Resurrection in Mark—or not?

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In Mark's gospel Jesus explicitly predicts his (or the Son of Man's) resurrection no fewer than four times, at 8:31, 9:31, 10:33-34, and 14:27-28. On each of these occasions, the resurrection constitutes one item in a catalog of prophesied events, including Jesus' rejection by the religious elite, betrayal, deliverance to Gentiles, mockery, torture, and execution. It is therefore striking that while Mark depicts Jesus undergoing all of the other experiences he prophesies, he neglects to confirm Jesus' resurrection. In stark contrast to the other canonical gospels, which all close with the risen Jesus appearing to his disciples (Matt 28:16-20; Luke 24:13-53; cf. Acts 1:6-11; John 20:11-21:25) and confirming his presence by insisting on it (Matt 28:20) or, more persuasively, by eating with the disciples (Luke 24:41-43) and encouraging them to inspect his body (Luke 24:38-40; John 20:24-29)—Mark closes with Jesus' empty tomb and a young man who accounts for that emptiness by asserting that Jesus has risen and departed to Galilee, where his disciples are to meet him:

> ἠγέρθη, οὐκ ἔστιν ὧδε: ἴδε ὁ τόπος ὅπου ἔθηκαν αὐτόν. ἀλλὰ ὑπάγετε εἴπατε τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ Πέτρῳ ὅτι Προάγει ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν: ἐκεῖ αὐτὸν ὄψεσθε, καθὼς εἶπεν ὑμῖν. (16:6-7)
>
> He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.[1]

The risen Christ himself never appears in Mark.[2] Indeed, this gospel leaves open the possibility that no one ever sees him at all, for its final verse reports that the three

women disobeyed the young man's command: οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν εἶπαν· ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ ("and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid"; 16:8).

Many readers from antiquity until today have understood the risen Jesus' absence from Mark as evidence that the gospel did not originally end at 16:8, but rather contained traditions such as those one finds in Matthew, Luke, and John: stories of the risen Jesus appearing to the disciples and to Peter in particular (which the reference to Peter in Mark 16:7 supposedly anticipates).[3] I will not rehearse the arguments in support of 16:8 as Mark's authentic ending, for they are widely available.[4] Nor will I summarize the wide body of scholarship exploring the implications of an ending at 16:8, although there is much that is insightful and useful in it. Recent scholarship's insistence on underscoring Mark's ending's ambiguity in particular informs my analysis, even though I believe that that ambiguity can be described in more precise terms than earlier interpreters have attempted, by attending carefully to the relationship between Mark 16:5-8 and 14:26-31 and situating 16:5-8 within the context of Mark's development of the theme of resurrection throughout.[5] Mark's decision to represent Jesus' resurrection merely by depicting Jesus' empty tomb and an anonymous young man claiming that he rose does not constitute a unique problem in Mark, but rather complements other ambiguous representations of resurrection Mark's gospel offers. When examined together, these depictions of resurrection give rise to particular theological implications, which I will pursue in this paper, ultimately drawing on the theoretical framework offered by Mikhail Bakhtin to do so.

Mark's gospel neglects to provide unambiguous narrative verification not only of Jesus' resurrection, but of any resurrection at all. This distinguishes Mark from every other New Testament narrative of Jesus' ministry. In addition to their literary depictions of the risen Jesus appearing to his followers, Luke narrates the story of Jesus raising the widow's son at Nain (7:11-17); John, of course, preserves the story of Lazarus (11:1-44); and Matthew states that as a result of Jesus' resurrection, dead saints en masse emerge from their tombs and appear to people in Jerusalem (27:52-53). Mark includes none of these traditions and, moreover, carefully narrates the traditions he does include that could be construed as resurrection accounts in such a way as to cause the reader to question whether resurrection has really taken place.

In Mark 5, for example, Jairus begs Jesus to save his dying daughter (5:23). Jesus is delayed (5:24b-34) and messengers meet them to report that his daughter is dead (5:35). Jesus, refusing to listen to what they say (παρακούσας τὸν λόγον λαλούμενον),[6] tells Jairus Μὴ φοβοῦ, μόνον πίστευε ("do not fear, only have faith"; 5:36). When they arrive and encounter mourners (5:38), Jesus dismisses them:

> Τί θορυβεῖσθε καὶ κλαίετε; τὸ παιδίον οὐκ ἀπέθανεν ἀλλὰ καθεύδει. καὶ κατεγέλων αὐτοῦ. αὐτὸς δὲ ἐκβαλὼν πάντας….(5:39-40)
>
> "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside."

Jesus proceeds to restore the girl by saying to her Ταλιθα κουμ, a transliterated Aramaic phrase that Mark translates as Τὸ κοράσιον, σοὶ λέγω, ἔγειρε ("Little girl, I say to you, arise"; 5:41), and in response the young woman ἀνέστη ("got up"; 5:42). Since Mark later uses both ἐγείρω ("arise") and ἀνίστημι ("get up") to describe eschatological

resurrection (see 12:18-27) as well as Jesus' own resurrection (the former in the resurrection announcement of 16:6; the latter in the resurrection predictions of 8:31, 9:31, and 10:34), the present story of Jairus' daughter's resurrection, as commentators observe, foreshadows both.[7]

Jesus' denial that the girl is dead, then, is troubling, not only because everyone else in the story agrees she has died (5:35, 40), but also because Jesus' resurrection of her seems to symbolize his own resurrection and the eschatological resurrection of the dead which early Jesus believers understood Jesus' to guarantee (see 1 Cor 15:20-22). Commentators often resolve this problem by interpreting καθεύδει ("she is sleeping"; 5:39) with reference to its use as a metaphor for death in the Septuagint (Ps 87:6; Dan 12:2) and elsewhere in the New Testament (1 Thess 5:10). Jesus, they argue, is not denying that the girl has died, but rather manipulating this metaphor to redefine death as a form of sleep from which she will awaken.[8] But such an interpretation is circular: it assumes what it wants to establish (that the girl is dead) despite Jesus saying she is not. Indeed, in 5:39 Jesus explicitly contrasts the girl's sleep with death, which tells against a metaphorical understanding of his statement as a claim that she is dead.[9] Jesus seems to be saying that the girl is not dead, but rather fast asleep—in a coma—and only appears to have died.[10]

The ambiguity Jesus' insistence that the girl is sleeping introduces into the Markan story is a conventional feature other ancient "resurrection accounts" display. Apuleius and Philostratus depict Asclepiades and Apollonius respectively raising the

dead, but both authors make room for skepticism in their accounts by suggesting that the person restored to life was not dead to begin with.[11] Apuleius writes:

> Diligentissime quibusdam signis animaduersis, etiam atque etiam pertrectauit corpus hominis et inuenit in illo uitam latentem. confestim exclamauit uiuere hominem. (Florida 19)
>
> Having carefully noted certain signs, [Asclepiades] again and again handled the man's body and discovered life concealed within it. Immediately he cried out, "the man lives"!

Philostratus, after narrating Apollonius' resurrection of a young bride, analogously notes:

> καὶ εἴτε σπινθῆρα τῆς ψυχῆς εὗρεν ἐν αὐτῃ, ὃς ἐλελήθει τοὺς θεραπεύοντας.... ἔιτ' ἀπεσβηκυῖαν τὴν ψυχὴν ἀνέθαλψέ τε καὶ ἀνέλαβεν, ἄρρητος ἡ κατάληψις τούτου γέγονεν οὐκ ἐμοὶ μόνῳ, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς παρατυχοῦσιν. (Vit. Ap. 4.45)
>
> And whether he found a spark of life in her, which had escaped the notice of those attending her…or whether he both reheated and recovered her extinguished life, it has been impossible to say how this could be apprehended, not for me alone, but also for those who happened to be present.

Both authors, like Mark, are careful to leave open the possibility that the miraculous events they recount might not be resurrections at all by suggesting that the "miracle worker" awakened a comatose person rather than resurrected a dead one. When read in the context these texts offer, it becomes difficult to deny that Mark's version of Jesus' restoration of Jairus' daughter is a profoundly ambiguous resurrection account, if it is one at all.

This ambiguity carries theological significance. Jesus initially refuses to hear (παρακούσας) the announcement that Jairus' daughter is dead, telling him μόνον πίστευε ("only have faith"; 5:36). This suggests that confidence in Christ's resurrection power is the only legitimate response to death, and such a suggestion is supported by

Jesus' rejection of mourning and ejection of the mourners in 5:38-40. One is reminded of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, where Paul urges his readers not to mourn for their dead as do those outside the community of faith who lack hope in resurrection. Believers, according to Paul, have faith that those who have "fallen asleep" will rise again with Jesus at his parousia, which precludes mourning as an inappropriate response to death.[12] But the resurrection faith Jesus demands in Mark is itself necessarily ambiguous, for he denies that the girl has died. Is the faith Jesus insists Jairus exercise, then, directed at his ability to defeat death and raise the dead, or at the fact that death has not yet claimed power over Jairus' daughter? When Jesus initially refuses to listen to reports that the girl has died, that refusal seems to emblematize the monologic rigor of the resurrection faith he urges Jairus to adopt: voices attesting death's power do not even deserve a hearing. Analogously, when he ejects the mourners, one may understand the rejection of mourning as an implication that, in the face of his power over death, grief and sorrow are no longer appropriate responses to a loved one's demise. As the story progresses, however, the suggestion emerges that death does radically limit Christ's power: his ability to help the girl may be based on the fact that, as he himself says, τὸ παιδίον οὐκ ἀπέθανεν ἀλλὰ καθεύδει ("the child is not dead but sleeping"; 5:39). He utters those words precisely as he excludes the mourners, and so his rejection of mourning as an appropriate response to the girl's death may testify to his prescient discernment that the girl is actually alive rather than to his confidence that he can resurrect her. That, after all, is precisely what happens in Apuleius' story. After mysteriously discerning signs of life that everyone present had missed, Apuleius

demands that the funereal mourning cease: Procul igitur faces abicerent, procul ignes amolirentur. Rogum demolirentur…. ("Therefore let the funeral torches be thrown away; let the flames be set aside; let the tomb be torn down…"; Florida 19). After applying "certain medications" (quibusdam medicamentis), he presents the "deceased" man alive (Florida 19).

Mark never resolves this ambiguity. When he tells those who saw the girl's restoration that μεδεὶς γνοῖ τοῦτο ("no one should now this"; 5:43), Mark's Jesus underscores the fact that it is impossible to determine exactly what has happened, for the reference of τοῦτο ("this") is enigmatically unclear: has the girl been raised from the dead or is this merely one more of Jesus' healing miracles, several of which he demands be kept silent (cf. 1:44; 7:36; 8:26). Even if we privilege Jesus' own refusal of resurrection, questions remain, for his denial that the girl he will restore has died is as ambiguous as the word καθεύδω, which Paul and other biblical writers use as a euphemism for death. It is significant that although Matthew and Luke preserve Jesus' denial in their version of the story, neither was comfortable with the ambiguity it generated, and both resolve it decisively on the side of resurrection. According to Matthew, the synagogue leader explicitly asks Jesus to resurrect his daughter, who died before he ever came to Jesus (9:18; in Mark 5:23 he only says ἐσχάτως ἔχει, "she is at the point of death"). Luke likewise offers indisputable evidence that the girl had died and come back to life by reporting that after Jesus told her to rise and before she "got up healthy" (ἀνέστη παραχρῆμα), ἐπέστρεψεν τὸ πνεῦμα ("her spirit returned"; 8:55). Mark, on the other hand, carefully presents this "resurrection" story as one in which it is

impossible to determine if resurrection actually occurred. It is a story that invites faith in resurrection, but refuses to demand it. It presents resurrection as one possible explanation of what it narrates, but only as a possible explanation. It is a story that not only excludes dogmatism about resurrection but that raises questions about it: is death just one more enemy Jesus can conquer, or does it represent the limit of Jesus' otherwise formidable powers. The theological inquiry about resurrection that this story opens is sustained throughout Mark's gospel and surfaces with especial intensity in its closing verses.

As I detailed above, the risen Jesus never appears in Mark. Instead Mark offers Jesus' empty tomb and a mysterious young man who announces he has risen. Many scholars, most famously Rudolf Bultmann, have argued that the empty tomb tradition was developed in order to prove that the resurrection took place.[13] But, as Craig Evans notes, "one wonders how well this applies to Mark, whose text in our oldest MSS contains no account of the resurrection itself…."[14] After all, New Testament texts report the ease with which opponents of Jesus' resurrection could challenge the empty tomb as evidence of it. Matthew 28:11-15 recounts the Jewish religious leaders and Roman authorities conspiring to start a rumor that Jesus' disciples had stolen his body—a prima facie more likely explanation of the empty tomb than the claim that Jesus rose from the dead. The empty tomb decisively resolves no questions about Jesus' resurrection, especially when paired, as in Mark, with the absence of the risen Jesus himself. Accordingly, Helmut Koester, citing a suggestion made by Dieter Georgi, offers a different explanation for the development of the empty tomb tradition.[15] Pagan hero

cults were always located at the object of worship's supposed tomb and they found a close analogue in the Jewish tradition of honoring the tombs of heroic ancestors, such as Abraham (Jos. BJ 4.532) and David and Solomon (Jos. BJ 1.179-83). The original purpose of the empty tomb motif in Mark, then, was to distinguish worship of Jesus from pagan worship of chthonic heroes and from the Jewish practice of paying respect to the tombs of the patriarchs and other important figures from Israel's national history. Mark, then, did not employ (or invent) the empty tomb tradition to establish Jesus' resurrection, but rather to exclude cultivation of a hero cult centered around Jesus and his tomb.

Whether or not one agrees with Koester's location of the empty tomb tradition in the Greco-Roman context of the hero cult, the inherent plausibility of his suggestion precludes assuming that the empty tomb functions as an apologetic motif designed to verify Jesus' resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15 likewise precludes this assumption, for this text, which is explicitly aimed at establishing bodily resurrection in general and Jesus' resurrection in particular, nowhere mentions Jesus' empty tomb. Paul verifies Jesus' resurrection with reference to people who saw Christ after he died, especially Peter and the twelve, who are mentioned first in Paul's list of witnesses. Mark neglects to mention these appearances, and may even preclude their possibility by having the women who see the young man refuse his order to tell his disciples and Peter to meet the risen Christ in Galilee (16:8). If we read Mark 16 in dialogue with Paul's argument about resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, then Mark's elimination (or preclusion) of the risen Christ's appearances to the disciples, combined with his inclusion (or invention) of the

empty tomb, appears to function as a subtle argument against Jesus' resurrection. By excising the most obvious and traditional evidence of Jesus' resurrection (appearances of the risen Christ) and introducing evidence fraught with ambiguity (the empty tomb), Mark may have been undermining or at least opening room to doubt Jesus' resurrection.

This possibility is further supported by careful examination of the empty tomb scene itself. Mark identifies the figure pronouncing Jesus' resurrection as νεανίσκον καθήμενον ἐν τοῖς δεξιοῖς περιβεβλημένον στολὴν λευκήν ("a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side"; 16:5). Most scholars follow Matthew and take the young man as an angel (28:2-5)[16] because in Hellenistic Jewish literature angels or other heavenly figures can be dressed like this young man[17] and can also be called νεανίαι.[18] But the word νεανίας is never used for angels unless the context makes it absolutely clear that the νεανίας in question is an angel,[19] and Mark neglects to supply such a context. Taking the young man as an angel really amounts to substituting Matthew's redactional alteration of Mark for Mark itself, and such a methodology is hardly permissible. Robin Scroggs and Kent Groff more carefully argue that Mark 16's νεανίσκος is a young man who functions as a representative of the risen Christ. He is dressed in a white robe (16:5) not to signal that he is angelic, but rather to recall the supernaturally white garments Jesus wore in the scene of transfiguration (9:3).[20] He is said to be καθήμενον ἐν τοῖς δεξιοῖς ("sitting on the right side") in order to recall the early Christian tradition, first recorded by Paul, that the risen Jesus sits at the right hand of God (Rom 8:34).[21] Since in early Christian literature, the risen Christ is often

represented as a young person when he abruptly appears to believers (παῖς, νεανίσκος, νεανίας, παιδιόν),[22] the connections between Mark's young man and Christ are so pervasive as to prompt the reader to ask whether this νεανίσκος actually is the risen Christ, who goes unrecognized by the women.[23] But this is not possible, for the same νεανίσκος turns up earlier in Mark's narrative as well (14:51-52).[24]

The young man of Mark 14 appears to have been a disciple of Jesus who follows him briefly after Jesus' opponents arrest his master in order to put him to death. When the captors grab hold of the young man too, he escapes by leaving his garment, a σινδών, in their hands. Frank Kermode, following a suggestion of Austin Farrer, argues that this unnamed figure appearing out of nowhere functions as an emblem of the disciples' desertion of Jesus to die alone in the hands of the Romans and Jewish religious leaders.[25] In 14:50, immediately before narrating the young man's flight, Mark writes ἀφέντες αὐτὸν ἔφυγον πάντες ("All of them deserted him and fled"; 14:50). When this νεανίσκος flees, he leaves behind a σινδών (14:51), which is the same word Mark uses for the garment in which Joseph of Arimathea, one of the religious leaders responsible for Jesus' death, wraps Jesus' dead body (15:46).

Mark represents this young man's abandonment of Jesus in the harshest terms imaginable. The νεανίσκος is shameful and cowardly, preferring to run away naked rather than to be associated (and perhaps arrested) with his master. Since the young man ceases following Jesus precisely when Jesus is arrested and, moreover, leaves behind a garment identified with the identical word Mark will later use for Jesus' burial shroud, the gospel represents this young man as evading following Jesus to his death.

This cessation of following constitutes a straightforward rejection of what Jesus had earlier demanded of his disciples:

> εἴ τις θέλει ὀπίσω μου ἀκολουθεῖν, ἀπαρνησάσθω ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἀράτω τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀκολουθείτω μοι…. ὃς γὰρ ἐὰν ἐπαισχυνθῇ με καὶ τοὺς ἐμοὺς λόγους ἐν τῇ γενεᾷ ταὐτῃ τῇ μοιχαλίδι καὶ ἁμαρτωλῷ, καὶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐπαισχυνθήσεται αὐτόν, ὅταν ἔλθῃ ἐν τῇ δόξῃ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ μετὰ τῶν ἀγγέλων τῶν ἁγίων. (8:34, 38)
>
> If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me…. For those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his father with the holy angels.

This young man's shameful refusal to follow Jesus to his death emblematizes the shameful desertion of all the disciples (14:49), not to mention Peter's explicit denial of Jesus (14:66-72) and Judas' traitorous betrayal (14:43-50).

It is striking that Mark attributes the announcement that Jesus rose from the dead to this personified emblem of the disciples' disgraceful and reprehensible betrayal of their master, for he is hardly a reliable narrator! How does he know that Jesus arose if he abandoned Jesus at precisely the moment Jesus' thrice reiterated prophecies of betrayal, arrest, death, and resurrection began to be fulfilled, as Mark vividly depicts him doing? This question has not, to my knowledge, been asked in Markan scholarship, but if one identifies the young man in chap. 16 with the young man in chap. 14, it demands to be posed. It is not particularly difficult to answer: the young man doesn't <u>know</u> that Jesus arose; he infers and believes it. What he says to the women is nothing more and nothing less than a straightforward description of the empty tomb, a précis of what Jesus himself told the disciples immediately before his arrest. In the following

passages I underscore the clearest points of contact between the young man's speech and Jesus' earlier predictions.

> Μὴ ἐκθαμβεῖσθε: Ἰησοῦν ζητεῖτε τὸν Ναζαρηνὸν τὸν ἐσταυρωμένον: ἠγέρθη, οὐκ ἔστιν ὧδε: ἴδε ὁ τόπος ὅπου ἔθηκαν αὐτόν. ἀλλὰ ὑπάγετε εἴπατε τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ Πέτρῳ ὅτι Προάγει ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν: ἐκεῖ αὐτὸν ὄψεσθε, καθὼς εἶπεν ὑμῖν. (16:7-8)
>
> Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.

Recall that in 14:27-28, Jesus predicts his followers' desertion, and, in response to Peter's resistance to this troubling prophecy (14:29), further predicts that Peter will thrice deny him (14:30).

> Πάντες σκανδαλισθήσεσθε, ὅτι γέγραπται, Πατάξω τὸν ποιμένα, καὶ τὰ πρόβατα διασκορπισθήσονται: ἀλλὰ μετὰ τὸ ἐγερθῆναί με προάξω ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν. ὁ δὲ Πέτρος ἔφη αὐτῷ, Εἰ καὶ πάντες σκανδαλισθήσονται, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐγώ. καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ἀμὴν λέγω σοι ὅτι σὺ σήμερον ταύτῃ τῇ νυκτὶ πρὶν ἢ δὶς ἀλέκτορα φωνῆσαι τρίς με ἀπαρνήσῃ. (14:27-30)
>
> "You will all become deserters; for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." Peter said to him, "Even though all become deserters, I will not." Jesus said to him, "Truly I tell you, this day, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times."

The young man, who was among the disciples that desert Jesus on the Mount of Olives in 14:50-52, is presumably among those who deny they would desert him as they accompany him there in 14:26-31 (see esp. v. 31). When he reappears in chap. 16 to announce Jesus' resurrection to the women coming to anoint his body, it is therefore significant that what he says may be explained as an echo of what Jesus said on that occasion, as he himself indicates by concluding his brief speech with καθὼς εἶπεν ὑμῖν

("just as he told you"; 16:7). Even the signaling out of Peter in the young man's speech (εἴπατε τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ Πέτρῳ, "tell his disciples and Peter"; 16:7) can be explained with reference to Jesus' earlier prophecy. Commentators usually see it as a hint that Jesus will interact with Peter in a special way to restore him after his denial of Jesus, for John includes such a tradition (21:15-19), and Luke (24:34) and Paul (1 Cor 15:5) seem to allude to it as well. But this interpretation assumes precisely what Mark neglects to provide, namely an account of the risen Jesus' appearance to the disciples. An alternative explanation makes far better sense of this young man's words. Peter, having thrice denied his master (14:66-72) as Jesus predicted he would (14:29-31) can no longer be counted among the disciples. The young man, recalling and either having come to believe Jesus' prophecy of Peter's triple denial or somehow actually learning of its fulfillment carefully distinguishes Peter from the disciples, for Peter himself had denied being a disciple of Jesus.

This analysis of the young man's words suggest that he is not so much looking forward to Jesus' appearance in Galilee and restoration of Peter, as he is looking back to Jesus' predictions of his post-mortem appearances in Galilee and of Peter's abandonment of Jesus. There is no evidence that this young man's knowledge of Jesus' resurrection is based on anything other than what he heard Jesus say in 14:26-31. It is not sufficient, then, to argue that Mark omits the appearance of the risen Jesus and includes only an empty tomb and anonymous young man announcing his resurrection. More accurately, Mark substitutes for expected appearances of the risen Christ (if Paul's discussion of Jesus' resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 is at all typical of how early

believers discussed it) a young man announcing Christ's resurrection who is a radically unreliable narrator: having abandoned Jesus at his arrest, he has no way of independently authenticating that Jesus rose from the dead. All he can do is what he does: point to the ambiguous empty tomb and repeat Jesus' own prediction of what would happen after his arrest and death. Mark refuses to certify Jesus' resurrection. Instead of vindicating Jesus by certifying that his prophecies of resurrection have been fulfilled, he provides us with a character that can do no more than reiterate that unverified prophesy. The empty tomb in which the young man sits, far from authenticating Jesus' resurrection, becomes a powerful symbol for its uncertainty: instead of a present risen Jesus, the reader encounters merely the absence of Jesus' corpse and the echo of the pre-risen Jesus' prediction that he would rise.

I do not want to suggest that Mark precludes faith in Jesus' resurrection. On the contrary, it is possible to draw from Mark's narrative the conclusion that Jesus rose from the dead. This is, after all, the conclusion the restored young man presumably draws. The tomb is empty, and one explanation of that absence is that Jesus has come back to life. Indeed, Jesus repeatedly prophesied his resurrection in the context of specific predictions of his impending betrayal, suffering, execution, and abandonment, all of which were all unambiguously fulfilled in the course of Mark's narrative. In the context of this narrative, resurrection is a plausible explanation of the empty tomb. But it is only a plausible explanation, not a necessary one, and Mark, unlike the other canonical gospels, goes to great lengths to make space for skepticism about Jesus' resurrection, just as he does in the case of the resurrection of Jairus' daughter.

I have yet to offer an explanation for the persistent ambiguity with which Mark represents resurrection in his gospel, and I have yet to invoke Bakhtin. I shall do both as I analyze one more Markan "resurrection" story. In 9:14-26 Jesus accedes to the request of a father to heal his demoniac son. As the narrative unfolds Mark reveals the dire straits this family is in, for the demon has repeatedly tried to kill the lad (9:22). After Jesus rebukes the spirit, Mark vividly describes its reaction and the boy's trauma:

> καὶ κράξας καὶ πολλὰ σπαράξας ἐξῆλθεν: καὶ ἐγένετο ὡσεὶ νεκρός, ὥστε τοὺς πολλοὺς λέγειν ὅτι ἀπέθανεν. ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς κρατήσας τῆς χειρὸς αὐτοῦ ἤγειρεν αὐτόν, καὶ ἀνέστη. (9:26-27)
>
> And crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he stood.

The entire episode, and of course this passage in particular, recalls in theme and diction Jesus' restoration of Jairus' daughter in chap. 5. But while most commentators agree with the bystanders against Jesus there to conclude that he resurrected the girl, commentators here (perhaps inconsistently) tend to dismiss the crowd's claim that "he is dead" to insist that no resurrection occurred.[26] Regardless of whether the demon succeeded in killing the lad as it was expelled, Mark clearly presents the exorcism as a figurative resurrection: Jesus' liberation of the lad from demonic forces is akin to raising him from the dead.[27]

Before narrating the exorcisim, Mark emphasizes the severity of the boy's torture at the hands of this demon. The father, desperate for help for his son, reports that the unclean spirit has made his son mute (9:17), that it dashes him down and causes him to foam at the mouth, grind his teeth, and become rigid (9:18). He later adds that it

has been harassing the lad since childhood (9:21) and has often cast him into the fire and the water in an attempt to kill him (9:22). Mark verifies the father's description when he represents the demoniac lad convulsing and writing on the ground, as well as foaming at the mouth, as soon as he encounters Jesus (9:20). The accumulation of gruesome detail seems excessive. Matthew and Luke presumably saw it so, for they both eliminate much of it from their version of the episode. But in Mark's narrative it combines with the disciples' failure to exorcise the demon to underscore the desperation of the father's plea to Jesus: εἴ τι δύνῃ, βοήθησον ἡμῖν σπλαγχνισθεὶς ἐφ' ἡμᾶς ("If you are able, have pity on us and help us"; 9:22). Jesus' response is harsh; he sarcastically throws the man's words back at him—Τὸ εἰ δύνῃ ("If you are able!"; 9:23a)—and then declares πάντα δυνατὰ τῷ πιστεύοντι ("all things can be done for the one who has faith"; 9:23b). This call for faith echoes Jesus' demand of Jairus when he was told of his daughter's death: Μὴ φοβοῦ, μόνον πίστευε ("Do not fear, only have faith"; 5:36). In each case, Jesus' simplistic insistence on faith borders on the inanely platitudinous, for it arguable fails to take seriously the father's understandable desperation at the prospect of their children's prolonged suffering and painful deaths.

If Jesus' demands for faith are characterized by uncompromising rigor, the response of the demoniac's father in chap. 9 demonstrates a theological flexibility bordering on self-contradiction: Πιστεύω: βοήθει μου τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ ("I have faith, help my lack of faith"; 9:24). In "Discourse in the Novel" Bakhtin makes a valuable observation about the kind of dialogic language that characterizes novelistic discourse, which will help us to understand this man's sentence as well as the representation of resurrection

throughout Mark's gospel: "the dialogic nature of language…[is] a struggle between…linguistic points of view, not an intra-language struggle between individual wills or logical contradictions."[28] I believe that the logical contradiction the man articulates (he at once possesses and needs faith) points to an attempt to shift between two linguistic perspectives on display in this episode.

When Jesus first encounters the father and hears his story, he initially responds by berating his disciples for the lack of faith they demonstrated when they fail to exorcise the lad: ὦ γενεὰ ἄπιστος, ἕως πότε πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἔσομαι; ἕως πότε ἀνέξομαι ὑμῶν; ("You faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you?"; 9:19). When he hears further details from the desperately begging father, he responds with yet another accusation of lack of faith (9:23). The father's frantic and belabored enunciations of the suffering his son has experienced (9:17-18, 21-22) stand in stark contrast to Jesus' repeated charges of faithlessness (9:19, 23a) and pious shock at the idea that any one would doubt God (9:23b). Jesus and the father are, as it were, speaking different languages, which express divergent points of view, distinct ideas: the expectation of absolute faith in God, even from parents watching their children destroyed by demons and illness; and the recognition of the devastating and desperate reality of suffering and death itself—again from the perspective of parents impotent to protect their children from the deadly torture of evil demons and terminal disease. In chap. 9, these two languages, these two ideas, come into conflict, and the literary result resembles Bakhtin's description of Dostoevsky's artistic method:

> As an artist Dostoevsky often divined how a given idea would develop and function under certain changed conditions, what unexpected directions it would take in its further development and transformation. To this end, Dostoevsky placed the idea on the borderline of dialogically intersecting consciousness. He brought together ideas and worldviews, which in real life were absolutely estranged and deaf to one another, and forced them to quarrel. He extended, as it were, these distantly separated ideas by means of a dotted line to the point of their diaologic interaction.[29]

Mark brings together honest despair in the midst of suffering, a refusal naively to deny or even attempt to minimize the emotional and spiritual desperation death occasions, with a pious demand for faith in God's intervention—not merely belief in God's abstract ability to alleviate deadly suffering, but faith that God intends to do so. These conflicting ideas come together in the man's self-contradictory response to Jesus: Πιστεύω: βοήθει μου τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ ("I have faith; help my lack of faith!"; 9:24). But though articulated here by a single character, the two ideas are not coerced into a monologic unity or dialectical resolution: despair is not subsumed within faith, nor is faith made subordinate to despair. Jesus' restoration of the lad is not really the final word, for Mark specifies that it looks to the witnessing disciples and crowds like a resurrection, thereby recalling the analogous story of Jairus and his daughter in chap. 5, which precisely refused to authorize faith in God's ultimate intervention (despite Jesus' demand for it; 5:36) by depicting Jesus suggesting that his ability to restore the daughter was contingent on her not actually having died (5:39). In chap. 9, the demon often tried to kill the boy (καὶ πολλάκις καὶ εἰς πῦρ αὐτὸν ἔβαλεν καὶ εἰς ὕδατα ἵνα ἀπολέσῃ αὐτόν, 9:22), and Jesus' exorcism looks like a resurrection (καὶ ἐγένετο ὡσεὶ νεκρός, ὥστε τοὺς πολλοὺς λέγειν ὅτι ἀπέθανεν, 9:26). But again, despite these hints at death and resurrection, Mark refuses to verify that God's power over suffering, in which

Jesus demands absolute faith, reaches beyond life to raise the dead. In the father's confession Πιστεύω: βοήθει μου τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ ("I have faith; help my lack of faith!"; 9:24), we encounter an emblematic dialogic nexus, as the man brings together conflicting points of view: he tries to shift from the perspective of despair to the perspective of faith, but refuses to deny the authenticity of his and his son's desolate suffering by adopting a perspective characterized by a faith that denies suffering any ultimate power. This dialogue resurfaces, though in different form, at the end of Mark's gospel.

One reason the risen Jesus never appears in Mark, despite Jesus' four predictions of resurrection and Mark's presumed knowledge of Jesus' resurrection appearances to the disciples, is that a conclusion featuring the risen Christ's appearance would transform Mark's dialogue between overwhelming suffering and overwhelming faith into a dogmatic, even propagandistic monologue, which Mark will not tolerate. At the end of his life Mark's Jesus experiences a form of desolate suffering analogous to that he encountered in Jairus and especially the demoniac boy's father. He was abandoned, denied, and betrayed by his closest followers, whom he for much of his ministry had expected to follow him to his death. This narrative datum often goes without comment, but it is only within hours of his arrest that Jesus predicts that it is one of his disciples who will betray him (14:18) and that he prophesies his followers' desertion (14:27) and Peter's denial (14:30). Earlier, on the contrary, he expects his disciples to follow him to his death rather than to flee and allow him to be arrested alone:

> Εἴ τις θέλει ὀπίσω μου ἀκολουθεῖν, ἀπαρνησάσθω ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἀράτω τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀκολουθείτω μοι. ὃς γὰρ ἐὰν θέλῃ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ σῶσαι ἀπολέσει αὐτήν: ὃς δ' ἂν ἀπολέσει τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ καὶ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου σώσει αὐτήν. (8:34-35)

> If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.[30]

Mark underscores Jesus' disciples devastating abandonment of their master by showing the Roman soldiers conscript a random passer-by, one Simon of Cyrene, to help Jesus carry his cross to the place of his execution. Despite speculation about this figure's significance as a supposed named eye-witness, I am tempted to wonder if Mark identifies this bystander as "Simon" in order to emphasize the absence of Simon Peter, who deserted and denied Jesus, despite earlier assuring him Εἰ καὶ πάντες σκανδαλισθήσονται, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐγώ ("even though all become deserters, I will not"; 14:29) and Ἐὰν δέῃ με συναποθανεῖν σοι, οὐ μή σε ἀπαρνήσομαι ("even though I must die with you, I will not deny you"; 14:31). Jesus' final words on the cross indicate his belief that God abandoned him as well: Ὁ θεός μου ὁ θεός μου, εἰς τί ἐγκατέλιπές με; ("My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"; 15:33). The reader is invited to contrast Jesus' desolation and despair here with two earlier scenes wherein God assured Jesus of his status as "beloved son" (ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός), namely his hopeful baptism (1:11) and glorious transfiguration (9:7). At the time of his death Jesus experiences total abandonment and absolute despair, much like the fathers of the ailing children in chaps. 5 and 9. And at his death we no longer hear words of faith; we hear the language of desolation.

If Mark were unambiguously to authenticate Jesus' resurrection by portraying the risen Jesus appearing to his disciples, he would be transforming what has been a sustained dialogue between conviction and doubt, faith and despair, into an ideological

monologue that refuses to take suffering seriously. He would be privileging the idea of faith to such a degree as to invalidate the possibility of spiritual despair as a legitimate response to suffering and death. He would be transforming "I have faith; help my lack of faith" into "I have faith"—period. On the other hand, if he were to end his gospel with the story of Jesus' burial (15:42-47), he would be privileging the exigencies of suffering and death in such a way as to identify hope that God's power can overcome death as a platitudinous inanity. Mark will do neither.

The demoniac's father does not deny his despair, but he does make room for the possibility of authentic faith. He insists on his lack of faith, even when confronted with Jesus' demand for absolute faith, but he acknowledges the legitimacy of that demand and holds it in a kind of dialogic tension with his desperation. The result is a self-contradictory sentence inscribing a dialogue between faith and lack thereof: "I have faith; help my lack of faith." Analogously, at Mark's close, the anonymous young man issues a précis of Jesus' fourth and final prediction of his betrayal and resurrection: "He has been raised; he is not here…. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee" (16:6-7). In its new context, this reiteration of Jesus' prophecy of resurrection (cf. 14:27-31) is itself shot through with dialogue. At Mark's close, readers encounter an empty tomb and a reminder of Jesus' prediction of resurrection, from which they may conclude that the prophecy has been fulfilled: he has risen. On the other hand, Jesus himself does not appear, but only one of his followers who, as a result of his flight at the moment of Jesus' arrest, is only in a position to reiterate what Jesus said before he was executed, not to verify the truth of those words. Therefore,

when the readers encounter Jesus' reiterated prediction of his resurrection in the young man's declaration of that resurrection, they discern two voices in dialogue with one another: one insisting that Jesus' prophecy of life coming from death has been fulfilled; the other suggesting that prophecy's words may ultimately be no less empty than Jesus' tomb itself. At least one function of the women's final, overwrought silence in Mark is to allow for the reverberation of echoes generated by the young man's announcement in the empty tomb, for in them one hears the voices of a dialogue that has animated Mark's gospel throughout.

Notes

[1] I quote the NRSV throughout, with occasional alterations.

[2] Of course, some have argued that Mark's story of Jesus' transfiguration (9:2-8) is a misplaced resurrection account, most notably Theodore J. Weeden, Sr., Mark: Traditions in Conflict (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971) 118-37. If this is correct then Mark's displacement of the account constitutes a refusal to present it as an actual appearance of the risen Christ, which supports the argument I make in this paper.

[3] C. E. B. Cranfield clearly articulates this line of reasoning, which scholars have often found persuasive: "Since the fact of Resurrection appearances was clearly an element of the primitive preaching (cf. 1 Cor xv.5ff., and also Acts i.22, ii.32, iii.15, x.41, xiii.31), it is highly improbably that Mark intended to conclude his gospel without at least one account of a Resurrection appearance" (The Gospel According to Saint Mark, rev. edn.; CGTC [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1972] 471). The ancient scribes who composed the various endings of Mark to which the ms. tradition bears witness must have been motivated in part by a similar logic.

[4] Most recently in Adela Yarbro Collins's Hermeneia commentary (Mark [Minneapolis; Fortress, 2007]), 797-801. See the works she there cites.

[5] See, for example, John Dominic Crossan, "Empty Tomb and Absent Lord (Mark 16:1-8)," The Passion in Mark: Studies on Mark 14-16 (ed. W. H. Kelber; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976) 135-52; several of the essays included in Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Patrick D. Miller eds., The ending of Mark and the ends of God: essays in memory of Donald Harrisville Juel (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005); Niell Q. Hamilton, "Resurrection Tradition and the Composition of Mark," JBL 84 (1965): 415-21; Donald H. Juel, A Master of Surprise: Mark Interpreted (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994) 107-122; Andrew T. Lincoln, "The Promise and the Failure: Mark 16:7, 8," JBL 108 (1989): 283-300; J. Lee Magness, Sense and Absence: Structure and Suspension in the Ending of Mark's Gospel (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986); Norman R. Petersen, "When is the End not the End? Literary Reflections on the Ending of Mark's Narrative," Interpretation 34 (1980): 151-66; Theodore J. Weeden, Sr., Mark: Traditions in Conflict 108-137; Joel F. Williams, "Literary approaches to the end of Mark's Gospel," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society (March 1999).

[6] Mark reports that Jesus παρακούει what these people say (5:36) and most translators and commentators understand the verb as "overhears." (This is the translation the NRSV offers. See also John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, The Gospel of Mark [Sacra Pagina; Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2002] 176; Robert H. Gundry, Mark: A Commentary on his Apology for the Cross [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993] 272; Robert A. Guelich, Mark 1-8:26, Word Biblical Commentary 34A [Dallas: Word Books, 1989] 300.) The word, however, can also mean "refuses to hear," the meaning it has in all seven of its Septuagint appearances, as well as in Matthew 18:17, its only other occurrence in the New Testament (Vincent Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark, 2nd ed. [London: Macmillan, 1966] 294).

[7] See Gundry, Mark 275.

[8] See Gundry, Mark 273-74; Joel Marcus, Mark 1-8 (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1999) 371.

[9] See Guelich, Mark 1-8:26 301.

[10] This is how Taylor understands Jesus' words (The Gospel According to St. Mark 295).

[11] Since these texts postdate Mark, it is possible that the features they display are influenced by Mark or the other gospels. However, the story about Asclepius is preserved in Celsus On Medicine 2.6.15, which dates from Tiberius' reign. This suggests that the ambiguity in Apuleius' account at least was a traditional feature of the story that predated Mark.

[12] Commentators regularly cite the striking similarities between Mark 5:35-43 and Paul's admonitions about mourning, especially since language linking death to sleep and resurrection to awakening appears in both (see my discussion of 5:40 below). Donahue and Herrington, e.g., suggest that "Jesus' expulsion of the mourners and their retaliatory mockery may reflect the rejection of elaborate mourning in Mark's community" and then offer 1 Thess 4:13 as a parallel for such a rejection in the early Christian movement (The Gospel of Mark 177).

[13] History of the Synoptic Tradition, rev. edn., trans. John Marsh (New York: Harper & Row, 1963) 287.

[14] Mark 8:27-16:20, Word Biblical Commentary 34B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001) 530

[15] "On Heroes, Tombs, and Early Christianity," in Flavius Philostratus, Heroikos, trans. Jennifer K. Berenson Maclean and Ellen Bradshaw Aitken (Writings from the Greco-Roman World; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001) 257-64.

[16] Yarbro Collins is typical (Mark 795-96).

[17] Cf., e.g., Rev 7:9, 13.

[18] Cf., e.g., 2 Macc 3:26; 3:33; Jos. AJ 5.277; Tob 5:5, 7, 10.

[19] Robin Scroggs and Kent I. Groff, "Baptism in Mark: Dying and Rising with Christ," JBL 92 (1973): 533-34.

[20] The similarities in the transfigured Jesus' white garb to traditional angelic clothing can, of course, be explained with reference to Mark 12:25, which asserts that resurrection life will be angelic.

[21] Scroggs and Groff, "Baptism in Mark" 535.

[22] Scroggs and Groff, "Baptism in Mark" 535, especially n. 13. See also Erik Peterson, Frühkirche, Judentum und Gnosis (Rome: Herder, 1959) 191-96.

[23] See John Knox, Christ the Lord: The Meaning of Jesus in the Early Church (Chicago: Willett, Clark, 1945) 100 n. 18 and "A Note on Mark 14:51-52," in The Joy of Study: Papers on New Testament and Related Subjects Presented to Honor Frederick Clifton Grant (New York: Macmillan, 1951) 27-30.

[24] Neither passage names the νεανίσκος, which precludes absolute certainty in identifying them, but given the relatively uncommon diminutive designation Mark uses, as well as the references to clothing in both passages, the common identity of the two

is beyond any reasonable doubt. Yarbro Collins's (Mark 795) insistence that "if the young man here were identical with the young man of chapter 14, he would be introduced as ὁ νεανίσκος ('*the* young man,' that is, the one mentioned earlier) and not simply as νεανίσκος ('a young man')" strangely ignores the fact that, as Smyth observes, in Greek "the generic article is frequently omitted…without appreciable difference in meaning. Its presence or absence is often determined by the need of distinguishing subject from predicate…, by the rhythm of the sentence, etc. (Greek Grammar [Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1956] 228 sec. 1126). One would perhaps expect the use of the definite article here, but its absence cannot be determinative in distinguishing the young man in chap. 16 from the one in chap. 14.

[25] The Genesis of Secrecy (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1979) 62-63.

[26] Gundry even attributes their interpretation to a lack of faith: the crowd says "in character with Jesus' description of them as an unbelieving generation [cf. "faithless generation" in 9:19, although Jesus seems there to be addressing the disciples] that the son has in fact died. Hardly the deliverance that the father asked for—rather, a defeat for Jesus and a victory for the spirit by way of fulfilling its purpose to destroy the son (cf. v 22a)" (Mark 492).

[27] Peter G. Bolt, Jesus' Defeat of Death: Persuading Mark's Early Readers (SNTS monograph series 125; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 229-34.

[28] M. M. Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas Press, 1981) 273.

[29] Mikhail Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Theory and History of Literature 8; Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1984) 91.

[30] Just before his entry into Jerusalem Jesus seems still to expect that James and John will die with him, even if he begins to express some doubt (10:38-40; cf. 15:27).