Scriptura 50 (1994), 41-54

READING MARK - PART I

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THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS: READING MARK AS MYTHOLOGY

Abstract

Capitalising on the analytic semiology of Roland Barthes, a semiological theory is developed which may account for the peculiarities of a gospel narrative. The gospel narrative as a system of second order signification is enriched with the Bakhtinian conception that signification may in fact be closer specified with the notion of dialogism. The function of dialogism in the myth's presentation of time and space, is indicative of the information which is revealed to the implied reader. This article is devoted to the development of a theory which would make a semiological reading of the gospel narrative of Mark possible[1]*. Roland Barthes' essay, Myth Today ([1957]1973: 117ff), provides the contours within which the semiological theory is developed and used*[2]*. The article is divided into five parts. In the first four parts, I provide an overview of the semiological theory of Barthes and show how it may be developed to account for the peculiarities of a gospel narrative. In the fifth part I describe the nature and function of divine time and*

1. The article forms part of a series of experimental articles. In these articles, I attempt to develop and creatively combine a variety of theories for the purpose of providing a more adequate reading, understanding, analysis and/or interpretation of Biblical texts than found in the use of 'one-dimensional interpretations'. Although space does not allow a comprehensive argumentation for and against this particular development of the theory, the publication of this paper might stimulate further discussion and research.

2. Whereas Barthes developed his theory primarily to criticise and expose the ideologies that functioned within the French consumer society of the 1950's, I develop the theory in terms of a probable consuming of the ideology of the gospel text by first century readers. Although I use twentieth century theories and research results, i.e. I read as a critic, I attempt to provide an understanding of how the Markan text could have been understood by a first century reader. The distinction between critic and reader has been popularised by Fowler (1983:32ff). Whereas the critic uses the distance between the text and the reader positively as a distance which creates the opportunity to describe, analyze and evaluate, the reader attempts to negate the space between text and reader. For the reader, the text is not an object to be studied, but a locus of 'inspiration', 'revelation' and 'real presence' (Fowler 1983:33).

space in Mark. Divine time and space constitute the dominant matrix in the narrative discourse within which the intentional consciousness of both implied author and reader[3] functions. In the final section, I supply a brief conclusion which provides basic theoretical guidelines for the reading of myth in terms of narrative theory.

1. Introduction to a semiological analysis of mythology

In his semiological analysis of myth, Roland Barthes (1973:117ff) develops the one-levelled Saussurian notion of the sign to a two-levelled sign system[4]. He identifies the first order of myth, the level of the sign, as the level of meaning, brought about by multiple signifieds. In the myth, where the first order sign/meaning becomes the signifier of the mythological concept, the mythological signifier is emptied of the first level content/meaning and multiple historical signifieds (cf. Barthes 1973:128) to constitute an empty form[5]. The mythological signifier or empty form receives its content from and

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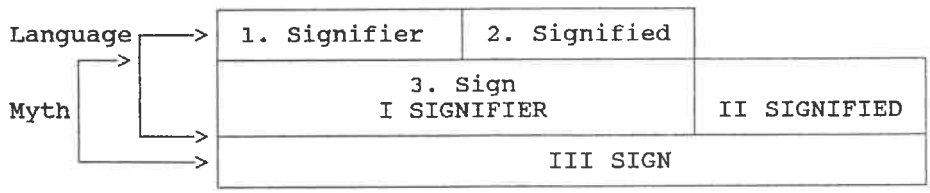
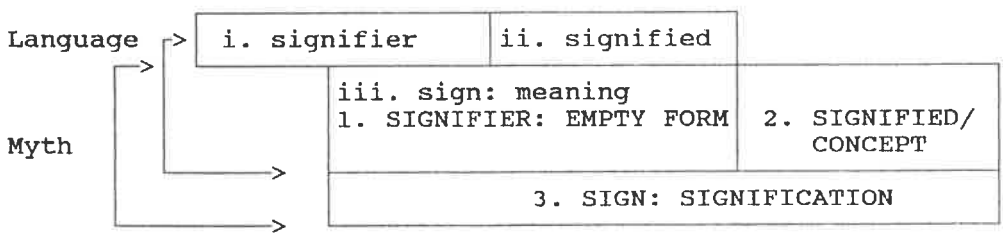
3. In the communication of a narrative, the *implied author* is an imaginary persona which can be constructed on the basis of the knowledge, beliefs, discursive strategies and capabilities which the narrative supposedly hold as being the conditions for the understanding of the narrative. The *implied reader*, likewise, is inscribed in the narrative as the persona who is conversant with this presupposed knowledge, beliefs and discursive strategies. As such, the implied author and reader share a certain understanding of what is happening in the text and of how the message communicated is to be dealt with. Whenever I use the terms 'author' and 'reader' in this article, I refer to the implied author and reader.

4. Barthes (1973:124) illustrates his development of Saussure's notion schematically with the following diagram.





is determined by the second level or mythological concept, thereby creating significance[6].

The dominant logic in mythological signification is then the movement from mythological concept to mythological signifier. The myth succeeds to undergird or motivate itself with a variety of signifiers - signifiers of which the one-to-one correspondence with the contingencies of the first order sign is distorted. In this activity, 'the store of mythical signifiers is inexhaustible' (Barthes 1973:138) and 'this distortion is not an obliteration of the first level signifieds' (Barthes 1973:132). The opposite is true. The first order signifieds are drawn into the myth and become signifiers in the myth. Here they acquire significance by virtue of the presence of the myth. As such, these mythological signifiers create both the fictional world postulated and impregnated by the myth and the alibi of the myth (Barthes 1973:133).

Further, the mythical concept determines the empty form as something that 'has *already* been worked on' (Barthes 1973:119). This activity reveals the mythical concept as the domain where decisions are made and initiatives are taken by the intentional activity or 'signifying consciousness' (Barthes 1973:119,134) within the myth.

With his semiological definition of myth, Barthes rescues the scholarly study of myth from the traditional *Religionsgeschichtliche* definition of myth. Whereas students of religion have traditionally limited the description of myth to its ontological status, the semiological definition focuses on its rhetorical and semiological nature and function. Bultmann (1964:10, footnote 2) defines his use of myth in terms of the classical *Religionsgeschichtliche* definition:

> Mythology is the use of imagery to express the other worldly in terms of this world and the divine in terms of human life, the other side in terms of this side.

In his *General Introduction to the History of Religions*, Eliade (1987) elucidates 'the modalities of the sacred and the situation of man' in a 'world charged with religious values' (cf. Eliade 1987:18). He describes myth as follows.

> The myth relates a sacred history, that is, a primordial event that took place at the beginning of time, *ab initio*... To tell a myth is to proclaim what happened *ab origine*. Once told, that is, revealed, the myth becomes apodictic truth; it establishes a truth that is absolute. ...for this reason... myth is bound up with ontology; it speaks only of realities, of what really happened, of what is fully manifest (Eliade 1987:95; cf. also Perrin 1982:47ff).

By moving the study of myth out of the sphere of the relationship between the divine/sacred/sublime and the worldly/secular/natural and into the sphere of semiology, Barthes does not only identify a different sphere for the study of myth, but also proposes a new conception of myth. Myth is not limited to sacred or religious phenomena. Myth is 'a language' (Barthes 1973:11), 'a type of speech' (Barthes 1973:117) that operates within a mass consumer

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6. Cf. point 4 below for a further development of signification as dialogism in narrative and more particularly in Mark.

culture. It is a 'system of communication', 'a message', 'a mode of signification' (Barthes 1973:117f) which 'has already been worked on so as to make it suitable for communication' (Barthes 1973:119). It is suitable for communication because the myth - whether of the order of the world of wrestling, an advertisement on soap powders, a newspaper article on the nobility, etc. (cf. Barthes' essays in *Mythologies*, 1973), or (as I am arguing in this article) a religious text - is impregnated by a 'signifying consciousness' (Barthes 1973:119)[7]. In mass culture, the consuming reader (a representative of a particular consumer society) is not only conversant with the type of speech, system of communication or mode of signification within myths. S/he is also able to receive, enjoy and understand the myth as intended by the signifying consciousness.

2. The critical reading of myth

In the semiological reading of myth, the critic may opt in the reading for one of three approaches. Each reading approach is based on a particular view of the mythical signifier (cf. Barthes 1973:138f).

- *Firstly*, the critic may ignore the alibi and focus on the empty signifier which is unambiguously filled with the mythical concept thereby identifying example or symbol in the myth.
- *Secondly*, the critic may focus on the full mythical signifier and compare it with the full sign/meaning of the multiple signs on the first level of signification and expose the distortion or alibi in the myth. (This is Barthes' approach.)
- *Thirdly*, the critic may focus on the full mythical signifier, filled with and naturalized by the mythical concept. The critic here analyses and describes the process through which the reader receives and consumes the myth in its full presence. The first two critical readings threaten the disappearance of myth by either dissolving its contact with the historical context or exposing the distortion and bracketing the mythological concept. The myth's validity is then discounted. The third naturalizes[8] myth by transforming mythisized (hi)story - the alibi - into nature

7. Within a semiological theory of myth, it is merely incidental that the identification of divine time and space (*vide* point 5 below) as the main sphere in which the signifying consciousness functions in Mark as myth, corresponds with classical *Religionsgeschichtliche* definitions of myth. It is not divine time and space as ontological categories that define Mark as myth. It is rather the presence of the second order signification, the intentional consciousness that brings signification about and the influence that this consciousness exerts on the reader via the particular representation of divine time and space, that place Mark within the semiologically defined framework of myth.

8. Culler (1982:137) points out that naturalization 'emphasizes the fact that the strange or deviant is brought within a discursive order and thus made to seem natural'. Closely related to naturalization are the terms 'motivation' and '*vraisemblablisation*'. The Russian formalist term, 'motivation' is 'the process of justifying items within the work itself by showing that they are not arbitrary or incoherent but quite comprehensible in terms of functions which we can name'. *Vraisemblablisation* stresses the importance of cultural models of the *vraisemblable* as sources of meaning and coherence. A naturalized reading or a readerly consumption of Mark presupposes that a real reader would have to match the persona of the implied reader to as high a degree as possible in order to be a consumer of the myth.

(Barthes 1973:140). Despite the fact that the naturalized myth retains an even though limited analogical contextual contingency on the first level of the sign system, it lays claims to universal validity.

In this article, I only focus on the last reading approach. I attempt to demonstrate that if this procedure is followed, i.e. where the function of the signifying consciousness within the text is taken into consideration, then the presence of divine time and space plays an important role in the consuming of the myth. Within the myth - which is impregnated by divine time and space - characters, events and settings find their role in their dialogical relation to the function of divine time and space.

3. Narrative as myth

Chatman (1980:22ff), among others, has modelled narrative theory in terms of semiology. Since the semiology of myth as explicated by Barthes provides interesting possibilities that augments Chatman's proposal, I concentrate only on Barthes' proposal. If the narrative is modelled in terms of the mythological semiology of Barthes[9], it renders a scheme where the second order mythological signifier is equivalent to what we may call 'the narrative text as empty form'. The narrative text is emptied of and is a distortion of the first order (hi)story which can be regarded as being equivalent to *fabula*[10] - which in turn comprises multiple characters, events and settings as they relate to one another in terms of historical time and space. In the narrative, it is primarily the domain of the concept which comes under scrutiny. The concept posits, fills, motivates and determines the significance of the narrative text. The concept may be considered as the domain of discourse[11], i.e. the domain where the intentional consciousness (or implied author) operates. Within this scheme, significance has three functions.

- *Firstly*, significance in myth reveals that it is the movement from concept/discourse[12] to narrative text that creates significance (cf. also Culler 1981:175ff). Although it is true that event, character and the detail of setting (cf. Chatman 1980:25) in the narrative text are partly determined by the (hi)story on the basis of some analogy which exists between narrative text and historical reality - establishing the narrative's alibi -, they are primarily influenced by the mythical discourse.
- *Secondly*, the myth undergirds itself with a variety of characters, events and settings that serve myth in its even though limited historical contingency.

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9. I do not model Mark as part of a canonical literary corpus on the model of myth (cf. Barthes 1973:146; 1986), but as narrative.

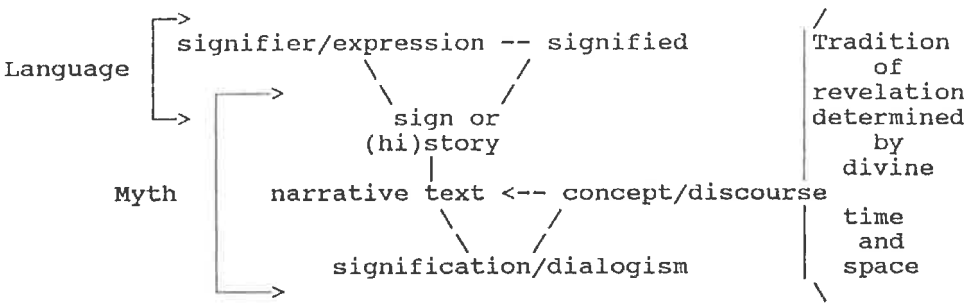
10. *Fabula* is the Russian Formalist terms for the 'logical, chronological sequence of events' underlying the narrative.

11. Narrative discourse comprises the expression level or the 'how' of narrative (cf Prince 1987:21). In the written language of Mark, the narrative statements belong to the same corpus of strategies which are used in Israelite and Old Testament discourse to reveal divine time and space.

12. Ricoeur's (1990:237ff) use of the notion of 'kerygma' has affinities to the use of concept/discourse in this article.

- *Thirdly*, it also provides textual elements with a mythological perception of time and space. This mythological perception of time and space already forms part of the tradition in which the myth functions. In Mark, this tradition is determined by the Old Testament and Israelite history of revelation as well as the promise-fulfilment trajectory in Old Testament narratives.

It is especially this function of the perception of time and space within this conception of history that will be researched as it pertains to the characters, events and settings in Mark[13]. The following diagram illustrates the argument.



Moreover, if we regard this relationship, the significance created by the intentional consciousness in discourse, to be equivalent to what Bakhtin calls 'dialogism', then everything posited by the discourse in the narrative text, becomes 'shot through' with a dialogical consciousness. It is to this aspect of the argument that I now turn.

4. Significance as dialogism in the Markan myth

The closer specification of significance with the Bakhtinian notion of dialogism provides us with a powerful theoretical instrument to expose the function of double reference in the interaction between discourse and (hi)story within myth. Applied to myth, we can state that mythological practices are all 'varieties of dialogism, defined as the coexistence in a single utterance of two intentionally distinct, identifiable voices' (Hirschkop 1989:6; cf. Pechey 1989:47)[14]. In the context of myth, dialogism signifies and posits two (or

13. It is especially this perception of time which provides the domain from within which characters, events and settings are evaluated. This evaluative or ideological function (cf. Uspensky 1973:67) within myth is the main characteristic of what Ricoeur (1990:237) calls the 'interpretive narrative' - the reason being that all entities in the narrative are already evaluated or interpreted in the narrative.

14. The domain where the 'varieties of dialogism' (or varieties of signification) are present, was initially specified by Bakhtin as 'intonation' in speech. In literature, it was later specified as the domain of 'value and stylisation' and ultimately as 'parody, the use of socially marked languages in literary texts, collage, and stylisation' (cf. Hirschkop 1989:6ff). I do not engage in a comprehensive study of these aspects of Bakhtin's theory in this paper.

more) intentionalities which appear as being in dialogue with one another: the intentionalities of that which the mythical disclaims and the intentionality of the mythical which is to be consumed by the reader.

In Mark, this activity results in the positing of three parallel plots[15] in the narrative text: the mythological plot - where the discourse sanctions and approves of certain characters, events and settings, i.e. the plot of Jesus as representative of divine time and space -, the plot trajectory of the disciples and that of Jesus' opponents. The last two are also infused with an intentional consciousness by the author. As such, each are represented as harbouring a certain intentionality with its own value-judgments - value judgments which are incongruous with the values of the myth. The intentional consciousness in myth posits these intentionalities as the intentionalities with which it is in dialogue. These intentionalities and evaluations of the mythical plot postulate the alibi, or they provide the reasons for the plot development of Jesus, the protagonist of the narrative (*vide* footnote 5 in next article).

It is within the dialogical functioning of the parallel plots, that the four modes of correlation between mythical concept/discourse and mythical signifier or narrative text as stated by Barthes (1973:131) become important for the readerly consumption of the myth. These comprise the manifestness of the myth, the relation of deformation between first order signs and the text, the imperative character of myth and finally the fact that myth is always partly motivated.

- *Firstly*, 'myth does not hide anything'. It is both 'perfectly manifest' and 'multi-dimensional' (cf. Barthes 1973:131). In Mark, the mythical is perfectly manifest. The prophetic quotation in 1:2-3 makes this evident right at the outset of the narrative. Since this prophetic quotation places the mythological plot trajectory of Jesus in the gravitational sphere of fulfilment - as is stated in 1:15 - Jesus' statements in 8:31, 9:31 and 10:33-34 also achieve prophetic value. The subsequent fulfilment of these statements in 14:43ff confirms the initial expectations of the reader. The promise-fulfilment scheme relates the events in the mythical plot in Mark to the tradition of the divine time-thrust in history (divine time) as well as to the presence of the revelation of God. The presence of revelation is introduced by the appearances of John the Baptist in 1:4 and Jesus in 1:9 as fulfilment of promise. The most important event, however, is the event in 1:10. This verse signifies the ultimate moment of revelation. In 1:10, we read: '... he saw the heavens 'torn apart' (*schidzo*) and the Spirit descending on him like a dove'. In first century society, where 'the heavens' were regarded as a concrete, material entity above which God lives, the tearing of the heavens signifies an opening up of direct contact from the divine with humanity - i.e. with Jesus. The Spirit of God coming down on Jesus in the form of a dove, is the ultimate symbol of

15. The plot of a narrative may be defined as 'the main incidents of a narrative; the outline of situations and events' (Prince 1987:71). These incidents or situations and events are usually structured in such a way in the narrative that it follows the development of the narrative from 'the inciting moment' through exposition, rising action, complication, climax, reversal, falling action, catastrophe and the moment of the resolution of suspense. If this procedure is followed, the three plot trajectories of Jesus, his opponents as well as the disciples in Mark, may be traced. Since this is not our main concern in this article, these few comments will have to suffice for the moment.

God's presence that is present with Jesus (divine space). Jesus, then is the place/space where the presence of God dwells. The myth as a second order signification is therefore perfectly manifest in Mark from the outset. (It is neither a secret nor hidden! - at least not to the implied reader.) As a reader reads through Mark, these two facets of its manifestation (divine time and space) at the outset, determine the reader's consumption of the myth.

Apart from the fulfilment of the prophetic quotations and the function of 1:10 - which reveals the myth in its full presence in Jesus to the reader - three other aspects of the myth support this 'manifestness' of the myth. It is also these three aspects which give the myth its multi-dimensional character. These are the variety of confessional titles used for Jesus, the motifs present in his activities and the variety of brief narratives about him. This plurality of first order signs (the titles, the motifs of exorcism, healing, sayings of a rabbinical type, etc. and the brief narratives themselves) are drawn into the gravitational sphere of divine time and space and made to serve the myth. In this sense, the unity of mythical time and space (present in Jesus), the dominant principle, creates a certain unity throughout the narrative. It generates a 'unified knowledge' (Barthes 1973:131f) in the myth in all its dimensions.

Secondly, the relationship between the mythical discourse and the historical meanings of historical events with their multiple signifieds is a relation of deformation (Barthes 1973:132), i.e. the historical meanings and representations are filtered out of the text by the myth (cf. also Genette 1980:90ff)[16]. In Mark, particular locations, characters, groups of people and events are emptied of their various sign-meanings in their historical context(s)[17] and infused with mythical discourse (cf. Barthes 1973:133). Dialogically, each of these representational points within the myth is in dialogue with and include or exclude characters, time movements (causalities), locations and activities.

Thirdly, in its signification, myth has an 'imperative character'. In all its fullness, it 'seeks out the individual reader'.

> It is I whom it has come to seek. It is turned towards me, I am subjected to its intentional force, it summons me to receive its expansive ambiguity (Barthes 1973:134).

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16. This is a common feature of biblical narrative. In his first chapter, *Odysseus' Scar*, Auerbach (1974:3ff) compares Homer's representation of reality (his realism) in the Odysseus - especially with regard to its 'leisurely and externalized description of everyday happenings' (Auerbach 1974:23) - with the Hebrew Bible story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. The two styles of representation realize two different and opposing types. He describes the type of representation in Odysseus as 'fully externalised description, uniform illumination, uninterrupted connection, free expression, all events on the foreground, displaying unmistakable meanings, few elements of historical development and of psychological perspective'. Just as in the gospel narratives, representation in the Abraham story is a representation where the background information is filtered out and only the bare essentials retained (cf. Auerbach 1974:23). The filtering out of the 'reality information' makes it virtually impossible to identify the original *Sitz im Leben* (i.e. as historical event and/or event recounted in the congregation) of these brief narratives. The purpose of this activity is to furnish these narratives with a new *Sitz* in the mythical world of the narrative.

17. Cf. Kermode (1979:111ff) for a concise summary of geographical and historical distortions and mistaken representations in Mark if compared to 'historically true' information.

In its claims of global, universal and divine chronological presence, the myth (in Mark) seeks the reader - the 'I' - to consume and inhabit it.

> This is because the concept (or mythical discourse - my insertion) appears in order to oblige me to acknowledge the body of intentions which have motivated it and have arranged it there as the signal of an individual history, as a confidence and a complicity (Barthes 1973:135).

The reader is able to comply with the myth - even in the case of ambiguity. It is assumed that a readerly consumption of the text (by the implied reader) will fulfil the expectations of the implied author or intentional consciousness which operates within the concept/discourse.

Finally, myth is always 'partly motivated'. The relationship between first order historical event and second order action is never arbitrary. It always contains some analogy - its alibi (cf. Barthes 1973:136ff). It can be argued that there is a certain degree of historical truth in Jesus' conflicts with opponents as well as the misunderstandings and incomprehension of the disciples. The possibility that the portrayal of these views as well as Jesus' own opposition to these views represent historical events, function as the alibi for the myth. The myth finds its *raison d'etre* in the incorrect views which exist about the nature and activities of Jesus. The myth is portrayed as the account which reveals both the erroneousness of these views and the appropriate information which the opponents as well as the disciples were expected to comprehend. It is especially through this strategy that the myth coaxes the reader to move out of the domain of error into the domain of being informed about the myth. Although this new sphere of existence is motivated by and does have an analogical relationship with historical reality, it is ultimately determined by the mythical consciousness and intention which operate within the discourse.

Even though the four modes of correlation between mythical concept/discourse and mythical signifier or narrative text assist the readerly consumption of the myth, ambiguity in the text is not exluded. Credit goes to Fowler (1991:195ff) as the person who has brought this phenomenon fully to the surface in Markan scholarship. However, many of these ambiguities may be solved. Since the ambiguities are the ambiguities of mythical speech, the reader understands the ambiguities as ambiguities which are compromised in favour of the myth - precisely because 'the myth is the compromise' (Barthes 1973:140).

5. The dominant in the dialogism in Mark: divine time and space

Whereas elements of the 'form' or textual level are related to contingency, i.e. (hi)storical time and space in the first order signs, the discourse appears in 'a global fashion' (Barthes 1973:132). The 'global fashion' of mythical discourse which impregnates and fills the textual level is evident in the universality and superiority (dominance[18]) of divine time and space in Mark.

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18. The reader is extremely sensitive to the influence and function of time and space. The presupposition of my argument is that the reader of Mark is extremely sensitive to the divine chronology. The function of the narrational divine chronotope described below is regarded as being equivalent to that of the *dominanta* as described by Ukhtomsky (cf. footnote 19 below).

Mythical time in Mark is realised as divine time. The superiority of *divine time* becomes evident in the promise-fulfilment scheme and the (even-though refracted) causal, logical and chronological sequences of events in the (hi)story which are taken up into the divine time-thrust which culminates in the vindication of the protagonist (resurrection) in the discourse. Sternberg (1990:81ff) describes this movement of time or the thrust of time in Biblical narrative as 'the grand chronology'. As such, the events of revelation and the fulfilment of promise (*vide* diagram above) in Mark continues the grand chronology represented in Biblical tradition. Since God is the agent of this time-thrust, it can be closer identified as a 'divine chronology'. In addition to the superiority of the divine chronology, the superiority of divine time is also revealed through its universalisation. Since divine time is intricately united to the existence of the protagonist (initially John the Baptist and ultimately Jesus of Nazareth), every action, saying or claim of the protagonist realizes and makes divine time evident. Each action of the protagonist in a very wide variety of circumstances represents the presence of divine time. It is therefore not only the superiority of the divine chronology which is repeatedly affirmed. Its universality is also made manifest in a plethora of situations. This two-fold superiority of divine time is made manifest through the triumph of the divine chronology and the universality of the claims, sayings and actions of the protagonist which cannot be confined to (hi)story time. The superiority of divine time in Mark signals divine favour of the protagonist over adversaries in the spiritual realm, religious realm and in nature. These adversaries are portrayed as only operating within historical or first order time. This superiority of divine favour (and the authority of the protagonist) is also repeatedly affirmed by the verdict of 'the crowds'. Following Malmgren's (1985:34ff) views on narrative space, we can identify divine time as narrational time. Narrational time in the text is generated by the author or the intentional consciousness operating in the mythical discourse.

The second major factor in Mark's mythical discourse which determines the narrative text is the global nature of *divine space*. The appearance of John the Baptist (1:4) and Jesus of Nazareth (1:9) as fulfilment of promise, realizes these two characters as the spatial locations of divine favour and presence. Wherever they act, the divine space is located in their being present. Since John prophesies about Jesus as 'the more powerful' one (1:8) and Jesus receives the Spirit as the physical realization of divine presence (1:10), Jesus as protagonist is designated as the more important space where the divine is present. The most significant result is that divine intention, realized through divine speech and action (revelation/epiphany - 1:4,9ff & 9:2ff), establishes Jesus to represent divine presence. Furthermore, Jesus' speech and actions throughout the narrative goes out from himself as the one who represents and embodies divine space. In each of the wide plethora of geographical spatial locations in which the protagonist finds himself, the myth reveals the protagonist to be the space of divine presence and revelation. In terms of Malmgren's (1985:34ff) views, divine space can be identified as narrational space over and against narratival, or (hi)story space. Narrational space is generated by the author or the intentional consciousness operating in the mythical discourse.

So far I have described divine time and space as narrational time and space. It is further clear that both time and space - as determined by narrational divine discourse - are intricately united with the protagonist (either John or, ultimately, Jesus). Significance or dialogism in the Markan myth is then primarily determined by the narrational, divine time-space located in the realm of discourse with the protagonist as the site in the narrative text where divine time and space are present. In terms of Bakhtin's description of the time-space relation as a *chronotope*[19], we may describe the dominant time-space in the Markan mythical discourse as the narrational, divine chronotope and more particularly as the narrational, divine chronotope of the protagonist. Bakhtin (1981) identifies the chronotopes of 'Greek romance (the most abstract of all novelistic chronotopes)' (1981: 110), 'the private (or everyday) life chronotope' (1981:121ff), 'the life course of one seeking true knowledge chronotope' (1981:130), 'the public square chronotope' (1981:135), 'the folkloric chronotope' (1981:147), 'the everyday-adventure chronotope' (1981:159) and the 'alien, miraculous world chronotope' (1981:165) among others. It is obvious from these examples that his identification of these chronotopes either focuses on the time or spatial elements within a particular genre type, which in turn functions as the heuristic principle in the genre[20]. In my own explanation of the function of the chronotope, I limit it to neither genre or time and spatial elements. In Mark, the narrational, divine chronotope of the protagonist functions within discourse as the domain within which narration is generated and consumed in accordance with the aim of the intentional consciousness.

The narrational, divine chronotope of the protagonist is the dominant site in

19. According to Holquist (1986:68f), Bakhtin's use of the concept of the 'chronotope' is derived from a 1925 lecture by Ukhtomsky, a biologist friend of Bakhtin. Ukhtomsky studied the human brain's capacity to order and relate spatial and temporal aspects of the wide variety of competing stimuli coming from the exterior world and affecting the human body. He studied these control procedures and identified the *dominanta* as the most prominent ordering device in the human brain effecting this ordering. He concluded that the random, uncoordinated impulses of the stimuli influencing the body, are translated into harmonised patterns in the body by the nervous system. This harmonised unity is created by 'a kind of biological listening device' which detects irregularities in the sequencing of stimuli affecting the central nervous system. A process which breaks up or speeds up affected subsystems in the nervous system so that they can be made constant with the rhythm of other systems, functions together with this 'listening device'. This is 'a kind of biological answering device'. In order to function adequately, the *dominanta*, the listening and answering device, requires the most extraordinary sensitivity to the most minute fluctuations in *time*, and in *space*. In addition to these sensitivities, the complexity of this process comes to the fore in the fact that they function simultaneously - as a chronotope - in the constantly ongoing regular functioning of the body. On the one hand, the nervous system of the body is ceaselessly active to experience outside stimuli, to model and shape them, and on the other, it translates them into biological representations or bodily actions - i.e. the activity of answering the world. Translated into a pragmatic theory of reading, this means that the human sensory system is equally sensitive to time and space indications in the world created by a text. The textual strategies and rhetorical tactics of a text function as stimuli which trigger certain experiences, listenings and answerings in the reader as s/he progressively reads through the text.

20. Although Bakhtin (1981:86) states that it is primarily the problem of time which is 'the dominant principle in the chronotope', it is obvious from his analyses, that he treats generic forms as well as spatial locations as dominant heuristic elements in the chronotope too.

which and through which mythical discourse is produced. The interaction of the narrational divine chronotope with the signs drawn from the first order (hi)story, generates the dialogism in the text. The dialogism produces a double reference or duplicity not only with regard to time (causality) and space (contingency) indicators in Mark, but also in statements, expressions, motifs, rhetorical figures, etc[21]. This fact reveals the protagonist himself to be the major site of dialogism - to be read either in terms of the intentionality in the myth or in terms of the (hi)story outside myth.

6. Conclusion

Capitalising on the Barthesian semiological analytic procedures for the critical reading of myth, I have tried to show that it is primarily divine time and spatial views which constitute the mythical discourse in Mark. In the next article, I demonstrate the dialogical interaction between the (hi)story existents, character, event, setting and the narrational divine chronotope. My aim is to show that it is this interaction which reveals to the reader the mythical quality of character, the mythical value of events and the mythical space which is to be inhabited by the reader. It is primarily the function of the divine chronotope, especially as it is realized in the being, speech and activities of the wandering Jesus, that draws the line where characters on the one hand fail to comprehend the divine chronotope represented by the protagonist. The reader, on the other hand, is not only able to identify the presence of the divine chronotope. The reader can also enter and inhabit the space that the function of the divine chronotope brings about. The major principle is that the protagonist, Jesus as the one who represents the divine chronotope, constitutes the major element on the discourse level. The discursive intention in the divine chronotope posits, impregnates and influences the narrative. Since the divine chronotope is intricately linked to and represented by the protagonist, the Jesus character as the site of divine time-space determines and creates significance/dialogism in Mark.

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21. De Man (1983:104) points out that Bakhtin 'frequently asserts the separation of trope from dialogism'. The reason being that it is not possible 'to imagine a trope (say, a metaphor) being unfolded into two exchanges of a dialogue, that is, two meanings parcelled out between two separate voices' (cf. Bakhtin 1981:327f). However, in Mark, certain instances of tropological language can be either read ironically or metaphorically, thereby creating dialogism, e.g 2:17 either constitutes straight forward metaphor or irony. A metaphorical reading confirms the myth. An ironic reading posits the possibility of a 'voice' which contradicts the myth.

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