, Via emphasises Mark's commitment to the processes of history, the 'temporality of eschatology' (p. 63). For Via too this means that 'revelation is both given and withheld' (p. 57).

offering as present what is only a memory, and always promising a future it cannot possibly deliver. '[L]'apocalypse johannique, n'est-ce pas aussi celle de toute scène d'écriture en général? … l'apocalyptique, ne serait-il pas une condition transcendentale de tout discours, de toute expérience même, de toute marque ou de toute trace?' Derrida asks.[36] The question here in Mark's Gospel receives an affirmative answer. The apocalyptic in Mark (in Jesus's ministry) is part of a general theology of representation. The Christian Gospel presents a theology of narrative.

As I said, within this eschatological paradox of representation there is repetition, folding and doubling. Time folds, rumpling the surface of the text until it seems we walk on water. There are rewinds (Herod's flashback to the execution of John is triggered by a conviction that Jesus is John *redivivus*), replays (the conversation at Herod's court on who Jesus is foreshadows Jesus's conversation with his disciples on the way to Caesarea Philippi) and fast-forwards (chapter 13). What is is a reflection of what was and what will be; and what is is a reflection itself of what occurred as Jesus lived. We are caught as readers/listeners in the mirroring of time and representation, in a land between, in a process that is always 'on the way'.[37]

It is the theme of journeying that relates these references to critical time. It is Jesus Christ's journeying which begins with the prophetic *odos* (1.2). And the word gathers a density of pedagogical, ethical, geographical and eschatological reference as the narrative proceeds. There is an imbrication of three distinct 'ways': the 'way' of Jesus teacher, the *methodos*; the 'way of God' (the *Derek* of God's righteousness); and the 'way' of the narrative which traces the geographical path and the response of the world (corporeal and incorporeal) to the other two 'ways'. The overlapping of these three ways participates in a larger, destined movement towards climax and crisis: the journey towards Jerusalem and death. The dynamic of the movement is governed by an eschatological promise that keeps us continually expecting a revelation and resolution that can never be presented. Its very absence is the precondition for representation – representation that is forever mourning the loss in that absence and desiring its recovery. The eschatological promise of chapter 13, prefigured in each miracle and 'raising', is the theological figuring of the indwelling desire that accompanies all writing and reading. The

[36] *D'un ton apocalyptique adopté naguère en philosophie* (Paris: Galilée, 1983), pp. 77–8.

[37] See here Elizabeth Struthers Malbon's book *Narrative Space and the Mythic Meaning in Mark* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), in which, having examined three forms of space within the narrative (geopolitical, topological and architectural), she concludes: '"on the way" … is, finally, the key mediator of the various Markean manifestations of the fundamental opposition ORDER and CHAOS … [the] conflict between the chaos and the order of life is overcome not in arriving, but being on the way' (pp. 166–8).

desire keeps us alert to the need to read the signs; throughout Mark's representation of apocalyptic dissolution we are commanded to watch, to be awake and to distinguish what are true signs from what are false.[38] The economy of the representation (the movement of the narrative and the Christology) is always also a theology of representation that moves towards and generates an economy of faith. From a discipleship perspective history, Christology and imitation are interwoven through the economy of faith that works within them, interprets them for itself and makes them part of its own Christian praxis. Theologically, history, Christology, imitation and the economy of faith are inter-associated (intertextualised) through the operation of the Spirit.

Christology, Mimesis and the Economy of the Spirit

It is in Mark's Passion narrative that the complex inter-association of Christology, story-telling, discipleship and a theology of history (realised through the working of the Holy Spirit) achieves its most profound expression. The movement of the Spirit through historical contingencies, that has governed the sending and now the handing-over of the Christ, is paralleled by the operation of faith (in the disciples and in the readers of/listeners to the narrative). Both movements or economies participate in and foster the continuation of the economy of mimetic desire. The economy of mimetic desire is the power (*dunamis*) of the story-telling to elicit response (faith) and the power of the representation to promise, partially present and continually forestall the anticipated conclusion,[39] the final resolution and demystification.

There are two related and focusing nodes of mystification. One is theological: who is this Jesus of Nazareth, how does he relate to the Christ, and what legitimises or authorises that relationship? The other one is literary:

[38] As Malbon points out, "'Watch" (*gregoreite*, from *gregoreo*) and "risen" (*egerthe*, from *egeiro*) have a linguistic root in common and thus, perhaps, have some elements of meaning in common. *Gregoreo* was a new formation in Hellenistic Greek from *egregoria*, the perfect of *egeiro*, their shared significance is "to be awake"' (*Narrative Space*, p. 152). Watching, the action characteristic of discipleship, is then a participation in an eschatological unfolding – both a prefigurement of one's own resurrection and an imitation of Jesus's.

[39] The forestalling is continuous, for from the beginning when the fulfilment is proclaimed, through each miracle performed, through to the transfiguration, Jesus's entry in Jerusalem, his purging of the Temple, his arrest, his trial, his provocation on the cross and early on the first morning of that new week, a resolution, a final revelation and vindication of Jesus's Messiahship is expected, longed-for, and yet deferred.

what relationship does this representation of the life and work of Jesus Christ bear to the generating events themselves, and what legitimises or authorises that relationship? The structure of the theological and literary problems is the same. In fact, they cannot be separated – for they are two forms of expressing the operation of the narrative, the economy of mimetic desire. For both, the nature of the problem is the nature of the problem for all representations, whether political – Jesus as the constitutional representative of God – or aesthetic – Mark's representation of Jesus Christ. The problematic is this: who or what legitimises or authorises that representative status?[40] What I am suggesting throughout this essay is that one legitimises and authorises the other. Just as God legitimises Jesus's representational function (at his baptism and at his transfiguration), so Jesus legitimises the Gospel's representational function ('for my sake and the gospel's'). And legitimation for both Jesus and the Gospel takes the same form, the origin of the one in the other, the extension of one into the other – God in Christ and Christ in the Gospel. The nature of Jesus Christ as representative authorises, through the Spirit, further forms of representational engagement with the gospel – in terms of the narrative of the Christ event, witnessing to that original event, and the disciples as representatives and disseminators of the truth of the gospel. The representative nature of the Gospel is both testimony to the meaningfulness of the Christ event and a vindication of the true identity of Jesus of Nazareth. Therefore one authorises (in a strong sense of that term) the truth of the other. And both forms of representation are caught up in the economics of the Trinity.

The economy of mimetic desire in Mark's Gospel traces the work of the spiritual powers in the cosmos – the Holy Spirit, the spirit of Jesus and the unclean spirits. The narrative begins when the Spirit descends (in prophecy to Isaiah first and then as a material object, the dove); once it has descended it immediately 'drives' and initiates the gospel story, the sending of the Christ. The success of the driving forward is countered by conflicts with religious officials and disciples (who at no point are said to have spirits of their own, to possess an independent spirituality), and the unclean spirits. The conflicts are overcome or transcended by the Spirit operating in and through Jesus – the divine *dunamis*, the Holy Spirit. The unclean, the unbelieving open to believing, the deprived who desire and know their need for salvation, are all either overcome or transfigured by Jesus. That is, until the Passion narrative – until the move into the crisis of death (the death of the will challenged and overcome is prior to any physical or spiritual death

[40] See Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, for a discussion of the relationship between legitimation and narrative.

on the cross). The spiritual generates events, provides scenes for action. The material (and literal) provide a constative body which the spiritual inhabits and is potentially disruptive of. In and of itself the corporeal is static – the scene for sleep, paralysis, literalism and non-commitment (unbelief).

In the Passion narrative Jesus gives up his flesh to be sacrificed and bequeaths his spirit, the Holy Spirit, to those who, like David in 12.36 or those in chapter 13, will testify and speak not of themselves (13.11). It is the Holy Spirit then who promotes the telling and the retelling of the Christ-event, who promotes the prophecies and testimonies to the coming and coming again of Christ. The economy of response is governed by the operations of God as Spirit. The mimetic experience, informed and legitimated by the Spirit, is always an anticipation of a revealed Christ.

Though the performer retreats in the Passion narrative, the performance continues (under someone else's initiative – the chief priest's and the Romans'). Jesus's injunctions to the disciples to preach repentance and follow are supplanted by the injunctions to beware and to watch. A new economy of responding and a new type of narrative are emerging from the old. A new set of protagonists propels the plot from the opening verses of chapter 14: they usurp the narrative and dictate the terms of its action. A violence both to the narrative and within the narrative is being perpetrated: the violence is evident in the increasingly ironic portrayal of Jesus that is foregrounded. It is almost as if someone else were narrating,[41] or another spirit were speaking within the narrator, a spirit darker and more uncertain than the spirit that fired within the narrative when Jesus's action governed it. The darkness deepens, likewise the uncertainty and ambivalence. Though briefly, when Jesus appears before Pilate, there is daylight, the Last Supper, the agony in the garden, the arrest, the Jewish trial and the crucifixion all develop a theme of deepening night that breaks in the resurrection dawn. Then the light will draw attention to itself through self-conscious circumlocution: 'very early on the first day … when the sun had risen'.

Along with the darkness, the change in protagonists and the new passivity of Christ, there is a widening of narratorial perspective. An omniscient

[41] Martin Kahler's idea in 1892, that Mark as an editor wrote an extended introduction to a Passion narrative, is a testimony to the dramatic change in narrative key in chapter 14. In *The Rhetoric of Irony* (University of Chicago Press, 1974) Wayne Booth recognises the complexity of narratorial position as the portayal of Jesus becomes ironic. A double irony is involved as Mark reports the sardonic remarks about Christ as King ironically. Booth makes the important observation that Mark's intention is 'to build, through ironic pathos, a sense of brotherly cohesion' (p. 28). For irony is elitist, only 'insiders' can recognise it. The crisis of representation, then, promoted through the ironic discourse at this point, fosters discipleship and exercises those who, by faith, are on the inside.

narrator (who has appeared at other moments in the text) becomes dominant as the drama widens in its religious and political complexity. A universal perspective is assumed in which Jesus is seen as only one among several major figures. The modification and expansion of narratorial perspective corresponds to the more detailed presentation of Jesus's own omniscience (which again has been evident before). Jesus predicts the future fame of the woman who anoints him, he predicts the future outcome for the disciples who will go to the city and encounter a man carrying a water jar, and he predicts the disciples' flight and Peter's denial – as well as his own impending death. At his Jewish trial he will predict his own glorification; finally, a *neaniskos* informs us that he will go before the disciples to Galilee. The one who predicts or prophesies is always the one who goes before, who is ahead, who is at the head of those who follow after. And the one who is at the head controls all that comes after. Jesus is the potentate of time.

Furthermore, in these closing chapters Jesus also demonstrates (again) his ability to read the hearts and minds of those around him – he knows what Judas has done and the logic of events that will now occur: 'the hour has come … See, my betrayer … And immediately Judas came.' Jesus, the potentate of time, also then speaks words that create and represent[42] events prior to their occurrence. His position as the one beyond time and the one whose words engender, parallels the position of the narrator, the work of the narrator, and the experience of that narration as it is re-created and represented in the event of reading/listening. But the inseparability of Christology and mimesis now enters the crisis of ironic and sometimes sardonic representation. (Irony can be understood as mimesis aware of its own paradoxical

[42] Jesus's words as both creating and representing events that have not yet but will now occur, portray, *in nuce*, the paradox of mimesis. The words are reported – that is, they are in the past and represented to us by the narrator. But the promise these words contain, what they suggest, is Jesus Christ, the Word of God, is the locus for what Ricœur terms the paradigmatic (mimesis 1) and the syntagmatic (mimesis 2) axes of mimesis (*Time and Narrative*, vol. I, p. 66). That is, Jesus Christ as author or creator both presents and re-presents, and incarnates the condition whereby one can move from presentation to representation. He portrays the 'two sides of poetic configuration' (ibid., p. 45). Ricœur wishes to relate these two sides through the act of reading that constitutes a third level of representation (mimesis 3). This act of reading 'completes the work' (ibid., p. 77) and the 'narrative has its full meaning when it is restored to the time of action and the times of suffering in mimesis 3' (ibid., p. 70). Lacoue-Labarthe, on the other hand, wishes to see no completion or fulfilment as possible: 'the logic of the paradox … is nothing other than the very logic of mimesis … the logical matrix of paradox is the very structure of mimesis … Hence the disquiet to which mimesis gives rise' (*Typography*, p. 260). In terms of Mark's Gospel, I would argue that Lacoue-Labarthe's disquieting mimesis has the upper hand. The paradox of representation remains, the questions remain and the reading does not resolve them. The narrative's meaning is forever withheld, although the narrative encourages a faith that participates in and looks forward to a Ricœurean restoration. The paradox of mimesis is then the paradox of the Word of God.

nature and unnerved by it.[43]) There is a crisis of meaning. Jesus the miracle worker, the *theios aner*, has disappeared. Jesus the Son of David, the Davidic king, the Messiah, is portrayed in terms of contradiction and parody. Jesus the Son of God only reappears on the lips of a man with no past association, in terms of Mark's text, with the disciples; a man, therefore, who (as others in the Gospel) speaks something he does not fully understand (as 10.38) or a man who has received a revelation. And if this is a revelation it is far from being unambiguous – not simply because Romans were familiar with 'sons of God' terminology, nor simply because the 'son' is anarthrous and could be translated 'a son' or just 'son'. But it is ambiguous because it is quite emphatically in the past tense. If this man *was* the Christ, the Son of God, then he is that no longer. There is certainly no suggestion of either victory or a return; no sense the presence of this son of God will continue in some way. There is, in fact, with this anagnorisis, a sudden plunge of the narrative towards tragedy. As for Jesus the Son of Man, *that* title holds the field, but as an epitaph over the suffering and thoroughly human character of Jesus. Pilate's *ecce homo* reverberates throughout. As Morna Hooker observes, 'Mark … does not treat it [the title] as a christological title comparable to "Christ" or "Son of God".'[44] It describes more the role he is playing as a symbol of

[43] See Paul de Man ('The Rhetoric of Temporality'): 'Allegory and irony are … linked in their common demystification of an organic world postulated in a symbolic mode of analogical correspondences or in a mimetic mode of representation in which fiction and reality could coincide. It is especially against the latter mystification that irony is directed' (p. 222). In other words, irony destabilises what we consider true representations of our world, representations that can be understood literally. The possibility of irony is the possibility that the literalism is only an interpretation, not a correspondence with facts 'out there'. Irony is, then, representation's reflection upon its own constitutive crisis – that it cannot present that which would legitimate its action. I would agree, then, with Stanley Fish's criticism of Wayne Booth's attempt to stabilise irony. In his essay, 'Short People Got No Reason to Live: Reading Irony' in *Doing What Comes Naturally* (Oxford University Press, 1989), he argues that irony too is an interpretation. But its possibility draws attention to a need always for interpretation – and that precipitates the crisis of representation. This possibility challenges Rorty's strict dichotomy between ironists and metaphysicians in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (Cambridge University Press, 1989). There Rorty separates ironists who hold to the contingency of language from the metaphysicians who believe in the possibility of achieving closer and more accurate representations of what is (see pp. 76–7). My own view, and Fish's, suggest that no such separation can be made – the metaphysical perspective and the ironic perspective are two moments that constitute the nature and crisis of representation. But Rorty's construal of ironism is wide and frequently synonymous with perspectivism – in which case, the ironist's position can embrace the metaphysican's rather than merely counter it. If that is so, then Rorty too accepts a similar view of irony to that I am suggesting here. Markan irony releases the forces of the need for endless interpretation and redescription – forces only held in check by Jesus Christ and guided by faith and the Holy Spirit. Without these theological cornerstones, there is only pragmatic meaning in the face of an infinite regress of unstable interpretation. Upon these theological cornerstones a realism is made possible – but it is a theological, not a philosophical realism.

[44] *The Gospel According to St Mark*, p. 89.

the suffering community of Israel than the Messianic victor. Christology loses its way in these last chapters, while simultaneously being given more attention.[45]

In our reading, we re-enact this crisis in Christology, the crisis of identity. We are caught up in the crisis of faith among the disciples, those who follow. For 'follow me' is a demand made by both Christ and the narrator of the Gospel. Following is the action of reading and participating in the event of reading (and forever rereading) the narrative of Jesus Christ.[46] Christ's identity, the disciples' identities, the readers'/listeners' identities, are all caught up in and kept in play by the process of representation. One cannot be abstracted or divorced from the other. All the forms of representation are searching for a legitimating fatherhood or origin. The crises of faith and Christology are co-extensive at this point with a bewildering semiosis that infects the narrative. *Logos* as both Christ and the gospel[47] appears to collapse towards *legion* (both demonic host and a Roman army). For there is a surfeit of potential, but no explicit meaning. The representation generates only the effects of meaning – not its understanding. The narrative moves between faith (which embraces and employs an analogical imagination) and paranoia. For no event or character stands alone or means merely what is written.

In the final chapters the refraction and ricochet of possible meaning revolve not just around duplication (there are two trials, two beatings, two betrayals, two cock-crows and the garden of Gethsemane is an ironic inversion of the scene of the transfiguration), but they revolve around triplication. Three times Jesus comes to the disciples (three of them) in the garden. Three times Peter denies him. At the first trial three questions are put to Jesus by the High Priest. At the second trial Pilate too asks three questions. In threes the hours of the crucifixion pass (15.25, 33, 34). The three guilty male protagonists (Judas, Peter and Barabbas – a name parodying 'Son of the Father') stand juxtaposed to three righteous male

[45] Morna Hooker: 'the true identity of Jesus becomes clearer the closer we move to the Cross' (ibid., p. 252).

[46] This is Scharlemann's acoluthetic reason, his Christological reason as it adheres to aesthetic reason.

[47] The word *logos* appears 23 times in the Gospel with a variety of different nuances. In the first reference – 1.45 – it appears to be a synonym for Jesus's preaching (*kerussein*). In 5.36 it appears to mean words spoken by one person (here the servant of the synagogue chief) to another. In 7.13 it is the Word of God as the Law. In 7.29 it signifies the manner of the Syro-Phoenician woman's reply. In 9.10 it refers to the content of the transfiguration. In 11.29 Jesus's word is associated with calling into question. In 13.31 it is synonymous with prophecy. One could suggest, therefore, that Mark's Gospel is part of a logocentric vision that perceives analogies between Jesus Christ as God's Word sent into the world and the true meaning of events and human discourse.

protagonists (Simon of Cyrene, the centurion and Joseph of Arimathea) and the three women who come to the tomb. One event may redeem another, one event may reinforce another or deepen the significance of the other, one event may be parallel and contradict another (the woman's anointing is followed by Judas's betrayal, both of which prepare for Jesus's death). What I wish to argue, though, is that there is a descent, in the closing chapters, towards a madness born of imitation, of duplication, or representation, of semiosis, irony and parody – a madness, that is, or a divine logic radically at odds with our own and our representation's. It is within this divine madness, counterpart to the final eschatological crisis of chapter 13, that a faith is born which clutches at significance without fully understanding what it is significant of. And the narrative itself is the first sign that that significance believed in *is* significant of something. For the centurion's cry is ambivalent and the women run away and say nothing, but the narrative speaks and vindicates the significance of what has transpired; that *something* has, in fact, transpired. The narrative is the first indication that a salvation has been wrought. In fact, it makes (*poiesis*) that salvation available. The salvation, the saving event, is again unpresentable. The representation substitutes for what has already taken place – without the representation there would be no salvation. The representation is, then, the search for, the witness to, and the producer of the process of salvation. There is, then, no need for a resurrection, for the narrative itself is the enactment (or is it the re-enactment?) of Christ's resurrection life. The narrative has become Christological, the means of grace.

Conclusion

Christology is and remains a riddle in Mark's Gospel, just as the parables are and remain a riddle, and the Gospel *tout court* is and remains a riddle. The riddles play with and emerge from the crisis of representation. The narrative performs the riddle of Christology and representation that involves the reader/listener, that forces the reader/listener to be alert and watchful. It is a watchfulness and alertness that has to move towards the edge of madness and paranoia, crisis, the cross and death in order that faith may arise. But the effect upon the reader/listener who participates in the riddling, in the economy of the mystery and a response to it, is the operation of a divine soteriology as it moves towards the final eschatological moment when the reader/listener who is now 'on the way' and following, meets up with the one who is returning to encounter her. Soteriology is inseparable from Christology, narratology (one's own narrative as a rereading of Jesus's narra-

tive) and the 'rhetoric of temporality'. Mimesis is therefore the measure of our understanding of the Christ.

The effectiveness of Christ (his *Heilbedeutsamkeit*, which is a central concern of Christology) can only *de jure*, not *de facto*, be distinguished from the effectiveness of the narrative of Christ. Jesus Christ and the Gospel (they are both the Word) participate in a divine creativity, in a Holy Spirit who 'drives'. But the original and generative act lies concealed and unrepresentable. In the beginning, as we saw, there is no beginning, there is only representation; and that representation expresses the eschatological and narrative desire to reveal the author who gave rise to it. Representation is promoted and produced by the absent and unrepresentable. History (of Jesus) and narrative (of Jesus) are inseparable. Their inseparability promotes discipleship, promotes training and being disciplined in the continuing representation of that which is unrepresentable. All discipleship is readership – the participation in the reading and rereading of this one man's representative life and work and teaching as it is narrated. All serious reading engages in an economy of response, and as such it is a liturgy, a prayer, sacramental.