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Introduction

The question I will confront in this monograph is whether there is a turning point in the Gospel of Mark, that is, a pivot on which the entire narrative turns. A second and related question is: If such a pivot exists, then what is it? I believe there exists such a turning point in the Gospel of Mark and I hold it to be (broadly stated for now) in Mark's middle section (8:22—10:52).[1] I am not alone in this determination. Several scholars have observed a major climax and turning point in this section of the narrative. The second question—what precisely is the turning point?—is more difficult to answer and constitutes the burden of this book. If, as I will argue, the author constructed the Gospel with a decisive midpoint in mind, then how or in what way does the presentation of the turning point have an impact on the primary objective in writing, namely, the presentation or identity of Jesus?[2] To put it another way, what is the relationship of the narrative's turning point to Markan Christology?

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1. It is generally acknowledged that the Gospel of Mark is anonymous. Determining the identity of the author is beyond the scope of this work. I will refer to the author as "Mark" (without the use of the quotation marks) only for ease and to facilitate reading. In so doing, I am not making a statement for or against any particular author. For the various proposals regarding authorship, see the major commentaries and especially Black, *Images of an Apostolic Interpreter*, 1–73.

2. Not everyone holds the primary purpose of the Gospel of Mark to be the identity of Jesus. Gundry (*Mark*, 1), for example, sees the Gospel as an apology for the cross: "The Gospel of Mark contains no ciphers, no hidden meanings, no sleight of hand . . . Mark's meaning lies on the surface. He writes a straightforward apology for the Cross." Evans (*Mark 8:27—16:20*, xi) has written a commentary that is "in essential agreement with Gundry's interpretation" [of the purpose of the Gospel]. In support of my conclusion, see Hooker, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 19: "The gospel is about 'good news about Jesus Christ,' and the whole book is focused on the figure of Jesus." More recently, Maloney (*Jesus' Urgent Message for Today*, 42) agrees: "To summarize the Christology of Mark's Gospel is very difficult since almost the entire narrative focuses on Jesus' identity."

In order to introduce this topic, I need to establish the context for determining *the* turning point in the Gospel, which will involve an examination of the structure or sequencing of the Gospel. After reviewing the proposals surrounding the various ways to outline the Gospel, I will examine the literary device of "turning point," including how the question of gospel genre influences the discussion. Finally, I will provide a general overview of the plot of Mark's Gospel, which will serve to introduce my proposal for the identification of Mark's turning point.

THE STRUCTURE OF MARK'S GOSPEL

Interpreters interested in the structure of Mark's Gospel have searched diligently for a coherent organizing principle in order to make sense of the narrative. Coming up with a conclusive outline or structure to the Gospel of Mark is difficult.[3] One reason may be the seemingly disjunctive manner in which Mark assembled the materials at his disposal. Eusebius, for example, says that Papias claimed that (according to "the Presbyter") Mark did not arrange the stories of Jesus in any particular order.[4] Toward the end of the nineteenth century, Martin Kähler insisted that all the Gospels are "passion narratives with extended introductions."[5] Accordingly, scholarly opinion

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See also Kingsbury, *Christology of Mark's Gospel*, ix.

[3] The late Robert Guelich (*Mark 1:1—8:26*, xxxvi) noted that "[o]ne might well despair of finding any structure or outline for Mark's Gospel based on consensus. The suggestions are as diverse as the individual commentators." More recently, Marcus (*Mark 1–8*, 62) agrees: "Of the making of many Markan outlines, there is, seemingly, no end."

[4] Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.15. The actual quote (from Kirsopp Lake's translation in *The Ecclesiastical History*, 297) is: "And the Presbyter used to say this, 'Mark became Peter's interpreter and wrote accurately all that he remembered, not, indeed, in order, of the things said or done by the Lord. For he had not heard the Lord, nor had he followed him, but later on, as I said, followed Peter, who used to give teaching as necessity demanded but not making, as it were, an arrangement of the Lord's oracles, so that Mark did nothing wrong in thus writing down single points as he remembered them. For to one thing he gave attention, to leave out nothing of what he had heard and to make no false statements in them.'" For a helpful discussion of Papias and his observations, see Black, *Images of an Apostolic Interpreter*, 82–94.

[5] Kähler, *The So-Called Historical Jesus*, 80, n.11. While the phrase quoted above is well known, Kähler's subsequent sentence in the footnote is less familiar: "Mark 8:27 to 9:13, the group of events from Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi to the transfiguration on the mountain, show clearly where the emphasis lies for the narrator." In many ways, as I hope to show below, this monograph seeks to develop Kähler's lesser-known phrase.

regarding the structure of the Gospel abound.[6] While it is possible to oversimplify matters, the Gospel of Mark has generally been outlined in one of four ways: (1) topographically, along geographic movements in the Gospel; (2) thematically, highlighting a particular theme or the development of a theme such as Christology, discipleship, or faith; (3) topically, with Jesus' teaching and healing ministry as the first major section and Jesus' death and resurrection as the second; or (4) rhetorically, seeking some literary or persuasive device by which to distinguish the material.[7]

Topographical Outlines

One of the first commentators of Mark's Gospel in the twentieth century, Benjamin W. Bacon, divides the material topographically.[8] Simply stated, he sees two major divisions of material: Part I relates to Jesus' Galilean ministry (1:1—8:26) and Part II concerns Jesus' Judean ministry (8:27—16:8). More recently, James R. Edwards shares the view of Bacon by stating that the narrative falls naturally into the same two halves.[9] Vincent Taylor expands this twofold structure into six major divisions (after a prologue) in his outline of the Gospel: (1) the Galilean ministry (1:14—3:6); (2) the height of the Galilean ministry (3:7—6:13); (3) the ministry beyond Galilee (6:14—8:26); (4) Caesarea Philippi and the journey to Jerusalem (8:27—10:52); (5) the ministry in Jerusalem (11:1—13:37); (6) the passion and resurrection narrative (14:1—16:8).[10] Many other commentators use topography as a means of examining the makeup of the Gospel.[11]

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[6] There are several good surveys of the various proposals for the structure of Mark. For a now rather dated overview (with helpful chart), see Baarlink, *Anfängliches Evangelium*, 73–83, esp. 75–78. More recent surveys include Cook, *Structure and Persuasive Power of Mark*, 11–86 and Larsen, "The Structure of Mark's Gospel," 140–60.

[7] My four categories are similar to that of Larsen ("The Structure of Mark's Gospel," 143–55), who proposes the following: (1) topography/geography; (2) theological themes; (3) *Sitz im Leben* of the recipients; and (4) literary factors.

[8] Bacon, *Beginnings of Gospel Story*, vi–vii.

[9] Edwards, *Gospel according to Mark*, 20–21.

[10] Taylor, *Gospel According to St. Mark*, 105–13.

[11] Others who divide the Gospel topographically include Bryan, *A Preface to Mark*, 83; Cranfield, *Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 15; Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 86–87; Harrington, "The Gospel According to Mark," 598; Hauck, *Das Evangelium des Markus*, vii–x; Klostermann, *Das Markusevangelium*, 1; Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 82–83; Lührmann, *Das Markusevangelium*, vii–ix; Schnelle, *History and Theology of the New Testament Writings*, 204–5; and Swete, *Gospel According to St. Mark*.

Using topography as the signal feature in developing a Markan outline is not, however, without problems, especially within the portrayal of Jesus' Galilean ministry (1:14—8:26). For example, in the so-called parable chapter (Mark 4), Jesus teaches in a boat alongside the sea (4:1–9). In 4:10, when he was alone, those around him with the Twelve (οἱ περὶ αὐτὸν σὺν τοῖς δώδεκα) ask about the parable he had told at the seashore. His response to this inquiry has been given the label "parable theory," for in it Jesus sets forth the essence of his teaching in parables: to *you* (plural) the secret (τὸ μυστήριον) of the kingdom has been given, but to those on the outside (τοῖς ἔξω) everything is in parables (4:11–12). Jesus then explains in allegorical fashion the meaning of the parable of the sower (4:13–20) and continues with no mention of a change of venue by offering three additional parables: a light under a bushel (4:21–25), the growing seed (4:26–29), and the mustard seed (4:30–32). In 4:33, the narrator explains that with many such parables he spoke *to them* (αὐτοῖς). A reader would naturally assume that the "them" to whom Jesus was speaking was the Twelve and those around him in the private setting of 4:10–12. There has, after all, been no mention of a change in Jesus' location in the narrative or any reentry of others into the conversation. Yet 4:34 indicates that he (Jesus) did not speak *to them* (αὐτοῖς) without a parable, *but* privately to his own disciples he explained everything. There is a distinct contrast between the "them" in 4:33–34 and the disciples in 4:34. A reader would assume that the subsequent three parables (4:21–32) were spoken only to the disciples and those with Jesus (in private), but the closing statement indicates a shift whereby others (presumably the crowd) must have heard Jesus speak these parables since he explained everything privately to the disciples (something that is only mentioned in regards to the parable of the sower, 4:13–20). Has there been a change of location that the narrator has not identified? Should a reader assume geographic consistency unless given reasons to believe otherwise? Geography or topography, in this case, is an impediment to a precise understanding of the nature of Jesus' parables.[12]

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Using the geographic schema in a different manner is Marxsen (*Mark the Evangelist*, 54–116). Marxsen assumes that Mark's geographic scheme does not represent history; rather, it represents the theological/redactional understanding of the author and thus provides the key to the Gospel.

12. Marcus ("Blanks and Gaps in the Markan Parable of the Sower," 247–62, esp. 249) argues that these confusing "stage directions" form a narrative "blank," an inadvertent failure on behalf of the author to supply necessary information or an accidental transmission of confusing narrative signals.

Another topographical dilemma in the Galilee cycle occurs in Mark 6. In 6:45, Jesus instructs his disciples to get into a boat and go to Bethsaida while he remained behind to pray (6:46). The precise location of their whereabouts is uncertain—the text (6:31, 35) simply indicates that they were at a "lonely place" (ἔρημος). Based on the details of the pericope (6:30–44, the feeding of the five thousand), it is clear that Jesus and his disciples were on the "Jewish side" of the Sea of Galilee. During the night, as Jesus was alone on the shore praying, the disciples were getting nowhere in the boat because of the wind (6:48). Seeing their struggle, Jesus came to them walking on the water. When he got into the boat with them the wind ceased, confusing the disciples (6:51–52). The narrative then states (rather awkwardly) "when they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret, and moored to the shore."[13] The disciples (now with Jesus) land not at Bethsaida—the intended destination according to 6:45 but rather Gennesaret, which does not actually represent a "crossing over" the sea—at least not in the Markan sense. Gennesaret is on the northwest, or Jewish, shore of the Sea of Galilee while Bethsaida is on the northeast (i.e., Gentile) shore. Paul J. Achtemeier attributes this geographic confusion to the rearrangement of traditional material by the author.[14] Werner H. Kelber offers a similar explanation:[15] "In the pre-Markan miracle catena the story of the walking on the sea, introduced by reference to departure for Bethsaida (6:45), was directly linked with the story of the blind man of Bethsaida (8:22–26), likewise introduced by reference to Bethsaida (8:22). Mark displaced the latter because he considered it the journey to the south." Elizabeth Struthers Malbon suggests that the geographical discrepancy is attributable to the fear

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[13] So the *RSV*. The Greek is καὶ διαπεράσαντες ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ἦλθον εἰς Γεννησαρὲτ καὶ προσωρμίσθησαν. The issue is what the prepositional phrase ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν modifies, the adverbial participle διαπεράσαντες or the proper noun Γεννησαρέτ. The syntactical position of the phrase (i.e., following the participle διαπεράσαντες) suggests a translation of "and after crossing over upon the land they came to Gennesaret . . ." Such a translation, however, does not account for the presence of προσωρμίσθησαν (they were moored to shore). The author of the Gospel of Matthew apparently sees this tension and attempts to smooth the awkward syntax by shifting the prepositional phrase so that it follows the verb ἦλθον (see Matt 14:34).

[14] Achtemeier, "Toward the Isolation of Pre-Markan Miracle Catenae," 265–91, esp. 283.

[15] Kelber, *The Kingdom of God in Mark*, 58. In a later work (*Mark's Story of Jesus*, 37), Kelber is misleading when he states, "After arrival on the Gentile side, Jesus performs a vast number of healings at Gennesaret (6:53–56)." A reader would get the impression that Gennesaret is on the eastern/Gentile side of the Sea of Galilee when in fact it is not.

of the disciples to move out beyond their comfort zone and go to Gentile land. The language is stressed: Jesus *made* (ἠνάγκασεν) his disciples get into the boat and go to the other side (6:45). The Greek implies that Jesus is asking them to do something against their will. Yet, to Malbon, Jesus is asking them to do precisely what he has already done—move beyond his own people and tradition into Gentile territory.[16] The disciples launch out in the boat but are unable to make any progress because the wind was against them. They react to Jesus approaching them on water with fear (6:50) and surprise (6:51)—two reactions that represent failure. Their failure is highlighted by their return to the Jewish side of the sea (6:53). The story of the disciples' failure illustrates the concerns many scholars have "when trying to use topography to determine sub-points within a section."[17]

Thematic Outlines

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Other interpreters have attempted to identify a coherent theme such as Christology, faith, or discipleship, or they address the structure of the narrative from the perspective of rhetorical motifs and/or other narrative features. Jack Dean Kingsbury stresses the identity of Jesus (and the "problem" of the secrecy motif) as the major focus of Mark's Gospel. In so doing, he argues that Mark's presentation of Jesus is that of the Davidic Messiah-King, the Son of God, who is also Son of Man.[18] Kingsbury then divides the Gospel into three main parts. The first part (1:1–13) comprises frame material and the beginning of the narrative proper, where John introduces Jesus' identity. The second part (1:14—8:26) depicts Jesus ministering through preaching, calling disciples, teaching, healing, and exorcizing demons in and around Galilee. The third part (8:27—16:8) treats Jesus' journey to Jerusalem and his suffering, death, and resurrection.[19] The driving feature of Kingsbury's analysis is Mark's presentation of Jesus—each part imparts information on the author's view of Jesus.[20] He offers an understanding of Jesus that attempts to take seriously the cryptic "secrecy" motif, which occupies a central place in the narrative, and to deal with the so-called "corrective Christologies."[21] Kingsbury's Christology, which will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 5, presents Jesus as the Davidic Messiah-King who is Son of God and Son of Man. Christology, no doubt, is a crucial theme in the Gospel of Mark. Yet it is not the sole theme of importance to this author and consequently, along with the other motifs that will be mentioned below, cannot be the *exclusive* organizing principle by which the narrative is constructed.

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[16] Malbon, *Narrative Space and Mythic Meaning*, 28.

[17] Larsen, "Structure of Mark's Gospel," 144.

[18] Kingsbury, *Christology of Mark's Gospel*, 55.

[19] Ibid., 50–51.

[20] For another division of the Gospel of Mark along christological lines, see Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 390. His division is quite broad: Part 1: Who Jesus Is (1:1—8:38); Part 2: Jesus Is Going to Die (9:1—16:8).

The conversion of the Twelve, however, is not only a major theme in the Gospel of Mark, but "the organizing principle by which Mark structures his Gospel," according to Richard V. Peace.[22] Mark has chosen to write this account of the life and ministry of Jesus for evangelistic purposes from the perspective of the Twelve—and in particular their step-by-step process of turning—with the hope that "his readers will follow this same path of discovery as the Twelve and so become, like them, disciples of Jesus."[23] Conversion—which involves repentance, faith, transformation—is the theme that plays "the controlling part" in the unfolding of the Gospel of Mark. This process of turning describes the gradual turning from a misunderstanding of who Jesus is to a complete and radically new understanding.[24] Peace proposes an outline that highlights this theme of conversion. He divides the Gospel into two parts (1:16—8:30; 8:31—15:39). The two parts are subdivided into six units, each of which highlights two features: (1) the title by which the Twelve come to understand Jesus; and (2) the facet of conversion that Mark points out in this unit.[25]

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[21] The corrective Christologies of which Kingsbury speaks hold that in the mind of the Evangelist the titles Son of God and Messiah/Christ were defective. He was offering a "corrective" or alternative by his presentation of Jesus as Son of Man. See Kingsbury, *Christology of Mark's Gospel*, 25–45. On the messianic secret motif, see esp. Wrede, *Messianic Secret*; Tuckett, ed., *Messianic Secret*; Räisänen, *The "Messianic Secret" in Mark*; and Telford, *Theology of the Gospel of Mark*, 41–54.

[22] Peace, *Conversion in the New Testament*, 107.

[23] Ibid., 110.

[24] Ibid., 112.

[25] Ibid., 115–16. Peace defends the validity of this structure in four ways: "(1) by showing that each unit has an independent literary structure that consciously sets it apart from the other units; (2) by showing that each of the proposed transition points between units bears similar stylistic characteristics indicating that it was Mark's intention to shift at that point to a new topic; (3) by showing that Mark has bracketed each unit so as to identify it as a unit of material that is to be interpreted together; and (4) by showing that Mark carefully uses the titles for Jesus so that no title used by 'the people' until the unit in which Jesus is revealed to possess that title."

Peace employs these features in the following outline:[26]

1. Prologue: The preparation of Jesus for ministry (1:1–15)
2. Part I: The discovery that Jesus is the Messiah (1:16—8:30)
    - A. Unit One: Jesus the teacher (1:16—4:34) [*Embracing the Word*]
    - B. Unit Two: Jesus the prophet (4:35—6:30) [*Faith*]
    - C. Unit Three: Jesus the Messiah (6:31—8:30) [*Repentance*]
3. Part II: The discovery that Jesus is the Son of God (8:31—15:39)
    - A. Unit Four: Jesus the Son of Man (8:31—10:45) [*Discipleship*]
    - B. Unit Five: Jesus the Son of David (10:46—13:37) [*Repentance*]
    - C. Unit Six: Jesus the Son of God (14:1—15:39) [*Repentance*]
4. Epilogue: The conclusion of Jesus' ministry (15:40—16:8)

There is much to be said for Peace's outline and discussion of structure. First, Peace's emphasis on conversion does not ignore christological concerns. As each unit heading emphasizes, Jesus in Mark is depicted as teacher, prophet, Messiah, Son of Man, Son of David, and Son of God. Two of these titles—Messiah and Son of God—remind a reader of the opening line of the Gospel (1:1).[27] Second, as I will argue later, Christology and discipleship (of which Peace has put forward an important aspect with the emphasis on conversion) are one and the same. When one understands the identity of Jesus properly, the natural response is to follow in discipleship. Finally, the major divide in Peace's outline occurs at 8:30 after the so-called confession of Peter and response by Jesus. It is this (and the subsequent) pericope that I propose is the key scene in Mark's Gospel. Peace (for different reasons than I) sees the importance of this passage in the larger Markan story.

The narrow theme of faith is chosen as the Gospel's principle organizing feature in Christopher D. Marshall's work, *Faith as a Theme in Mark's Narrative*.[28] In this work, the Gospel is structured not sequentially but

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[26] Ibid., 123–24. I have added the italicized material in order to highlight the aspect of conversion that Peace suggests.

[27] There is, of course, a significant textual issue in 1:1, namely, the inclusion of the title "Son of God" (υἱοῦ θεοῦ). This textual issue will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 5.

[28] Marshall, *Faith as a Theme in Mark's Narrative*.

along rubrics related to the narrative's logic: the call to faith (1:14–15); the place of miracles in the call to faith (1:27, 44; 2:10, 12; 3:3–6; 4:40–41; 5:19; 6:2–3; 7:36–37); faith and the powerless (2:1–12; 5:21–24, 35–43; 5:24–34; 9:14–29; 10:46–52); faith and discipleship (1:14–20; 10:46–52; 13:5–6, 21–23; 9:42; 11:20–25); and the nature of unbelief (from adversaries, 2:1–12; 6:1-6a; 11:27–33; 15:27–32; from disciples, 4:35–41; 9:14–29).[29] Marshall suggests that Mark's purpose is best understood pastorally—namely, "to instruct and strengthen the faith of his readers by involving them in the story of Jesus in such a way that those features of his teaching and example that Mark has chosen to narrate are experienced as directly relevant to their present needs."[30] Thus, faith becomes the dominant hermeneutical lens through which the entire Gospel should be read.

Christology, conversion, and faith are not the only themes that have been used by interpreters to outline the Gospel of Mark. Ernst Best has championed the theme of discipleship in Mark.[31] Best articulates his study of Mark in three parts: Part I, the Disciple and the Cross (8:27—9:1; 9:2–8, 9–13, 14–29, 30–32, 33–50; 10:1–12, 13–16, 17–31, 32–34, 35–45; 8:22–26/10:46–52); Part II, The Disciple and the World (1:16–20; 2:14; 3:13–19; 6:6b–13, 30; 14:28; and 16:7); and Part III, The Disciple and the Community (14:27–28; 6:34 and the community in general).[32] As does Marshall, Best argues that the main purpose behind Mark was pastoral: "to build up his readers as Christians and show them what true discipleship is," namely, following Jesus.[33]

Another motif that interpreters propose as the primary organizing principle of the Gospel is that of rejection and misunderstanding.[34] Eduard Schweizer observes a threefold pattern in the Gospel of Mark that involves (1) a calling to follow Jesus; (2) rejection of Jesus' call; and (3) a transitional summary statement by the narrator.[35] This pattern in the first half of the Gospel is thus:

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[29] Ibid., vii–viii.

[30] Ibid., 6.

[31] Best, *Following Jesus*. Schweizer ("Portrayal of the Life of Faith in the Gospel of Mark," 387–99) argues that "following Jesus" is a metaphor that unveils the profound relations between believer and the living Lord. A more recent work—focusing on the disciples (not necessarily discipleship as Best's work does)—is Shiner, *Follow Me!*

[32] Ibid., 6–7.

[33] Ibid., 12.

[34] Larsen, "Structure of Mark's Gospel," 146.

[35] Schweizer, "Portrayal of the Life of Faith," 388.

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1. Calling to follow Jesus
    - Disciples (1:16–20)
    - Selection of the Twelve (3:13–19)
    - Sending of the Twelve (6:7–13)
2. Rejection
    - By Pharisees (3:6)
    - By his fellow citizens (6:1–6a)
    - By disciples (8:14–21)
3. Transitional Summaries
    - Jesus' healing (3:7–12)
    - Jesus' teaching (6:6b)
    - Opening of blind eyes (8:22–26)

In the middle section of the Gospel (8:27—10:52), there are three predictions regarding Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection (8:27–32a; 9:30–32; 10:32–34). Each of the predictions is followed by a misunderstanding of the disciples and a call to follow Jesus (8:32b—9:1; 9:33–50; 10:35–45). The final scene of Jesus opening the eyes of Bartimaeus (10:46–52) forms another transitional pericope. The concluding section of Mark's Gospel (according to Schweizer) deviates from this pattern by presenting two main concerns—the temple in Jerusalem (11:1—13:37) and the passion/resurrection of Jesus (14:1—16:8). Schweizer's point is clear: "Even those who would disagree about some of the details would agree on *three main points* made by this structure of the whole Gospel: (1) Jesus is, throughout the Gospel, rejected by men . . . ; (2) man is called to follow Jesus . . . ; and (3) Jesus cannot be understood without his cross."[36]

In some ways, each of these key themes—whether it is Christology, conversion, faith, discipleship, or rejection/misunderstanding—does identify a primary concern of Mark. Yet precisely because *each* of these themes is present in the narrative, it is hard to choose *one* of them as dominant. Themes in Mark are interconnected with one another.[37] One would

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[36] Ibid., 389; emphasis original.

[37] I am reminded of the landmark study of Robert Tannehill, whose essay "The Disciples in Mark" ushered in the narrative-critical perspective into Markan studies. One might think that if the disciples carry a primary role in Mark, then discipleship

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be hard pressed to look at discipleship alone without taking into account Mark's presentation of "Who is this?" (4:41). Rejection and misunderstanding by those with an interest in Jesus—Pharisees, fellow citizens, and disciples—would not be as forceful as a motif if it were not juxtaposed to the faith of others (primarily minor characters).[38] Especially in a narrative, as opposed to an epistle, themes are not applied rigidly, but move in and out of the narrative, giving the entire presentation texture. As Dewey observes, "A scholar's outline of Mark tells us more about which aspect of the Gospel narrative is his or her focus than it does about Mark's structure."[39]

Topical Outlines

A number of commentators outline the Gospel along topical lines, with Jesus' healing and teaching ministry as the first major section and Jesus' death and resurrection as the second.[40] In many ways, such a manner of outlining Mark's Gospel dates back to the Gospel's first commentator—an unknown person referred to as "Pseudo-Jerome."[41] Though this author does not mention an "organizing principle" as I have been describing, he does exhibit a heightened interest in the miracles of Jesus, which he uses as a structuring element for the Gospel.[42] For example, he comments: "Mark

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would be a dominant theme. However, this work was supplemented two years later with Tannehill's "Gospel of Mark as Narrative Christology." Thematic studies, while valuable, cannot be given exclusive pride of place.

[38] On the faith of the minor characters, see esp. Malbon, "Major Importance of the Minor Characters," 58–86; repr., Malbon, *In the Company of Jesus*, 189–225. See also Williams, *Other Followers of Jesus*.

[39] Dewey, "Mark as Interwoven Tapestry," 235.

[40] For this treatment, see esp. Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels*, 115–25; Gnilka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, 1:32; Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, v–viii; Hare, *Mark*, 7–8; Hurtado, *Mark*, xxiv; Lagrange, *Évangile selon Saint Marc*, lix–lxx; Lane, *Gospel according to Mark*, 29–32; Malley, "Gospel According to Mark," 21–61, esp. 23–24; Mann, *Mark*, 87–93; Schweizer, *Good News According to Mark*, 7–10; and Williamson, *Mark*, 150–63.

[41] Pseudo-Jerome, *Expositio quattuor Evangeliorum*, *PL* 30:531–90. For an English translation of this work, see Cahill, ed., *The First Commentary on Mark*. On the identification of this work as "the first Markan commentary," see Cahill, "Identification of the First Markan Commentary".

[42] See Cahill's observations (*First Commentary*, 5) in his Introduction to the English translation of the commentary. He notes that the author of this commentary structured the Gospel according to fifteen miracles (*virtutes* in Latin) of Jesus, omitting from the list

arranged the passages of the Gospel in view of the Gospel itself and not for their own sake. He did not follow the order of the story but followed the order of the mysteries. This is why he tells the story of the first miracle as occurring on the sabbath."[43] Thus, a configuration device used by an early commentator of Mark's Gospel was the various miracles of Jesus. Such an observation is indeed helpful, but it can hardly be the primary organizing element Gospel since the last (i.e., fifteenth) *virtus* performed by Jesus (according to Pseudo-Jerome) occurs in Mark 10 with the healing of Bartimaeus. How would such a proposal outline the last six chapters?

A more recent example of a topical treatment, though not one focusing on the mighty deeds of Jesus, is the work by John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington.[44] They divide the Gospel into three major sections, each described by the content of the section. The first major section (1:1 [*sic*]—8:22) is entitled "Jesus as the Anointed Son of God Proclaims in Galilee the Imminence of God's Reign in Powerful Words and Deeds." The second section (8:27—10:45) is entitled "Journey to Jerusalem Where Jesus, as God's Son, Is the Son of Man Who Must Suffer, Die, and Rise Again. His Life Is a Ransom for Many." The final section (11:1—16:8) is entitled "Jesus in Jerusalem: Conflict of Kingdoms; Farwell Address of Jesus; Passion, Death, and Resurrection." This outline is but one example of many that focuses upon the content of the Mark's message, and while often such outlines observe geographic movements in the Gospel, the content-driven outlines tend to group the various pericopae around the movement and work of the Gospel's central character, Jesus.[45]

The strength of such a topical approach is that the outline proposed closely follows the text of the Gospel, which in turn follows the life and ministry of Jesus from his initial appearing (1:9) to his burial (15:46). There

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the cure of the woman (Mark 5:25) and the walking on water (Mark 6:48).

[43] Cahill, *First Commentary*, 38.

[44] Donahue and Harrington, *Gospel of Mark*, 46–50. Though Donahue and Harrington opt for this type of outline, they do observe the difficulty in choosing one overriding structure: "It might be best to think of Mark as a series of overlays that comprise multiple structures and modes of composition" (47).

[45] Interpreters who combine topographical and topical elements in outlining the Gospel include Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 127; Elwell and Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament*, 90; Gould, *Gospel According to St. Mark*, xiii–xvi; Guelich, *Mark 1:1—8:26*, xxxvii; Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story*, 14; Johnson, *Writings of the New Testament*, 169–78; Johnson, *Gospel According to St. Mark*, 24–26; Juel, *Mark*, 23–26; Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus*, 5–6; Nineham, *Gospel of St Mark*, 27–29; and Painter, *Mark's Gospel*, ix–xiv.

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is no abstract attempt on the part of the interpreter to "reduce" the Gospel to a single discernable theme or to categorize the material under the broad category of geography. In this linear form of presentation, very little substantive material risks being lost or subsumed under a false title. To many, this "life of Jesus" approach (to borrow a phrase from the [first] quest for the historical Jesus) is appealing, especially given the Evangelist's interest in Jesus' passion.[46] One is reminded again of Kähler's observation that the Gospel is a passion narrative with an extended introduction.

However, Mark's Gospel is not simply a collection of stories about Jesus loosely strung together as if it resembled a "string of pearls."[47] Rather, it is a well-crafted story from a gifted storyteller.[48] As a result, the author uses literary techniques such as foreshadowing, intercalation, hinge passages, and *inclusiones* to tell the story of Jesus.[49] Many of these features provide clues to a more appropriate manner of structuring the Gospel. It is to these literary features that I now turn.

Literary and Rhetorical Outlines

The rise in literary analysis as it relates to biblical criticism not only gave rise to thematic studies of Mark's Gospel but also accounts for an increased tendency to look for rhetorical or other narrative-related clues in the text by which to discern a structure.[50] While there is confusion over the governing principles of rhetorical criticism versus narrative criticism, the basic

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[46] For an examination of the "quest for the historical Jesus," see Schweitzer, *Quest of the Historical Jesus*.

[47] Schmidt, "Die Stellung der Evangelien in der allgemeinen Literaturgeschichte, 50–134, esp. 127.

[48] For a discussion of Mark as storyteller, see Best, *Gospel as Story*, 128–33; and Moloney, *Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist*, 47–121.

[49] Dewey ("Mark as Interwoven Tapestry," 225) offers a helpful list of these devices: "theme, manifest content, particular aspects of content such as setting, geography, or characters, form-critical type, and rhetorical devices such as key and hook words, inclusios, intercalations and frames, parallel and chiastic repetitions." "These means," she adds, "may be used to structure a single episode, to interrelate a few episodes, or to interconnect an entire narrative."

[50] For narrative criticism and the Gospel of Mark, see Malbon, "Narrative Criticism," 23–49; Rhoades, "Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark," 411–34 (now available in Rhoades, *Reading Mark*, 1–22); and Rhoades, "Narrative Criticism: Practices and Prospects," 254–85 (also now available in Rhoades, *Reading Mark*, 23–43). On Mark's literary world, see Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*, 35–79.

notion is that rhetorical critics focus on the orality of a work—especially the rhetorical convention of persuasion—while narrative critics focus on the written text.[51] There is, of course, considerable overlap between the two. For example, Duane F. Watson positions rhetorical criticism as "a historical enterprise standing between ahistorical literary criticism and historical criticism."[52] From another perspective, Mark Allan Powell similarly situates the discipline of narrative criticism as one that "focuses on stories in biblical literature and attempts to read these stories with insights drawn from the secular field of modern literary criticism. The method is eclectic, drawing from such related fields as structuralism and rhetorical criticism, with the goal of determining the effects the stories are expected to have on their audiences."[53] Here I am not proposing to examine either of these fields in depth. Rather, I am interested in the ways in which these methods aid in addressing the structure of Mark's Gospel. In other words, each method commonly employs devices or techniques—whether the focus is written or oral—that may function as an organizing principle by those looking into the structure of the Gospel. What follows is a brief survey of some of these devices and their relationship to the Gospel of Mark.[54]

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Literary Devices

One of the earliest literary devices came not, however, from a literary or narrative critic but from a form critic, Karl L. Schmidt. Schmidt was the first to notice Mark's penchant for "summary statements" (*Sammelberichte*).[55] *Sammelberichte* are opening or closing statements added to individual stories that tie these stories together but are otherwise, according to Schmidt, historically worthless.[56] Statements summing up many things, especially the activity of Jesus, are key elements of Mark's narrative structure. One noteworthy example of the decisive role summary statements plays in the narrative regards the Prologue and in particular its precise limits. Leander Keck argues that 1:14–15—which offers the detail of the activity and message of Jesus—goes more properly with the preceding material (1:1–13) than subsequent material.[57] Keck's primary reason is the noun τὸ ϵὐαγγέλιον, which occurs in 1:1 and 1:15, forms as it were an *inclusio* (another literary device to be discussed below).[58] In addition, the handing over (παραδοθῆναι) of John the Baptist in 1:14 is theological information presented to the reader and so "fulfills the word of John about Jesus, while at the same time it rounds out the over-arching interest in τὸ ϵὐαγγέλιον."[59] Thus, the *Sammelberichte* of 1:14–15 looks back, in Keck's view, not forward. In many ways, Keck's view was contradictory to the more established view set forth by R. H. Lightfoot, which held the Prologue to end at 1:13. Lightfoot's argument was one of content: "only in verses 9 to 13 do we learn that He is Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee, and that He, Jesus of Nazareth, is the unique or only Son of God."[60] One critic, Frank J. Matera, builds on the work of Lightfoot but offers an insightful literary reason why the extent of the Prologue ends at 1:13.[61] He suggests that in vv. 1–13, the narrator communicates privileged information about Jesus and John the Baptist that is crucial in properly understanding the Gospel message. The additional information (see primarily 1:2–3, 10, 12–13) "is communicated *only* to the reader; none of the human characters within the narrative (Jesus excepted) is privy to it."[62] In contrast, the characters in the story are privy to the information set

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[51] Larsen, "Structure of Mark's Gospel," 149, 153.

[52] Watson, "Rhetorical Criticism, New Testament," 399–402, esp. 400.

[53] Powell, "Narrative Criticism," 201–4, esp. 201.

[54] See also Collins, *Mark*, 85–93, for a discussion of compositional and structural devices.

[55] Schmidt, *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu*, 320. See also Hendrick, "The Role of 'Summary Statements' in the Composition of the Gospel of Mark," 289–311; and Larsen, "Structure of Mark's Gospel," 150–51. Scholars continue to debate which passages constitute specifically the *Sammelberichte*. Possible examples include: 1:14–15, 21–22, 32–34, 39, 45; 2:1–2, 13; 3:7–12; 4:1–2; 5:21; 6:6b, 12–13, 30–33, 53–56; 10:1. Others who recognize summary statements in the Gospel include Egger, *Frohbotschaft und Lehre*; and Perrin and Duling, *The New Testament*, 239–40. For critiques of this approach, see esp. Hall, *Gospel Framework*.

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[56] Ibid., 17.

[57] Keck, "Introduction to Mark's Gospel," 352–70. Others who share this view include Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, 1:71–74; Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 137–39; and Boring, "Mark 1:1–15 and the Beginning of the Gospel," 43–81.

[58] Keck, "Introduction to Mark's Gospel," 359–60.

[59] Ibid., 361.

[60] Lightfoot, *The Gospel Message of St. Mark*, 15–20, esp. 17. Lightfoot's reasoning became very influential. Among those holding to this view include Cranfield, *Gospel According to St. Mark*, 33–60; Lane, *Gospel According to Mark*, 39–40; Schweizer, *The Good News According to Mark*, 28–41; and Taylor, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 151.

[61] Matera, "The Prologue as the Interpretive Key to Mark's Gospel," 3–20, esp. 5.

[62] Ibid., 5. Emphasis original.

forth in the summary statement of 1:14–15. According to Matera, this is "the most telling clue to the extent of the Prologue."[63]

Francis J. Moloney identifies four "textual markers" (1:1; 1:14–15; 8:31; and 16:1–4) that alert the reader that the author is "up to something."[64] These textual markers permit a reader to begin to plot the literary design of the author. Moloney proposes a fourfold outline[65]:

1. Prologue: The beginning (1:1–13)
2. Who is Jesus? (1:14—8:30)
    - Jesus and the Jews (1:14—3:6)
    - Jesus and his own (3:7—6:6a)
    - Jesus and the disciples (6:6b—8:30)
3. The suffering and vindicated Son of Man: Christ and Son of God (8:31—15:47)
    - On the way from blindness to sight (8:31—10:52)
    - The symbolic end of Israel and the world (11:1—13:37)
    - The crucifixion of the Son of Man, the Christ, and the Son of God (14:1—15:47)
4. Epilogue: A new beginning (16:1–8)

Several scholars propose the literary technique of intercalation or "sandwiching" as a key structural device.[66] Intercalations or sandwiches

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[63] Ibid., 6.

[64] Moloney, *Gospel of Mark*, 16–20. Moloney notes that "narrative units are not separated by brick walls. One flows into the other, looks back to issues already mentioned, and hints at themes yet to come" (19). Similarly Carson, Moo, and Morris (*Introduction to the New Testament*, 89) suggest that the Markan narrative is punctuated by six "transitional paragraphs" or statements (1:14–15; 3:7–12; 6:1–6; 8:27–30; 11:1–11; 14:1–2), which divide Mark's account into seven basic sections. While not "markers" in the above sense, Pesch (*Naherwartungen*, 54–67) observes an ancient literary symmetry in the Gospel, with the first three major sections (1:2—3:6; 3:7—6:29; 6:30—8:26) corresponding to the final three sections (8:27—10:52; 11:1—12:44; 14:1—16:8) except for chap. 13, which carries for the Evangelist a special place. See also Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*.

[65] Moloney, *Gospel of Mark*, 20.

[66] Edwards, "Markan Sandwiches"; Shepherd, *Markan Sandwich Stories*; Shepherd, "The Narrative Function of Markan Intercalations"; and van Oyen, "Intercalation and Irony in the Gospel of Mark." As we will see later, Kee (*Community of the New Age*, 75) rejects a single manner of outlining Mark's Gospel because of "the thematic complexity

are “literary conventions with theological purposes. Each sandwich unit consists of an A¹-B-A² sequence, with the B-component functioning as the theological key to the flanking halves.”[67] Shepherd identifies twenty different Markan passages in which scholars have determined to be intercalations. Based on consensus of these commentators, he identifies six passages as clearly representing this technique:[68]

1. Jesus’ Relatives and the Beelzebul Controversy (Mark 3:20–35)
2. Jairus and the Woman with the Hemorrhage (5:21–43)
3. The Mission of the Twelve and the Beheading of John the Baptist (6:7–32)
4. The Cursing of the Fig Tree and the Cleansing of the Temple (11:12–25)
5. The Passion Plot and the Anointing (14:1–11)
6. Peter’s Denial and Jesus’ Trial (14:53–72)

Another literary device commonly employed by Markan commentators to address the overall structure of the Gospel is that of chiasms.[69] A chiasm is a concentric schema whereby “the crosswise repetition of one or several elements” is place around a central (usually significant) element in the center.[70] This schema resembles the sandwiching technique referred to above. Bas M. F. van Iersel notes that this was common *compositional* device in the first-century Greco-Roman world, so much so that schoolchildren had to learn the alphabet both forward and backwards.[71] This device can be applied at the microlevel, that is, within a single episode, at the mesolevel (a combination of episodes), or at the macrolevel (an entire

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of Mark.” However, he does note with appreciation the significance of Mark’s interpolation technique (see 54–56).

[67] Edwards, *Gospel According to Mark*, 11.

[68] Shepherd, *Markan Sandwich Stories*, 388–92.

[69] On the use of chiasms in Markan studies, see Dewey, *Markan Public Debate*, 48; Humphrey, *He is Risen?*, 4; Rhoades, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 51–55, esp. 53; and Scott, “Chiastic Structure,” 17–26. A more popular work that relies on a chiastic structure is Dart, *Decoding Mark*.

[70] Van Iersel, *Mark*, 68–86, here 71. See also van Iersel, *Reading Mark*, 18–30.

[71] Ibid., 70–71. See also Stock, “Chiastic Awareness and Education in Antiquity.”

composition).[72] Thus, van Iersel's macrostructure of Mark's Gospel (after the title of 1:1) is as follows:[73]

[A] Prologue, the wilderness (1:2–13)
[B] Prospective hinge (1:14–15)
[C] *Galilee* (1:16—8:21)
[D] Frame: blind (seeing) (8:22–26)
[E] The Way (8:27—10:45)
[D′] Frame: blind (seeing) (10:46–52)
[C′] *Jerusalem* (11:1—15:39)
[B′] Retrospective hinge (15:40–41)
[A′] Epilogue, the tomb (15:42—16:8)

A final literary device underscores an altogether different technique. Ben C. Witherington, working within a socio-rhetorical model, suggests a macrostructure of the Gospel corresponding to the questions in the narrative (1:27; 2:7, 15, 24; 4:41; 6:2; 7:5) culminating with Jesus' question to the disciples in 8:27.[74] The remainder of the narrative (8:27—16:20) seeks to answer that question ("Who is Jesus?") and the attendant question—What is Jesus' mission? In brief, Witherington's outline is divided into four parts: (1) the questions—who and why (1:1—8:27); (2) the "who" question answered (8:27–30); (3) what is the mission? (8:31; 9:31; 10:32); and (4) mission accomplished (11:1—16:20).[75] The questions all focus on the identity of Jesus; thus, the major concern of the Gospel, according to Witherington,

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[72] Van Iersel, *Mark*, 72–76. The bold print (original) observes the topographic elements of the Gospel, which has previously been noted. For a discussion of the notion of van Iersel's "hinge passages," see pp. 83–84. See also Stock, "Hinge Transitions in Mark's Gospel."

[73] Ibid., 84. See also Standaert, *L'Évangile selon Marc*, 38–109.

[74] Witherington III, *Gospel of Mark*, 36–39. Robbins ("Socio-Rhetorical Criticism," 165–209, esp. 165) defines socio-rhetorical criticism as "a textually-based method that uses programmatic strategies to invite social, cultural, historical, psychological, aesthetic, ideological and theological information into a context of minute exegetical activity." While I will "categorize" other socio-rhetorical outlines in the section to follow, Witherington himself seems to suggest that his model should be viewed under the auspices of literary techniques since the "original reader would have read it aloud to himself" (16).

[75] Witherington III (*Gospel of Mark*, 44–49) sees the Gospel concluding with the so-called "longer ending" (16:9–20).

is Christology. As we have seen before, it is hard to separate themes and outlines neatly. Here is one more example of a commentator using a literary device (questions) to punctuate the overarching theme of the Gospel (Christology).[76]

Rhetorical Devices

As mentioned above, rhetorical approaches to a biblical text focus on oral rather than written concerns. This is not the place to discuss, much less critique, rhetorical criticism as a discipline.[77] Rhetorical criticism is complex and evolving within the broader field of biblical criticism. As has already been noted, it shares the stage with narrative or literary criticism on some points while (in its modern or "new rhetoric" form) it overlaps with the emerging disciplines of text linguistics, semiotics, reader-response criticism, discourse analysis, and speech-act theory, among others.[78] At this point, four approaches from many possible "rhetorical" subdisciplines will be discussed. I hope this simple survey will be sufficient to show that structural concerns are often inseparable from hermeneutical concerns.

a. *A Classical Approach*. Benoît H. M. G. M. Standaert employs the common fivefold division of classical rhetoric in his outline of the Gospel of Mark:[79]

- *Exordium* (1:1–13)
- *Narratio* (1:14—6:13)
- *Probatio* (6:14—10:52)
- *Refutatio* (11:1—15:47)
- *Conclusio* (16:1–8)

One easily sees Aristotelian influence on Standaert's work.[80] An interesting and surprising feature emerges, however, in that Standaert couples

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[76] For another commentator that stresses the asking of rhetorical questions as a storytelling (though not necessarily a structural) technique, see Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand*, 131–34.

[77] For a helpful essay on this discipline, see Wuellner, "Where is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?"

[78] Watson, "Rhetorical Criticism," 401.

[79] Standaert, *L'Évangile selon Marc*, 42. See also Stock, *Call to Discipleship*, 49.

[80] Aristotle, *The "Art" of Rhetoric*.

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this classical rhetorical division with the literary analysis of concentric compositions and genre analysis of ancient drama.[81] The combination of rhetoric, literary, and genre analysis makes Standaert's proposal unique among Markan commentators.

b. *A Linguistic Approach*. John G. Cook's *The Structure and Persuasive Power of Mark* offers an example of the study of Markan structure from the perspective of text linguistics.[82] As the name implies, "text linguistics" originates from the procedure that whole texts are analyzed rather than single components (i.e., sentences).[83] It is a discipline that has its origins in a secular field (not biblical criticism) and goes under several different rubrics depending on the perspective under review: semantics (the relationship between a sign and its meaning), pragmatics (the relationship between a sign, its meaning, and its users), semiotics (the observance of signs), or speech act (the use of language to "do something").[84] The vocabulary associated with text linguistics is sophisticated, and an attempt to explain this methodology is not within the scope of my work.[85] Regardless of the sophistication of this method of inquiry, the resulting outline is virtually the same as has been described above in many of the other categories. Cook uses the linguistic device of "text part" to distinguish the Markan material. In fact, he uses several layers or "frames" to discuss these text parts: Frame 00 contains the editor's title (or "name label"); the frame labeled 0 contains the title of the work; Frame 1 contains the narrator's description of characters and events; and Frames 2, 3, and 4 are used for words found in the mouths of the various characters in the narrative. Classification of these final three frames (Frames 2–4) is determined based on the type of communication. A frame that includes characters speaking to characters is Frame 2. If a character tells a story in which the members of the story communicate with one another, then that results in a classification notation of Frame 3. When a speech in Frame 3 itself indicates

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[81] Standaert, *L'Évangile selon Marc*, 174.

[82] Cook, *Structure and Persuasive Power of Mark*.

[83] Ibid., 1.

[84] Ibid., 87–89, 351.

[85] For a general discussion of this method, see Baldinger, *Semantic Theory*. For a discussion for applicable to the study of Mark's Gospel, see Boers, "Reflections on the Gospel of Mark"; and Danove, *Linguistics and Exegesis in the Gospel of Mark*.

a communication, that communication will be classified in Frame 4.[86] This technique produces the following summary outline:[87]

Frame 00: Superscript ("Gospel according to Mark")

Frame 0: Prologue (1:1)

Frame 1:

- Text Part 1: John and Jesus in the wilderness (1:2–13)
- Text Part 2: Jesus' ministry in Galilee and environs (1:14—8:26)
- Text Part 3: Jesus' journey to Jerusalem (8:27—10:52)
- Text Part 4: Jesus in Jerusalem and environs (11:1—16:8)

Despite the particularized *verba*, this approach in effect simply yields another topographical outline.

c. *Ancient Drama Approach*. Mary Ann Beavis employs what she calls a "reader oriented" approach. In this approach, she ignores repetition and any other so-called textual marker and opts for a structure based on the alternation of blocks of narrative and teaching. "The overall structure of the Gospel thus resembles that of a five-act hellenistic play, with the place of the four choruses taken by teaching scenes" (the first of which—4:1–34, especially vv. 11–12—is foundational).[88] The five-act sequence can be visualized in this manner:

1. 1:1—3:35 (Narrative: Prologue, controversies); 4:1–34 (Teaching: Parables [*See!*])
2. 4:35—6:52 (Narrative: Miracles); 6:53—7:23 (Teaching: Clean and unclean)
3. 7:24—9:29 (Narrative: Revelations); 9:30—10:45 (Teaching: Discipleship)
4. 10:46—12:44 (Narrative: Jerusalem, controversies); 13:1–37 (Teaching: Apocalyptic discourse [*Hear!*])
5. 14:1—16:8 (Narrative: Passion, empty tomb)

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[86] To find the meanings of these various frames, see ibid., 122–25, and 139–42.

[87] The summary outline is contained in Appendix 2 of Cook's work (*Structure and Persuasive Power*, 343–47). The full linguistic outline comprises most of the book (see pp. 172–283).

[88] Beavis, *Mark's Audience*, 163–65.

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The primary strength of Beavis's outline is her attention to the Hellenistic literary culture in which the Gospel was composed and the interplay between the narrative and didactic elements of the Gospel. The idea of Mark resembling a Hellenistic play is found frequently in the literature (see below), but usually in discussion on genre, not structure. Two recent commentators have, like Beavis, observed the resemblance to a Greek play and have outlined the Gospel in three or more "acts." Richard T. France, after acknowledging the author's heading and prologue, divides the gospel into three acts centered around the physical presence of Jesus: (1) Galilee (1:14—8:21); (2) On the Way to Jerusalem (8:22—10:52); and (3) Jerusalem (11:1—16:8).[89] Similarly, Marcus focuses on the length of the various pericopae and proposes a structure made up of six major sections—all of approximately equal length[90]—divided into three acts. His outline looks like this:[91]

1. 1:1–15—Prologue (15 verses, 248 words)
2. 1:16—8:21—Act I: Jesus' Earthly Ministry (290 verses, 4,813 words)
    a. 1:16—3:6: First Major Section—Honeymoon and Beginning of Opposition (64 verses, 1,095 words)
    b. 3:7—6:6a: Second Major Section—The Struggle Intensifies (118.5 verses, 1,958 words)
    c. 6:6b—8:21: Third Major Section—Feasts (107.5 verses, 1,760 words)
3. 8:22—10:52—Act II: Fourth Major Section—"On the Way" (117 verses, 2,076 words)
4. 11:1—15:47—Act III: Jerusalem Ministry (231 verses, 3,828 words)
    a. 11:1—13:37: Fifth Major Section—Teaching (113 verses, 1,963 words)
    b. 14:1—15:47: Sixth Major Section—Dying (118 verses, 1,865 words)
5. 16:1–8: Epilogue (8 verses, 136 words)

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[89] France, *Gospel of Mark*, 13–14.

[90] Except for the first section (2:1—3:6), which is about half the length of the others.

[91] Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 64. Marcus does not specify whether his word count is based on the number of words in Greek or English.

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d. *"New" Rhetorical Approaches*. Watson observes that there is a "new rhetoric" on the scene now. This approach "redefines rhetoric as argumentation with a persuasive intent and focuses on the audience/readers of rhetoric. This historical and social situation that produced speech and in which it was enacted becomes central. Rhetoric is a liaison between text and social context, assessing the latter through the former."[92] A primary proponent of this approach in New Testament studies is Vernon K. Robbins.[93] In 1984, he published a sociorhetorical interpretation of Mark under the title *Jesus the Teacher*.[94] Robbins's stated goal for such an investigation is "to read the Gospel of Mark in the context of a wider range of literature from the Mediterranean world…both within and outside Jewish and Christian circles of influence."[95] Robbins favors certain "stylistic traits," which lead to a three-step progression that, in turn, is an elaboration of 1:1. The three-step progressions are: (1) Jesus goes to a new place with the disciples; (2) he engages in a special interaction; and (3) as a result of this interaction, he summons his disciples anew. This pattern of behavior on the part of Jesus is repeated and serves to differentiate the various stages of development in Mark's narrative.[96] This three-step progression allows Robbins to see six major sections (in addition to an introduction and conclusion). Robbins's outline, entitled "The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (an obvious reference to 1:1; see above), is as follows:[97]

Introduction: Jesus and John the Baptist (1:1–13)
1. Jesus and the Gospel of God (1:14—3:6)
2. The Healing Son of God (3:7—5:43)
3. The Rejected Prophet (6:1—8:26)
4. The Suffering, Dying, Rising Son of Man (8:27—10:45)
5. The Authoritative Son of David (10:46—12:44)
6. The Future Son of Man and the Dying Messiah-King (13:1—15:47)

Conclusion (16:1–8)

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[92] Watson, "Rhetorical Criticism," 401.

[93] He examines this method in *Exploring the Texture of Texts*.

[94] Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher*.

[95] Ibid., 12.

[96] Ibid., 19–51, esp. 20–26. See also his "Summons and Outline in Mark."

[97] Ibid., 27.

Other "new rhetorical" interpreters employ different features to outline the Gospel.[98] Ched Myers, for example, sees the three apocalyptic movements or what he calls "pillar stories" of Jesus' baptism, transfiguration, and crucifixion as "anchors" in Mark. "At the level of the narrative, each moment is fundamental to the regeneration of plot: the baptism opened the subversive mission of the kingdom, the transfiguration deepened it by confirming the second call to discipleship. Golgatha becomes the 'practice' of the first two moments: 'baptism' (which according to 10:38 is a metaphor for political execution) and 'cross' (8:34)."[99]

The overarching strength of these literary or rhetorical models is the close attention *to the text* of Mark. Such an emphasis is not far from the goals of this present work, but one has to wonder whether these tools alone can successfully get at the heart of the *author's* developmental structure.[100]

Outline "Alternatives"

In his 1975 commentary, Paul J. Achtemeier observes: "A satisfactory solution to the problem of the outline of Mark thus remains to be found. Perhaps this is due to insufficient attention to the narrative of Mark on the part of scholars, or perhaps it is due to the fact that Mark himself did not shape his Gospel with any such central point in mind, but rather moved, section by section, to the chronological as well as theological climax of his Gospel."[101] Since that time, there has been a plethora of analyses of Mark's Gospel from the perspective of narrative criticism—most of them, as noted above, choosing some method of division for the structure of the Gospel.[102] However, a few interpreters of Mark continue to argue that the

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[98] Vena ("The Rhetorical and Theological Center of Mark's Gospel," 327–45, esp. 328–29) combines a "new rhetorical" emphasis with the literary device of chiasm—the center or fulcrum of the chiasm being 8:34—9:1, Jesus' call to suffering and discipleship. The broad pattern of his outline is: A (1:1–13); B (1:14—7:23); C (7:24—10:52); B′(11:1—14:31); A′ (14:32—16:8).

[99] Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 390–91. Another example of a sociopolitical reading is Waetjen, *Reordering of Power*. Waetjen is less concerned about providing an overall outline for the Gospel and instead concentrates on offering a reading the text of Mark's Gospel in light of the historical sociology.

[100] For a helpful discussion on the author, see Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 1–23.

[101] Achtemeier, *Mark*, 40.

[102] For example, see Rhoades et al., *Mark as Story*. For a recent scholarly examination

Gospel has no discernable outline, or at least not a linear outline as is often proposed. Robert H. Gundry argues that "the Gospel of Mark presents only a loose disposition of materials governed by little more than the initiatory character of John the Baptizer's ministry and its locale in the wilderness at the Jordan River, the charismatic character and Galilean locale of the bulk of Jesus' ministry, and the finality of Jesus' passion and resurrection and their locale in Jerusalem . . . Mark presents a collage, not a diptych or a triptych or any other carefully segmented portrayal of Jesus."[103] Edwin K. Broadhead refuses to present an outline in his brief commentary on Mark, choosing instead to address what the Gospel is not (an oral presentation, visual, bare historical report, a story of the gods, a psychological profile, or a modern biography) versus what it is—"a narrative account of Jesus' ministry and death, set in sequential order."[104] Similarly, William R. Telford simply presents several structures for consideration without offering one as dominant.[105]

Two interpreters—Howard Clark Kee and Joanna Dewey—do not go as far as Gundry or Broadhead but are pessimistic about whether Mark's Gospel has a single *linear* outline. Kee pays close attention to the key themes in the Gospel such as kingdom, discipleship, and eschatology. Yet he suggests "no simple outline can do justice to the thematic complexity of Mark."[106] Instead, he suggests that these themes "run like a great fugue throughout the Gospel."[107] Dewey argues persuasively that Mark's Gospel does not have a discernable linear outline but is rather like an "interwoven tapestry" made up of "overlapping structures and sequences, forecasts of what is to come and echoes of what has already been said."[108] She further concludes that this nonlinear compositional style is a characteristic feature

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of this work, see Iverson and Skinner, eds., *Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect*.

[103] Gundry, *Mark*, 1045–46.

[104] Broadhead, *Mark*, 139; emphasis supplied.

[105] Telford, *Mark*, 101–4. Of the few structures Telford presents, he especially mentions Schweizer (101), van Iersel (103), and Edwards (104).

[106] Kee, *Community of the New Age*, 75.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Dewey, "Mark as Interwoven Tapestry," 224. Dewey gets this "interwoven tapestry" motif from Johnson, *Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark*, 24, whose metaphor for the structure of Mark's Gospel was an "oriental carpet with crisscrossing patterns."

of aural narrative (but submits that we can continue to study the Gospel using literary analysis).[109]

TURNING POINTS AND THE GENRE OF MARK

Outlines and turning points, however, are two different things. The issue at hand with regard to Mark's Gospel is, regardless of how one outlines or breaks the material into constituent parts, does the Markan *narrative* have a similar decisive turning point?

Nature of Turning Point

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Before addressing the Markan turning point, it is necessary to revisit the definition of turning point and examine it in the context of literary criticism. In the work commonly known as *The Poetics* (Περὶ Ποιητικῆς in Greek, derived from the work's first two words), Aristotle deals with the gist of drama (δρᾶν, which for him means it presents people who μιμοῦνται δρῶντας, lit. representing or imitating actions), especially its development of plot—a matter of considerable importance if the work is to be a success (*Poet.* 1.1). Before defining plot (μῦθος), Aristotle carefully distinguishes two kinds of δρᾶν—the actions of people doing good things (τὰς καλὰς ἐμιμοῦντο πράξεις), which he calls "tragedy" (τραγῳδία) and the actions of lesser people doing common or lesser things (οἱ δὲ εὐτελέστεροι τὰς τῶν φαύλων), which he calls "comedy" (κωμῳδία) (*Poet.* 3.8). Tragedy is the imitation of an action that is great and complete in itself and does not employ mere narration or recital (ἐπαγγελία). It evokes empathy and fear (ἐλέου καὶ φόβου) to the observer (*Poet.* 6.2–4). Every tragedy has six constituent parts:

1. Plot (μῦθος)
2. Character (ἤθη)
3. Style (λέξις)
4. Thought (διάνοια)
5. Appearance (ὄψις)
6. Music (μελοποιία)

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[109] Ibid., 224, 236.

Plot (μῦθος), according to Aristotle, is the most important—something he calls the soul (ψυχή) of a tragedy—and is defined as the putting together or the arrangement of the matters (σύνθεσιν τῶν πραγμάτων) (*Poet*. 6.8, 20).[110] Plot is further developed to contain two movements of sorts: the first phase, which he calls complication (πλοκή) and the second phase, which often goes by the label dénoument (λύσις) (*Poet*. 18.3). Two of the most important elements in bringing an emotional effect to the observers in this movement from complication to dénoument are "reversals" or (περιπέτειαι) and "recognitions" (ἀναγνωρίσεις). These are moments in the drama where the course of action that one is seeing in the first phase suddenly changes direction or course and generally involve some sort of recognition moment with respect to the characters. These two notions—reversal and recognition—come very close to what many contemporary literary critics label "climax" or "turning point."[111] Aristotle's *Poetics* is important in analyzing the structure of a tragedy in particular, but also that of any piece of literature that seeks to tell a story.

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At the turn of the nineteenth century, the German literary critic Gustav Freytag analyzed the structure of a five-movement play in a manner that has since been referred to as "Freytag's Pyramid."[112] The first three movements—introduction, inciting moments, rising action—"rise" as the pyramid image suggests. The fourth movement is the apex of the pyramid, which Freytag called the climax. The final two movements—falling action and catastrophe—parallel the rising of the pyramid with the so-called falling side of the pyramid. Both Freytag and the vast majority of literary analysis since the time of Aristotle see this moment of climax as a crisis point or turning point in the drama.

Freytag's fivefold movement (or Aristotle's threefold) creates what many scholars simply refer to as the beginning, middle, and end of a narrative or play. Aristotle observed this early on: "A whole is what has a beginning and middle and end. A beginning is that which is not a necessary consequence of anything else but after which something else exists or happens as a natural result. An end on the contrary is that which inevitable [*sic*] or, as a rule, the natural result of something else but from which nothing follows; a middle follows something else and something follows from it. Well-constructed plots must therefore not begin and end at random, but must embody the formulae we have stated" (*Poet*. 7.3–7 [Fyfe, LCL]).

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[110] The modern literary critic Meyer Howard Abrams (*Glossary of Literary Terms*, 159) defines plot similarly: "The plot in a dramatic or narrative work is constituted by its events and actions, as these are rendered and ordered toward achieving particular emotional and artistic effects." In addition to the definition of Abrams, Culpepper (*Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 79–80, esp. 80) presents five other definitions of plot, but considers Abrams's "a concise synthesis of most of the elements of the other definitions."

[111] To modern literary critics, a turning point is the observable moment when—in the development of a plot—there is a definite change in direction and a reader begins to be aware that the story/plot is moving toward its end. See Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, s.v. "turning point," 950. Aristotle's definition of περιπέτεια is "a change of the situation into the opposite" (*Poet*. 11.1).

[112] Freytag, *Technique of the Drama*, 114–40.

Aristotle's *Poetics* or Freytag's pyramid is helpful in analyzing any piece of dramatic literature, whether ancient or modern, drama or comedy. But is the document we call "the Gospel of Mark" a drama? It would not be judged by most to be a comedy.[113] So what is the genre of Mark's Gospel and how does genre aid (if at all) in the understanding of the so-called turning point?

Genre and Turning Point

Examination and attempts at making an ironclad classification of the genre of Mark's Gospel is not new within NT scholarship.[114] At one time or another, the Gospel has been identified with almost every conceivable genre of ancient literature: Homeric-type epic poems,[115] ancient biography or *bios*,[116] Jewish novel,[117] Jewish midrash,[118] Hellenistic novel,[119] Greek tragedy,[120] apocalyptic historical monograph,[121] Ancient Near Eastern

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[113] But see Via, *Kerygma and Comedy in the New Testament*.

[114] On genre in general, see Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 68–126; and Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*. On the nature of genre applied to gospel studies, see Burridge, "About People." For a discussion of genre and Mark's Gospel, see esp. Bryan, *Preface to Mark*, 9–26; and Guelich, "The Gospel Genre."

[115] MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark*.

[116] Burridge, *What Are the Gospels*. See also, Talbert, *What is a Gospel?*

[117] Vines, *Problem of Markan Genre*. These novels include canonical/deuterocanonical books such as Judith, Esther, Daniel, and Tobit.

[118] Sabin, *Reopening the Word*.

[119] Beavis, *Mark's Audience*, 31–44; Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*, 48–83; Tolbert, "The Gospel of Mark," 45–56, esp. 52–53.

[120] Bilezikian, *Liberated Gospel*; Hooker, *Beginnings*, 1–22; Standaert, *L'Évangile selon Marc*, 373–494, esp. 385–92.

[121] Collins, *Is Mark's Gospel a Life of Jesus?* This work can now be accessed in Collins, *The Beginning of the Gospel*, 1–38.

combat myth,[122] oral performance,[123] and apologetic tract.[124] Others hold that Mark's Gospel is *sui generis*—a new type of literature without previous parallel.[125] It is not necessary for me to choose one genre as dominant. In saying this, I am not saying that genre is not important. I believe it is. What kind of book a reader thinks he or she is reading can and often does shape the manner in which he or she reads.[126] However, the more appropriate question to ask, especially in light of my interest in the narrative turning point, is what do these various genres have in common and how will the answer to this question aid in the quest of ascertaining the Gospel's turning point? Here I will survey briefly five of the genres referred to above—Greek tragedy, Hellenistic novel, apologetic tract, Jewish midrash, and Graeco-Roman biography—and show that in each case, plot is the common feature.

Greek Tragedy

Since the 1920s, New Testament scholars have compared the Gospel of Mark with ancient Greek tragedies.[127] In many ways, it is the easiest of these examples to show the mutual element of plot given the Aristotelian definition. Gilbert C. Bilezikian has argued most extensively that Mark's Gospel was written within the milieu of Greek tragedy since tragedy was one of the dominant literary strategies in the Roman empire of the first century.[128] All the features of Greek tragedy articulated by Aristotle in *Poetics*, for example, are present in Mark: the Gospel narrates the actions of a

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[122] Miller, "The Kingship of Jesus," 1–16, esp. 7–9.

[123] Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel*.

[124] Roskam, *Purpose of the Gospel of Mark*, 217–38, esp. 236.

[125] Achtemeier, *Mark*, 4–5, 42; France, *Gospel of Mark*, 4–15; Lane, *Gospel of Mark*, 1; and Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 13–16. Guelich (*Mark 1:1—8:26*, xxii) sees the Gospels belonging *formally* to the broad category of Hellenistic biography, while *materially* they are *sui generis*.

[126] Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 64.

[127] The early work includes Riddle, "The Martyr Motif in the Gospel According to Mark"; Carré, "The Literary Structure of the Gospel of Mark"; Burch, "Tragic Action in the Second Gospel"; and Bundy, "Dogma and Drama in the Gospel of Mark." The latter three are cited by Frederick C. Grant in his 1943 Cole Lectures (published as *The Earliest Gospel*, 133) as he advocates this point: "Some scholars have seen in Mark the pattern of a Greek tragedy, and indeed with some probability."

[128] Bilezikian, *Liberated Gospel*, 33–50, esp. 50. Weeden (*Traditions in Conflict*, 17) remarks that Mark "approximates the style of Greek drama." See also, Inch, *Mark as Tragedy*, 71–168.

good person (Jesus); the observer experiences the emotional effects of fear and empathy; the plot develops along the standard formula of (1) complication (1:1—8:26); (2) crisis (8:27–8:30); and (3) dénoument (8:31—16:8). Bilezikian's reading of Mark's Gospel in light of this paradigm yields the following summary: "The action in the Gospel of Mark follows a course identical to the one recommended by Aristotle for Greek tragedies. In the language proper to dramatic composition, it can be said that the first half of the Gospel constitutes the complication, the recognition at Caesarea Philippi is the crisis, and the remainder of the Gospel is the denouement."[129]

Whether the author consciously tried to mimic the Greek tragedy is hopelessly unprovable; rather, if one can study the structure, language, and plot of the Gospel narrative and detect similarities in design, then it holds that the "movement" of Mark's plot resembles the Greek tragedy. And if it resembles it, then we are in a better position to examine the interim climax or crisis point in the story.

Hellenistic Novel

Another form of literature that Mark's Gospel has been compared to is the Greek ancient novel. Mary Ann Tolbert has been an especially strong advocate for this form and has labeled her suggestion of it as "a new hypothesis for genre" of Mark's Gospel.[130] She notes that while only five complete novels have survived, fragments from many others exist—some which can be dated as early as the first century BCE.[131] Two of the five, Xenophon's *Ephesian Tale* and Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, can be dated broadly from 100 BCE to 50 CE, well within the time frame with which Mark would be familiar.[132] These novels are all erotic novels, that is, their basic plot centers on the familiar work of the god Eros. Clearly, the Gospel of Mark does not fit this pattern. However, Tolbert argues that when read closely, Mark does share features with this ancient literary form, especially in terms of plot. Tolbert writes:

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[129] Bilezikian, *Liberated Gospel*, 55.

[130] Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*, 59.

[131] Ibid., 62. The five are Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, Xenophon's *An Ephesian Tale*, Longus's *Daphnis and Chloe*, Achilles Tatius's *Leucippe and Clitophon*, and Heliodorus's *An Ethiopian Tale*. For these, see Reardon, *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*.

[132] Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*, 62.

> The literary heritage of the Greek novel combines Greek drama and historiography. As prose writing, it takes its basic narrative structure from historiography but blends manners, style, and concerns of drama and epic into its stories. The ancient novel is 'fundamentally drama in substance and historiography in its outward form.' The major characters in the novels are often historical persons of earlier periods or the fictional sons and daughters of actual historical figures. The action takes place in real cities and involves practices and groups that truly existed (e.g., shipwrecks, pirates, slavery, crucifixion). This essential historiographic form gives verisimilitude to the conventionalized and formulaic plots themselves. The internal dynamics of the plots owe much to drama and epic: brief, dramatic scenes, dialogue with narrative summaries interspersed, episodic development, beginnings with minimal introduction or *in medias res*, central turning points, and final recognition scenes. The ancient novel, then, like the modern novel, is a remarkably synthesizing genre, pulling together a great variety of earlier forms and adapting and diluting them for a larger audience.[133]

Talbert dismisses this as a possible explanation of the genre of Mark because of the fictitious nature of the story. "Both history and biography, however legendary, claim to speak of actual people and real events."[134] However, Tolbert never claims—nor do I—that the Gospel of Mark is fictitious. Rather, she simply argues that Mark's Gospel shares many of the same characteristics with these novels. I simply want to observe is that one of these characteristics is plot development.

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Apologetic Tract

A relative newcomer on the genre scene—as it relates to Mark—is that of an apologetic tract. Hendrika H. Roskam argues that Mark was written to a specific Galilean community in the period shortly after the Jewish Revolt. This Christian community is currently experiencing hardship and is becoming increasingly subject to severe threats and persecution. The author of Mark's Gospel has written "to confirm them in their faithfulness to the Christian message, so that they will be strong enough to endure the hardships they are experiencing."[135] The evangelist Mark writes this tract using the story of Jesus' life (and death) as a model, a model that resembles closely ancient biography. But it is not biography per se because Mark's overall *purpose* in writing is apologetic; he simply uses this biographical form "to argue his case . . . and thus to give his arguments more cogency."[136] So, how does this "apologetic writing in biographical form" deal with plot development?

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[133] Ibid., 64–65. The quote is from Perry, *The Ancient Romances*, 140.

[134] Talbert, *What Is a Gospel?*, 17.

Roskam argues that while Mark's structure is ostensibly chronological, the narrative itself is constructed in such a way as to highlight Mark's apologetic arguments.[137] Thus, she concludes: "The Gospel's story as a whole is, so to speak, a narrative argument against the accusation of subversiveness that might be addressed to the Markan Christians. Although the Gospel has a chronological and geographic framework, the *sequence of events* in the Gospel is not so much determined by time or location, as by the evangelist's apologetic line of reasoning."[138] As with Greek tragedy and the Hellenistic novel, the "sequence of events" or plot is under the control of the author.[139]

Jewish Midrash

Marie Noonan Sabin asks an important question in the study of Markan genre: what was the cultural frame of reference that produced the composition of Mark?[140] Her answer to this question is that Mark's Gospel is first and foremost a religious document. What type of genre might communicate best in a Jewish religious context? Sabin's answer is midrash.[141] Sabin struggles, as do many, with a precise definition of Jewish midrash. It is clearly the Jews' "most ancient way of interpreting the Bible."[142] But it is

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[135] Roskam, *Purpose of the Gospel of Mark*, 236.

[136] Ibid.

[137] Ibid., 232. See pp. 145–211 for the detailed development of how the narrative structure parallels Mark's apologetic concerns.

[138] Ibid., 233; emphasis supplied.

[139] Though speaking about Greek tragedy (not biography or apologetic tracts) and the Fourth Gospel, Bryant (*Dialogue and Drama*, 256) concurs: "An author must decide how and where to begin, how to articulate a plot and limit its action to a coherent series of events in which one calls the next into being. Writers learn this art by emulating the writing of others."

[140] Sabin, *Reopening the Word*, 10.

[141] Ibid., 13.

[142] Ibid.

also more. She explores midrash as theological imagination, a way of reading, a way of writing, and as a way of reading life. What is of interest to us is the penultimate exploration: midrash as a way of writing—something she suggests motivated the author of Mark's Gospel. At a minimum, midrashic writing attempts to link one biblical text with another and usually does so through allusions, echoes, catchwords, and the like or juxtaposes different texts in an effort to hear the "double voice" of Scripture. Rabbis would employ this method in creating homilies. These homilies would tie together different passages of Scripture for the purpose of stimulating discussion or to open the door for theologizing. The tying together of different passages became an art for the rabbis. "[These verses] were linked together by the homilist so as to form a narrative 'journey,' a 'plot-like' structure from [one part of Scripture to another]."[143] It is not unreasonable, Sabin poses, to think that Mark's narrative thus "flows from this midrashic tradition."[144] Without passing judgment on that issue, the point here is that a midrashic understanding of the Gospel of Mark sees the author engaged in a "plot-like journey [like that] of the synagogue homily."[145]

Graeco-Roman Biography

In many ways, this final category is the most difficult to make a connection that plot is the common thread among the various genre studies of Mark. Richard A. Burridge has written the most exhaustive study on the Gospels as ancient biographies or βίοι.[146] His study of these works identifies four generic features that are common to this form of literature: opening features, subject, external features, and internal features.[147] The one that concerns us is the internal features, that is, setting, content, style, tone, mood, attitude, occasion for writing, and the author's intent or purpose. In Burridge's discussion of this last item, authorial intent, his study reveals several common features such as informative, didactic, apologetic and polemic. One addition value, he observes, is entertainment value: the ability of an author to hold the audience's attention.[148] The employment of vari-

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[143] Ibid., 19.

[144] Ibid., 23.

[145] Ibid., 22.

[146] Burridge, *What Are the Gospels*.

[147] Ibid., 107.

[148] Ibid., 182. See also, Burridge, "About People," 137: "Furthermore, we must not

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ous literary techniques, such as "dramatic and tragic motifs," was used by these ancient authors.[149] With the notion of "drama" or "tragedy," we are back where we started with Aristotle and the primary elements of tragedy. Ancient biographies, after all, like Gospel or tragedies, or epic poems, or novels, or even midrash involve the recounting of a story—historical or imagined. It is in the nature of *story* where plot—how one sequences the events that are being described or related—comes into play.

Mark's Milieu

I have resisted choosing a single genre for Mark's Gospel because as many of these examples suggest, there are *elements* of each of them in Mark. If there were not, scholars would have no trouble eliminating them as possible candidates. Mark, in composing a *Gospel* (εὐαγγέλιον) did so within the context of the literary milieu of the day. Mark was probably familiar with or at the very least aware of many different types of literature.[150] As I have shown, the common thread that ties disparate type of literature together is the notion of plot. Even if one is dealing with the account of a historical figure, such as ancient βίος, the *narrative* or story must be interesting enough to be read or, if performed, interesting enough to hold the attention of the audience. Or take the rather obscure apologetic tractate. My review of Roskam's thesis demonstrates that plot serves the larger purpose. Jo-Ann Bryant states it nicely with respect to John's Gospel: "The gospel as a literary form may indeed be *sui generis*, but the methods of representing time, setting, action, and characters [and I would add plot] found in the Fourth Gospel [and I would add Mark's Gospel] are not."[151] Whatever writers want to do, whether ancient or modern, they want to communicate. In so doing, one is constantly negotiating the tensions inherent between what one

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forget that much ancient biography was written to entertain the audience, which is best exemplified by the anecdotes about Euripides preserved in Satyrus, or by the satirical undercurrents included in Lucian, who was a professional entertainer, in his *Demonax*, not to mention the literary skill of Plutarch's or Tacitus's writings."

[149] Burridge, *What Are the Gospels*, 182.

[150] Bilezikian (*Liberated Gospel*, 50) concurs: "The probability of Mark being familiar with one of the dominant literary forms of the culture in whose language he composed his own work cannot be lightly dismissed."

[151] Bryant, *Dialogue and Drama*, 256.

wants to say (i.e., purpose) with how best to say it (i.e., style) so that one's audience grasps and reacts accordingly.[152]

PLOT AND THE GOSPEL OF MARK

So what is Mark's emphasis? Plot—the ordering or sequencing of events—is as we have seen the lifeblood of any story. In this closing section, I want first to revisit one key point made by Aristotle concerning plot; second, to use that key piece of information to lay out briefly the narrative flow of Mark's Gospel; and finally, based on that narrative flow, to state what I believe is Mark's overall purpose.

First, Aristotle observed that a good story has three parts: a beginning, middle, and end (*Poet*. 7.3–7). In the Aristotelian concept of plot development, the beginning is called the "complication phase." Action in this phase centers on the potential tragic situation of the hero. This is followed by a series of events that lead to a climax, usually a recognition scene that occurs near the middle of the narrative. In this section, often the true nature of the main character, which has been veiled thus far, is revealed with greater clarity. The situation of the hero or main character, however, changes for the worse in the final phase. The complicating factors that characterized the beginning phase, which were brought to a head in the middle phase, now are dealt with decisively.

From the survey of Markan outlines above, it is quite clear that—regardless of the manner in which the material is broken into constituent parts—Mark's Gospel follows this pattern. If one believes Mark keyed these movements to the geographic movement of Jesus, one is left with a "beginning" in and around Galilee (1:1—8:26), a "middle" on the way to Jerusalem (8:27—10:52), and an "end" in Jerusalem (11:1—16:8). If one prefers another, more literary method (like van Iersel's chiastic structure), there is still a discernable beginning, middle, and end.

This middle phase, what Aristotle referred to as the περιπέτεια, the "great reversal" or "turning point," is seen by most interpreters as occurring

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[152] I think Collins ("Mark and His Readers: The Son of God among Jews," and "Mark and His Readers: The Son of God among Greeks and Romans") touches on this in her two articles that deal with the manner in which Mark's title Son of God would have been heard among the different readers: Greeks and Romans on the one hand and Jews on the other. Readers (or hearers) understand things in their own contexts. Good authors will try to anticipate how their work will be understood and write accordingly.

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in or around 8:22 or 8:26 and continuing to 10:45 or 10:52. But this is a broad range of possible turning points. More precision is needed in isolating Mark's περιπέτεια.[153]

Second, using this key Aristotelian concept of beginning, middle, and end, I want to suggest a narrative flow for Mark's Gospel. A "narrative flow" is not the same thing as plot, but addressing the flow of a story should aid in discerning the plot and purpose of a work. I suggest that Mark's Gospel is a very balanced Gospel (Appendix 1 depicts this narrative flow). The story's beginning (i.e., Prologue) is matched by a corresponding ending (i.e., Epilogue).[154] Approximately one-fourth of the way into the story, Jesus is seen teaching in parables alongside (or on) the Sea of Galilee (4:1–34). This represents a significant teaching section in the Gospel.[155] It is paralleled with the only other uninterrupted block of teaching material, which occurs at approximately the three-fourth's mark of the Gospel—the so-called Olivet Discourse (13:4–37).[156] Between these two blocks of teaching material, at approximately the half-way mark, sits the "middle section" (8:22—10:52), which consists of "the turning point" (8:27—9:13), flanked by two blind miracles (8:22–26; 10:46–52).[157] Linking these major markers (i.e., beginning, middle, and end) are various episodes that keep the narrative moving.[158]

Finally, as the graphic in Appendix 1 illustrates, at each of these three phases, the identity of Jesus comes into view. In the beginning phase, his identity as Messiah/Christ is seen in the opening line of the Gospel (1:1).[159] The divine voice from heaven appears in 1:11 referring to Jesus as "my beloved son." Jesus himself, after forgiving and healing a paralytic, refers to himself with the cryptic phrase, Son of Man. These same three titles—Messiah, Son of God, and Son of Man—are found in each of the following phases. In the middle section, Peter confesses Jesus to be the Christ (8:29) to which Jesus sternly speaks of the impending suffering, death, and resurrection of "the Son of Man" (8:31). In the subsequent Transfiguration scene

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[153] For a recent full-scale commentary that relates Aristotle's *Poetics* to the structure of the Gospel, see Collins, *Mark*, 85–93, esp. 92–93.

[154] This, in the graphic display, is highlighted by the use of diamond-shaped boxes.

[155] One only needs to compare the "red letters" in Mark to that of Matthew's Gospel (or John's) to see that Mark is low on sustained, uninterrupted blocks of Jesus teaching.

[156] Appendix 1 highlights this feature with square-shaped boxes.

[157] The "turning point" is marked with an oval-shaped circle in Appendix 1, while the blind miracles are square-shaped boxes that "touch" the oval.

[158] Hence the arrows pointing forward to the conclusion of the story.

[159] Many MSS also have "Son of God" in this verse.

(9:2–13, which I will argue goes with Peter's confession), the divine voice from heaven reappears summoning Peter, James, and John to listen to "my beloved Son" (9:7). This repetition of christological titles occurs again in the Passion Narrative, which could be labeled the final phase. At the trial of Jesus (14:61–62), the high priest asks Jesus, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" To which Jesus replies, "I am" (ἐγώ εἰμι). He continues, "and you (plural) will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (14:62). At this strategic final scene, Jesus concurs with what many in the story (and certainly the readers) have known—he is the Messiah, Son of God (i.e., Blessed One), and Son of Man. Whatever else may be on the mind of Mark, he is attempting—based on this plotting of the account of Jesus—to reveal the true nature of Jesus.[160]

But in Mark's Gospel a correct understanding of who Jesus is can never be divorced from the question "what does this mean?" In the narrative, recognition of Jesus' true identity carries responsibilities. Jesus' call is a demanding call: he calls people to follow him. This is what happens in the calling of the first disciples (1:16–20): Simon and Andrew leave their fishing nets and immediately follow him. Two other would-be disciples, James and John, not only leave their boats, but they leave their father in the boat in order to follow Jesus. The essence of what it means to "follow Jesus" is found in another calling scene (3:13–19). Here Jesus calls "whom he desired" and they came to him and he appointed Twelve to be "with him" (μετ᾽ αὐτοῦ). Lest one think that being "with Jesus" is easy, the very Twelve that first heard and responded to this call would abandon him in his moment of greatest need, as Roman soldiers came to arrest him (14:50). The language is startling: "they all left him and fled" (καὶ ἀφέντες αὐτὸν ἔφυγον πάντες). To flee is the opposite of being "with" someone. Mark's presentation juxtaposes Christology (who is Jesus?) with discipleship (what does this mean?). They are indeed two sides of the same coin.

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CONCLUSION

In this introductory chapter, I have tried to make three points. The first is that many have attempted to provide *the* outline for the Gospel of Mark, but somehow Mark's Gospel resists nice, neat, concise outlines—even though the geographic strand is tempting. The nature of narrative is much more complex and does not lend itself to precise divisions. Kee's image of fugue or Dewey's depiction as "interwoven tapestry" is closer to Mark's design. Second, narratives—as stories—do not resist, however, literary devices, such as turning points. This is true regardless of the genre in which one writes since authors want most desperately to communicate. Finally, I believe that Mark worked from a cultural context that would have allowed him to concentrate on the "lifeblood" of a good story—plot. This plot, which is presented in a balanced fashion, is concerned chiefly with Jesus and one's proper response to him. What does this have to do with the notion of turning point?

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[160] See the disciples question in 4:41: τίς ἄρα οὗτός ἐστιν ὅτι καὶ ὁ ἄνεμος καὶ ἡ θάλασσα ὑπακούει αὐτῷ; (Who then is this that even the wind and the sea obey him?).

As mentioned above, the majority of commentators see the central or middle section of Mark's Gospel (8:22—10:52) as crucial in the development of Mark's story of Jesus. Yet, when one reviews the secondary literature on this topic there is hardly any agreement as to precisely which pericope in the central section is the so-called turning point. A few commentators suggest that Jesus' question to the disciples in 8:21 ("Do you not yet understand?") is meant to serve as the conclusion to the first half of the narrative. The vast majority of interpreters see Peter's confession of Jesus as "the Messiah" (8:29) as the pivot on which the entire narrative turns. Others, however, see Jesus' response to Peter and the disciples in 8:30 ("He warned them not to tell anyone about him") and the subsequent prediction ("The Son of Man must suffer . . .") as the critical point.

The purpose of this monograph is threefold: first, to survey the various analyses of the turning point in Mark's Gospel by looking in detail at the central section, especially 8:27—9:13, and pointing out the textual features to which the interpreters rely on in arriving at their conclusions; second, to offer another approach in search of an interim climax in the Markan narrative; and finally, to assess this approach's impact on Markan Christology. Specifically, based on linguistic and thematic links in the narrative, I will argue that the twin pericopae of Peter's confession (8:27—9:1) and the Transfiguration (9:2–13) *together* function as the turning point of the Gospel and serve in a Janus-like manner enabling the reader to see the author's true intention: the identity of Jesus and the significance of that reality for Jesus' disciples. Peter's confession faces backward toward the Prologue (1:1–13)—especially the opening line (1:1)—and serves to answer the disciples' basic question, "Who then is this that even the wind and sea obey him" (4:41)? The declaration by God on the mountain faces forward

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and introduces or foreshadows the last word about Jesus, namely that he is the Son of God (15:39). In the midst of these two statements *about* Jesus, Jesus responds to Peter and the disciples by identifying himself as Son of Man (8:31). Christologically, the images of Jesus as Messiah, Son of Man, and Son of God converge and present Jesus, the crucified, as king, ushering in the kingdom of God in power (9:1). When one is confronted with this Jesus—after calculating the costs (8:34–38)—the only wise decision, according to the Markan story, is to follow in discipleship.

Five chapters follow that attempt to articulate in detail the thesis stated above. In the following chapter, I will survey the many possible turning points (e.g., 8:21, 29, 30, etc.) and address why exegetes have these as the watershed moments in the narrative. My own proposal, the so-called Janus approach, will be set forth in chapter 3. If Peter's confession and the story of the Transfiguration together function as the turning point of the Gospel, then it must be shown that the two pericopae were meant to be read together. I will set forth thirteen grammatical or linguistic links, eight thematic correlations, and one suggestion from Synoptic studies that suggest that these two pericopae go together. Setting forth these links is the purpose of chapter 4. In a chapter entitled "Converging Lines in Markan Christology" (chapter 5), I will deal with the christological notions of Messiah/Christ, Son of God, and Son of Man in its immediate context (8:27–9:13) and in the wider context of the Gospel as a whole. While each of these terms is used elsewhere in the Gospel, why is it here that they take on such heightened importance, so much so that the entire narrative turns on these disclosures of Jesus' identity? In the final chapter (chapter 6), I will summarize the essential argument of this monograph and set forth its findings as it relates to Synoptic studies in general and to Markan studies in particular.

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