IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME

BIBLICAL STUDIES IN HONOUR OF ARCHBISHOP DONALD ROBINSON

Edited by
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LANCER

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LANCER BOOKS are published by
ANZEA PUBLISHERS
3–5 Richmond Road,
Homebush West, NSW 2140
Australia

ISBN 0 85802 516 8

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Cover design by John Windus

Typeset by DOCUPRO, Sydney

Printed in Australia by Southwood Press

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MARK: STORY AND HISTORY

Paul Barnett

Those privileged to have been the students of Donald Robinson have always recognised in him both an exceptional scholar and an inspiring teacher. His freshness of approach, eye for the detail unnoticed by others, breadth of knowledge of the biblical literature and facility in *koine* Greek have left their abiding mark in our memories. Above all, his love for the Scriptures and for their message about Jesus shone through all his sermons, classes and tutorials.

Robinson's academic career suffered from three problems: the interruption to his studies caused by military service during the Second World War, the isolation of Australia from the centres of international scholarship, and his departure from Moore College for episcopal ministry. Changed circumstances for Donald Robinson would have brought him to the forefront of New Testament scholarship. That is the belief many of his students have always held.

Reading and Writing in New Testament Times

As children of the age of the printing press, and more lately of the photocopier, we easily but wrongly assume that biblical texts

such as the Gospel of Mark were written for mass circulation and for private reading. For us, private reading means silent reading. Indeed our teachers discouraged any movement of the lips in the reading process as slowing down the function of the eyes.

But in the era when Mark was written all reading, including private reading, was oral reading.[1] Augustine found it worthy of comment that Ambrose read with sealed lips (*Confessions* 6:3). Texts were only read silently for brief moments when their contents were deemed inappropriate for others to hear. It was customary for readers to provide accompanying gestures of mouth and tongue. A person able to read a book at sight is exceptional and noteworthy (Petronius, *Satyricon* 75). Philip the Evangelist *heard* the Ethiopian in his chariot reading from Isaiah (Acts 8.30).

It was also slow reading. There were neither spaces between words nor punctuation marks nor divisions of texts into chapters and verses. The text would be approached not as comprising phrases, nor yet as words, but as syllables, even individual letters. Only exceptional scribes were able to look ahead to the end of a phrase before articulating it. The post Renaissance phenomenon of private, 'speed' reading has contributed significantly to the explosion of knowledge which has characterised our epoch. But it was not so in antiquity.

It is equally significant that writing in classical antiquity was also associated with the sounds of syllables. Writing was frequently by dictation to a scribe. Dictation was deemed superior to writing in one's own hand by Dio Chrysostom (*Discourses* 18.18) and famous persons were often accompanied by a scribe ready to take dictation (Pliny, *Letters* 3.5). Even without a scribe it was customary to self-dictate. A copyist would pronounce each line to himself before putting pen to paper. Dictating, writing, and copying were based on the aural rather than the visual.

It may be relevant to our approach to Mark to understand that, as one scholar has observed, 'a written text was essentially a transcription which, like modern musical notation, became an intelligible message only when it was performed *orally* to others or to oneself'.[2]

Mark as Narrative

Form criticism was succeeded by redaction criticism. It then became important to consider the text of Mark as a whole, not merely in its component parts. The author's interests and emphases have been investigated in his finished work, how he has shaped and crafted his document.

More recently scholars have shown considerable interest in the Gospel of Mark as a narrative or story and the author as narrator.[3] Following redaction criticism it has been argued that the Gospel is a unified whole, not just a collection of component parts. Narrative criticism identifies the narrator as the one who imposes unity on the text. As the teller of the story from beginning to end, the narrator is present in every scene. He evaluates, interprets and explains everything. We are completely in his hands. His is the plot and his the characters. He uses many methods to bring us his message—riddle, irony and paradox—but also his careful choice of words. Thus, Mark must be thought of primarily as *narrator* rather than writer.

The rise of narrative criticism has been contemporaneous with and indeed influenced by the growing understanding of the aural rather than the visual processes of both reading and writing referred to at the beginning of this paper. Verbal signals associated with Mark's structuring in terms of backward and forward echoes (the healing of blind men at Bethsaida and Jericho, for example) have been long recognised.

Many scholars now believe that the Gospel of Mark was written to be read aloud and listened to, probably at one sitting. In his successful solo stage presentations of the Gospel of Mark, the actor Alex McGowen may have stumbled on what generations of Christians and scholars had missed, the fundamentally aural and dramatic character of this gospel.

If Mark is a story written to be heard, rather than read silently, it might follow that we can discover numbers of words of similar sound, which are significant to the unfolding of the story. In what follows we shall trace in Mark not so much the rhetorical structures associated with listening, but keywords.

Word Sounds in Mark[4]

First, some statistics. By my count, Mark employs a vocabulary of some 1334 different words. However, as many as 582, or 44 per cent, are used only once. Mark employs approximately 70 words in a deliberate or pointed way. Clearly this is subjective; the number might be increased or decreased according to one's judgment. Some of these words are used in a limited way, being repeated within one or two sections of the Gospel. A greater number, however, are used distributively throughout longer sections of the Gospel.

Of this latter list we are particularly interested in the dozen and a half words (or collections of words which have similar sounds) that appear near the beginning of the Gospel and which are repeated within the Gospel. By this I mean Mark's opening sentence, the three stories involving John the Baptist which together comprise the 'beginning of the gospel' and the first three stories of the gospel proper—Jesus' preaching in Galilee, his call of the four fishermen, and the dramatic sabbath scene in the synagogue at Capernaum. Mark locates such words early to introduce themes which will be reintroduced with the repetition of the keyword. These words, to a significant degree, tell Mark's story.

On the analogy of musical notation, what is written would become real when it is *heard* rather than seen. His keywords introduce signature tunes which reappear throughout. Mark's method will become apparent as we observe his pattern of word choice. Let us examine some keywords which are located near the beginning and which are distributed throughout the Gospel.

Euangelion ('gospel') occurs in the opening sentence, which serves as the title for the written 'Gospel' that follows. After the prologue or 'beginning' the 'gospel' proper begins with Jesus 'preaching the gospel' in Galilee. After Jesus has called and prepared the Twelve they too 'preach' in Galilee (3:13–15; 6:6b-13). The first half of the written 'gospel', then, is devoted to Jesus and the Twelve preaching the 'gospel' in Galilee. In the second half of Mark the 'gospel' is 'preached' (passive) to 'all the nations' of 'the world' (13:10; 14:9) by disciples, who must

be prepared to 'lose' their lives, 'leave' all not only for Christ's sake, but also so that the 'gospel' might be preached (8:35; 10:29). The first half of Mark is devoted to Jesus and the Twelve gospelling the kingdom of God, which Mark then explains and amplifies in his second half in terms of Jesus' death and his resurrection after three days, which there becomes the dominant theme.

Huios ('son') is also to be found in the opening sentence of the Gospel. It is well known that *huios* occurs many times and is thought to represent one of the author's leading themes, perhaps his leading theme (1:1, 11; 3:11; 5:7; 9:7; 12:6(2); 13:32; 14:61; 15:39), especially when *huios* is used with *agapētos* ('beloved'; 1:11; 9:7; 12:6). Not so often noticed is that *huios* is used twice with *schizomenos* ('opened'). On the first occasion, close to the beginning, the heavens are 'opened' and the voice of God declares the man in the river Jordan to be his 'beloved Son' (1:10). On the other occasion, which occurs at Golgotha near the end of the Gospel, the centurion having declared the man on the cross to be the 'Son of God', the curtain of the temple is 'torn' from top to bottom (15:38). To Roman readers, the juxtaposition of 'Son of God', one of the titles for the Roman princeps, and crucifixion, something unmentionable among Romans, must have been arresting, to say the least. Yet here is a Roman centurion, the commander of the execution squad, declaring that a crucified Jew was 'Son of God'. Both occasions of supernatural 'opening/tearing' are accompanied by oracle-like declarations that Jesus is *huios* (*theou*).

In the 'beginning of the gospel' Mark introduces John the Baptist. He will prepare the *hodos* ('way'; cf. Mal 3:1) of Jesus. This *hodos* will become very important in the second half of the Gospel. Jesus' *hodos* will take him from Galilee to Jerusalem, where he will meet rejection, betrayal and death at the hands of the temple authorities, followed by resurrection after three days (8:27; 9:33, 34; 10:17, 32, 46, 52). The disciples follow Jesus on the 'way' to Jerusalem, symbolising the sacrificial 'way' they must walk after Jesus is gone from them, losing their lives (8:35), leaving their possessions for him and the gospel (10:29; cf. 9:37, 41), remaining with their wives (10:5–9) and serving

one another in the messianic community in imitation of him (10:44).

The 'tempting' or 'testing' (*peirazein*) of Jesus by Satan occurs in the 'desert' (*erēmos*; 1:12–13) and represents Jesus' cosmic struggle which continues throughout the Gospel. The demons discern Jesus' supernatural identity and mission in the synagogue of Capernaum ('The holy one of God...come to destroy us', 1:24). By the lakeside they offer menacing worship (3:11). When Jesus goes to a lonely place outside Capernaum (literally a 'desert' place), he must pray not to be deflected from his God-given mission (1:35–39). Solitude on a mountain and in Gethsemane signify his ongoing struggle with the temptation to messianic triumphalism (6:45–46; 14:35). Peter's opposition to Jesus' conviction that he must suffer is regarded as emanating from Satan (8:33). The concerted opposition of the Pharisees to Jesus (2:7, 16, 18, 24; 3:6; 7:1) which is called 'temptation' (8:11; 10:2; 12:15) implies that they, too, are instruments of Satan.

Immediately the 'beginning' of the Gospel (1:1–13) is finished Mark introduces his important theme, the kingdom (*basileia*) of God (1:15). According to Jesus, God's kingdom is about to break into history. We find *hē basileia (tou theou)* distributed throughout the Gospel (4:11, 26, 30; 9:1, 47; 10:14, 15, 23, 24, 25; 12:34; 14:25; 15:43). Yet this is a mysterious theme. For, although Jesus says that it is 'near' (1:15), Mark does not ever say that the *basileia* has arrived. Though so important a theme, it remains up in the air, unfulfilled. Here Mark's deceptive simplicity as a narrator may be seen. In describing the trial and crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth on the day of preparation for the Passover Sabbath, Mark repeatedly applies the word 'king' (*basileus)* to him, a word so close in sound to 'kingdom' *(basileia).* Jesus is accused, convicted and crucified on that day for claiming to be *ho basileus tōn Ioudaiōn* ('the king of the Jews'; 15:2, 9, 12, 18, 26). Mark wants us to understand that, incredible as it may seem, *hē basileia tou theou* ('the kingdom of God') actually begins with the crucifixion of *ho basileus Israel* ('the king of Israel').

Climactic to the scene, his enemies mock the man on the cross as *ho Christos ho basileus Israel* ('the Christ, the king of Israel';

15:32). That fateful Passover in Jerusalem, Jesus publicly declares himself to be the Christ of God, when he rides up in the manner of a king and he gives an affirmative answer to the high priest's question, 'Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?' (*ho Christos, ho huios tou Eulogētos; 14:61–62; cf. 1:11). Up to that point he has suppressed his messianic identity, preferring to be known as the Son of Man (8:30). In a complete reversal of Jewish messianic expectations, in which the Christ was associated with power and victory, Mark the narrator lets us hear that the crucified Jesus is the basileus* and that in his shameful death the *basileia* of God has at last arrived. It is with consummate irony that we hear this, not from the lips of the disciples, but from those who have brought about his death, the temple authorities.

Moreover, they throw the word *dynasthai* ('to be able') at him: 'He saved others, himself he does not have the power (*dynatai*) to save' (15:31). In the opening chapter of the Gospel the power of Jesus was demonstrated in the healing of the leper (1:40). In two subsequent incidents Mark has pointedly referred to the powerlessness of the sick/demon-possessed. This is in contrast to the power Jesus had showed (*dynasthai*) to heal=save (*sōzein*) the powerless (2:4; 9:22, 23, 28, 29). It is as the chief priests and the scribes say, though they unwittingly give expression to the profound truth of the kingdom of God of which they know nothing. In Jesus' apparent powerlessness the power of God is now actually being revealed in the saving of others.

Even their insincere offer to 'believe' (*pisteuein*) in return for a miraculous descent from the cross (15:32) reveals an understanding of the response he has sought and which Mark has brought to our attention near the beginning of his story (1:14–15). The like sounding *pisteuein* (1:15; 5:36; 9:23, 24, 31; 13:21; 15:32) and *pistis* ('faith'; 2:5; 4:40; 5:34; 10:52; 11:22; cf. *apistia* = 'unbelief'; 6:6; 9:24; and *apistos* = 'faithless'; 9:19) will become much used in the course of the story as it unfolds. It was introduced at the beginning and also at the end, a sure sign that Mark rated the theme very highly. Some irony is implied by Mark's usage. Those in privileged positions—the family and people in Nazareth, the religious leaders like Pharisees and temple authorities and even the Twelve—are

characterised by *apistia*, whereas ordinary folk like the four friends of the paralytic, the bleeding woman, Jairus and Bartimaeus, who reach out to Jesus in simplicity and need, are said to 'believe'.

Thus Mark narrates the scene at the cross in such a way as to reveal, on the one hand, the ultimate human repudiation of Jesus, while yet paradoxically displaying the unanticipated means by which God would bring his kingdom, his salvation, to humanity. The themes which Mark has introduced in his opening chapter are fulfilled here, near the end, by the cross.

In the next episode Mark introduces another of his most significant themes, 'following' Jesus (1:14–15; 1:16–20). The two keywords in this theme are 'to follow' Jesus (*akolouthein)* and 'to leave' people and things behind *(aphiēmi*). The call 'to follow' Jesus means that the four fishermen must 'leave behind' nets and family (1:17, 18, 20), as they later remind him ('We have *left* everything to *follow* you'; 10:29). When Levi 'arose and followed' Jesus, it is implied that he left behind his means of support, namely his customs booth (2:14). A contrast is intended between the rich man who refused to 'sell everything ...and give to the poor' as a precondition to 'following' Jesus, and the blind beggar Bartimaeus, who 'threw aside his cloak' and then 'followed Jesus in the way' (10:21; 10:50, 52). As one who is 'saved' by his 'faith' in Jesus, and who leaves his all to 'follow' him, Bartimaeus makes Mark's complete response to Jesus; he is both a believer and a disciple (10:50, 52).

During Jesus' teaching on the Sabbath in the synagogue in Capernaum, we are twice told of Jesus' 'authority' (*exousia*; 1:22, 27). In the *erēmos* ('wilderness'), he was anointed by the Spirit, led by the Spirit (1:10, 12) and in the synagogue identified by the *unclean* spirit(s) as 'the Holy One of God...come to destroy' them. Because he taught *with* authority, not *by* authority, and because of his effortless mastery over the unclean spirits, he is recognised as having 'authority'. Mark's incidental use of *exousia* in the Parable of the Absent Householder makes clear its meaning as 'authority delegated to an appointed representative' (13:34). God has delegated the Son of Man to exercise authority on his behalf, just as Jesus delegated his authority to the Twelve for their mission (2:10; 3:15; 6:7; 11:28,

29, 33). Thus *exousia* is very important in the Gospel story as it unfolds.

As a final example, also taken from the dramatic scene in the synagogue in Capernaum, we note the use of *ekplēssesthai* to express the people's amazement at the 'new teaching' and the 'authority' of Jesus (1:22). This word repeats on a number of other occasions throughout the Gospel (2:2; 7:37; 10:26; 11:18).

Other words for 'shock' or 'fear' are also used at the beginning and the end of the story as well as being distributed throughout. The fear of the women at seeing the young man in white rather than the body of Jesus inside the tomb on the first day of the week is told in words beginning with *ek—ekthambeisthai* ('amazed'; 16:5, 6) and *ekstasis* ('astonishment'; 16:8). Other words for 'shock' or 'amazement' used by Mark—*adēmonein* (14:33); *existasthai* (2:12; 3:21; 5:42; 6:51); *thambeisthai* (1.27; 10:24, 32); *thaumazein* (5:20; 6:6; 15:4, 44); *phobein* (4:41); and *phobeisthai* (4:41; 5:15, 33, 36; 6:20, 50; 9:32; 11:18, 32; 12:12; 16:8)—are probably intended to convey not just amazement, but *eschatological* amazement. Conceivably, Mark has used similar sounding words associated with 'fear' in the Capernaum synagogue and in the tomb outside Jerusalem to indicate that in Jesus' initial coming to Galilee, and climactically in the disappearance of his body, those involved stood at the edge of the eschatological abyss. Mark would have us, the hearers, stand there with them to share their wonder.

These examples give support to the notion that we should think of Mark more as a narrator of a story to listen to than as a writer of a book to read. If this is correct, there are some interesting implications for the way modern Christians present this Gospel.

Theology and History in Mark

Regardless of whether or not the aural hypothesis is accepted, it is plain from Mark's careful choice and use of keywords that he is, by calculation, a theologian, even though he expresses his theology through narrative. Mark's carefully chosen keywords represent ideas, intellectual themes—in short, theology.

Some of Mark's theological ideas may have come to him by

outside influence. For example, a number of his keywords appear to have been derived from Paul or from Pauline thought.[5] Jesus' 'your faith has saved you' (5:34; 10:52) and the taunt of the chief priests and scribes, 'he saved others' (15:31), could almost be seen as Pauline paradigms of persons saved by faith ('you are saved through faith'; Eph 2:8; cf. Rom 5:1, 9; James 2:15).

Likewise, Mark's 'he said this *plainly*' (*parrēsia ton logon elalei*; 8:31), referring to the divine necessity for the death and resurrection of the Son of Man, seems to have some connection with Paul's 'that utterance (*logos*) may be given me in opening my mouth boldly (*parrēsia*) to proclaim the mystery of the gospel' (Eph 6:19; cf. Acts 4:29, 31).

Again, the strongly Marcan concepts of *basileia* and *huios agapētos* ('beloved Son') may be related to Paul's *basileian tou huiou tēs agapētos* ('the kingdom of his beloved Son'; Col 1:13). The bitterly ironic words of the religious authorities to the crucified One—'He cannot save himself (*ou dynatai sōsai*). Let the Christ, the king of Israel come down now from the cross' (*ho Christos...tou staurou; 15:31–32)—may echo Paul's words to the Corinthians: 'through what we preach to save (sōsai)*...we preach Christ crucified (*Christos estauromenon*)...the power (*dynamin*) of God' (1 Cor 1:21, 23, 24).

What, then, is the place of history in his narrative? Those who espouse the narrative theory tend to view the Gospel as a 'literary creation' rather than as a work of history.[6] It is the contention of this paper that, while Mark is unquestionably kerygmatic in character, as expressed through the medium of narrative, the historical and biographical elements should not be overlooked, either in the Gospel as a whole or in its parts. When considered as a whole, there is no good reason to reject the broad historical sweep of this Gospel.

According to Luke-Acts, Peter told Cornelius that Jesus' ministry began in Galilee and ended in Jerusalem (Acts 10:37–43). Luke's assurances about writing 'an orderly account' (Luke 1:3), based on information eyewitnesses 'handed' (Luke 1:2) him, must be worth something.

Josephus writes of the arrest and killing of John the Baptist, events which served as markers for the ministry of Jesus:

> When others too joined the crowds about [John], because they were aroused to the highest degree by his sermons, Herod [Antipas] became alarmed. Eloquence that had so great an effect on mankind might lead to some form of sedition, for it looked as if they might be guided by John in everything that they did. Herod decided therefore that it would be much better to strike first and be rid of him before his work led to an uprising, than to wait for an upheaval, get involved in a difficult situation and see his mistake...because of Herod's suspicions [John] was brought in chains to Machaerus, the stronghold, and there put to death (*A.J.* xviii. 118–119).

The *arrest* of the Baptist was the signal for Jesus to commence his proclamations in Galilee (Mark 1:14; cf. John 3:24; 4:45), whereas John's *death* occurred immediately before the Son of Man despatched the disciples to the towns of Galilee (Mark 6:14), perhaps helping to explain the electrifying response of the Galileans to that mission (Mark 6:30–33).

Herod Antipas had removed one popular prophet for political reasons; the Herodians' surveillance of a new prophet is hardly surprising. Jesus' withrawals from the reach of Antipas on a number of occasions is consistent with the circumstances of Galilee at that time and the known character of the tetrarch (cf. Mark 3:7; 4:35; 7:24; 8:13).[7]

The incident in the wilderness on the eastern side of the lake appears to have brought Jesus' public activities in Galilee to an end (Mark 6:30–45; cf. John 6:14–15) and to have precipitated a journey to Judaea which brought about Jesus' death in Jerusalem at the Passover at the hands of Pontius Pilate exactly a year later (Mark 10:1; John 7:10). Thus Mark's Gospel reflects the subtleties of the politics of Galilee, whether or not the author was familiar with them at first hand.[8]

Granted that this overall chronology appears to be historically secure, it may be agreed that Mark has shaped and organised the material at his disposal *kerygmatically*. The passage of time between certain incidents—e.g., between Jesus' baptism and his entry to Galilee (1:13, 14), between the events at Caesarea Philippi and the final march on Jerusalem (8:27; 10:32), between Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem and the night of his 'betrayal' when

there were many disputes between Jesus and the religious factions—is truncated for dramatic effect.

Various episodes appear to have been gathered together thematically. The groupings of the conflict stories (2:1–3:6) and the miracle stories (4:35–6:6) appear to establish important aspects of Jesus' christological identity, whereas the stories during the wanderings to the north reveal the insight of the Gentiles into Jesus, on one hand, and the spiritual blindness/deafness of the Twelve on the other (7:1–8:26). The account of the 'way' to Jerusalem contains many incidents and responses of Jesus which point to the sacrificial, non-triumphalist nature of discipleship in the coming time, when he will no longer be with them (8:27–10:52).

Despite these compressions and groupings for reasons of kerygmatic impact, it is entirely reasonable to accept that the Gospel story taken as a whole bears a recognisable relationship with the actual sequence of events as they occurred. A Jesus-history is broadly recoverable from the kerygmatic narrative. We reach similar conclusions when we come to consider the component parts or pericopae of the Gospel.

Most noticeable is the mass of gratuitous detail included by Mark which is quite unrelated to his kerygmatic intention. We must account for such detail either as ingenious verisimilitude or as authentic data which was part of the (Galilean?) tradition Mark received and which, without necessarily understanding it, he has retained within his Gospel. Although this line of argument is out of vogue today, it is still worthy of consideration.[9] Let us consider several examples.

> 1:32–33 That evening at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered together at the door.

This is an authentic, though unexplained, detail. Only when the Sabbath ended at sunset would the people be free to bring their sick. Would a redactor (living outside Palestine?) writing for Gentiles create an irrelevant detail like this? It is more likely to have been embedded within the tradition and retained by the author.

Mark abounds with details of this kind—the 'other boats', the taking of Jesus 'just as he was', and the 'cushion' in the story of the storm on the lake (4:35–41); the visual and aural images of the man 'Legion' bound with 'fetters and chains...night and day among the tombs...always crying out' (5:4–5), and the five thousand men who 'sat down by companies upon the green grass ...in groups, by hundreds and fifties' (6:39) are just some of the examples which might be quoted. Since these details are not indispensible to the kerygmatic narrative, we must ask whether they were superimposed on the tradition by the redactor-evangelist or whether they came as part of the tradition which he received. The latter option appears the more probable.

7:31 Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee through the region of the Decapolis.

This itinerary, which on face reading is impossible, is often cited as evidence of Mark's ignorance of the geography of northern Palestine. But this view depends in part on the assumption that Jesus travelled from the *city* of Tyre to the *city* of Sidon. But Jesus is crossing the *horia* ('border') of Tyre and, we assume, of Sidon, both Hellenistic city states with borders some considerable distance from their capitals. Other references to *horia* within this Gospel (5:17; 7:24; 10:1) reflect our writer or his source's knowledge of the boundaries of city states and tetrarchies.

8:22 And they came to Bethsaida...and [Jesus]...led [the blind man] out of the village.

Bethsaida, located just to the east of the entry of the upper Jordan into the sea of Galilee, was one of the major settlements in the tetrarchy of Gaulanitis. Since Bethsaida was not a 'village', it may be thought that Mark is in error. But, according to Josephus, there were 'fourteen villages (*kōmai*) that went with this city' (*A.J.* xx.159). This satellite-like relationship between a Palestinian Hellenistic city and its villages may be seen in Mark's 'villages of Caesarea Philippi' (8:27). In referring to

Bethsaida and Caesarea Philippi, the two major settlements in Philip's tetrarchy, Mark or his source have, in passing, given us a glimpse of a pattern of cities and their constituent villages in that region.[10]

Finally, brief mention might also be made to Jesus' involvement in three activities for which there was an established format: the Passover liturgy, the Sanhedrin and the Roman trial procedures, which occurred within the one twenty-four hour period (14:17–25; 14:53–65; 15:1–5). These are more or less recoverable from ancient sources: Mishnah Tractates *Pesahim* 10 for Passover liturgy, and *Sanhedrin* 4–7 for Jewish trials, and fragmentary Roman references for provincial trials.[11]

It is not Mark's purpose to list the well-established elements in these three activities, still less to provide raw material for modern reconstructions of them. Indeed, their authenticity has often been called into question. The kerygmatic narrative is too important for him to stop for details. Nonetheless, that narrative contains a number of echoes: the thanksgiving, the cup and the psalm from the Passover, the practice of judges cross-examining witnesses in Jewish trials, and the prefect-judge's interrogation of the prisoner before him in the Roman trial. The transposition of the high priest's question, 'Are you the Christ?' to Pilate's, 'Are you the king of the Jews?', so subtly recorded by Mark, and indeed with kerygmatic overtones, reflects chillingly cold calculations on the part of the temple authorities who knew that no Roman prefect would condemn on the messianic charge but that he could not fail to do so on the political charge.

Enough has been written at least to raise the question whether the fashionable dismissal of historical elements in Mark is warranted, even if there are problems with some of the examples submitted.

Conclusion

My case is that Mark is indeed kerygma, but as narrative, narrative written to be *heard* rather than read. The keywords introduced near the beginning which repeat, especially near the end, support some theory along this line. Nonetheless, Mark's

story must have borne a recognisable resemblance to the overall Jesus history, even if there is evidence of kerygmatic compression and grouping. The component parts or pericopae contain many traces of first hand familiarity with the events which Mark recorded, even though he may not have been present in person (in Galilee?). His retention of such details, which for the most part are dispensible in terms of the kerygmatic narrative, says something for his sense of and appreciation for history and of Jesus as a genuine figure of history rather than a mythological one.

Notes

1 See generally, P Saenger, 'Silent Reading: Its Impact on Late Medieval Script and Society', *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 13, 1982, pp. 367–414. Cf. G L Hendrickson, 'Ancient Reading', *The Classical Journal* 25, 1929, pp. 182–196. On the transformation of culture through the transition from oral to written communication see J W Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen, 1982). For the implications for the Gospel of Mark see J Dewey, 'Oral Methods of Structuring Narrative in Mark', *Interpretation*, 1989, pp. 32–44; P J Achtemeier, '*Omne verbum sonat*: The New Testament and Oral Environment of Late Antiquity', *JBL* 109/1, 1990, pp. 3–27.

2 Saenger, *op. cit.*, p. 371 (my italics).

3 R A Guelich, *Word Biblical Commentary: Mark 1–8:26* (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), *pp. xxii-xxv; C D Marshall, Faith as a Theme in Mark's Narrative* (Cambridge: CUP, 1989), pp. 14–30; E Best, 'Mark's Narrative Technique', *JSNT* 37, 1989, pp. 43–58.

4 For recent literature on Mark see R A Guelich, *op. cit.*; C D Marshall, *op. cit.* See Guelich, *op. cit. passim* for comment on words identified here as keywords; also literature cited therein.

5 So T J Weeden, 'The Intention of the Evangelist Mark', *NTS* 32, 1986, pp. 187–206.

6 So, C D Marshall, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

7 H W Hoehner, *Herod Antipas* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), pp. 317–330.

8 Mark's slightly inaccurate 'Herod the King' (6:14) is corrected by Matthew ('Herod the Tetrarch'; 14:1) who displays some knowledge of Galilean geography as well as of politics. He omits from Mark both the difficult Bethsaida (6:45) and the controversial itinerary (7:31), while supplying information not derived from Mark (see 4:12–

13; 4:24). It may be in Mark's favour that Matthew does not correct the former evangelist's assertion that Herodias had been wife to Antipas' brother Philip, which is notoriously at odds with Josephus *A.J.* xviii.136.

9 See T W Manson, 'The Foundation of the Synoptic Tradition: The Gospel of Mark', *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles*, (ed.) M Black (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1962). Manson refers in this paper to the views of an earlier scholar, C H Turner.

10 See further E Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, Volume II, (rev. and ed.) G Vermes, F Millar and M Black (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1979), pp. 171–2, 176–7.

11 See further W L Lane, *Commentary on the Gospel of Mark*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), *in loc. cit.;* and A N Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (London: OUP, 1965), pp. 24–47.