

THE NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE OF MARK 16:8

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The bearing of Mark's narrative technique on the problem of whether Mark 16:8 was the original and intended ending of the gospel has been definitively stated by W. L. Knox.¹ He argued that the canons of narrative technique in ancient literature required that an author round off the incidents of his narrative fully, leaving nothing to the imagination. He then surveyed the endings of the major literary units in Mark as well as the conclusions of the major works of ancient popular narrative, both Jewish and Gentile, and found this canon at work in virtually every instance.² In the light of this evidence, Knox concluded in a delightfully hyperbolic manner:

To suppose that Mark originally intended to end his Gospel in this way implies that he was totally indifferent to the canons of popular story-telling, and that pure accident he happened to hit on a conclusion which suits the technique of a highly sophisticated type of modern literature. The odds against such a coincidence (even if we could for a moment entertain the idea that Mark was indifferent to canons which he observes scrupulously elsewhere in his Gospel) seem to me to be so enormous as not to be worth considering. In any case the supposition credits him with a degree of originality which would invalidate the whole method of form-criticism.³

The problem presented by Mark 16:8 is, therefore, that the absence of any parallels to other endings either within or outside of the gospel makes it probable that the ending was unintentional and, therefore, accidental.⁴

¹ W. L. Knox, "The Ending of St. Mark's Gospel," *HTR* 35 (1942) 13-23.

² It should be noted that for Knox the few exceptions to this rule, such as the end of Jonah and a few dramatic endings in John's Gospel (13:30; 18:27, 40; 19:22), are further proof of the improbability that Mark 16:8 was the intended ending. Jonah is a parable and, therefore, a different literary genre than Mark. And while John ends a few incidents dramatically in his gospel, he does not dare employ such a technique as the conclusion of his total composition. See Knox, "Ending," 16-18, 22.

³ Knox, "Ending," 22-23.

⁴ The argument, on the basis of the absence of parallels in other ancient literature, that it is impossible that a gospel ended with $\gamma\alpha\rho$ has clearly yielded to an argument favoring the possibility. The early evidence for final uses of $\gamma\alpha\rho$ was primarily endings of sentence or of brief papyri; see C. H. Kraeling's discussion of POxy. 1223 (in "A Philological Note on Mark 16.8," *JBL* 34 (1915) 357-58); also H. J. Cadbury, "Mark 16.8," *JBL* 34 (1915) 344-45. R. R. Ottley listed sentences ending with $\gamma\alpha\rho$ in Homer, Aeschylus, Euripides, and the Septuagint (in " $\epsilon\theta\omicron\beta\omicron\upsilon\nu\tau\omicron$ $\gamma\alpha\rho$ Mark 16:8," *JTS* 27 (1926) 407-9). R. H. Lightfoot further expanded this list (in *Locality and Doctrine in the Gospels* [London: Harper Brothers, 1937] 10-11). W. Bauer (in *A*

The approach to this problem here will be to identify and compare the specific narrative techniques of 16:8 with those of the endings of stories earlier in the gospel. To the degree that there is continuity in the narrative style of the endings in Mark, the probability that 16:8 was the intended and original ending increases. Three major narrative techniques can be identified in 16:8: (1) the use of extensive narrative" commentary; (2) the use of intensive inside views; and (3) the use short sentences.

I. Narrative Commentary

Narrative commentary is one of the major means by which narrator varies his manner of address to his audiences.⁵ In the biblical narrative tradition, narrative commentary is relatively uncomplicated in its basic techniques. Biblical narrators generally interrupt the reporting of the events of their stories in order to give brief notes of additional information, to translate a foreign word, or, most frequently, to explain something surprising or confusing.

Mark uses each of these types of narrative commentary. Most of the functions of his comments are correlated with three distinctive grammatical forms: (1) comments in the form of appositives; (2) comments introduced by *ἢν (ἢσῶν) δε*; (3) comments with *γᾶρ*. Appositive comments are brief interruptions within a sentence, often the first sentence of a story, which are used to give additional information about a character, a date, a place (e.g., 14:3, 10, 12, 43; 15:21, 40, 41, 42), or to introduce translations of Aramaic (e.g., 15:22, 34). Comments introduced by the formula *ἢν (ἢσῶν) δε* are sometimes used to set an overall scene (e.g., 14:1; 15:7) but more frequently provide more extensive information about a theme introduced earlier in the

Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature [2d ed; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979) 151) noted additional sentences composed of only a verb with *γᾶρ* and cited a letter of Pseudo-Demetrius, a story in the *Vita Aesopi*, and the end of the preface of Polyaeus's *Strategemata* as instances of documents concluding in a sentence composed of a verb plus *γᾶρ*. P. W. Van der Horst has most recently called attention to the ending of the 32nd treatise of Plotinus (*Ennead* 5.5). Van der Horst concludes that these treatises were created by Plotinus's student, Porphyry, who separated them by a caesura which indicates "at least a large breathing space." Both Porphyry and Plotinus, therefore, thought that it was appropriate for a treatise to end with a two word sentence with *γᾶρ*; see "Can a Book End with *γᾶρ*? A Note on Mark 16:8," *JTS* 23 (1972) 121-24.

⁵ The analytical categories for the detailed analysis of narrative technique have been developed most fully in 20th century criticism of fiction. The most comprehensive analysis of the various techniques of narration is still Wayne Booth's now classic work, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961). Narrative commentary in modern fiction has been a major area of technical experimentation and it has, as a result, become extremely diverse in its forms and styles. Booth discusses, for example, reliable and unreliable narrative commentary, ornamental commentary, commentary that is part of the dramatic structure of the story, and the various types of indirect narrative commentary in impersonal narration (e.g., 169-209, 271-309). Biblical narrators are invariably reliable and the typed of commentary vary in a much narrower range.

story (e.g., 15:25, 40). Narrative comments introduced by *γαρ* are almost always used to explain confusing or surprising events which have been reported in the previous sentence (e.g., 1:16, 22; 2:15; 3:21; 5:8, 28, 42; 6:17, 18, 20, 31, 48; 9:6, 34; 10:22; 11:13; 14:2, 40, 56; 15:10; 16:4, 8). These comments are, therefore, an answer to the anticipated questions of the audience. Since their function is to explain a previous statement, these comments usually occur in the middle or at the end of literary units within a story and not at the beginning.

In the context of Mark's use of narrative comments in the gospel as a whole, the concentration of narrative commentary in Mark 16:8 is striking.⁶ The comments are introduced by *γαρ* and therefore have the characteristic grammatical form of comments whose function is to explain puzzling elements in the previous sentence. The comments in 16:8 do clarify the reasons for the actions of the women in first fleeing from the tomb and then remaining silent. However, while these comments explain the women's flight and silence, the ending leaves any questions unanswered, such as: did the women ever tell the disciples and did Jesus appear to them in Galilee? Furthermore, the explanations themselves raise a question which the story does not go on to answer: why were the women afraid? The explanation of puzzling elements in the narrative is combined, therefore, with the introduction of these enigmatic elements.

The ending of Mark, then, raises as many questions as it answers. These observations lead us to ask whether there are other explanatory comments in Mark which come at the end of a story and which raise new questions as well as answer old ones.⁷

The narrative comments with *γαρ* earlier in Mark's Gospel generally occur in the midst of stories and provide relatively straightforward explanations of confusing or surprising elements in the narrative. However, there are two instances in which an explanatory narrative comment is the ending. Those are the stories of the walking on the water (6:45-52) and the plot of the authorities (14:1-2). In both cases the comment does raise new questions as well as answer old ones.

A. *Walking on the water*

The ending of the story is as follows:

και λιαν εκ περισσου εν εαυτοις εξισταντο, ου γαρ συνηκαν επι τοις αρτους, αλλ' ην αυτων η καρδια πεπωρωμενη.

And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

⁶ Concentrations of narrative commentary also occur in the stories of the death of John the Baptist (6:14-29; comments in 6:17, 18, 20) and the transfiguration (9:2-8; comments in 9:6).

⁷ We shall examine the endings of the literary units identified in *The Greek New Testament* published by the United Bible Societies.

This narrative comment, like 16:8, is a nexus of exegetical difficulties.⁸ It explains the disciples' amazement in two ways: first, because they failed to understand the significance of the loaves, and then because their hearts were hardened.

The first part of the comment naturally refers back to the preceding story of the feeding of the five thousand (6:30-44). But since there has been no discussion of the meaning of the loaves, or of the disciples' response to the feeding, the comment raises a question as well as answering one: what is the meaning of the loaves? This question cannot be answered with the information previously given.

The second part of the comment only increases the confusion. The reference to the hardening of the hearts brings to mind the OT motif of the responses of Pharaoh and other Gentile kings to the Israelites. The negativity of this motif implies that the disciples' amazement was somehow wrong. The explanation has the effect of increasing the enigma of both the response of the disciples and the meaning of the loaves. Why were their hearts hardened? How can disciples of Jesus be like someone as villainous as the Egyptian pharaoh?

The analysis of this comment's narrative function leads to the same conclusion as Quesnell's redactional analysis,⁹ namely, that the comment heightens the mystery surrounding the loaves. The questions raised at the end of this story are then illuminated in the rest of the narrative.

Thus, the narrative comment at the end of this story has the ambiguous impact of explaining a surprising response on the part of the disciples with a comment which in turn raises further questions. It is directly parallel in its form and function to the comments in 16:8.

B. *The plot to kill Jesus*

The narrative comment which ends this brief story and the preceding statement which it explains are:

και εζητουν οι αρχιερεις και οι γραμματεις πως αυτον εν δολω κρατησαντες
αποκτεινωσιν ελεγον γαρ, Μη εν τη εορτη, μηποτε εσται θορυβος του λαου.
And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill
him; for they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be a tumult of the people"

The narrator's report that the chief priests and scribes were now seeking to use treachery (δολος) in their plot against Jesus is a surprising development. Prior to this (11:18; 12:12), they have

⁸ For a comprehensive survey of the critical literature on Mark 6:52, see Quentin Quesnell, *The Mind of Mark* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969) 1-28.

⁹ Quesnell concludes that 6:52 is clearly a redactional addition by which Mark sought to heighten the theological significance of the loaves (see, e.g., 66-67, 176, 257-68). Furthermore, as Quesnell demonstrates, 8:14-21 deepens the enigma of the loaves even further prior to its illumination in the second half of the narrative (see, e.g., 103-24, 152-74).

sought to arrest and destroy him; but they never have resorted to actions which take them unclean in the context of the narrative's norms of judgment. Jesus' list of those things which defile a man (7:20-23) includes *δολος* (7:22). By implication, therefore, the chief priests and scribes defile themselves by this action. This new and radical development in their plot invites explanation.

Mark's explanation refers back to his notice at the beginning of the story of the imminence of the feast (14:1- *μετα δυο ημερας* = "on the second day" = "the next day")¹⁰ and to his earlier description of the authorities' fear of the crowd (11:18; 12:12). The implication of the comment is, therefore, that the authorities have resorted to treachery because of the imminence of the feast and their fear of a riot by the people. But this implication raises a tantalizing question: will they give up their efforts to arrest and kill Jesus if they cannot arrest him before the feast? This in turn implies the possibility that Jesus may be able to escape his passion and death. Thus, the comment invites reflection on earlier elements of the narrative and raises questions about what is going to happen.

Both narrative comments with *yap* which end stories earlier in Mark's Gospel are, therefore, directly parallel in their narrative function to the comments in 16:8. In contrast to the usual clarifying function of most narrative comments with *γαρ*, none of these three comments wraps up the story in a tidy little parcel, but rather each leaves several strings hanging out which invite the audience to do some work. All three comments are enigmatic and encourage reflection back to earlier elements in the narrative as well as forward to the possibilities of what may happen in the future. But, as the history of criticism shows, the final comment in 16:8 is a supremely enigmatic and provocative narrative comment.

Therefore, Knox's generalization that, apart from 16:8, Mark always rounds off the sections of his narrative without leaving anything to the imagination of his audience is inaccurate. In both of the earlier narratives which end with narrative comments, the comments have the same form and function as the comments in 16:8.

II. *Inside Views*

The inside view is a variation in narrative point of view in which the narrator describes the perceptions, thoughts, or feelings of a character. The most typical narrative point of view is that of an observer or reporter. When telling a story from this perspective, the narrator describes the events objectively. An inside view takes the audience "inside" a character and describes internal events which would not be known to an observer.

¹⁰ Mark almost certainly meant the time to be calculated in the same way as the resurrection prophecy (*μετα τρεις ημερας* in 8:31 = "on the third day"); see Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (London: St. Martin's, 1952) 528.

The inside views in Mark can be classified into two types: perceptions of the characters and descriptions of emotions.¹¹ In Mark 16:8 there are two inside views which describe emotions:¹² *ειχεν γαρ αυτας τρομος και εκστασις*, "for trembling and astonishment had come upon them," and *εθοβουντο γαρ*, "for they were afraid." Mark explains the women's flight and silence in response to the astonishing announcement of Jesus' resurrection by describing their feelings. The combination of these two inside views in a single verse focuses intense attention on the emotions of the characters.

Let us look again at earlier stories in the gospel in order to see whether another possible characteristic of Mark's narrative style is to end a story with a climax of insight into the feelings of the characters. Three earlier stories in Mark end with an inside view: the walking on the water (6:45-52), the second passion prophecy (9:30-32), and the conflict about paying taxes to Caesar (12:13-17).¹³ We shall discuss each of these, taking them up in reverse order.

A. *The conflict about paying taxes to Caesar*

The climax of this conflict narrative is an inside view of the emotional response of the Pharisees and Herodians who had sought to trap Jesus: *και εξεθαυμαζωω επ αυτω*, "And they were amazed at him." Its function is the same as that of the inside views in 16:8. It describes emotional reactions to a surprising word or action of Jesus.

B. *The second passion prophecy*

Again, at the end of this story the narrator gives us an inside view into an emotional response of the disciples to a surprising word of Jesus, namely, his reiteration of the prophecy of his passion: *οι δε ηγνοουν το ρημα, και εοβουντο αυτον επεπστησαι*, "But they did not

¹¹ The exploration of variations in narrative point of view has been one of the primary features of the development of modern fiction. "Stream-of-consciousness" narration, for example, is a sustained inside view. For the classic discussion of point of view in the modern novel, see Percy Lubbock, *The Craft of Fiction* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1921); also see Booth, *Rhetoric*, 163-65, 245-48.

¹² Representative instances of the two types of inside views in Mark are as follows: (1) Perceptions-1:10; 2:16; 3:2, 21; 5:6, 15, 32, 36; 6:48-49; 7:25; 8:33; 9:8, 25; 11:13 12:28, 34; 14:67, 69; 15:10, 35, 39; 16:5; (2) Thoughts/feelings-2:6; 3:5; 4:41; 5:29, 30, 33, 42; 6:2, 6, 19-20, 26, 34, 50-52; 7:37; 8:11; 9:6, 10, 32; 10:14, 22, 24, 26, 32, 41, 11:18, 21; 12:15, 17; 14:4, 19, 33; 15:5, 43, 44; 16:5, 8.

¹³ Two other stories in Mark end with an inside view followed by a statement in which the feeling is expressed in direct discourse: the calming of the storm (4:35-41) and the healing of the deaf and dumb man (7:31-37). While these endings are similar in their effect, since they also end with a concluding description of the emotional responses persons to actions by Jesus, they are not strictly concluding inside views. They are however, similar in terms of narrative technique and should be noted as further example of similar tendencies in Mark's methods of composition.

understand the saying, and they were afraid to ask him." In this case the content as well as the function of the inside view is the same as in 16:8. In both instances Mark describes a response of silence by Jesus' followers, a silence brought on by fear.

C. *Walking on the water*

We saw in the section on narrative commentary above that the last sentence in this story is a narrative comment. It is also an extensive inside view. And once again it is an inside view into the disciples' emotional response to a surprising action of Jesus. Furthermore, the inside view is compounded. Both the description of the disciples' amazement, which needs to be explained, and the explanation, that the disciples did not understand about the loaves because of their hardened hearts, are inside views. As a result, this is one of the most intensive insights into the characters of the gospel prior to 16:8.¹⁴ There is also another similarity between the inside views in 6:51-52 and those in 6:8. Both inside views report responses by Jesus' followers which are to some degree wrong.

Thus Mark is consistent in the way he uses inside views to end stories. In all four cases they describe emotional reactions to Jesus' surprising words or actions. Sometimes the consistency extends to an identity or similarity of content. This suggests that ending a story with a climactic insight into the feelings of his characters is for Mark a deliberate narrative technique. The double use of this device would certainly be appropriate at the climax of the gospel.

III. *Short Sentences*

A survey of the endings of narrative units in the UBS Greek text of all four gospels shows that on several occasions in each gospel a story ends with a simple and relatively brief sentence. There are three times as many instances of this in Mark as in the other three gospels. This fact is even more striking in light of the Gospel of Mark's comparative shortness.¹⁵

It is unlikely that this way of ending a story is an accident. Bultmann and others have called attention to the emphasis placed upon those elements of a story which are left until the end.¹⁶ Furthermore, one recent work on oral communication points out the emphatic effect of a short sentence which follows a longer one.¹⁷ The ending of a story with a simple, relatively short

¹⁴ For other intensive inside views in Mark, see the following stories: the woman flow of blood (5:27-30), the transfiguration (9:6, 8) and Gethsemane (14:33-35).

¹⁵ Matthew 16:4; 17:23; 26:35. Luke 1:66; 9:9; 14:6. John 10:42; 18:40. Mark 6:6; 11:14; 12:12; 17, 34, 37; 14:11, 31.

¹⁶ Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (2d ed.; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968) 191. See also Roberta L. Klatzky, *Human Memory* (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman and Company, 1975) 9, for experiments on the function of human memory which help to explain why attention to position is a good principle of style.

¹⁷ Henry Grady Davis, *Design for Preaching* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1958) 277, 279. For the oral use of the Gospel of Mark, see footnote 24.

sentence is probably, therefore, a spontaneous or deliberate¹⁸ stylistic technique at work in the composition of Mark's Gospel, a combining of the effect of brevity and final position in order to bring about maximum stress.

Are the words εοβουοντο γαρ in Mark 16:8 an independent, simple and brief sentence ending the gospel? If so, Mark 16:8 exhibits yet a third technique of narrative style which, along with narrative comments and inside views, is present in earlier parts of the gospel.

The difficulty here is that neither the UBS nor the Nestle-Aland text punctuates εοβουοντο γαρ as an independent sentence. The Nestle-Aland text precedes these words with a semicolon; the UBS, with a comma. Nor do translators treat these words as a separate sentence. The RSV, NEB and Jerusalem Bible all precede them by a comma. If we are to argue, then, that the ending of Mark's story of the resurrection exhibits yet a third narrative characteristic of the ending of other stories in the gospel, we are going to have to show that the last two words really should be taken as an independent sentence and not as simply a new clause in a compound sentence.¹⁹ Two considerations lead us to regard εοβουοντο γαρ as a separate sentence. We shall take them up in turn.

The first is a grammatical consideration which at least allows the possibility of a separate sentence. One modern discussion of grammar defines a sentence as "any locution (word, phrase, clause, or sentence) spoken or punctuated as an independent unit of discourse."²⁰ It may be "complete" or "incomplete." A complete sentence is one which includes a subject and predicate and makes sense on its own as an independent assertion.²¹ In addition, a sentence may be related to what has gone before it either asyndetically or by means of a more or less ambiguous particle or conjunction. Blass-Debrunner-Funk cites ουν, δε, and και as such particles,²² but γαρ must be added to the list, since both Nestle-Aland and the UBS text often precede a γαρ clause with a period.²³ The presence of a particle or conjunction is often the source of our difficulty in

¹⁸ See David Noel Freedman, "Pottery, Poetry and Prophecy: An Essay on Biblical Poetry," *JBL* 96 (1977) 12, regarding the validity of contemporary observations about poetic style regardless of whether the stylistic device was conscious or unconscious for the poet.

¹⁹ The punctuation of NT texts is largely a modern editorial creation. This statement of J. H. Moulton is, therefore, worthy of quotation: "When ... we use an extremely careful edition like that of WH, where punctuations in text and in margin are constantly determining the meaning for us, we must always be careful to realize our freedom to take our own line on sufficient reason." In J. H. Moulton and W. F. Howard, *A Grammar of the New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1968) 2.48.

²⁰ Newman P. and Genevieve B. Birk, *Understanding and Using English* (3d ed.; New York: Odyssey, 1958) 550.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 551.

²² *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961) 241.

²³ In both editions of the Greek text we find a period before a γαρ clause in these passages in Mark: 4:25; 5:8; 6:17, 31; 7:10; 8:35, 36; 9:6, 41; 13:8; 14:7.

knowing whether or not we should regard the clause which contains it as a new sentence or as a continuation of the sentence which has gone before. Its relationship to what goes before must be sufficiently loose as to make it at least appropriate, if not necessary, to come to a full stop before it. The presence of the conjunction or particle by no means guarantees that it is a continuation of the sentence which has gone before. In the case of both the *γάρ* clauses in 16:8, it is just as possible to precede each with a full stop as with a relatively minor pause (either a semicolon or comma). These two narrative comments serve to explain the preceding statements that the women fled and that they remained silent, but they do not by any means have to be a part of the preceding sentences.

Secondly, we must consider the fact that the Gospel of Mark was surely composed to be heard rather than to be read in silence.²⁴ It may even have been composed and delivered orally before it was written down.²⁵ The problem in relation to the punctuation of 16:8 is, therefore, to determine the probable character of the pause which Mark and those who read his gospel aloud made prior to the last two words of 16:8. Was it only a hesitation, or was it a major pause accompanied by a full breath?

In the earlier discussion of narrative comments above, we observed that the function of comments with *γάρ* is to answer questions which have been raised by the previous statement. Prior to each *γάρ* clause in 16:8, Mark reports an extremely surprising and puzzling action by the women. He first says that, in response to the young man's command to go and tell the news to the disciples, the women "fled" (εουγον). This word reverberates with the connotations of its previous use in the report of the reactions of the disciples and the young man at Jesus' arrest. The report is, therefore, a surprise and raises the question, "Why did they flee?" The explanation answers this question. If the function of this report of the women's flight and its explanation was first to raise question and then to answer it, the narrator necessarily paused long enough to give his listeners a chance to feel surprise and wonder at the women's response. In view of its function, the probability is that the narrator made a full stop prior to the explanation. Since a full stop is permitted by the grammar, the first *γάρ* clause should be read as separate sentence.

The same factors are present to an even greater degree in the report and explanation of the women's silence. The report evokes the questions, "Why were they silent? Why didn't they obey the young man and announce this wonderful news?!" The *γάρ* clause, εοοβουντο γαρ, is an

²⁴ In the ancient world even when a person read to himself, he read aloud rather than in silence. This is clear from such passages as the story in Acts 8:26-40 about the Ethiopian eunuch who was reading alone in his chariot when Philip came up to him and heard him reading, and also from Augustine's discussion in *Confessions* 6.3 of Ambrose's curious practice of reading silently (*vox autem et lingua quiescebant ... eum legentem vidimus ta ite et aliter numquam*).

²⁵ See Martin Hengel, "Mc 7, 3 πωγμα," *ZNW* 60 (1969) 192 n. 50: "Vermutlich ist gerade das Mkevg. nicht rein als literarisches Werk zu betrachten, sondern wurde bereits vor seiner schriftlichen Fixierung im Gottesdienst der Gemeinde vorgetragen. Seine stilistischen Züge weisen nicht nur auf einen literarisch ungeübten Vf., sondern zu gleicher Zeit auf einen sehr versierten volkstümlichen Erzähler hin."

answer to that question. The force of the narrator's answer to the question depended upon the narrator allowing his listeners enough time to ask the question themselves. In order to allow that time, he needed to come to a full stop. It is probable, therefore, that Mark's final two-word answer was also a separate sentence.

If Mark did intend that 16:8 be presented orally in this manner there is a climactic concentration of increasingly shorter sentences in this verse. The four sentences have consecutively six, six, four, and two, words. The final two-word sentence is a climactic use of a narrative technique which is present throughout the gospel.

IV. *Conclusion*

Mark employs the same narrative technique which he uses in 16:8 to end earlier stories in his gospel. Furthermore, in 16:8 he uses these techniques in a concentrated and climactic manner. Combinations of these techniques do occur at the conclusion of earlier stories. Mark 6:5 is both an inside view and a narrative comment, while 12:17 is both an inside view and a short final sentence. But in 16:8 there is a combination of all three techniques as well as a multiple use of two of them. This concentration seems particularly appropriate for the ending of a story which brings to a close the gospel narrative as a whole. Consequently, purely from the point of view of the possibilities of narrative style, it is probable that Mark did indeed intend to end his gospel at 16:8.

In view of this, Knox's argument that Mark could not possibly have hit upon a narrative style that anticipated by some 1500 years the development of modern narrative techniques appears less likely. A relatively safe prediction would be, however, that further instances of similar techniques for ending a narrative will be discovered both in the biblical narrative tradition and in ancient popular narratives. In that case inheritance as well as inspiration may prove to have contributed to the unique enigma of the ending of Mark.