

THE HIDDEN CITY

George Aichele, Adrian College, USA (Retired)

I read the gospel of Mark's kingdom language intertextually with Italo Calvino's strange novel, Invisible Cities, in which Marco Polo describes a collection of fantastic cities. This approach illuminates a different way to understand the Markan kingdom of God, for which that kingdom is neither realized nor imminent, indeed not eschatological at all. Nor is the kingdom a symbol. Instead the mysterious kingdom is comparable to (in Marco's words) "a crack [that] opens" and "all spaces change, all heights, distances; the city is transfigured, becomes crystalline, transparent as a dragonfly" – and yet even that, as Calvino's story implies, is but one of many possibilities.

Time [*aiōn*] is a child playing draughts; the kingly power [*basilēiē*] is that of a child (Heraclitus, fragment 52 [Burnet 1920, modified]).

1. THE KINGDOM AND TIME

According to the Jesus simulacrum¹ of the gospel of Mark, the kingdom of God grows mysteriously like seed planted in the ground (4:26-29, see also 4:3-8), or like a tiny mustard seed it becomes a huge plant (4:30-32). Jesus says that this kingdom belongs to children, or to those who are like children (10:14-15), but also that entry into the kingdom requires great sacrifices (9:43-48, 10:17-23) and may even be impossible. This array of kingdom language is puzzling, and whether there is any coherence to it at all is uncertain. One question that is raised by this vivid and yet confusing language concerns the concept of time that is involved. The kingdom of God is "at hand" or "not far" (1:15, 12:34), and it "has come with power" (9:1, see also 11:10),² but there is also the suggestion that it may be yet to come. This temporal puzzle appears perhaps most explicitly in Mark 10:29-30, where Jesus says to the disciples,

there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time [*nun en tō kairō toutō*], houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life [*en tō aiōni tō erchomenō zōēn aiōnion*].

Even though the phrase, "kingdom of God", does not appear in this statement, both Jesus's reference to "eternal life" and the larger context of the saying in Mark 10:17-31 (see also 10:13-16) connect it to the concept of the kingdom in the gospel of Mark. "A hundredfold" of houses and family and lands (*agrous*, "fields") is to be received "now in this time", but "eternal life" is to be received "in the age to come". The statement conjoins two distinct Greek words denoting time, *kairos* ("season, opportunity", Liddell and Scott 1996) and *aiōn* ("age, epoch", Liddell and Scott 1996), the latter of which appears twice, first as a noun and then as an adjective describing "life" (*zōē*), a word that is equivalent to the kingdom elsewhere in Mark's gospel (see below).

Is “eternal life” in Mark 10:30 simply an additional reward for those who have left everything “for my sake and for the gospel”, a deferred bonus as it were, or does it have some other kind of connection to the “hundredfold” that is to be received now? More specifically, do both *kairos* and *aiōn* modify and clarify “now” (*nun en ... kai en*), even though *aiōn* is further modified as “to come”? According to Vincent Taylor, the phrase *nun en tō kairō toutō* in this saying is “unusual”, and *ho aiōn houtos* would be “more common ... in contrast with *ho aiōn ho erchomenos*” (1953: 434). In other words, these words do not simply oppose one another, but instead this conjunction creates a semantic tension between two terms that are neither opposite nor complementary to each other. Temporal linearity is itself troubled and torn in Mark’s gospel, so much so that “many that are first [prōtoi] will be last [eschatoi], and the last first”, as Jesus says in the very next verse (10:31). These words further the implication that *kairos* and *aiōn* do not have some sort of sequential temporal reference.

The difference between *kairos* and *aiōn* is paradoxical, and it deconstructs any simple binarism between them. Despite this, the conjunction of *kairos* and *aiōn* in Mark 10:29-30 is often understood to denote a tension between two temporal concepts, two distinct moments at the edges of a temporal break that opens between the imminent “now” of this *kairos* and the “yet to come” of that *aiōn*. For many scholars and other readers, this creates an ambiguity or perhaps even contradiction in the words of Mark’s Jesus, for it is not clear how the kingdom can be both present now and also still to come in the future, perhaps at the end of the world. As a result, this problem has for many years been a matter of much scholarly discussion, and various attempts to reconcile the apparent opposition have drawn upon long traditions of Christian theological interpretation to produce different understandings of the gospel of Mark and its Jesus simulacrum. These (mostly Christian) readers also draw upon the other writings collected in the Bible, especially the other two synoptic gospels, Matthew and Luke, as well as the letters of Paul.³

The intertextual conjunction of the gospel of Mark with other texts in the canon of the Bible suggests alternative ways to approach the problem. Matthew’s “parallel” to Mark 10:29-30 does not have the phrase, “now in this time”, and it associates eternal life with “the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, [and] you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matthew 19:27-29). The gospel of Luke retains the tension between *kairos* and *aiōn* (18:30), and temporal tension is also evident in Luke’s kingdom material (for example, 19:11-15). However, Luke tends to emphasize more the idea that the kingdom has arrived in the activities of Jesus and those around him (see 10:8-11, 11:20, 17:20-21, 22:29-30) as well as in the resurrection of Jesus (23:42-43). The phrase “kingdom of God” appears in the gospel of John only in 3:3-5 (“unless one is born anew, [one] cannot see the kingdom of God ... unless one is born of water and the Spirit, [one] cannot enter the kingdom of God”), although the “kingship” of Jesus is a frequent topic in that book (for example, 18:36-37). Paul’s language about the kingdom reflects both his desire to shape the Christian community (Romans 14:17, 1 Corinthians 4:20) and his expectation of an impending end (1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 15:24, 50, Galatians 5:21, 1 Thessalonians 2:12). For Paul, the kingdom is a tool of “pastoral power” (Castelli 1991).

The ambiguity or contradiction of the Markan kingdom language also results from distinctly non-Heraclitean assumptions that modern readers make about the linear nature and structure of time and history. These philosophical assumptions in turn often correlate to what are finally theological positions regarding the “historical Jesus” as the source of the kingdom sayings, as well as understandings of the development of Christian beliefs and writings as a coherent sequence by way of which those sayings have been recorded. Likewise, the entire Bible is read as though it narrated a single continuous history, an orderly, linear sequence of unique, unrepeatably moments that begins in the past, moves towards a specific goal (which includes the kingdom of God), and culminates in the future. In other words, it is not a matter of childish play, as Heraclitus says in the epigraph to this

essay. This order and linearity is seen to be manifested in both the history of the biblical texts themselves and the history narrated by those same texts.⁴

As a result, the tendency among most modern readers is to think of the manifestation or advent of the kingdom of God as occurring either during the time of the “historical Jesus” or at the end of all history. In light of these assumptions and beliefs, the temporal difficulty presented in Jesus’s language in Mark 10:29-30 appears as follows: *kairos* and *aiōn* must refer to two distinct points in time. In other words, the problem is one of eschatology. If the kingdom of God already exists in the present moment, then only the faithful can perceive that this goal has already been reached, for it is not at all obvious. However, if the kingdom will only arrive or become apparent at some future moment, then only the faithful can now anticipate reaching that goal. However, these two options appear to be contrary to one another: the kingdom of God must be either “now” or “not yet”. It cannot exist already and still be coming. This makes comprehension of the vivid and parabolic language that Mark’s Jesus uses to speak about the kingdom even more difficult.

Drawing upon the work of Rudolf Bultmann and Heideggerian existentialism, Norman Perrin describes the “coming” of the kingdom as that which jolts the reader “out of the effort to make a continuous whole of human existence” (1976: 195, see also 35-37, 71-80). There is much to be said for Perrin’s understanding, perhaps especially in relation to the gospel of Mark.⁵ In his earlier book, Perrin even says, “We may not interpret the eschatological teaching of Jesus in terms of a linear concept of time”, and also, “we may not necessarily understand it in terms of the end of history or of time” (1963: 185). Although the “presence” of the kingdom in the sayings of Jesus is nearly always recognized, many other readers of the gospels do not go so far as Perrin to minimize the future dimension of the kingdom of God. However, even Perrin does not deny its eschatological quality, even though it seems unlikely that eschatology makes any sense apart from some “linear concept of time”. Even C.H. Dodd’s concept of “realized eschatology” likewise still maintains a teleological and conclusive aspect for the kingdom.

Werner Kelber argues that “The ‘deficient’ posture of the gospel [of Mark] is thus a literary means of expressing both the incompleteness and the imminent availability of redemption” (1974: 85). Both “incompleteness” and the imminence of “availability” strongly imply a coherent linear temporality, the tension between now and not yet. However, if something is incomplete then it can only be at best incompletely available. Kelber also suggests that the kingdom may be present now but hidden and will be more fully manifest in the future.

[T]he Markan people live in the hiddenness of the Kingdom. And yet, they are not totally incarcerated in their present misery, for the present is open to the future. Their crisis is but the prenatal darkness which inevitably precedes the breakthrough toward life and light (1974: 42).

However, as the metaphor of “prenatal darkness” also suggests, “incomplete” is not the same thing as “hidden”. Kelber’s phrasing in this statement still emphasizes that the kingdom is fully available only in the future, even though the kingdom language of the gospel of Mark itself does not strongly or consistently support such an understanding. Kelber recognizes a problem in the comprehension of Mark (its “deficient posture” [1974: 85]), but his claim that redemption is both incomplete and available reflects the difficulty and demonstrates the inconsistency of applying a linear model to the Markan kingdom language.

Some scholars argue that the apocalyptic dimension of the kingdom sayings in Mark’s gospel is a later addition, in which the theme of the son of man plays an important role (see Mack 1988: 102-103, 277-282, 288-290). This resolves the temporal problem by neutralizing the question of eschatology, but it requires a speculative “editing” of the text. I also question the eschatological value of the kingdom sayings, but I am not interested in reconstructing the history of the text of Mark. The apocalyptic aspect of the Markan kingdom material does have strong connections to

Jesus's son of man sayings; like the kingdom of God, the sons of men are mysterious figures in Mark. It is explicit in 3:28 that there are many of them, and implicit in the diversity of the Markan son of man sayings.⁶ The sons of men are characterized by a fragmented temporality as well as by their own multiplicity.

In the following I view the kingdom material, as well as the larger son of man story told by Mark's Jesus, in a different light – that is, as a “revelation” (*apokalupsis*) that does not necessarily have eschatological significance. However, the content of this revelation remains secret, and instead the only thing that is revealed in Mark is that something has been revealed (“to you has been given the secret”, 4:11). The content of that mysterious revelation is not “in” the gospel of Mark, to be uncovered by careful exegesis. Nor is it to be discovered by removing inconvenient material through historical speculations regarding later editorial additions to earlier, no longer existent texts. The Markan revelation is outside of the text, and if it is “found” at all that is because it has been brought to the text, through the reader's eisegesis.

Despite Mark's evident resistance to any attempts to uncover its secret, readers often interpret that gospel in light of the other biblical texts as well as the theological traditions and philosophical assumptions noted above, and they make a great deal more sense out of the perplexing kingdom language of Mark's enigmatic Jesus than they might otherwise. For some readers, biblical references to the kingdom of God are vaguely and uncritically associated with both of these temporal options at once. In addition, the future moment of the kingdom is strongly associated with the resurrection of Christ and (especially) the parousia (“presence, arrival”, Liddell and Scott 1996), which is often understood as the apocalyptic “second coming” of Christ at the same time as the catastrophic end of the world. Alternatively, this future moment may be identified as a paradisiacal life which the faithful enter after death (compare Mark 14:25). In any case, for Christianity, the kingdom of God is thought to be equivalent to salvation in or through time: whether it is “now” or “not yet”, the kingdom is the final terminus of “salvation history”. Thus the Markan kingdom is understood in relation to the question of time and not of place, and if the kingdom is thought of as a place at all, it is usually regarded as a spiritual, supernatural, or metaphorical place, not some worldly, political kingdom, whether real or ideal.

However, modernist assumptions about time and history have been challenged and rendered doubtful by postmodern philosophical thought. For such thinking, any concept of historical reality depends upon a virtuality, a construct deriving from fundamental structures of consciousness and ideology.⁷ The gospel of Mark does not strongly support the linear eschatology that the modernist views presuppose, and its language (especially in passages such as 10:30) allows a significantly different understanding of time. In this essay, I read the gospel of Mark independently from its usual contexts in the canon of the scriptures or the history of Christian interpretations, insofar as that is possible. I do not conclusively define the meaning of the phrase “kingdom of God” in Mark. Instead I suggest a different way (one among many possibilities) to think about that phrase, as a parabolic image of the disruption of historical security which does not assume a linear historical teleology – that is, coherent movement toward a conclusive *eschatos* – and therefore in which the alleged tension between “realized” and future eschatology plays no part.

2. A NON-ESCHATOLOGICAL KINGDOM.

Neither the gospel of Mark nor any other text can be read independently of any context. No written text can speak for itself, and some intertextual context is required for any understanding. In order to understand Mark apart from either the intertextual assistance provided by the history of Christian thought and the canon of the scriptures or the scholarly fictions of the historical Jesus and the history of the synoptic tradition, it is necessary to find help elsewhere. In this essay, I draw upon

Italo Calvino's book, *Invisible Cities* (1974), with additional assistance from Franz Kafka's novel, *The Trial* (1964), to provide a context for reading Mark's kingdom of God language.

Calvino's book is not quite a novel, but it is not a series of short stories (or non-fiction writings) either. In it, the intrepid Venetian traveler and merchant, Marco Polo, describes cities that he has visited to the great Mongol emperor, Kublai Khan. Marco's brief descriptions of and commentary upon these fantastic cities⁸ make up most of the book's numerous sections, which are tied together by minimal narrative threads of ongoing conversations between Marco and Kublai. Each of the described cities is remarkable and unique, and yet despite their many distinctive features, they all share similarities to one another, like the moves in a chess game. As Marco says, "Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else" (Calvino 1974: 44). The cities form a paradigm, and this structure is then further sub-divided into thin cities, trading cities, hidden cities, and so forth (as indicated in the chapter titles).⁹

One of Marco's "hidden cities", Marozia,¹⁰ is inhabited by vicious rat-people, "who tear from one another's teeth the leftovers which fall from the teeth of the most voracious ones" (Calvino 1974: 154). These people believe a prophecy that "a new century is about to begin" in which they will be miraculously metamorphosed into swallow-people, "calling one another, as in a game, showing off, their wings still, as they swoop..". (idem.). However, what Marco sees when he visits the city after the transformation has allegedly occurred are "suspicious umbrellas under which heavy eyelids are lowered" (idem.). Furthermore, "it is already an achievement if they can get off the ground flapping their batlike overcoats" (1974: 154-155). Nevertheless, says Marco, sometimes in Marozia "a crack opens and a different city appears", only to vanish immediately.

Perhaps everything lies in knowing what words to speak, what actions to perform, and in what order and rhythm; or else someone's gaze, answer, gesture is enough; ... at that moment, all spaces change, all heights, distances; the city is transfigured, becomes crystalline, transparent as a dragonfly (1974: 155).

If the anticipated kingdom has arrived in Marozia, if has done so in a way that was not anticipated. The transfiguration of the city described by Calvino's Marco Polo cannot be forced: "everything must happen as if by chance, without attaching too much importance to it" (1974: 155). As in the Markan kingdom of God, the instant of *kairos* ("the time is fulfilled", 1:15) reveals the *aiōn* ("the kingdom of God is at hand"), but this moment cannot be sustained for long, for "at any moment the old Marozia will return and solder its ceiling of stone, cobwebs, and mold over all heads" (Calvino 1974: 155). Perhaps this ephemeral transfiguration of the city occurs when the rats – or some of them – truly do metamorphose into swallows (they "repent and believe in the gospel"), instead of merely trying to pass as bats. Nevertheless, there is nothing final about this change: this *aiōn* is not *eschatos*. Indeed, as Marco Polo says, "both [rat and swallow cities] change with time, but their relationship does not change" (1974: 155). Marco concludes that "Marozia consists of two cities, the rat's and the swallow's; ... the second is the one about to free itself from the first", and a bit later he concludes his conversation with the Khan (as well as Calvino's book) by saying,

[in] the inferno where we live every day ... [t]here are two ways to escape suffering The first is easy for many: accept the inferno and become such a part of it that you can no longer see it. The second is risky and demands constant vigilance and apprehension: seek and learn to recognize who and what, in the midst of the inferno, are not inferno, then make them endure, give them space (1974: 165).

A meeting between Kublai Khan and Marco Polo allegedly did occur late in the thirteenth century, at the dawn of what is sometimes called "the modern age". Each of these famous men – at least, as they are simulated in Calvino's book – suggests an image of non-modern nomadism: Kublai is one of the last of the ancient nomad warriors, and Marco anticipates the new nomadism of

postmodern commercial globalism (see Jameson 1991, Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 492). It is curious that these two great nomads choose to spend their time together talking about cities, which are inherently opposed to nomadic life (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 481). Indeed, a more typically sedentary urban quality appears strongly in two of Marco's other hidden cities: Raissa, "city of sadness", where "at every second the unhappy city contains a happy city unaware of its own existence" (Calvino 1974: 149), and Berenice, "the unjust city" that contains within it the seeds of justice, which grow to yield seeds of injustice, and so on forever (1974: 161). Despite the constant movement within both of these cities, each of them is itself trapped in a kind of paralysis from which neither one can ever break free. In contrast, Marozia hints at the possibility of something more: it is perpetually "about to free itself" (1974: 155). Although it is a city, it knows the nomad's desire.

To use the terminology of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987), Calvino's book implies that cities may either be paranoid or schizophrenic, just like individuals or societies. As Calvino's Marco Polo describes them, the rats of Marozia are paranoid: "grim and petty", they steal each other's food and hide under "suspicious umbrellas" (1974: 154). In contrast, the swallows fly free, swooping in schizophrenic "lines of flight" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 506, compare 189). Nevertheless, there is an interchangeability, a shared characteristic that makes it possible that at any moment (*kairos*) the rats may become swallows, for they are both nomads. Similarly, Deleuze and Guattari argue that neither the paranoia of the sedentary society nor the schizophrenia of the nomadic life are permanent conditions, for each one continually arises out of and inevitably collapses back into the other (1987: 423).

This tension is not a dialectic, and it is never resolved – that is, it is non-eschatological. As Marco tells it, the swallows realize something that the rats can only dream about. At the moment of transformation, Marozia recognizes itself as a city of nomads, a schizophrenic city: "It is possible to live smooth even in the cities, to be an urban nomad" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 482, see also 500). The magical crack opens to reveal a different city, a smooth space in which swallows may take flight – and yet this different city has been there all along (*aiōnios*). This is a different kind of hiddenness from the eschatological one that Kelber describes, and there is no eschaton. There can be no permanent flight of swallows in Marozia, for "at any moment [or *kairos*] the old Marozia will return and solder its ceiling of stone, cobwebs, and mold over all heads" (Calvino 1974: 155). Paranoia returns and once again restrains schizophrenic freedom.

Read in the light of *Invisible Cities* and especially the story of Marozia, the Markan kingdom of God is not some place that must be metaphorical if it is present in this world now, or else it can only be manifest in the future. Nor is it a mental or spiritual state (a matter of faith-filled understanding) that can be achieved or maintained in some way. The farmer who is compared to the kingdom in Mark 4:26-29 "sleeps and rises night and day" while the seed sprouts "he knows not how", but "when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle". It is a cycle of sowing and reaping without end. The *kairoi* of planting and harvesting justify but also depend upon the mystery of the seed's *aiōn*. They are not distinct moments. A critical know-how is involved: "knowing what words to speak", "vigilance", knowing how to sow the seed and how to reap. However, there is also an uncontrollable aspect: the crack that opens briefly, the day of ripening. Just as the ephemeral crack through which the "other" Marozia appears cannot be forced, so the kingdom cannot be forced, like a seed growing secretly.

The Markan kingdom is not another world that one enters by leaving this one. Instead there is only this one world, and the kingdom is a "way to escape", as Marco says (or a "line of flight"), not from but *within* that world, which "is risky and demands constant vigilance and apprehension". Not unlike Marco Polo, the Markan Jesus suggests that there are "two ways", the way of accepting the inferno and the way of "giving space" (compare 8:33, 10:21, 12:14, and see below). This understanding of the kingdom is quite different than the binarism of now and not yet, and it is further supported by a word that Mark's Jesus sometimes uses interchangeably with the phrase,

“kingdom of God”. That word is *zōē*, which is usually translated as “life” but can mean “way of life” (Liddell and Scott 1996), and this translation fits especially well with Marco’s Marozia. Mark’s Jesus simulacrum associates *zōē* with the kingdom of God in 9:43-48 (see also 10:17, 23).¹¹ *Zōē* also appears in Mark 10:30, together with *aiōn* (see also 10:17). The kingdom is (a way of) life.

In other words, the tension between *kairos* and *aiōn* that implies for many readers a temporal “distance” between present and future in Mark 10:30 and elsewhere in Mark’s story can also be understood in a very different way, as defining a non-eschatological temporality that unites the immediate moment of the *kairos* to the prolonged (perhaps even endless) duration of the *aiōn*. On this reading, the kingdom of God appears through a re-spatializing of temporality and the concomitant, sudden blossoming of “eternal life” in “this time”, perhaps not unlike the experience suggested by the opening lines of William Blake’s poem, “Auguries of Innocence” (1969: 431):

To see a world in a grain of sand,
And a heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
And eternity in an hour.

This would be a very different way to understand the gospel of Mark’s secret kingdom of God than the views described in the first section. Mark’s Jesus tells his followers, “there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God *has come* with power” (9:1, emphasis added, see also 13:30; compare Matthew 16:28, 24:34, Luke 9:21, 21:32). The eschatological dimension of *elēluthuian* (“has come”) in Mark 9:1, like that of *ēggiken* (“is at hand”) in 1:15, have been the focus of particular scholarly attention, thanks to Dodd’s concept of “realized eschatology” (see Kelber 1974: 7, 74, Perrin 1976: 37-38, Taylor 1953: 166-167, 385-386). However, in conjunction with Calvino’s book, instead of the rest of the New Testament and Christian theology, a rather different reading of these Markan passages occurs. In Mark 9:1, the element of the future appears in what “some standing here” will see, but at that time what they will see is that the fortuitous “crack” of the non-eschatological kingdom has opened and closed.

The gospel of Mark’s Jesus does speak of a forthcoming cataclysm, especially in the “apocalyptic discourse” of Mark 13, but only a “parabolic” reading of that chapter would see the described cataclysm or its outcome as either the kingdom of God or eternal life.¹² Furthermore, when the disciples ask Jesus when this catastrophic event will occur, he undercuts any expectation of it: “of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (13:4, 32).

Matthew 24, which is otherwise similar to Mark 13, pays serious attention to the *parousia* (see 24:3, 27, 37, 39), which is “your coming and ... the close of the age”.¹³ However, there is no mention of the Greek words *parousia* or *pareimi* in the gospel of Mark. Mark’s Jesus even warns explicitly against “false Christs and false prophets [who] will arise”, as well as those who come “in my name”, to “lead many astray” (13:6, 22; compare Matthew 24:5, 23-26, Luke 17:3, 21:8). Furthermore, in the Markan predictions of glory and power and clouds and angels, it is not Jesus who “will ... come”, but rather the son of man, and the word used is *erchomai* (8:38, 13:26, 14:62). The same word modifies “kingdom of God” in 9:1 and *aiōn* in 10:30, but even the “master [*kurios*, lord] of the house” who may “come [*erchomai*, twice] suddenly” is only a man (*anthrōpos*) who has gone on a journey (13:34-36) – a son of man perhaps, but still only a man. No connection between the kingdom and Jesus’s death or post-death existence appears in Mark’s gospel, except for his statement at 14:25: “I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God”.¹⁴ Although Jesus’s resurrection is announced at the end of the story (16:6, see also 14:28), he never appears again after his burial.

In Marozia, the oracle's prophecy is interpreted to mean that the rats will transform into swallows in the near future. However, evidently the determined citizens have tried to force the miracle, and as a result they can only offer a sorry imitation of bats. No true metamorphosis has occurred. Instead, the tension between the once-present moment of the sibyl's words and the now-"realized" *eschatos* seems to have been the product of a mistaken interpretation. In contrast, the crack that sometimes opens to reveal "a different city", only to vanish "an instant later" (1974: 155), cannot be forced or controlled: "it is enough for someone to do something for the sheer pleasure of doing it, and for his pleasure to become the pleasure of others". This suggests Mark 8:35: "whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it" – that is, *not* in order to save his life, for then he will lose it – which Perrin regards as a kingdom saying of sorts (1976: 52). Metamorphosis, which is itself a kind of nomadism, cannot be willed or controlled, and like the metamorphosis of Jesus himself (see Mark 9:2-8), it does not last.¹⁵

3. THE PARABOLIC KINGDOM

In the gospel of Mark, Jesus tells his disciples, "To you has been given the secret [*mustērion*] of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables" (4:11). As Kelber says, "Inasmuch as the kingdom resists definition, it attracts the discourse of parables" (1983: 114, see Perrin 1976: 55). The kingdom of God often appears in parables attributed to Jesus, and even when the phrase appears in ostensibly non-parabolic utterances – for example, Mark 1:15 or 14:25 – the utterance becomes "parabolic". In other words, the Markan kingdom sayings, regardless of their form, both demand and yet resist understanding. They are what Roland Barthes calls writerly texts (1974: 3-6). They evoke "the emptiness of language which constitutes writing" (Barthes 1982: 4, speaking of the zen koan).

Perhaps the "secret of the kingdom" belongs especially in a written text such as Mark, for all writings are silent, secret formulas, equations that may be "solved" in various ways, no one of which is more correct.¹⁶ The kingdom is itself a "text" to be deciphered. Insofar as "the kingdom of God" is equivalent in the gospel of Mark to "the gospel", as 1:14-15 implies or even asserts ("the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel"), then the kingdom is Mark itself, as "the gospel" (see 1:1). Yet like the kingdom, Mark is also (a) secret, as Frank Kermode repeatedly notes (1979). More than the other gospels, even John (which has its own mysteries), Mark is the gospel as writerly parable, paradoxically narrating its own mysterious hidden-ness (see Aichele 2006: 85-104). To be sure, some writings are more easily deciphered than others, but Mark's gospel is not one of them.

Such parabolic texts belong among the "thinking, loving, dying, or creating machines that have at their disposal vital or revolutionary powers" which are the irreducible debris of nomadism, according to Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 356). As Perrin says (describing Jesus's proverbs, but he applies this concept to the parables as well), "They challenge the hearer, not to radical obedience, but to radical questioning" (1976: 52). Even though it is not specifically mentioned in relation to them, the kingdom of God is also implicit in many of the miracles in Mark – some of which are also writerly and "parabolic". The miracles, even the exorcisms and the ghost story of the walking on the sea, also disrupt any "effort to make a continuous whole of human existence" (Perrin 1976: 195, see Aichele 2006: 122-130, 136-145).

The kingdom of God is a mystery throughout Mark's gospel, and it does not lend itself to clear or unequivocal definition or identification. This kingdom is hidden, like Marozia's "other" city. In contrast, both Matthew and Luke make it explicit that this secret – or rather, these secrets, for the word *mustērion* is plural in those gospels – concern secret knowledge, and the disciples have been "given to know" this knowledge (Matthew 13:11, Luke 8:10, emphasis added). That the kingdom involves a secret is noted, but that secret is also known in Matthew or Luke, by the disciples but also by the implied reader. These gospels keep no secrets.

However, to be given something is quite different than to be given to know it, and in relation to secrets, “a sense of mystery is a different thing from an ability to interpret it” (Kermode 1979: 126). There is no indication anywhere in the gospel of Mark that the disciples know what the secret gift is. They never show any sign of having received any secret knowledge, in strong contrast to the disciples simulated in Matthew or Luke. They have been given the secret of the kingdom, but they do not know that secret. In contrast, although the reader of Mark knows that the disciples have been given the secret, she has not even been given that much. As a result, she belongs to “those outside” for whom “everything is in parables” (Mark 4:11). Because of this, in Mark’s gospel things are not as clear as they are in Matthew or Luke. For both readers and disciples, the Markan kingdom remains secret.

Furthermore, in Mark the kingdom is to be “received” or “entered” (*dechomai, eiserchomai*, 9:47, 10:15, 23-25, see also 9:43, 45), as one might enter a story in order to “live” (*zaō*) it. This contrasts to the kingdom of God that is described in Paul’s letters, which is to be “inherited” (*klēronomeō*, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 15:50, Galatians 5:21). In Mark 10:17, a rich man also wants to inherit “eternal life”, but Jesus responds by telling him how to “enter” the kingdom: “go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me” (10:21, see 10:23-24; contrast Matthew 19:29, 25:34). The Markan secret that is the kingdom is not some body of knowledge to be known, like a secret password or key, nor is it some own-able object to be passed on or inherited, as in Paul’s letters, and as the rich man of Mark 10:21-23 apparently expects. Instead, it is a way of life.

This may be precisely why Mark’s disciples (and “those who were about him”, 4:10) never “get” the secret of the kingdom (as they do in Matthew or Luke), even though they have been given it. Everything has been “explained” to the Markan disciples, according to 4:34, but the Greek word in this verse is *epeluen*, “loosen” or “untie” (Liddell and Scott 1996), which suggests an opening up that is not necessarily a giving to know: perhaps a deconstruction. What is “loosened” is apparently “the word” (*ton logon*, 4:33), which has been tied up in parables (compare Mark 4:14-20) and which only some will “accept” (*paradechontai*, 4:20), like the kingdom. As Marco Polo says to Kublai Khan, “I speak and speak ... but the listener retains only the words he is expecting. ... It is not the voice that commands the story: it is the ear” (Calvino 1974: 135). The Markan disciples evidently do not have “ears to hear” (4:23). A Marozian crack opens, but the disciples blink. By the end of Mark’s story, these disciples have fled in fear (14:50, 16:8), and although Jesus has instructed them to meet him in Galilee after he is “raised up” (14:28, 16:7), that gospel gives the reader no reason to think that any post-resurrection meeting took place – again, in strong contrast to Matthew, Luke, or John. Instead the reader is left with the mystery of the open, empty tomb, just as she is left with the mystery of the kingdom.

Perhaps what Mark’s Jesus is saying to the disciples in 4:11 is something more like, “I have given you the secret that is the kingdom”. It is not some knowledge about the kingdom that is secret, such as a password or way to get in. Instead the kingdom of God itself is secret or hidden, and Jesus has somehow given this secrecy to the disciples. The secret (of the) kingdom is a gift. Mark’s Jesus describes the kingdom as something to be entered, but perhaps the disciples do not know that they could enter it, or even have already entered it. As a result, knowledge is a factor in the gospel of Mark as in the other gospels, but in Mark it is an unfortunate *lack* of knowledge. The disciples in Mark, as well as the readers of Mark, are like the “man from the country” in another, nonbiblical parable, the “delusion” told by a priest in Kafka’s novel, *The Trial*, to the central character, Joseph K. (1964: 267-269). This man waits for his entire life to enter through a door that leads “into the Law”, but he never does enter, because its guard has never given him permission. Nevertheless, the doorkeeper tells the nameless man as he is dying, “this door was intended for you”. As Kermode observes, “Mark, and Kafka’s doorkeeper, protect [the mystery] without understanding it, and those outside, like K and like us, see an uninterpretable radiance and die” (1979: 28, see also 45).

The kingdom language of the gospel of Mark would resemble the teachings of Hellenistic Cynic philosophers who saw themselves as “kings” and their Cynic ways of life as “kingdoms” (Mack 1988: 72-74, see also 69, n.11), except for this crucial matter of the given-but-not-known secret. The reader of Mark may wish to be an adept of the kingdom and eventually a “king”, like the disciples in Matthew 19:28 or Luke 22:29, but she is continually excluded. Similarly, the “mystagogic” understanding mentioned in Clement of Alexandria’s fragmentary (and disputed) letter describing “the secret gospel of Mark” allegedly led its reader “into the innermost sanctuary of that truth hidden by seven veils” (Cameron 1982: 70) – still more secrets, and all of them unveiled! The full text of this ancient version of Mark, which Clement describes as “a more spiritual Gospel for the use of those who were being perfected” (Cameron 1982: 70) no longer exists, but Clement’s remaining description of that text even mentions “the mystery of the kingdom of God” (Cameron 1982: 71, see also Kermode 1979: 57-59).

One effect of either the Cynic or the mystagogic understandings would be that the problematic future aspect of the kingdom of God is discounted, or disappears altogether, and for that reason, the reader might be tempted to understand both Mark’s Jesus and Calvino’s Marco Polo as Cynics of sorts or as Alexandrian mystagogues. However, both the Cynics and secret Mark promise access to their secrets, no matter how difficult, but the text of Mark’s gospel that has survived offers no access at all.

4. EMPTY LANGUAGE

This may be where my view diverges the farthest from Perrin’s later treatment of the kingdom of God as a “tensive symbol”. In the thought of Paul Ricoeur, on whom Perrin draws heavily (1976: 29-30), the symbol is characterized by a surplus or overflowing of meaning (Ricoeur 1967: 168, see also 1976: 45). The Ricoeurian symbol is full of meaning; it is a form of the Derridean *archē*, an original unity from which difference arises. Perhaps the definitive instance of the value of this *archē* – not merely the concept but even the word – in the Bible appears in John 1:1-3 (“In the beginning [archē] was the Word ... and without him was not anything made that was made”). The Ricoeurian symbol is in full bloom throughout the gospel of John.

The word *archē* also appears in Mark 1:1 (“The beginning of the gospel”), but in that passage it functions quite differently. In this verse, referentiality is short-circuited and turned back on the text of Mark (see Aichele 2006: 86-88). As I noted above, Mark’s gospel indicates that although the disciples have been given the secret of the kingdom, those disciples do not know it and never “get it”, in strong contrast to the stories of Matthew and Luke. The Markan disciples possess the symbol of the kingdom of God, but they do not know what it symbolizes, and thus it cannot function for them as a source (*archē*) of meaning. In turn, the reader of Mark knows that the disciples have been given the secret, but she also does not know what it is. To shift from Ricoeur’s terminology to that of C.S. Peirce, both the disciples and the reader lack the interpretant, “the paradigmatic relation between one sign and another” which is also “the effect that the sign produces” (Ducrot and Todorov 1979: 85). As a result, the Markan signifier, “kingdom of God”, cannot be properly connected with any signified object or referent. The kingdom remains (a) secret even though the secret has been given.

The unresolvable mystery of the Markan kingdom results from the lack of an interpretant. In other words, “the kingdom of God” in the gospel of Mark cannot be a symbol in Perrin’s or Ricoeur’s sense. This phrase has no surplus of meaning in Mark, and until some interpretant is supplied, it is empty of any meaning. The parabolic “kingdom of God” aspect of a saying or deed of Mark’s Jesus takes the form of an opening (a “crack”, as Marco Polo says) through which the secret “comes to light” (*eis phaneron*, “into [the] visible”, Mark 4:22), like the inextinguishable radiance that appears

through the door at the end of Kafka's parable (1964: 269). It is "loosened" (*epeluen*, Mark 4:34). However, what appears through that opening remains itself unspoken, and perhaps even finally otherwise unspeakable – hence the necessity for parabolic language. Kermode compares Mark 4:14-20, the allegorical interpretation of the parable of the sower, to the interpretive "glosses" that are described in the discussion between K. and the priest following the parable in Kafka's novel (Kermode 1979: 33, see Kafka 1964: 269-276). The priest quotes "the commentators" as saying that "The right perception of any matter and a misunderstanding of the same matter do not wholly exclude each other" (Kafka 1964: 271). Understanding is misunderstanding, or in other words, there is no interpretant.

One aspect of the Markan mystery of the phrase "kingdom of God" is that although many passages point to something called "God", God never appears as a character in the story. Mark's Jesus often mentions God, and in Gethsemane he submits to the will of "Abba, Father" (14:36), but there is no answer to his prayers. He dies soon thereafter, seemingly abandoned by God (15:34). Mark's gospel tells of an empty tomb on Easter morning, and no resurrection encounter is narrated. This all may be due, as Perrin says, to the "activity of God" (1963: 185), but whether God is involved in any way in Jesus's death or uncanny resurrection is not stated. Things happen according to the scriptures (9:12-13, 12:10, 14:21, 27, 49), but whether those scriptures speak for God, or about Jesus, is not clear. Even Judas's betrayal is unmotivated (14:10-11, contrast Luke 22:3 and John 12:4-6, 13:27).

The voices that speak from the sky or cloud in the Markan baptism and transfiguration stories are not identified as God, and the spirit that descends at the baptism or drives Jesus into the wilderness is not identified as God's (1:10, 12, contrast Matthew 3:16, Luke 3:22, 4:1). Although the heavenly voices identify Jesus as "my beloved son", the scribes later claim that he is possessed instead by Beelzebul (Mark 3:22). They may be right: the demons call Jesus "son of God" (3:11), and they would probably be more likely to use that phrase for the one chosen by their own "prince", Beelzebul. Unlike Matthew or Luke, Mark does not say whether Jesus rejected Satan's temptations.

The first verse of Mark (but only in some ancient manuscripts) also identifies Jesus as "the son of God", but the rest of the gospel raises serious questions about this description. There is no miraculous birth or incarnation story to make Jesus's divine paternity or origin explicit, and instead he is called, insultingly, the "son of Mary" (6:3, see Schaberg 1987: 160-166). Jesus refuses to tell the temple authorities what or who authorizes his activities (11:27-33). The vineyard parable in Mark 12:1-9 does not clarify his relationship to God, for even if the vineyard owner is understood to be God, it is not clear in Mark's gospel that Jesus is his heir, the one, beloved son.

In addition, although the kingdom is said to be of God, apart from that phrase, God plays no role in the Markan Jesus's discussions of the kingdom. As with "will of God" or "son of God", the word "God" in these phrases marks holes in the Markan story that may be filled by the reader in a variety of possible ways, such as "Yahweh" or "Abba, Father", or the Christian Trinity or the Muslim Allah, although far different options are also possible.¹⁷ "God" occupies an "empty place" in Mark, like a variable in a mathematical formula that yields different results when different values are inserted (see Frege 1952: 31-32, 54, and Ingarden 1973: 91). Apart from some canonical or otherwise theological context, the interpretant is lacking, because apart from the canon or some other intertextual context, there is no way of knowing who this "God" is.

The empty phrase "of God" is a crack in Mark's gospel through which "a different city appears" (Calvino 1974: 155), the parabolic unspeakable that was noted above. "God" is thus another mystery or secret at the Markan kingdom's center. When Jesus says, "all things are possible with God" (Mark 10:27), this complicates but does not settle the disciples' concerns about the possibility of salvation (10:23-26). Mark's gospel itself suggests that entry into the kingdom requires (among other things, such as losing your life) a shift of perception or understanding. The first words that Mark's Jesus

speaks are “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel” (1:15). The gospel – that is, Mark itself, as a text (see 1:1) – is here closely connected to both *kairos* and the kingdom of God, and one word that connects them all is the word, “repent” (*metanoete* = change your mind). Mark’s implied author also advises, “let the reader understand [*noeitō*]” (13:14). *Noeō* is not far from *metanoēō*: the “vigilance” that recognizes the opening of the crack. However, since knowledge of the secret is not given, repentance may be just as difficult and extreme as plucking out an eye or giving everything away. Like the kingdom itself, repentance cannot be forced.

Perrin says, “One cannot ... ‘receive’ or ‘enter’ a symbol; one can only respond in various ways to that which the symbol evokes” (1976: 54), arguing that to enter or receive the kingdom must be understood as a “metaphor of response”. This seems closer to what I am saying, but apart from some larger context, such as the Bible or Christian tradition – or Calvino’s book or any of a great number of other potential intertexts – it is not clear what response the Markan phrase “kingdom of God” evokes. Lacking an interpretant, the sign can produce no effect. In the absence of a referent, neither “entering the kingdom” nor “receiving the kingdom” can be a metaphor; these phrases must remain parabolic and paradoxical. Perhaps Perrin would counter that the parables as “bearers of reality” (1976: 56) are the very openings or cracks through which the kingdom appears. This would be even closer to my view, but there may also be other cracks. The relation between the parables of Mark’s Jesus and the kingdom is not exclusive, and even on Perrin’s understanding of “symbol”, there may be numerous openings and even numerous kingdoms. Jesus’s parables, like Marco’s cities, might even encourage readers to look for other cracks.

Some readers of the biblical gospels seek to develop the concept of the kingdom of God as a “new community”,¹⁸ often in harmonizing readings of sayings in various gospels. However, Perrin argues that one consequence of the kingdom’s status as a symbol and not a concept is that

The parables give no hint of a structured supportive community; they offer no help in the form of an expression of the possibility and challenge in the form of conventions which can ultimately be domesticated. (Perrin 1976: 199; see also 5-6, 33)

The gospel of Mark’s kingdom language offers little basis for any developed concept or image of the kingdom. The hidden city that is the Markan kingdom of God might be Augustine’s city of God (see Perrin 1976: 63-65), or it might be the New Jerusalem of Revelation 21-22, or it might be something else entirely. To be sure, there is in the kingdom sayings a strongly provocative (parabolic) element, as well as a suggestion perhaps of something new in the emphases on repentance and the difficulty of entry. However, there is not even as much (or little) about the kingdom of God in the words of Mark’s Jesus as there is in Marco Polo’s words about Marozia.

Indeed, several possibilities for conceiving the kingdom are suggested by Marco. In their discussions throughout the course of Calvino’s book, Kublai Khan and Marco Polo describe a wide range of possible cities, all of which are utopian, but none of which is paradise. Similarly, Mark’s Jesus simulacrum never indicates that the kingdom of God is paradise.¹⁹ Indeed, in contrast to the great Khan, who imagines a “model city” which “contains everything corresponding to the norm” – this might be the ideal city as a Ricoeurian symbol – the traveling merchant speaks of a “model city ... made only of exceptions, exclusions, incongruities, contradictions”, from which he derives each of his described cities by subtracting exceptions or abnormalities (Calvino 1974: 69). Each of the resulting cities exists “always as an exception” – not a surplus of meaning, but a deficit.

In thinking this way, Marco may not be far from Kafka’s priest, who offers multiple interpretations of the parable of the man before the Law without settling on any of them, and who concludes that “it is not necessary to accept everything as true, one must only accept it as necessary” (Kafka 1964: 276). Joseph K. responds that this is a “melancholy conclusion”, for “it turns lying into a universal principle”. Like Kermode’s claim that “without interpretation there would be no

mystery” (1979: 126), K.’s words point to the crucial function of the interpretant. Kermode continues: “The desires of interpreters are good because without them the world and the text are tacitly declared to be impossible; perhaps they are, but we must live as if the case were otherwise”. We cannot know the secret of the kingdom of God, but we must live as though we did. Without interpretation there can be no truth. Truth is something we make, and it is never disinterested. Marco Polo describes a similar situation in relation to history: “Futures not achieved are only branches of the past: dead branches” (Calvino 1974: 29). Both the present (“now”) and the future (“not yet”) are “branches” of temporality from which alternative possibilities have been “subtracted”. They are realized virtualities.

Read together with Calvino’s book, the kingdom sayings of Mark’s Jesus suggest that there may be many kingdoms of God (or even many Gods), just as there are numerous invisible cities in the imaginings of Marco Polo and Kublai Khan. The plural kingdoms of God appear in bits of story scattered throughout the gospel of Mark. Marco’s multiple cities belong to numerous and perhaps even incompatible realities, each of them an “exception, exclusion, incongruity, contradiction” to some universal model, and they are only barely allowed to touch one another in the minimal narrative that holds Calvino’s book together. So likewise the many kingdoms of God do not belong together in any single larger “necessary” whole, apart from Mark’s collection of kingdom sayings. Perhaps the way to “receive” or “enter” the Markan kingdom(s) of God is simply to “subtract” *less* from the sayings – that is, to refuse to harmonize them or to rewrite them on historical or theological grounds, and instead to recognize each of their kingdoms as an “exception”.

The parables of the kingdom may be metaphorical, but the kingdom itself is not a metaphor, and it is not to be found in some other, “spiritual” dimension or world. Our preconceptions about time (meaningfully divided between past, present, and future) break against the empty place that is the kingdom. Although the conjunction of *kairos* and *aiōn* is fantastic and always uncertain, it is not a dream or vision. Nor is the kingdom removed to some eschatological “not yet”, or pie in the sky. Despite the fact that Mark’s gospel offers very little non-parabolic information about the kingdom of God, that kingdom is quite real, precisely *because* it is virtual.²⁰ People pass by it every day and never know that it is there. Others enter and leave it constantly, but even they may not always know that.

The Markan kingdom of God is always Marco Polo’s “second [city] ... the one about to free itself from the first” (Calvino 1974: 155). As with the kingdom, the city that is the hidden Marozia is “at hand” or “not far”, and yet the distance to it may not be overcome by even the greatest effort – or it may be bridged by no effort at all. A child can do it, but not a rich man (Mark 10:14, 25). Likewise, Mark’s secret kingdom is not to be easily entered (10:24). Nevertheless, it is here, near, very close, ready to appear in the blink (or out of the corner) of an eye. The Markan kingdom of God gestures mysteriously in the earth, like the seed in Mark 4:26-28, but the crucial thing is to seize it when it appears, like the swallow-city of Marozia (Mark 4:29, 13:37).²¹

ENDNOTES

¹ On Jesus simulacra, see further Aichele (2011), especially Chapter Two.

² All Bible quotations are from the Revised Standard Version.

³ A useful review of this discussion appears in Perrin (1963), and a summary of it appears in Perrin (1976: 34-40). Perrin surveys the writings of (among others) Strauss, Weiss, Schweitzer, Rauschenbusch, Jeremias, Fuchs, Linnemann, Jüngel, Wilder, Funk, Via, Crossan, Bultmann, J.M. Robinson, J.A.T. Robinson, Dodd, Fuller, Kümmel, Cullmann, Manson, Tödt, Beasley-Murray, Glasson, Grässer, McCown, Grant, and Knox, as well as the ancient theologian, Augustine. That a linear model continues to be invoked by more recent readers of Mark is indicated by Moloney: “The reigning presence of God is ‘at the door’ – there but not fully present, and this summons forth a response, indicating an unresolved tension between the present and yet to come kingdom” (2002: 49). Moloney cites (and rejects) Dodd.

⁴ Perrin argues that in early Israelite thought, history was not thought of in linear terms (1963: 160-161). However, his discussions of prophetic eschatology and especially apocalyptic dualism would seem to imply the emergence of such a way of thinking by the beginnings of the Common Era (1963: 162-168).

⁵ As do many others, Perrin lumps all of the biblical gospels together (as well as the gospel of Thomas) in order to develop a harmonized reading of the kingdom sayings. I read Mark and each of the other gospels as different stories, although my mention here of other gospels is by way of contrast only (see further Aichele 2011: 3-45). It is possible that my conclusions may apply to the other gospels as well, but that is not my interest here.

⁶ See further Aichele (2006: 53, 131-155, 203-221). The plurality of the sons of men in Mark 3:28 is often obscured in inclusive language translations such as the NRSV. It may not be a coincidence that most scholars, including Mack, ignore the significance of Mark 3:28 as a son of man saying.

⁷ See for example Deleuze (1991) or Derrida (1978).

⁸ Hidden or otherwise invisible cities, as “alternate realities”, are quite common in fantasy literature. According to Benjamin, the city is also one of the major foci of Kafka’s writings (1968: 141).

⁹ Calvino’s book is “structured around an interlocking pattern of numbered sections, while the length of each section’s title graphically outlines a continuously oscillating sine wave, or perhaps a city skyline” (Wikipedia 2011).

¹⁰ No relation to the tenth century (CE) Roman noblewoman of that name is evident.

¹¹ Also, “He is not God of the dead, but of the living (zōntōn)” (Mark 12:27). The verb *zaō* appears again in Mark 5:23 and (in the longer, added ending) 16:11.

¹² As Kelber notes, many scholars associate events described in Mark 13 with the Roman destruction of the city of Jerusalem (1974: 109-111). Even so, that distinguishes these events from the kingdom of God, as Kelber also notes (1974: 122-124, 127-128).

¹³ See also 1 Corinthians 15:23, 1 Thessalonians 2:19, 3:13, 4:15-16 (immediately preceding the famous “rapture” passage), 5:23, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-8 (note the caution in 2:2-4), James 5:7-9, 2 Peter 1:16-18 (perhaps referring to the transfiguration), 3:4, and 1 John 2:28. *Parousia* is also sometimes referred to humans, as well as to “the lawless one” (2 Thessalonians 2:9) and to “the day of God” (2 Peter 3:12).

¹⁴ Note subtle but significant differences in Matthew 26:29 and Luke 22:18. Kelber suggests that “the kingdom in Mark” is in Galilee (1974: 130), and Mark 14:25 and 14:28 could be read together to support this claim. However, this is not explicitly stated, and it would have to be inferred that the two statements are somehow parallel.

¹⁵ On the transfiguration of Jesus as a metamorphosis story, see Aichele and Walsh (2011).

¹⁶ See Kelber (1983: 101-123), and more generally, Kermode (1979: 23-47) and Barthes (1974).

¹⁷ “[T]he priest ... uses the name of God in vain: he calls a state of affairs in which the priest determines the value of things ‘the kingdom of God’; he calls the means by which such a state is attained or maintained ‘the will of God’” (Nietzsche 1954: 596 [section 26]).

¹⁸ For example, Kelber (1974: 90).

¹⁹ Kelber’s association of the Markan kingdom of God with “redemption” (1974: 85) needs to be justified.

²⁰ On the relation between reality and virtuality, see Aichele (2011), Preface and Chapter One.

²¹ I wish to thank the anonymous reviewer of this essay for numerous valuable suggestions.

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