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The Role of the Spirit in Mark's Narrative

An exegetical narrative examination with special attention to

Mark's prologue

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the role of the Holy Spirit in the narrative of the Gospel of Mark by exegetically analyzing the six mentions of the Spirit in Mark and using tools of narrative criticism. Special attention is given to Mark's prologue by studying its content, length, and function in relation to the rest of the narrative. The Greek word for *spirit* is also reviewed in detail to provide a better understanding of its use in the Markan gospel. Even though the analysis of Mark's mentions of the Holy Spirit concentrates on the pericopes where the Spirit is found, this does not lose sight to the rest of the Markan story. This thesis attempts to prove the centrality of the Spirit to Mark's narrative which, among other things, focuses on the arrival of God's ruling happening in two stages and resulting in multiple conflicts. The author of Mark sets his story in the context of a new eschatological time being inaugurated in the life and ministry of Jesus. As this thesis tries to demonstrate, the Spirit is revealed as essential to the validation of Jesus' identity and the fulfillment of his mission, which after his departure was to be continued by his followers, empowered by the same Spirit.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Foundations for the study

1.1.1 Research question

The main aim of this thesis is to study the role of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of Mark with a special interest in the prologue. The Holy Spirit has received a significant amount of attention in Lukan and Johannine studies, but as I will attempt to show, that is not the case for Mark's Gospel.¹ The Spirit is mentioned only six times in the whole gospel, and interesting enough, the prologue contains three of these occasions. The study of the Spirit in Mark is, among other things, relevant for our understanding of the Markan Gospel as a whole, the person and mission of Mark's Jesus, and Mark's understanding and views of the Spirit. As I will argue in this thesis, the prologue is an interpretative key to understand Mark's narrative and hence what it is written about the Spirit. These aspects are relevant for New Testament scholars, but they might also impact the way believers understand the Gospel, Jesus, and the Spirit.

Bearing all this in mind, I would like to ask the following question in my thesis: What can we learn about the role of the Holy Spirit in Mark's narrative through an exegetical analysis of the six mentions of the Spirit?

To answer this question, I will first define 'spirit' in Mark's narrative and what makes it different from other uses of the word *pneuma* in Mark. This will provide us with a better understanding of the subject of study in the particular context of Mark's story. Subsequently, it will be essential to explore the function of Mark's prologue in relation to the rest of his gospel and compare this to similar and contemporary texts and their prologues or introductions in the context of the first-century milieu. The reason for giving special attention to the prologue lies in the number of times the Spirit is mentioned there and the function these verses have for reading the whole Markan gospel. After that, it will be necessary to analyze the six mentions of the Holy Spirit in Mark (1:8, 1:10, 1:12, 3:29,

¹ As it will be mentioned in chapter two, the identity of the composer of Mark's Gospel is unknown, but for convenience I will sometimes refer to the composer as "Mark."

12:36, and 13:11) to learn what the author writes about the Spirit and the connections between what is presented there in light of the rest of the gospel. Finally, I will use the findings from the former sections to draw some conclusions and contribute to the study of the Spirit's in Mark's narrative.

1.1.2 History of research

Since the time of the Church Fathers, there has been a great interest in the four gospels. There are countless comments and studies on the Gospel of Mark, and a recount of them through time and languages will be nearly impossible.² To narrow the scope, I will mention the most recent works that focus on the study of the Spirit or the prologue in Mark.

When it comes to studying Mark's prologue, the first work that will be important to consider is Frank J. Matera's article "The prologue as the Interpretative Key to Mark's Gospel."³ The paper presents a concise review of the previous research on this topic, a study of the extent of the prologue, its major themes, and the connections of these introductory verses to the rest of the Gospel. Even though this paper was published in 1988, it is a valuable source for my study since it helps establish the research on the foundations of what has been done in the past century.⁴ Next, the work of Brandley T. Johnson provides an overview of the research that has been done in the past three decades.⁵ This work also assists my research regarding introductory paragraphs in Antiquity and components of Greco-Roman rhetoric, the extent of the prologue, and its influence on the rest of the gospel. Lastly, Francesco Filannino published a book on Mark's prologue by late 2021.⁶ His work has proven to be valuable for this thesis on the issues regarding the extension, content, and function of Mark's prologue.

² Harrington provides a summary of the most relevant works on Mark in Daniel J. Harrington, *What Are They Saying About Mark?* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2004); and Thiselton offers an exhaustive review on the Holy Spirit's studies in Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit in Biblical Teaching, Through the Centuries and Today* (London: SPCK publishing, 2013).

³ Frank J. Matera, "The Prologue as the Interpretative Key to Mark's Gospel."

⁴ Matera reviews the research done to Mark's prologue since the beginning of the 20th century.

⁵ Bradley T. Johnson, *The Form and Function of Mark 1:1-15: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach to the Markan Prologue*.

⁶ Francesco Filannino, *The Theological Programme of Mark: Exegesis and Function of Mark 1:1,2-15*.

Scholars have not given much attention to the study of the Holy Spirit in Mark. Most of the studies on Mark's Gospel do not explore this topic, or there is only a brief comment on it.⁷ In 1987 Robert Mansfield published the first and only book-length work on the Spirit in Mark.⁸ Mansfield used a narrative-critical approach to study the purpose of the second Gospel and concluded that Mark had a dual theological motif, *Spirit* and *Gospel*. For him, the role of the Spirit in Mark has to do with ensuring the proclamation of the full gospel of Jesus as a way of balancing the disproportionate emphasis on signs and wonders during Mark's time.⁹ A few years later, McDonnell and Montague wrote a chapter on Spirit Baptism in Q and Mark where they argued that the Spirit in Mark empowers Jesus' ministry and inspires his followers to follow him.¹⁰ Later, Craig Keener also wrote about the Spirit's empowering nature in Mark but he emphasized this with being equipped for the confrontation of hostile powers.¹¹

Moving into the 21st century, we find an article published by Emerson Powery on the Spirit and hermeneutics in Mark. He argued that proper interpretation of Scripture could only happen through the guidance of the Spirit.¹² He dedicates one paragraph to analyzing Mark's prologue concerning the Spirit, and this brief account will be valuable for the current thesis. More recently, Carroll (2018) has written a chapter on the Spirit in Mark and Matthew, concluding as Keener that the Spirit equips for hostile confrontation.¹³ Lastly, a book called: *The Spirit in Israelite, Jewish and Early Christian texts* has been

⁷ See William R. Telford (*The Theology of the Gospel of Mark*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) where there is no mention to the Spirit in Mark, or Howard Marshall (*New Testament Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004) who neither studies the Spirit in Mark. Another example is Frank Thielman (*New Testament Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011).

⁸ Robert Mansfield, *Spirit and Gospel in Mark*.

⁹ Robert Mansfield, 4–5, 109, 156, 164.

¹⁰ Kilian McDonnell and George T. Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Evidence from the First Eight Centuries*.

¹¹ Craig Keener, *The Spirit in the Gospels and Acts: Divine Purity and Power*.

¹² Emerson Powery, "The Spirit, the Scripture(S), and the Gospel of Mark: Pneumatology and Hermeneutics in Narrative Perspective."

¹³ John T. Carroll, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament*.

published in late 2021. Here there is a short chapter written by Blaine Charette about the Holy Spirit and spirits in Mark that will be a valuable source for my project.¹⁴

It is also important to mention that other works on the Gospels take into account the Spirit in Mark while studying Jesus' miracles and exorcisms, but not from a narrative-critical approach.¹⁵ Since I will be aided by narrative-criticism in this project, works that focus on other aspects of Mark's narrative are also essential sources, e.g. those of Kingsbury (1989), Moloney (2004), Malbon (2009), and Breytenbach (2021).¹⁶ However, the main studies on Mark's narrative do not pay attention to the role of the Spirit. David Rhoads, who is recognized as the precursor of narrative criticism in Markan studies,¹⁷ does not include the Spirit as one of the characters of Mark's Gospel in his work *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*.¹⁸ Another example is Joel William, who also omits the Spirit as a character in his work on minor characters in the Gospel of Mark.¹⁹ This shows that there is still a need for more studies on the Spirit in Mark from a narrative approach.

1.1.3 Dialogue partners

This project is a study of the Gospel of Mark rather than a history of the scholarship; however, there are some key conversation partners. The work of Robert

¹⁴ Ronald Herms, John R. Levison, and Archie T. Wright, *The Spirit Says: Inspiration and Interpretation in Israelite, Jewish, and Early Christian Texts* (Berlin, GER: De Gruyter, 2021).

¹⁵ E.g. Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999) 87, 94; Cheryl S. Pero, *Liberation from Empire: Demonic Possession and Exorcism in the Gospel of Mark* (New York: Peter Lang Publishers, 2013).

¹⁶ E.g. Mark's narrative: Ciliers Breytenbach, *The Gospel According to Mark as Episodic Narrative* (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2021); Narrative Christology: Elizabeth S. Malbon, *Mark's Jesus: Characterization as Narrative Christology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009); Mark's plot: Jack D. Kingsbury, *Conflict in Mark: Jesus, Authorities, Disciples* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989); Mark's storytelling and narrative techniques: Francis J. Moloney, *Mark: Storytelling, Interpreter, Evangelist* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004).

¹⁷ Mark Allan Powell, "Narrative Criticism: The Emergence of a Prominent Reading Strategy" in *Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Kelly R. Iverson and Christopher W. Skinner (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 19-20, 42.

¹⁸ David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie. *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012).

¹⁹ Joel William, *Other Followers of Jesus: Minor Characters as Major Figures in Mark's Gospel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994).

Mansfield will be of great relevance for this thesis since he is the only one who thoroughly explores the Spirit in Mark through narrative criticism. Johnson's and Filannino's works on Mark's prologue will also be a key source to my study, especially in providing a framework on the length of the prologue and its literary function in relation to Mark's narrative. Then, the works of Rhoads, Dewey and Michie, and Elizabeth S. Malbon will be of significance due to their methodological approach and their contributions to the studies on the Jesus of Mark.²⁰ In addition to these authors, I will also interact with commentaries on Mark, theologies of the New Testament and Mark, and works that explore the ministry of Mark's Jesus.²¹ Chapters four and five, where I exegetically study the six mentions of the Spirit in Mark, will primarily rely on the works of Guelich and Evans (Word Bible Commentary), Marcus (Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries), Collins and Attridge (Hermeneia), and France (The New International Greek Testament Commentary).

1.1.4 My proposal

Through this thesis I attempt to analyze the role of the Spirit in Mark's narrative. In order to do so, I will study the six mentions of the Spirit in the Markan gospel, but before this I will focus on two significant elements: *pneuma* and the prologue. The reason for devoting one chapter to study *pneuma* in Mark is to provide a clearer picture of the term's meaning and how it was used in Mark's time. When it comes to the prologue, the goal is to analyze its extension and function in relation to the rest of the gospel of Mark. Among NT-scholars, it appears to be significant agreement on Mark's prologue as an interpretative key for the whole gospel.

After dealing with these two significant elements, I will research the mentions of the Spirit in Mark without losing sight of how these occasions relate to the rest of Mark's

²⁰ Elizabeth S. Malbon, *Mark's Jesus: Characterization as Narrative Christology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009); David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey and Donald Michie. *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012).

²¹ E.g. Elizabeth E. Shively, *Apocalyptic Imagination in the Gospel of Mark: The Literary and Theological Role of Mark 3:22-30* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012); Andreas Hauw, *The Function of Exorcism Stories in Mark's Gospel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2019).

narrative. The Spirit is mentioned only six times in the whole gospel, and the prologue contains half of these mentions. Here I present the six occasions and suggest some questions that are worthy of further examination:

[1] The Spirit as part of Jesus' mission (1:8): Jesus is described as a 'Spirit baptizer' who is contrasted with John the 'water baptizer.' *Is Mark suggesting that Jesus' primary mission is to give the Spirit to his followers?*

[2] The Spirit appears in Jesus' baptism (1:10): the Spirit descends upon Jesus marking the initiation of his public ministry, which is mainly shown through his healings, exorcisms, and teachings. *Is Mark proposing that the Spirit is the one who empowers Jesus and provides him with the necessary tools for his ministry?*

[3] The Spirit sends Jesus to the wilderness (1:12): Jesus is tested in the desert inaugurating a confrontation with the devil that will last for the rest of the narrative. *Is Mark insinuating that the Spirit has control over Jesus' agenda? Is this related to the confrontations that Mark portrays in the rest of his narrative?*

[4] The Spirit as the source of Jesus' power (3:39): Jesus' source of power is questioned, and he indicates the Spirit to be the one empowering him. *How does this relate to the words on the lips of John in Mk 1:10? Or OT prophecies like the one in Isaiah 61?*

[5] The Spirit inspiring the words of David (12:36): Mark introduces on the lips of Jesus an affirmation about the identity of the Messiah. *What does this tell us about the role and nature of the Spirit?*

[6] The Spirit as a helper (13:11): the Markan Jesus comforts his disciples with the promise of the Spirit's help and inspiration in times of distress and persecution. *Does this promise apply to any other than the disciples of Jesus?*

These are just some examples of questions worthy of analysis. I will argue that there is still a gap in Markan studies regarding Mark's narrative and the role of the Spirit in it. I will analyze all the findings from the body of this thesis, aiming to provide a

substantial picture of the role of the Spirit in Mark's narrative. To succeed in this endeavor, I will be assisted by the methodology described in the following point.

1.2 Methodology

This study will be mainly conducted by narrative criticism. Narrative Criticism focuses on the text's final form as we have it today and aims to discern "how the *implied reader* of a narrative would be expected to respond to the text."²² This will be achieved by paying attention to story development and rhetorical discourse strategies. By implied reader I mean an ideal reader constructed within the text as suggested by Wayne Booth, and the product of the encounter between the text and the reader as presented by Wolfgang Iser.²³ It is necessary to remark that there are different approaches within Narrative Criticism and classifying them is not an easy task. It is not my intention to oversimplify this challenge, but I will cite Emerson Powell's work to offer some degree of structure:

- 1) Author-oriented narrative criticism is concerned with analyzing a narrative in the hope of discerning the author's intent. This is done by trying to identify the expectations inferable to the implied reader.²⁴
- 2) Text-oriented narrative criticism focuses on the text itself aiming to discover how the implied reader understood the text and ascribed normative value. As Powell describes it: "the implied reader's understanding is essentially synonymous with 'the meaning of the text,' a relatively timeless concept."²⁵
- 3) Reader-oriented narrative criticism: this approach distinguishes itself from the previous two in the emphasis on narrative criticism as the methodology that guides the interpreter to discern and understand *different* and *multivalent*

²² Powell, "Narrative Criticism," 23.

²³ Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 74-75 and Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), xii.

²⁴ Powell, "Narrative Criticism," 26, 43.

²⁵ Powell, "Narrative Criticism," 34.

responses.²⁶ It focuses on meaning made in the reading process instead of meaning in the text itself.²⁷

I will approach this thesis with a reader-oriented hermeneutic. This will hopefully allow the study of the Markan narrative to shed light on the role of the Spirit. What would the intended readers discern about the Spirit while reading Mark's gospel? How is the prologue shaping or influencing the rest of the reader's experience with the story Mark is about to tell? These are some of the questions that illustrate the perspectives that the chosen methodology emphasizes.

I will apply the mentioned methodology to the study of Mark's six mentions of the Holy Spirit while analyzing them in the context of the larger story Mark is telling. Thus, chapters four and five will be the core of this thesis, and that is the reason for establishing my approach to that section in the first place. However, before undertaking that analysis, it will be important to establish some foundations around two key elements: the term *pneuma* and the form and function of the prologue. Therefore, chapter two will deal with *pneuma* to discover Mark's use of this term and compare it to contemporary texts. The works of France and Cranfield on the Greek text, and studies on the Spirit in the biblical text like the one written by Keener or Thiselton will be significant aids to this chapter.²⁸ After that, chapter three will be dedicated to establishing the prologue's form and function in the reading and interpretation of the Markan gospel. Here I will rely on the works of Johnson, Filannino and Matera, and I will use elements of literary and rhetorical analysis.

1.3 Limitation of the Scope

I hope that some of the limitations presented for this thesis have already been established on the previous pages. I attempt to write about Mark's narrative and not the narrative of the other evangelists, which limits my study to only Mark. I will primarily

²⁶ Powell, "Narrative Criticism," 43.

²⁷ Russell William Dalton, "Reading our Religion: Reader-Oriented Criticism and the use of the Bible in Educational Ministry," PhD diss. Union Theological Seminary, 1998. Ethos Theses and Dissertations, 27.

²⁸ Craig Keener, *The Spirit in the Gospels and Acts: Divine Purity and Power*. Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit: In biblical teaching, through the centuries and today*

focus on the six pericopes that contain a mention of the Holy Spirit, and even though they will be analyzed in the context of the rest of the Markan narrative, this will not be exhaustive. Unless otherwise specified, all the biblical references will be taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).²⁹

This thesis will rely on exegetical tools to analyze Mark's six mentions of the Spirit, but from a narrative critical approach that accepts the text in its current final form. This will also limit the scope of the present study by avoiding issues that have to do with redaction, sources, variants of the text, socio-cultural codes, and historicity to mention some examples. The present study does not explore Mark's theology, which means that I will avoid endeavoring on exhaustive analyses of the author's integral theological views but limit the thesis to what relates to the Spirit and the prologue.

When it comes to the extent of the prologue, I will provide an analysis of the different discussions on this matter in chapter three. At this stage, I can mention that I am choosing to limit the prologue to the alternative that includes most verses (1:1-15). Another essential boundary must be established concerning the function of the prologue in light of contemporary texts to Mark and the milieu within which Mark operated. Here we find issues that have to do with an approach *behind* the text and *besides* the text. A thorough analysis of these matters will be too extensive for our current study, and it will deviate from the primary goal of studying the Spirit in Mark's narrative. Therefore, I will rely on the work of Bradley T. Johnson to present a shorter account of the rhetorical context to Mark and prologues in Antiquity.³⁰

²⁹ *The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments: New Revised Standard Version*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989.

³⁰ Bradley T. Johnson, *The Form and Function of Mark 1:1-15: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach to the Markan Prologue*. Johnson devotes a chapter to analyze the rhetorical context to Mark where he studies the aural nature of the NT world, the nature and role of rhetoric within the first century Greco-Roman world, and the educational training available during Mark's time. Johnson builds on Richard Burridge analysis of biographies in Antiquity to provide a framework for Mark's prologue.

1.4 Motivation

Finally, I wish to say something about what motivates the present endeavor. I have always had a particular interest in the Bible. In my years at bible college, I was drawn to the New Testament, and as I kept pursuing theological studies, my curiosity for the Gospels grew more and more. I am fascinated with the amount of work that scholars have done on the Gospels during the past centuries, but I believe there is still much to discover about the Markan narrative. In addition to my interest for the Bible, I am captivated with the Holy Spirit in biblical texts, and the works that have appeared in the past decades on the Spirit in Lukan and Johannine literature have added to this. I hope that this thesis will contribute to our views on the Spirit in Mark, its relation to the life and ministry of Jesus, and its place in the bigger story of God's salvific plan. By doing so, I hope to inspire the reader to explore more about Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

2 Pneuma in Mark

2.1 A brief introduction to Mark's Gospel

Attempting to introduce Mark in a few paragraphs might be unfair to the complexity of this gospel, and it will most likely be incomplete. However, providing a few lines about Mark's authorship, audience, date, location, purpose, and special features might help the reading of the present thesis.

The vast majority of NT-scholars will agree on the Gospel of Mark as the earliest account of Jesus' life and ministry among the four canonical gospels.³¹ The identity of its author will remain a mystery, but there is a high probability that John Mark is the one who wrote this gospel.³² There are elements in the Markan narrative that can suggest that the author is writing to an audience of Jewish and Gentile Christians undergoing distress³³ and that he is located in Rome.³⁴ It is not easy to find agreement regarding issues with the dating of the gospel's composition. Nonetheless, it can be observed that most scholars debate around a range of dates that go from a few years before or after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.³⁵

Because of elements that point to a Markan emphasis on the cost of discipleship, some believe that the evangelist's purpose with the gospel was to encourage Christians suffering persecution.³⁶ However, it is possible to see a broader purpose in this and interpret it as aiming to show what discipleship in general is all about.³⁷ Finally, some features in Mark's narrative distinguish it from the other gospels, like its focus on Jesus' actions and the use of adverbs like "immediately" or "at once;" or the attention to Jesus'

³¹ Robert H. Stein, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels: Origin and Interpretation*, 49-96.

³² Werner Georg Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, trans. A. J. Matill (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), 70. See also a short review of the issues around Mark's authorship in Thomas D. Lea, and David A. Black, *The New Testament: Its Background and Message* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2003), 140-141.

³³ Nicholas Perrin, "The Gospel of Mark" in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, eds. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown and Nicholas Perrin (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2013), 559

³⁴ Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 127.

³⁵ Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26: Word Biblical Commentary*, xxxi-xxxii.

³⁶ David A. deSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods & Ministry Formation*, 196.

³⁷ David A. deSilva, 198.

emotional life and the preparation of his disciples for future ministry; or the high Christology that the gospel encompasses.³⁸

Finally, regarding the genre of the Markan Gospel, there seems to be consensus among NT scholars that the gospels are best classified as Greco-Roman biographies.³⁹ Richard Burridge made a great contribution to the studies on the gospel's genre,⁴⁰ and in this regard Johnson claims: "Burridge's landmark study shifted the balance of the debate decidedly in favor of reading Mark within the literary genre of Greco-Roman biography."⁴¹ Burridge highlighted the similar features in Mark compared to Greco-Roman biographies, and concluded that the key to interpret the gospels must be the subject of their narrative, Jesus of Nazareth.⁴² Bond offers an interesting observation regarding the Markan Jesus and asserts: "In common with other biographies, Jesus is the subject of nearly every verb and is the central actor in virtually all the narratives."⁴³ Nonetheless, Burridge warns against constraining the genre too much. He argues for flexibility within ancient biographies and shows how Greco-Roman biographies had elements of moral philosophy, religious or philosophical teaching, history, encomium, political beliefs, and story/novel.⁴⁴

2.2 Analyzing *pneuma*

2.2.1 Origins of the word *pneuma*

Much has been written about the origins, development, and meaning of the word *pneuma*.⁴⁵ Due to the space limitation and the scope of the current thesis, I will only

³⁸ Thomas D. Lea and David A. Black, *The New Testament: Its Background and Message*, 143.

³⁹ Adam Winn, *The Purpose of Mark's Gospel: An Early Christian Response to Roman Imperial Propaganda*, 4.

⁴⁰ Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?: A Comparison With Graeco-Roman Biography*.

⁴¹ Bradley T. Johnson, *The Form and Function of Mark 1:1-15: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach to the Markan Prologue*, 23.

⁴² Richard A. Burridge, 211 & 248.

⁴³ Helen K. Bond, *The First Biography of Jesus: Genre and Meaning in Mark's Gospel*, 98.

⁴⁴ Richard A. Burridge, 62-66.

⁴⁵ For an exhaustive study of the word *pneuma* see: Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 332-455. Friedrich provides a description of the meaning and origin of the word in the Greek World, the Old Testament, in Judaism, its development to the Pneumatic Self in Gnosticism, and finally *pneuma's* meaning and use in the New Testament. Another relevant source is Moises Silva's *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*.

provide a few elements necessary to consider in order to understand better Mark's use of this word.

2.2.1.1 Etymology

Concerning the etymology of the word Kleinknecht writes:

Derived from *πνέω, the verbal noun πνεῦμα means the elemental natural and vital force which, matter and process in one, acts as a stream of air in the blowing of the wind and the inhaling and exhaling of breath, and hence transf. as the breath of the spirit which, in a way which may be detected both outwardly and inwardly, fills with inspiration and grips with enthusiasm.⁴⁶

Some precedence to the noun πνεῦμα is already observable in the writings of Homer, where the verb πνέω is found in the form πνείω denoting "to blow" (e.g., earth winds), "emanate" an aroma, or "to breath."⁴⁷ Around the 6th cent. BC πνεῦμα comes into use and is found in the works of Homer and Aristophanes in various forms and contexts as, for example, "breathless" and "blasts of winds."⁴⁸ Then πνεῦμα keeps increasing its importance and is found in the works of Euripides, Plato, and Aristotle. However, *pneuma's* application to the human (or divine) spirit is not found prior to the NT.⁴⁹

Thus, *pneuma* comes from the Greek root *pneu* which denotes "dynamic movement of the air," and the suffix *-ma*.⁵⁰ Considering the etymology, Brown defines the term in the following way: "[*pneuma*] denotes the result of this action, namely, air set in motion, considered as a special substance and with an underlying stress on its inherent power."⁵¹ Before considering the meaning of *pneuma* in point 2.2.2, it is essential to review the concept's background from its Hebrew counterpart.

⁴⁶ Hermann Kleinknecht, "πνεῦμα," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), 334-335.

⁴⁷ Moisés Silva, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 800.

⁴⁸ Moisés Silva, 800.

⁴⁹ Moisés Silva, 800.

⁵⁰ Colin Brown, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 689.

⁵¹ Colin Brown, 689.

2.2.1.2 Hebrew background to *pneuma*

Perhaps the best strategy to approach the current point is to concentrate on the Greek version of the Hebrew Bible, namely the LXX, and look at the Hebrew word translated as *pneuma*. Regarding the number of appearances of *pneuma*, Brown informs the following:

In the LXX the Heb. equivalent of *pneuma* is almost always *rûah*; only three times does *pneuma* render *n^ešāmâh*, breath. Furthermore, as far as LXX translations of *rûah* are concerned, *pneuma* predominates, for of the 377 instances of *rûah* in the Masoretic Text, 264 are translated by *pneuma*, the next most frequent rendering being *anemos*, wind, used 49 times.⁵²

Therefore, it seems reasonable to concentrate on the Hebrew word *rûah*. This Hebrew term has a wide range of meanings, “ranging from ‘wind’ to ‘spirit,’ which can be further subdivided into meteorological, anthropological, theological and eschatological aspects.”⁵³ Regarding the word’s origins, it is possible to identify in West Semitic literature equivalents between the term *rh* and *rûah*.⁵⁴ Hildebrandt states: “In Ugaritic, *rh* means ‘wind, breath, fragrance,’ and in Aramaic, *rwḥ* is ‘wind, spirit.’ The Arabic form makes a distinction between *ruḥ*, ‘life-breath,’ and *riḥ*, ‘wind.’”⁵⁵ When it comes to the OT, the following list provides an overview of the most important meanings of *rûah* in the OT based on the work of E. Kamlah:⁵⁶

- Wind
- Breath
- Life-force of the individual
- Spirit
- The Spirit of God
- Evil spirits

⁵² Colin Brown, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 690.

⁵³ Frey, Levison, and Bowden, *The Holy Spirit, Inspiration, and the Cultures of Antiquity: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, 157.

⁵⁴ Hildebrandt, *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God*, 4.

⁵⁵ Hildebrandt, 4.

⁵⁶ Eberhard Kamlah, “Spirit, Holy Spirit,” 690-693.

Thus, the Hebrew word *rûah*, which basically means spirit, wind, and breath, has a similar origin to the Greek *pneuma* as it was presented when analyzing its etymology in 2.2.1.1. Having all this in mind, I will proceed now to move from the origins of *pneuma* to its meaning in the following point.

2.2.2 The meaning of *pneuma*

Pneuma is a word that has a wide range of use, and this can be observed in the Greek New Testament and some of its contemporary texts. Regarding this, Robertson states the following:

It can be translated in a host of ways, ranging from spirit to breath to air. It was a highly complex term and concept in the ancient Greek-speaking Mediterranean [...] Its conceptual associations varied widely depending on context, and played an important role in medical and philosophical thought.⁵⁷

Tibbs writes similarly to Robertson:

The term *pneuma* was originally used in Greek to denote “air” or “moving wind.” In anthropological and cosmological contexts it was used to denote a fine material substance that made up the universe and was a component of physical vitality.⁵⁸

Thus, considering the wide-ranging meaning and use of *pneuma*, it will be significant to establish a classification within its use in the NT. I will therefore rely upon the work of Danker and Krug and use their categories and one biblical citation for each of them as an example:⁵⁹

- **A physical item** like wind, breath, or spirit
- **A personal inner and expressive human identity** (Mark 2:8 “At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing [...]”)

⁵⁷ Robertson, “De-Spiritualizing ‘Pneuma’: Modernity, Religion, and Anachronism in the Study of Paul,” 367.

⁵⁸ Clint Tibbs, *Religious Experience of the Pneuma: Communication with the Spirit World in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14*, 43.

⁵⁹ Frederick William Danker and Kathryn Krug, *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 289.

- **A non-corporal sentient being** (Hebrews 12:22-23 “But you have come to Mount Zion [...], and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect”)
- **A transcendent force or expression:**
 - *A self-expression of God* (Mt 12:28 “But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you”)
 - *The Spirit of Jesus after resurrection* (Acts 16:7 “When they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them”)
 - *The divine self-expression or agency of the Holy Spirit* (Mk 3:29 “but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness [...]).

Much more could have been written on *pneuma* and *rûah*, but the previous points aimed to concisely present the term’s origins and navigate its meaning in the NT. As we have seen, *pneuma* can represent wind, breath, or spirits. This latter meaning is the most relevant for the present study, and in the following point I will analyze how Mark uses it to refer to different ‘types’ of spirits.

2.2.3 Mark’s use of *pneuma* in his narrative

In the Gospel according to Mark we find the word *pneuma* twenty-three times. In the following points I will show all the appearances of *pneuma* in three different tables and with a short extract from the verses so that the reader can identify the context. I will also provide some comments on the original Greek text.

2.2.3.1 Unclean spirit

As it can be observed, on each of these fourteen occasions Mark writes “unclean spirit,” except for the account in chapter 9 where three out of four times *spirit* is found without the adjective. However, the context of this episode and Mark’s description of the account in 9:25a makes the type of spirit clear to the reader.

Unclean spirit (14)		
<p>Mark 1:23 Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit [...]</p>	<p>Mark 5:2 [...] a man out of the tombs with an unclean spirit met him.</p>	<p>Mark 7:25 but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit [...]</p>
<p>Mark 1:26 And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice [...]</p>	<p>Mark 5:8 For he had said to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!"</p>	<p>Mark 9:17 [...] he has a spirit that makes him unable to speak</p>
<p>Mark 1:27 [...] He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.</p>	<p>Mark 5:12* [...] the unclean spirits begged him, "Send us into the swine [...]" - The Greek text reads: "<i>they</i> begged him" -</p>	<p>Mark 9:20 [...] When the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy [...]</p>
<p>Mark 3:11 Whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him [...]</p>	<p>Mark 5:13 [...] And the unclean spirits came out and entered the swine [...]</p>	<p>Mark 9:25a [...] he rebuked the unclean spirit [...]</p>
<p>Mark 3:30 [...] for they had said, "He has an unclean spirit."</p>	<p>Mark 6:7 [...] and gave them authority over the unclean spirits.</p>	<p>Mark 9:25b [...] "You spirit that keeps this boy from speaking and hearing [...]"</p>

The Greek construction found in all these verses combines the noun πνεῦμα (spirit) with the adjective ἀκάθαρτος (impure, unclean). This adjective is the combination of an ἀ (alpha) in the front which means negation, and the rest derives from the adjective καθαρός which means pure, clean. Thus, *akathartos* comes from "not

clean/pure” and is correctly translated as “unclean.”⁶⁰ Mark uses the terms for *unclean spirit* and *demon* as synonyms, both appearing with equal frequency in his narrative.⁶¹ As Guelich states, *unclean spirits* are a “common Jewish designation for demons.”⁶²

2.2.3.2 Holy Spirit

Mark’s references to the Holy Spirit are part of the core of this thesis and will be analyzed in depth in the following chapters. The six occasions where the Holy Spirit is mentioned were already presented in the previous chapter, but they are introduced again in the following table:

Holy Spirit (6)		
Mark 1:8 [...] but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit .	Mark 1:12 And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.	Mark 12:36 David himself, by the Holy Spirit , declared [...]
Mark 1:10 [...] the Spirit descending like a dove on him.	Mark 3:29 [...] but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit [...]	Mark 13:11 [...] for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit .

On four of these six occasions we can observe the construction Πνεύματι ἁγίῳ, which is best translated: *the Holy Spirit*.⁶³ In the remaining two occasions the context is so clear that is no room for another interpretation than the Holy Spirit: (1) In Mark 1:10 the Spirit descends upon Jesus like a dove; and in (2) Mark 1:12 the Spirit cast Jesus out to the wilderness. In chapters four and five I will analyze all these mentions of the Holy Spirit in depth.

⁶⁰ William D. Mounce, *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, 58 & 257.

⁶¹ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 103.

⁶² Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26: Word Biblical Commentary*, 56.

⁶³ Grimm, Wilke, and Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti*, 521.

2.2.3.3 Human spirit

Finally, in Mark, there are three times where the word *pneuma* refers to the person's spirit. Two of these occasions (2:8 and 8:12) mention Jesus' spirit, and the remaining one relates to anyone's spirit.

Human spirit (3)		
Mark 2:8 At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing [...]	Mark 8:12 And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said [...]	Mark 14:38 [...] the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

There are no grounds to read a reference to the Holy Spirit in 2:8 and 8:12.⁶⁴ It seems apparent in the text that the author describes Jesus' emotional experience on these occasions, and the phrase "in his spirit" could be replaced with "in himself" without altering the meaning of the accounts.⁶⁵ Joel Marcus adheres to this interpretation and writes: "In the OT 'spirit' can be used as an anthropological term for the seat of the emotions, the will, or the intellect."⁶⁶ The last use of *pneuma* concerning the person's spirit (14:38), where Mark refers to the human will and a form for inner struggle, confirms Marcus' statement. Here we find *flesh* referring to "the seat of the human propensity to sin" in contrast to *spirit* which is depicted as "the God-given capacity to overcome this natural inclination."⁶⁷

2.3 Introductory notions to the Spirit in Mark

After a brief presentation of Mark's gospel and issues concerning the Greek word *pneuma*, I will devote the last section of this chapter to the one use of the word *pneuma* that is most relevant for the current thesis: *the Holy Spirit*. The aim is to analyze some elements like the possible influences of the OT and Judaism in Mark's understanding of

⁶⁴ Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26: Word Biblical Commentary*, 88.

⁶⁵ Robert A. Guelich, 88 & 414.

⁶⁶ Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 217.

⁶⁷ Joel Marcus, *Mark 8-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 979.

the Holy Spirit, and some general notions of how the Spirit is presented in the narrative. It will not be before chapter six that a more comprehensive analysis of the Holy Spirit in Mark's narrative will be given.

2.3.1 Background to Mark's notions of the Spirit

Much has been written about the following topics, but in an attempt to concentrate on the primary purpose of this thesis, I will provide a short overview mainly based on the works of Anthony Thiselton and Craig Keener. Even though this approach might oversimplify two complex areas, I will contend that the material included here is enough for the current thesis. The main aim of this section is to inform on the background and context that anteceded the Markan gospel.

2.3.1.1 The Spirit in the Old Testament

Anthony Thiselton dedicates the first chapter of his work *"The Holy Spirit: in biblical teaching, through the centuries and today"* to analyze the Holy Spirit in the OT and provides seven points to summarize how the Spirit is presented through the OT.⁶⁸ I will show those seven points by outlining what is written on each one throughout the whole of Thiselton's first chapter. On the occasion where Thiselton includes Bible references, I will also have one of them as an example to fundament that characteristic.

- *Transcendent*: the Spirit of God is presented as different from the human spirit; the Spirit is other, unlike, and superior to any other spirit. ("the Spirit lifted me up and bore me away" Ezek. 3:14)
- *Anointer*: the Spirit anoints chosen individuals to perform specific tasks. ("But when the Israelites cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer [...] The Spirit of the Lord came upon him [...] Jud 3:9-10)
- *Representative*: the Spirit is depicted as divine, an extension of God, and a representer of his presence. Thiselton writes: "Often the Spirit of God is found in

⁶⁸ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit in Biblical Teaching, Through the Centuries and Today*, 3-21.

synonymous parallelism with God, for example, in ‘do not take your Holy Spirit from me’ (Ps.51:11).”⁶⁹

- Observable by his effects: the work and operation of the Spirit are evaluated by the effects it produces.
- Creative: the Spirit is presented as a creative, dynamic, and powerful Agent of God, who is also present in the creation narrative.⁷⁰
- Life-giving: the Spirit of God is understood as the one who creates and gives life (“the Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life” Job 33:4)

Thiselton’s work provides a short overview of how the Spirit is presented in the Old Testament. There is a high probability that both the author and the recipients (at least some of them) of the Gospel of Mark were acquainted with these notions of the Spirit. This will be observed in chapters four to six, and recurrent references to the OT will be mainly studied in Mark’s prologue. Perhaps the notion of the Holy Spirit as anointer (point 3) was present in the readers’ minds when John the Baptist promised a Greater One coming after him to baptize them with the Holy Spirit? And perhaps the same was experienced a few verses later when the account of Jesus’ baptism is recorded, and the descent of the Spirit on him is described? I will attempt to answer these types of questions and show the influence of the OT in Mark’s narrative in chapters four to six.

2.3.1.2 The Spirit in Judaism

Keener maps the views on the Spirit in Early Judaism, and he divides them into two categories⁷¹:

- The Spirit of purification (concerning the ethical role of the Spirit)

⁶⁹ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit in Biblical Teaching, Through the Centuries and Today*, 13.

⁷⁰ To my view, Thiselton does not substantiate this point enough, but I nonetheless include his arguments. When it comes to the description of a ‘creative, dynamic, and powerful Agent of God’ he provides Isa 63:11-14 where the subject is God. In here the focus appears to be in God who gives his Spirit to Israel (v.11), and again he gives them the Spirit who gives them rest (v.14). Regarding the Spirit present in creation, Thiselton mentions this as part of point 3 (representative), and only Gen 1:2 is given as a reference.

⁷¹ Craig Keener, *The Spirit in the Gospels and Acts: Divine Purity and Power*, 6.

- The Spirit of prophecy and of wisdom or instruction (with these last two subcategories overlapping considerably)

Through his analysis, Keener shows how rabbinic Judaism emphasized the Spirit of prophecy above other views of the Spirit. Still, he also demonstrates how some groups, like the Essenes, appreciated a more “ethical dimension to the Spirit alongside the prophetic one.”⁷² Then, Keener elaborates on the developments in rabbinic Judaism that lead some groups to believe in the cessation of the prophetic work of the Spirit already by the time of the NT.⁷³ Thus, Keener will argue that the Jewish emphasis on the role of the Spirit concerning holiness and prophecy should be considered when analyzing different notions of the Spirit in early Christianity. Keener writes: “Early Jewish pneumatology provides a context in which early Christian pneumatic experience may be understood.”⁷⁴ Having this in mind, it will not be unreasonable to argue that the recipients of Mark’s gospel might have had a preparative understanding of the Spirit as one who could inspire one’s speech and writing, but also work in the ‘purification’ of the individual. Is it possible that Mark’s readers had these features of the Spirit in mind when reading that the Markan Jesus promised the Spirit’s help in knowing what to say before a trial (Mk 13:11)?

In summary, there are elements about the Spirit as presented in the OT and the Spirit in the minds and understandings of early Jewish thought around the first century that should be considered when studying the Spirit in Mark. As mentioned before, I will elaborate more on these issues in chapters four to six. Now, I will move to some general considerations on the Spirit in Mark.

2.3.2 The Spirit and spirits presented as counterparts

It is crucial to avoid presenting ‘conclusions’ on the Spirit in Mark at this stage of the present thesis. The goal of this point and the following one is to highlight a few general considerations on the Spirit in Mark, which will help the posterior examination through

⁷² Craig Keener, *The Spirit in the Gospels and Acts: Divine Purity and Power*, 26.

⁷³ There are different opinions on this matter, which I consider not essential to the purpose of this thesis. For a counter-argument on the Spirit’s activity in early Judaism see: Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit in Biblical Teaching, Through the Centuries and Today*, 22, 27-28.

⁷⁴ Craig Keener, 27.

chapters four to six. First, I would like to highlight how *spirits* and the Holy Spirit are presented as opposites, counterparts in a battle between forces.

John Carroll concurs with the views of Mark's composition around the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, and he sees an "urgent tone" in Mark's narrative, which will be suitable with a time of crisis and distress.⁷⁵ Then he writes:

Reflecting this setting are the urgent tone of the narrative and the intense struggle it relates between Jesus's Spirit-powered mission to advance the reign of God and the tenacious forces of evil that oppress human beings. So although there are few explicit mentions of the Holy Spirit, Mark's Gospel places in the foreground conflict between the Spirit or reign of God and the unclean and destructive spirits.⁷⁶

As chapters four and five will show, there is a clear contrast in Mark's narrative between the Holy Spirit present in the life and ministry of Jesus and the unclean spirits that are defeated by his exorcisms. Mark sets up his narrative to lead the reader to see this contrast between the incoming Kingdom of God and the forces of evil that are being pushed away by Jesus' ministry.⁷⁷ Without going into much detail or interpretation, it is possible at this stage to make the affirmation that the Holy Spirit is contrasted with evil spirits and therefore entirely different to them.

2.3.3 The Holy Spirit's nature in Mark

In second place, it is important to remark the influence of the OT on Mark's narrative and the perceptions during Mark's time about the Spirit's nature. Although Mark does not specify the deity of the Spirit, it appears implicit in his narrative. As I have shown in point 2.3.1, there was an understanding of the Spirit of God which had its basis in the OT and was palpable around the time of Mark's composition. Therefore, it is observable in Mark's narrative that the author assumes that the readers understand the Spirit's deity. For instance, in Mark 3:20-30 the author introduces on the lips of Jesus a condemnation of those that blaspheme the Spirit, which is categorized as "eternal sin." In chapters four to six, I will analyze what Mark writes about the Spirit, and we will be able to see how the

⁷⁵ John T. Carroll, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament*, 43.

⁷⁶ John T. Carroll, 43-44.

⁷⁷ John T. Carroll, 45-46.

Spirit is presented as part of a new era in God's salvific plan for humanity. In other words, in Mark the Holy Spirit is introduced in the larger context of the OT prophecies as a key player in the unfolding of a new eschatological era.

2.4 Conclusion

Through this chapter, I have attempted to present a short introduction to significant subjects that will be important to consider when undertaking an exegetical narrative examination of the Spirit in Mark. Therefore, this chapter began with issues concerning the origins, authorship, location, and audience of Mark's gospel, providing some framework for the rest of this thesis. Then, much of this chapter was devoted to analyzing the Greek word *pneuma* (πνεῦμα), including its origins, meaning, and its use by Mark. As it has been established, *pneuma* is used when referring to wind and breath, but also spirit (s). The word connotes air set in motion and is considered a special substance with a fundamental emphasis on its intrinsic power. *Pneuma's* counterpart in Hebrew carries the same meaning and is also used when referring to spirit, wind, and breath. This chapter also included an overview of the twenty-three times that Mark uses the word *pneuma* and the way it is used on each occasion. When denoting spirit (s), Mark's use of *pneuma* concentrates on unclean spirits, the Holy Spirit, and human spirit.

Finally, some introductory notions to the Spirit in Mark were included, first by providing some background to Mark from the OT and Early Judaism, and then by including two general considerations of Mark's presentation of the Spirit in his narrative. Namely, the divine nature of the Holy Spirit and his depiction as different from (and battling against) unclean spirits. The main aim of this chapter was to provide some context before embarking on the study of the Spirit in Mark's narrative and to offer concepts that will be included in the final chapter where all the material will be brought together.

3 Mark's prologue

This chapter aims to analyze Mark's prologue and to do so different aspects need to be considered. First, it is essential to define what a prologue is in general, and then Mark's prologue must be established concerning its length. Subsequently, I will analyze the structure and content of the prologue and pay special attention to the OT references contained there. I will also compare the Markan prologue to other prologues and study the function of this opening unit regarding the rest of the gospel.

3.1 Defining prologue

Dennis Smith summarizes three types of narrative beginnings observable in ancient Greek and Latin literature: the preface, the dramatic prologue, and the incipit.⁷⁸ To understand better the nature and function of a prologue, it will be interesting to take a quick look into these three forms.

Preface: introduction to a written work where the author announces his purpose for writing.⁷⁹ Smith explains how prefaces were related to the conventions of the time and includes a reference to Aristotle, who said that the essential function of a preface is "to make clear what is the end or purpose."⁸⁰

Dramatic prologue: its inclusion was standard in both Greek and Roman drama, in some cases functioning as a preface. The expository prologue allowed the writer to "set up the action or situation of the play" and "introduce the audience to the opening action of the drama."⁸¹

Incipit: Smith defines this one as "a less formalistic type of beginning [...] refers to the use of a brief phrase to introduce a document or selection from a document."⁸² He provides the beginning of the Gospel of Thomas as an example: "These are the secret sayings which the living Jesus spoke and which Didymos Judas Thomas wrote down."⁸³ In

⁷⁸ Dennis E. Smith, "Narrative Beginnings in Ancient Literature and Theory," 1.

⁷⁹ Dennis E. Smith, 1.

⁸⁰ Dennis E. Smith, 2.

⁸¹ Dennis E. Smith, 3-4.

⁸² Dennis E. Smith, 4.

⁸³ Dennis E. Smith, 4.

other words, the incipit functions as a title, which is insert in the opening words of a text, and some Markan scholars consider 1:1 as an incipit.⁸⁴

Regarding a prologue, the Cambridge Dictionary of English offers the following definition: “a part that comes at the beginning of a play, story, or long poem, often giving information about events that happened before the time when the play, story, or poems begins.”⁸⁵ Thus, a prologue can be defined as an opening unit that prepares the audience for the narrative or story that is about to be told. It lays out a background to the coming narrative and presents the story’s purpose and main character (s).

Throughout this chapter, I will attempt to show the form and function of Mark’s introductory unit. It will be necessary to determine its extension,⁸⁶ but a quick reading of Mark 1:1-15 shows that the Markan gospel possesses an opening unit that presents the purpose of the book, introduces different characters of the story, and shows some events that took place before and at the beginning of the Markan Jesus’ ministry. Lastly, scholars appear to have a consensus on classifying Mark’s opening unit as a *prologue*. This can be observed in commentaries to Mark, studies that compare the gospels, studies on Mark’s theology, and Markan studies in general.⁸⁷

3.2 *The extension and structure of Mark’s prologue*

3.2.1 *Different views on the extension of the prologue*

There have been different arguments about the extension of the prologue, and at the beginning of the 20th century most commentators recognized the prologue from 1:1 to

⁸⁴ E.g., Adam Winn, *The Purpose of Mark’s Gospel: An Early Christian Response to Roman Imperial Propaganda* (Tübingen, GER: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 95-97; Craig A. Evans, “Mark’s Incipit and the Priene Calendar Inscription: From Jewish Gospel to Greco-Roman Gospel,” *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 1 (2000), 67-81.

⁸⁵ *Cambridge Essential English Dictionary*, 1135.

⁸⁶ Scholars do not agree on the extension of the prologue, but the discussions rarely exceed the alternative that includes 1:1-15. For a complete review see: Francesco Filannino, *The Theological Programme of Mark: Exegesis and Function of Mark 1:1,2-15*, 13-29.

⁸⁷ E.g., Donahue & Harrington, *Sacra Pagina*, 59. Marcus, *Anchor Yale*, 640. France, *NIGTC*, 54. Shively, “Characterizing the Non-Human,” 137. Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark’s Gospel*, 92. Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit*, 44. Malbon, *Mark’s Jesus*, 32. Mansfield, *Spirit & Gospel in Mark*, 15. LaVerdiere, *The Beginning of the Gospel*, xii.

1:8.⁸⁸ However, around the middle of the past century, arguments for a closure of the opening material in v.13 or v.15 began to arise.⁸⁹ Frank J. Matera describes how R. H. Lightfoot argued for the prologue extending to v.13, and some years later L. E. Keck contended for the extension to v.15. Matera himself concurs with Lightfoot but recognizes that most scholars at the end of the 20th century agreed with Keck and the prologue's ending at v.15.⁹⁰ Most recently, the works of Bradley T. Johnson (2017) and Francesco Filannino (2021) have contributed to the arguments for ending the prologue in v.15. Even when the debate is noteworthy, it is also extensive and will not be included here. The disagreement has ranged chiefly between 1:1-8 to 1:1-15, and today most scholars debate about the ending of the prologue at either 1:1-13 or 1:1-15. Therefore, I find appropriate to concentrate on the arguments around the ending at v.13 or v.15 instead of reviewing old debates from which Markan scholars appeared to have moved on. I adhere to the view of Mark 1:1-15 as a cohesive opening unit, and I will dedicate the following point to fundament the reasons for delimiting the prologue to that extent.

3.2.2 The Markan prologue: Mark 1:1-15

There is great agreement among scholars on Mark's introduction as being enclosed to the opening verses of chapter one, but as it was mentioned above, the disagreements have been regarding its extension.⁹¹ If the opening unit is divided into segments or scenes, the following division is generally accepted:⁹²

- First scene: 1:(2) 4-8 John⁹³
- Second scene: 1:9-11 John and Jesus
- Third scene: 1:12-13 Jesus
- Fourth scene: 1:14-15 - *Does it belong to the opening unit?* -

⁸⁸ Frank J. Matera, "The Prologue as the Interpretative Key to Mark's Gospel," 4.

⁸⁹ Frank J. Matera, 4.

⁹⁰ Frank J. Matera, 4. The same is asserted by Boring, M. Eugene Boring, "Mark 1:1-15 and the Beginning of the Gospel," 55.

⁹¹ M. Eugene Boring, 53.

⁹² M. Eugene Boring, 53.

⁹³ In 3.2.3 I will come back to the issue of Mark 1:1 as title of the gospel, but for now I will concentrate in the first scene which starts we John the Baptist.

Thus, it is essential to deal with the question about 1:14-15 as part of the prologue. Much has been written about this topic since 1950-60, and I will summarize the main arguments for the literary unity of 1:1-15 in the following points:

[1] Keck argued for a literary link built by having the word εὐαγγέλιον in the title 1:1 and in 1:14-15, which will be an indication of literary unity.⁹⁴

[2] Filannino mentions “structural reasons,” arguing for parallelism in the presentation of two characters: Jesus and John. He highlights:⁹⁵

a-Identification through a supernatural voice (Mark 1:2-4; 1:9-11)

b-Period in the desert (Mark 1:5-6; 1:12-13)

c-Preaching (Mark 1:7-8; 1:14-15)

[3] Various interpreters see a link between the announcement of the εὐαγγέλιον as related to the previous account of the temptation.⁹⁶ Namely, they will assert that 1:14-15 provides a conclusion to the confrontation in 1:12-13 showing Jesus’ victory over Satan. Regarding this connection, Filannino concludes: “[it] confirms the reciprocal relationship of these two realities which Mark hints at in his juxtaposition of the episode of the temptations (Mark 1:12-13) with the good news of the closeness of the kingdom of God (Mark 1:14-15).”⁹⁷

[4] Johnson provides an analysis of repeated words in the opening unit as proof of the unanimity of 1:1-15. He observes εὐαγγέλιον (see point **[1]** above) and κηρύσσω (to proclaim) which appears in 1:4, 7, 14.⁹⁸ Then, Johnson mentions the verb ἔρχομαι, used in v.9 and v.14 in its aorist indicative active form (ἦλθεν), which might indicate a

⁹⁴ M. Eugene Boring, 55.

⁹⁵ Francesco Filannino, *The Theological Programme of Mark: Exegesis and Function of Mark 1:1,2-15*, 27.

⁹⁶ Francesco Filannino, 27.

⁹⁷ Francesco Filannino, 27.

⁹⁸ Bradley T. Johnson, *The Form and Function of Mark 1:1-15: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach to the Markan Prologue*, 53.

narrative strategy from the author “to suggest that *Jesus came from and went (back) to Galilee.*”⁹⁹

[5] Another significant contribution to the unity of Mark 1:1-15 is Johnson’s study of ‘temporal markers’ through vv.1-15. He defines this literary feature as a *climax* and observes it in ἀρχή in 1:1; ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις in 1:9; μετὰ δέ 1:14; πεπλήρωται and ἤγγικεν in 1:15; and μετανοεῖτε and πιστεύετε in 1:15.¹⁰⁰ A summary of Johnson’s findings can be seen in his conclusion:¹⁰¹

We observe the following trajectory established by Mark’s temporal markers: 1) Mark initiates his narrative with a starting point (ἀρχή); 2) the narration narrows to focus on Jesus (ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις); 3) the climax of the unit is anticipated with the quasi-temporal break initiated by μετὰ δέ; 4) the first words of Jesus bring to fullness both God’s appointed time and his approaching kingdom (πεπλήρωται and ἤγγικεν); and 5) the yet-untold drama is alluded to through the utterance of tandem imperatives awaiting actualization (μετανοεῖτε and πιστεύετε).

[6] Boring presents the following narratological arguments to state that 1:14-15 is the conclusion to Mark’s introduction “rather than the introduction to the body of the narrative:”¹⁰²

a-Mark 1:14 closes John’s participation and takes him “off the stage.”

b-“The summary, general nature” of 1:14-15 is evidence that the segment proves closure to the preceding sections.

c-The opening unit cannot end with Jesus in the desert. Boring writes: “the reader needs to know the outcome. Mark 1:13 is still incomplete and unfulfilled without 1:14.”

d-No new characters are presented in vv.14-15, but 1:16-20 introduces new participants.

⁹⁹ Bradley T. Johnson, 54-55.

¹⁰⁰ Bradley T. Johnson, 56.

¹⁰¹ Bradley T. Johnson, 60-61.

¹⁰² M. Eugene Boring, “Mark 1:1-15 and the Beginning of the Gospel,” 58-59.

e-There is a shift from primarily *diegetic* to primarily *mimetic* narrative in 1:16. The characteristics of *diegetic* narrative provided by Boring are: unfocused segment, telling, summary, and recounting. In contrast, the *mimetic* narrative shows: focused scene, showing, scene, and enactment.

[7] Johnson discusses the break from 1:1-15 to 1:16 (and the rest of that pericope) and highlights that Jesus and Galilee are the only two common denominators between 1:1-15 and 1:16-20. Besides those two, there is a “host of new factors” in vv.16-20 like the introduction of new characters, the Markan Jesus speaking for the first time to people, and the concept of discipleship dominant in vv.16-20 and absent in vv.1-15. Finally, the lack of major themes in vv.16-20 which were key to vv.1-15, is another sign of a break in the narrative (e.g., gospel, baptism, repentance, or proclamation).¹⁰³

[8] Finally, Filannino argues for a conciliating view regarding the ending. He states that “1:14-15 provides a fundamental transition” between 1:1-13 and the rest of the Gospel and that 1:14-15 is key to understanding both the ending of 1:1-13 and the beginning of the coming narrative.¹⁰⁴ Still, he contends the ending of the prologue in v.15.

In summary, a literary analysis of Mark 1:1-15 provides compelling arguments for its cohesiveness.¹⁰⁵ The unity around the central theme of the *good news* presented in the opening verses, the noticeability of parallels between John and Jesus, the recurrence of the exact words, and the clear distinction with 1:16-20 are examples of the evidence for the Markan prologue encircling 1:1-15. Another critical aspect of the prologue is its content. It has been briefly mentioned that key themes of the whole Markan narrative are presented in the prologue, and this might also be a strong argument for the unity of 1:1-15. This argument was not developed through the current point because it will be central to the coming one, 3.2.3.

¹⁰³ Bradley T. Johnson, *The Form and Function of Mark 1:1-15: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach to the Markan Prologue*, 61.

¹⁰⁴ Francesco Filannino, *The Theological Programme of Mark: Exegesis and Function of Mark 1:1,2-15*, 28.

¹⁰⁵ For a textual and syntactic analysis see Johnson, *The Form and Function*, 30-49.

3.2.3 The structure and content of the prologue

This thesis aims to study the role of the Spirit in Mark's narrative, and since Mark's prologue is so significant for the rest of the gospel, special emphasis is given to it in the current chapter. Mark's opening unit is rich in content, and throughout this point, I will divide it into segments for an analysis of its structure and meaning. I attempt to discuss introductory issues without doing a complete exegesis of each segment. Still, in the following chapter, an exegetical analysis of the pericopes which contain a mention of the Spirit will be provided. There are different approaches to analyzing the structure of the prologue, but one can generally observe that the prologue contains: (1) The Title, (2) The reference to Isaiah, (3) John the Baptist, and (4) Jesus.¹⁰⁶ No matter how the structure of the prologue is divided, the main point is that the reader is presented with material fundamental for understanding who Jesus is.¹⁰⁷

3.2.3.1 The title (1:1)

¹The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

i-Issues concerning Mark 1:1 as title

The opening verse of Mark's gospel has been generally recognized as a title,¹⁰⁸ but there is no agreement among scholars concerning what the verse is a title for.¹⁰⁹ Eugene Boring reviews different alternatives to 1:1 (a) as the title for the whole Gospel, (b) as head for the introduction, (c) the first sentence of the Gospel, or (d) part of a longer introductory sentence.¹¹⁰ He then concludes:

It is important to see Mark 1:1 as a title for the whole Gospel [...] No place in Mark is there a heading for a particular section; no place in Mark does a sub-unit of the Gospel begin with a verbless clause. All the key terms of this title

¹⁰⁶ E. g., see the classification on scenes in point 3.2.2, or Matera, *The Prologue as the Interpretative Key to Mark's Gospel*, 6-9. There Matera divides the material in: (1) The relationship between John and Jesus, (2) The identity of Jesus, (3) Jesus and Satan.

¹⁰⁷ Frank J. Matera, "The Prologue as the Interpretative Key to Mark's Gospel," 6.

¹⁰⁸ La Verdere, *The Beginning of the Gospel: Introducing the Gospel According to Mark*, 1-3.

¹⁰⁹ Francesco Filannino, *The Theological Programme of Mark: Exegesis and Function of Mark 1:1,2-15*, 21.

¹¹⁰ M. Eugene Boring, "Mark 1:1-15 and the Beginning of the Gospel," 47-53.

refer to the narrative as a whole; none of them refers exclusively to the introduction.¹¹¹

As Boring mentions, the verse has no verb, which represents a strong argument for 1:1 as the title of Mark. Then, it can also be observed the lack of an article besides “Ἀρχὴ” (beginning), which will indicate Ἀρχὴ as the opening word of a title.¹¹² The Greek text reads as follows: Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ Υἱοῦ Θεοῦ. The genitive Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ presents some issues of interpretation that will be considered in the next point.

On the other end, some scholars disagree with the hypothesis of 1:1 as the title for the whole Gospel. For instance, Johnson argues that *arche* must have an ‘end’ in the text in which is found, and since he claims that *arche* refers to the beginning of John’s ministry (which ends in v.14), 1:1 must be the title to just the prologue.¹¹³ Another exponent is Guelich who interprets 1:1 in light of 1:2. He disputes that v.2 cannot stand alone because the opening adverb καθὼς never introduces a sentence in Mark or the rest of the NT, and because when καθὼς combines with γέγραπται, it refers to the material that precedes it.¹¹⁴ Thus, Guelich will argue that 1:1-3 is the heading of Mark and disagree with the hypothesis of 1:1 as the title for the entire gospel. Some others will say that taking a standpoint is unnecessary or unattainable claiming the polyvalence of Mark 1:1-4,¹¹⁵ and Filannino contests the exact opposite saying: “The examination of the different interpretations shows that a solution of this kind is hardly practicable since they imply meanings that cannot be reconciled with one another.”¹¹⁶

Concerning the issues mentioned above, it is crucial to take a standpoint, and I find myself compelled by the arguments of 1:1 as the title for the whole gospel. I am aware of how this influences the analysis and findings of this chapter and the rest of this thesis. I will deal with these issues in points 3.5-3.6 and chapter six where I bring together all the

¹¹¹ M. Eugene Boring, “Mark 1:1-15 and the Beginning of the Gospel,” 50-51.

¹¹² La Verdiere, *The Beginning of the Gospel: Introducing the Gospel According to Mark*, 4.

¹¹³ Bradley T. Johnson, *The Form and Function of Mark 1:1-15: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach to the Markan Prologue*, 120-121.

¹¹⁴ Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26: Word Biblical Commentary*, 7.

¹¹⁵ Francesco Filannino, *The Theological Programme of Mark: Exegesis and Function of Mark 1:1,2-15*, 21.

¹¹⁶ Francesco Filannino, 21.

material to present an analysis. Finally, it is essential to remark that I will refer to the title as part of the prologue in this thesis, as it has already been observed. This is done to provide a better framework for the study, taking 1:1-15 as the opening unit of the whole Markan narrative. Hence, throughout this paper I refer to Mark 1:1-15 as the prologue for the entire gospel, but at this point it has been shown the particularity of 1:1 as the 'title' for the Markan gospel.¹¹⁷

ii-Issues regarding the content of 1:1

The dual nature of the term 'beginning' present some challenges to the interpreter. Is Mark referring to the chronological start, or is he speaking of 'first' in terms of origin or principle?¹¹⁸ Is the "beginning of the good news" referring to the whole narrative coming after 1:1 (1:2-16:8[20]), or is it only indicating the ministry of John?¹¹⁹ Regarding these questions, it does not appear to be agreement among scholars, just as was mentioned above about 1:1 as a title. Moving forward, the author of Mark writes "the good news of Jesus Christ," which also poses questions because of the genitive Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ that can be read as a subjective or objective.¹²⁰ Guelich outlines different alternatives based on how one interprets the Greek text: (1) the gospel concerning Jesus Christ, (2) the gospel proclaimed by Jesus Christ, and (3) a combination of both.¹²¹ He will then conclude that the best interpretation is the good news 'concerning' Jesus, which refers to both the word and work of the Markan Jesus.¹²² France is open for ambiguity and dual interpretation, but finally agrees with Guelich on "the gospel concerning Jesus Christ" as the best interpretation. I adhere to this interpretation and will work through the rest of this thesis with this presumption. Lastly, we find the description of Jesus as the Son of God, which presents some issues about its origins. Even though this thesis studies the Gospel of Mark

¹¹⁷ Filannino resolves this issue by referring to the opening unit as 1:1,2-15 instead of 1:1-15, and by doing so he highlights 1:1 as title for the whole Gospel. See Filannino, *Theological Programme Mark*, 21.

¹¹⁸ Danelle Nightingale, "'Don't Be Late!' Assessing the Cost of Missing the Prologue in the Gospel of Mark," 112.

¹¹⁹ Francesco Filannino, 21.

¹²⁰ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 53.

¹²¹ Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26: Word Biblical Commentary*, 9.

¹²² Robert A. Guelich, 9.

in its final form, it is essential to say that the phrase “Son of God” is not found in some manuscripts.¹²³

In summary, Mark starts his narrative by giving the readers key elements of the text one is approaching. He informs who was the story about: Jesus Christ, what was the story about: the good news, and who Jesus was: the Son of God. Next, the author will continue to introduce the narrative by setting it against the background and context of the OT and some of its prophecies.

3.2.3.2 The reference to Isaiah (1:2-3)

²As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, “See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; ³the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight’”

As the author states in the text, the quotation presented in vv.2-3 comes from Isaiah, but it is a mixed quotation and does not come wholly from one prophet.¹²⁴ Mark combines a prophecy from Malachi 3:1a “*See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me [...],*” with Exodus 23:20 in which the angel is sent “*before you.*”¹²⁵ Thus, Mark combines these verses to convey the idea of God sending a messenger to prepare the way for his servant. At this point, the reader can sense parallels between the exodus from Egypt and Elijah, who is later identified as the messenger in Malachi 4:5a.¹²⁶ In point 3.3 I will deal more deeply with the OT imagery in the prologue.

Next, the reader finds v.3 with allusions to Isaiah 40:3, which announces a new exodus where the Lord redeems his people from exile.¹²⁷ That the Gospel’s recipients are able to identify the mixed nature of this quotation is not as relevant as the message it conveys. Matera summarizes this by saying:

¹²³ The methodological approach to this thesis is in essence narrative criticism and therefore I am studying the Markan gospel in its final form. The issue with ‘Son of God in Mk 1:1’ is an extensive debate, and a review of this together with arguments for the inclusion of the phrase can be found in Tommy Wasserman, “The ‘Son of God’ was in the beginning (Mark 1:1),” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 62, no.1 (April 2011).

¹²⁴ Frank J. Matera, “The Prologue as the Interpretative Key to Mark’s Gospel,” 6.

¹²⁵ La Verdiere, *The Beginning of the Gospel: Introducing the Gospel According to Mark*, 26.

¹²⁶ La Verdiere, 26.

¹²⁷ Frank J. Matera, 7.

As it stands, the entire text is attributed to Isaiah. Its function is to identify who John is. It answers that he is the messenger of the covenant, the eschatological prophet foretold by 'Isaiah'. His task is to prepare the way of the Lord for God's final act of salvation, a new exodus.¹²⁸

The reader is now ready to be introduced to John the Baptist. The evangelist has skillfully managed to fit the Jesus-story into God's larger salvific plan so that the story of Jesus is seen as part of a "line that includes Isaiah and John."¹²⁹

3.2.3.3 John the Baptist (1:4-8)

⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

In this segment we find the author informing about John the Baptist. The material contains the location and message of John, the response of the people to his ministry, and a short description of his appearance, which "accords closely with the expectations raised by 1.2-3."¹³⁰ Subsequently, the reader finds a statement on the lips of John with the first reference to the Holy Spirit in Mark, which I will analyze in the next chapter of this thesis. As observed here in Mark 1:4-8, the author keeps the person and message of John subordinated to the main character of the narrative, Jesus.¹³¹ The only time John the Baptist "speaks" in Mark is to talk about the one coming after him.

Concerning John's message, the purpose appears to be twofold:

(1) A call to repentance and to turn from sin (1:4-5). This might resound with the readers as a parallel to Malachi who was cited in 1:2a, and now it appears as a reference to Malachi 4:5-6 which encourages a change of heart.¹³²

¹²⁸ Frank J. Matera, "The Prologue as the Interpretative Key to Mark's Gospel," 7.

¹²⁹ M. Eugene Boring, "Mark 1:1-15 and the Beginning of the Gospel," 62.

¹³⁰ P.J. Sankey, "Promise and Fulfilment: Reader-Response to Mark 1.1-15," 10.

¹³¹ P.J. Sankey, 10.

¹³² P.J. Sankey, "Promise and Fulfilment: Reader-Response to Mark 1.1-15," 9-10.

(2) The proclamation of the Greater One coming after him (1:7-8).¹³³

LaVerdiere presents a similar division that particularly focuses on John's life and mission. He sees the first part as describing "John's general mission as a baptizer and proclaimer (1:4-5)", and the second part unfolding "John's specific mission as Elijah (1:6) and his relation to Jesus (1:7-8)."¹³⁴ Mark's use of the OT in these verses places the reader into the larger context of God's plan. Thus, the hope of salvation has been reinforced by John in his declaration of forgiveness and Spirit-baptism,¹³⁵ and at this point, the reader's expectations are high. The main character has been announced and is now about to enter the narrative.

3.2.3.4 Jesus' baptism, temptation, and ministry (1:9-15)

The final segment of the prologue concerns Jesus, who is the main character of Mark's story.¹³⁶ Here in Mark's opening unit, the reader will find the initiation of his public ministry with the accounts of his baptism, temptation in the desert, and preaching of his message. In the next chapter of this thesis, I will provide an exegetical analysis of the pericopes with mentions of the Spirit, but at this point it is crucial to stay focused on how Mark's narrative unfolds.

i-The baptism

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn

¹³³ P.J. Sankey sees yet another parallel to Malachi. He compares how Malachi's herald spoke about the terrifying coming of the Lord to John's statement of unworthiness regarding the one coming after him in P.J. Sankey, "Promise and Fulfillment," 10.

¹³⁴ LaVerdiere, *The Beginning of the Gospel: Introducing the Gospel According to Mark*, 28.

¹³⁵ P.J. Sankey, 11.

¹³⁶ M. Eugene Boring, "Mark 1:1-15 and the Beginning of the Gospel," 61-63. Boring deals with the established notion of prologues introducing the main character(s). He adds to this concept the particularity of the Markan prologue which not only introduces the characters, but also presents the relationship between John and Jesus, and the subordination of them to the actual main character who is God.

apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

The evangelist sets the scene for Jesus’ appearance. Mark has Jesus coming from Nazareth to the Jordan distinguishing him “from the crowds of Judeans and Jerusalemites”¹³⁷ and suggesting to the reader “that he is the stronger one who was to come after John (ἐρχεται: v.7), as suggested by the use of the same verb (ἐρχομαι).”¹³⁸ Sankey highlights the phrase ‘in those days’ (v.9) as “strongly suggestive of final eschatological events.” He argues that this builds up the expectation of the Lord’s manifestation,¹³⁹ which the author has already established by the references to the OT and Elijah in 1:2-8. However, Sankey finds then “anti-climax and irony” and a “sense of mystery” because the appearance of Jesus is the like of a “solitary and anonymous pilgrim.”¹⁴⁰

Thus, the main character has made his entrance, John has baptized him, and the evangelist proceeds to define his identity further. Nightingale states: “[...] the significance of the Spirit’s anointing is clear. Jesus, having been anticipated in v.8 as the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit, here, is witnessed to be the recipient of that very Spirit.”¹⁴¹ Matera recognizes that the reader finds himself with many questions like the descent of the Spirit, the imagery of a dove, or the voice from heaven. However, he notes that one thing is made clear for the reader: “Jesus is identified as the Spirit-empowered Son of God.”¹⁴² Now the readers know that the Holy Spirit anointed Jesus and that he is the Son of God.¹⁴³ The former is visually confirmed by a dove, and the latter is audible confirmed by God’s voice.

¹³⁷ Frank J. Matera, “The Prologue as the Interpretative Key to Mark’s Gospel,” 7-8.

¹³⁸ Francesco Filannino, *The Theological Programme of Mark: Exegesis and Function of Mark 1:1,2-15*, 22.

¹³⁹ P.J. Sankey, “Promise and Fulfilment: Reader-Response to Mark 1.1-15,” 11.

¹⁴⁰ P.J. Sankey, 11.

¹⁴¹ Danelle Nightingale, “‘Don’t Be Late!’ Assessing the Cost of Missing the Prologue in the Gospel of Mark,” 113.

¹⁴² Frank J. Matera, 8.

¹⁴³ Danelle Nightingale, “‘Don’t Be Late!’ Assessing the Cost of Missing the Prologue in the Gospel of Mark,” 114.”

ii-The temptation

¹²And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

After being informed that Jesus is the Spirit-empowered Son of God, the reader is given more exclusive information on the character's next move: the wilderness. Regarding how the narrative unfolds, Mansfield writes:

The scene shifts at 1:12-13, but the Spirit is still the dominant force, driving Jesus into the desert to be tested by Satan. The activity of the Spirit is the motif that provides continuity between the originally separate traditions of the baptism and the testing that Mark has joined.¹⁴⁴

It is clear to the reader that the main character is moving on to a new scene. The location changed, the different characters around during the baptism disappeared, and the appearance of Jesus' adversary in the Markan story is established. As can be seen above, Mansfield makes an exciting point highlighting the role of the Spirit in the continuity of Mark's narrative, and he will later emphasize the impact of the Spirit's intervention regarding Jesus empowering and equipping for preaching the Gospel.¹⁴⁵ I will come back to the significance of this account for the rest of the Markan gospel in point 3.5, where I analyze the function of the prologue.

Thus, the reader is left with some unanswered questions about the wild beasts and the angels, the nature of the confrontation with Satan, and the result of this encounter. But the evangelist rapidly dissipates any doubts by informing the audience that Jesus begins with the proclamation of the good news in v.14. As Matera has observed, this account hints to the reader the source of Jesus' authority over evil spirits since he was "tested by the prince of unclean spirits in the wilderness" and did not fail.¹⁴⁶ Mark has skillfully informed the reader that Jesus is the Greater One for whom John prepared the way; he fulfills the OT prophecies and is the Spirit-empowered Son of God who has prevailed against Satan.

¹⁴⁴ Robert Mansfield, *Spirit and Gospel in Mark*, 29.

¹⁴⁵ Robert Mansfield, 29-33.

¹⁴⁶ Frank J. Matera, "The Prologue as the Interpretative Key to Mark's Gospel," 9.

Now the author is ready to tell the story of Jesus, and therefore he will conclude his opening unit by providing a statement about the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

iii-The beginning of Jesus' ministry

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

The evangelist concludes the activity of the Baptizer by informing the audience of his arrest. There is no indication of a timeframe between John's arrest and Jesus' arrival in Galilee, the temporal note is vague, and the author "does not clarify the temporal span."¹⁴⁷ Filannino observes this in the narrative and suggests that "the point which Mark intends to signal with this temporal indication is of a theological nature."¹⁴⁸ Theological because it relates to the rest of the prologue where John predicted the arrival of the Greater One, it reiterates the identity of Jesus, and it signals the beginning of a new phase in God's salvific plan.¹⁴⁹ Now, the reader's hopes are projected even forward, the message is one of good news and of the coming of God's kingdom.¹⁵⁰

The statement on the lips of Jesus "the time is fulfilled," further inserts the story of Jesus in the context of God's salvific plan, something that Mark has been doing throughout the whole prologue. Guelich makes some noteworthy observations regarding that statement:

Instead of announcing a period of time reaching its conclusion, Jesus announces the coming to pass of a decisive moment in time. The voice and tense of *πεπλήρωται* support this meaning. The perfect tense indicates that the event has come to pass now with lasting significance, and the passive voice indicates that God is at work in bringing it to pass.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Francesco Filannino, *The Theological Programme of Mark: Exegesis and Function of Mark 1:1,2-15*, 161.

¹⁴⁸ Francesco Filannino, 161.

¹⁴⁹ Francesco Filannino, 161.

¹⁵⁰ P.J. Sankey, "Promise and Fulfilment: Reader-Response to Mark 1.1-15," 15.

¹⁵¹ Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26: Word Biblical Commentary*, 43.

Thus, in a few lines, Mark manages to capture the essence of Jesus' life and mission¹⁵² and prepares the reader for the rest of the narrative with a calling to repent and believe the Gospel that is about to be presented.

3.2.4 Summary

Before moving to the next point, it seems proper to summarize what has been reviewed through the current point (3.2). First, I attempted to provide arguments for the extension of the prologue, and as it has been observed, there is no agreement among scholars. I presented different ideas for the longer ending (1:1-15), and I chose this alternative for the current thesis. Second, I reviewed the prologue's content and structure, which has its background in the OT, and the presentation of the life and mission of John the Baptist and Jesus. The prologue is rich in content, and many noteworthy (and essential) issues were left aside. The goal of this section was to define the prologue in its extension and content, but in point the next point (3.3) I will turn to some key elements of the prologue, and in 3.5 I will analyze its function concerning the rest of the Markan gospel.

3.3 OT prophecies, imagery, and parallels

Even when the prologue contains only fifteen verses, the author has skillfully managed to ground his opening unit in the context of OT prophecies, imagery, and parallels. The references are there in a more or less precise manner but not explicitly, which is characteristic of Mark. Hays claims that the reader must be able to "hear the echoes"¹⁵³ of the OT references, imagery, and parallels to perceive them. Hays' work is an excellent contribution to the coming section of this thesis.

¹⁵² Eugene LaVerdiere, *The Beginning of the Gospel: Introducing the Gospel According to Mark*, 60.

¹⁵³ Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 48-49.

3.3.1 Jesus as Davidic king

Right at the prologue's opening, the evangelist states that Jesus is the Christ (anointed one) and the Son of God.¹⁵⁴ The custom of anointing a king, a prophet, or a priest for service was well known for any Israelite,¹⁵⁵ and the reader might be able to see a connection between being the anointed one and the awaited King of Israel. Mark gives elements in his narrative to elucidate this, for example, in 15:32. There we find the following statement on the lips of the chief priests and scribes: "Let the *Messiah*, the *King of Israel*, come down from the cross now [...]" In the Psalms, something similar is observable which provides background to the Markan narrative:

"Great triumphs he gives *to his king*,
and shows steadfast love *to his anointed*,
to David and his descendants forever" (Psalm 18:50)

Hays concludes that "the synonymous parallelism of these lines shows that—in this passage, at least—*Christos* is an epithet for the Davidic king."¹⁵⁶ Thus, there is a hint of Jesus' royal identity in the title *Christ*, and then the concept of *Son of God* further emphasizes this. There are many concerns regarding the authenticity of the title Son of God in 1:1; however, the same title is repeated during the baptism narrative in 1:11. Hays contends a connection between the title 'Son of God' in Mark and Psalms 2:6-8 where the king is "acclaimed as God's 'son,' not because of a belief about his supernatural origin but as a way of expressing the special status of election and divine favor into which the king was embraced [...]"¹⁵⁷ Later in Mark's narrative, we find the outcry of Bartimaeus who calls Jesus Son of David in 10:46-52 reinforcing the idea of Jesus being the heir of David's throne.¹⁵⁸ Hence, the prologue presents elements that lead the reader toward the prophecies of David's heir returning to the throne. There are many prophecies about the Davidic king, but here is one of the most important:

¹⁵⁴ Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 46.

¹⁵⁵ For more on this see: Ake Viberg, "The Concept of Anointing in the Old Testament."

¹⁵⁶ Richard B. Hays, 47.

¹⁵⁷ Richard B. Hays, 47-48.

¹⁵⁸ Richard B. Hays, 50-51.

“Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever. In accordance with all these words and with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.” (2 Samuel 7:16-17)

3.3.2 Isaianic prophecy, a new exodus

As I briefly mentioned in point 3.2.3.2, in Mark 1:2 the evangelist combines a prophecy from Malachi 3:1a “*See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me [...]*,” with Exodus 23:20 in which the angel is sent “*before you*.”¹⁵⁹ Mark combines these verses to convey the idea of God sending a messenger to prepare the way for his servant. The prophecy in Malachi is found in the context of the awaiting of the Day of the Lord and the apparition of a new Elijah before this event.¹⁶⁰ The evangelist hints at the person and ministry of John as the new Elijah who ‘prepares the way,’¹⁶¹ and in the next point I will look at this in more detail. Then we find the reference to Exodus 23:20, which is more evident when one observes the wording closeness in the Greek text:¹⁶²

Mark 1:2b: ἰδοὺ, ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου,
ὃς κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδὸν σου

Exodus 23:20: καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου
ἵνα φυλάξῃ σε ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ, ὅπως εἰσαγάγῃ σε εἰς τὴν γῆν ἣν ἡτοίμασά σοι.

Hays argues that Mark made no mistake in combining all these verses but that he is showing intentionality and placing his narrative in the framework of the “Isaianic new exodus.”¹⁶³ This is a reasonable conclusion since the connection to Exodus 23:20 is already observable in 1:2, and then in the next verse (1:3) appears the quotation of Isaiah 40:3, which announces a new exodus where the Lord redeems his people from exile.¹⁶⁴

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

¹⁵⁹ La Verdere, *The Beginning of the Gospel: Introducing the Gospel According to Mark*, 26.

¹⁶⁰ Eugene LaVerdiere, 26-27.

¹⁶¹ Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark*, 38.

¹⁶² Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 22.

¹⁶³ Richard B. Hays, 20-21.

¹⁶⁴ Frank J. Matera, “The Prologue as the Interpretative Key to Mark’s Gospel,” 7.

“Prepare the way of the Lord; Make straight in the desert
A highway for our God.” (Isaiah 40:3 -New King James Version)

The new exodus motif mentioned in this paper is for several scholars seen as “God’s final act of salvation,”¹⁶⁵ which entails “the establishment of God’s kingly rule in Jerusalem”¹⁶⁶ and “experience a new encounter with God.”¹⁶⁷

3.3.3 John’s ministry, the new Elijah

As I mentioned in the previous point, Mark 1:2b quotes in part Malachi 3:1a referring to the figure of the “eschatological Elijah,” who is the foretold messenger and is identified as John by Jesus himself in Mark 9:11-13.¹⁶⁸ However, Mark not only provides a background to John the Baptist concerning the OT and his place in the larger context of God’s plan, but he also describes John’s appearance, customs, and message. This description reinforces the idea of John as the one ‘preparing the way,’ the forerunner. The evangelist writes:

“John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist,
and he ate locusts and wild honey.”

Guelich claims that the description of John’s clothing corresponds to the “nomadic attire of the wilderness in general and to the prophetic dress in particular.”¹⁶⁹ And Marcus signalizes how the description of John’s appearance resembles the rough and uncomfortable clothing of the ascetics.¹⁷⁰ Several scholars have observed a parallel between the Baptist and Elijah,¹⁷¹ especially regarding John’s leather belt which matches the description of Elijah’s belt in 2 Kings 1:8:¹⁷²

“They answered him, “A hairy man, with a leather belt around his waist.”

¹⁶⁵ Frank J. Matera, “The Prologue as the Interpretative Key to Mark’s Gospel,” 7.

¹⁶⁶ Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 30.

¹⁶⁷ Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark*, 24.

¹⁶⁸ Francesco Filannino, *The Theological Programme of Mark: Exegesis and Function of Mark 1:1,2-15*, 99.

¹⁶⁹ Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26: Word Biblical Commentary*, 21.

¹⁷⁰ Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 151.

¹⁷¹ Robert A. Guelich, 21.

¹⁷² Robert A. Guelich, 21.

He said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite."

Filannino agrees with the significance of John's clothing description and further stresses the location of John's ministry by the Jordan as another element that reinforces the Elijah-parallel.¹⁷³ He then concludes:

I am more inclined to believe that the geographic location by the Jordan is meant to contribute to the characterization of John as the eschatological Elijah, sent to prepare the final coming of the Lord. The last Elijah appears in the same place in which the first Elijah had ended his earthly experience.¹⁷⁴

In summary, as Filannino stated, there are elements in the narrative of the prologue (the prophecies, the description of John, and his location) that contribute to the characterization or identification of John as the new Elijah, the forerunner who prepared the way for Jesus. Lastly, in addition to the person of John, it is also essential to look at his message and I will do this in the next chapter in point 4.1. Nonetheless, since the current section is concerned with the OT prophecies, imagery, and parallels, there is one prophecy to mention which echoes the message of John about one coming after him who baptizes with the Holy Spirit:¹⁷⁵

"I will **sprinkle clean water upon you**, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a **new spirit I will put within you**; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. **I will put my spirit within you**, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances." Ezekiel 36:25-27

The promise of sprinkling water for cleansing in Ezekiel provides a parallel to the endowment of the Spirit by baptism, which John is announcing in the ministry of the

¹⁷³ Francesco Filannino, *The Theological Programme of Mark: Exegesis and Function of Mark 1:1,2-15*, 99.

¹⁷⁴ Francesco Filannino, 99.

¹⁷⁵ There are of course other texts that echo John's message like Isaiah 44:3 "For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my spirit upon your descendants, and my blessing on your offspring" or Jeremiah 33:8 "I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me."

Greater One.¹⁷⁶ The author of Mark is skillfully leading the reader to read the narrative in the context of God's salvation and the fulfillment of His promises.

3.3.4 Elements surrounding Jesus' appearance

Much of the material that comes in the last part of the prologue will be reviewed in the exegetical analysis provided in the coming chapter 4. However, some general observations can contribute this chapter's analysis of the prologue, particularly on the present point about the OT prophecies, imagery, and parallels.

3.3.4.1 The baptism

The movement that John started with the particularity of public baptism as a sign of acceptance of his message¹⁷⁷ seems unprecedented.¹⁷⁸ The only background for this was the Jewish purification rituals with water, which can be traced to the Essenes¹⁷⁹ and those described in the Torah.¹⁸⁰ Here is an example:

“Take the Levites from among the Israelites and cleanse them. Thus you shall do to them, **to cleanse them: sprinkle the water of purification on them**, have them shave their whole body with a razor and wash their clothes, and so cleanse themselves.” (Numbers 8:6-7)

Thus, the idea of purification surrounds the ritual promulgated by John and prepares the reader for the baptism with the Holy Spirit that the Greater One is said to bring.

3.3.4.2 Wilderness, angels, and wild beasts

There are some interesting elements in Jesus' temptation account description, but I will deal with them in point 4.3 in the coming chapter. At this stage, it can be said that

¹⁷⁶ Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 152.

¹⁷⁷ Kilian McDonnell and George T. Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Evidence from the First Eight Centuries*, 5-6.

¹⁷⁸ Eugene LaVerdiere, *The Beginning of the Gospel: Introducing the Gospel According to Mark*, 28-29.

¹⁷⁹ Eugene LaVerdiere, 29. LaVerdiere mentions archeological discoveries in texts at Qumran, remains of pools in synagogues, and private homes.

¹⁸⁰ These are some examples: Ex. 40:12-15; Lv. 14:8-9, 15:16-18; Nm. 19:7-8; Dt. 23:9-11

several elements in these verses reinforce the idea of Mark's story as being connected or build based on OT prophecies, imagery, and parallels.

3.3.5 Summary

This section (3.3) aimed to show, as Hays denominates it, the 'echoes of the OT' in the prologue.¹⁸¹ In the coming chapters, I will deal with even more of the prophecies, imagery, or parallels to the OT. Still, it was essential to highlight the influence of the OT in Mark's narrative already in this chapter. This shows us how Mark builds up from the foundation of the OT, showing continuity in God's salvific plan and embedding Jesus' life and ministry in the context of the OT. It also reinforces the view of the Spirit in Mark as a confirmation of an eschatological time taking place in the life and ministry of Jesus, but I will have to come back to this in more detail in the following chapters. Now, I will investigate different prologues in the NT to provide a framework before dealing with the crucial point of establishing the function of the prologue in relation to the rest of the gospel.

3.4 Comparison to other prologues

3.4.1 Prologues in the New Testament

Due to the similarity in the genre, I choose to compare Mark's prologue to two of the other gospels, Luke and John, and the Acts of the Apostles. Even when Acts is not a gospel, its historiographic content makes the comparison to Mark more relevant than the letters (Paul, John, Peter, etc.) or John's Revelation.

¹⁸¹ Hays will argue that the reader needs to be able 'to hear' these echoes. Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 10.

3.4.1.1 The Prologue in the Gospel of Luke

Luke's opening unit provides the reader with the motivation, purpose, and method for the narrative ahead.¹⁸² Bovon describes it as "elegantly balanced,"¹⁸³ and Nolland says that it is "clearly in the style of Hellenistic literary prologues."¹⁸⁴ Fitzmyer will go even further to claim: "none of the other canonical Gospels begins, as does the Lucan Gospel, with a distinctive literary prologue. The earliest Gospel, Mark, begins almost *in medias res*, with at most one line of introduction."¹⁸⁵ It appears to be a degree of agreement among the writers of some of the most relevant critical commentaries on the NT (Word Biblical Commentary, Anchor Yale, and Hermeneia) on Luke's opening unit as a prologue. However, some other prominent scholars in Lukan studies see the opening unit as a *preface*.¹⁸⁶ This appears to be the main issue in comparing Luke's and Mark's opening units: should their introductory verses be classified as prefaces or prologues? Subsequently, what are the scholars' expectations or understandings for each category? As we see in Fitzmyer's statement, he does not recognize a prologue in Mark and sees the 1:1 as the introduction, while most Markan scholars agree that the prologue is between 1:1-13 and 1:1-15.

In any case, if one puts that issue aside and analyzes both opening units it is possible to arrive at some conclusions. The Lukan prologue does not present the characters of the narrative that is about to begin; it neither establishes the coming gospel upon the background of the OT as Mark does¹⁸⁷ nor provides a theological framework. Luke appears at his opening unit more concerned with arguing for the certainty of the work he has put together. Nonetheless, Luke's prologue is similar to Mark's in preparing the reader for the

¹⁸² François Bovon, "The Prologue (1:1-4)," 16.

¹⁸³ François Bovon, 16.

¹⁸⁴ John Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 4. Nolland actually writes "preface" but later he will call it prologue. The reason for this is that Nolland sees prefaces as the main category, and prologues as a type of prefaces.

¹⁸⁵ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, 287.

¹⁸⁶ The following are examples of works which review Luke's opening unit as a preface: Howard Marshall, Ward Gasque, and Donald Hagner. *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978); Craig L. Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels: New Testament Introduction and Survey* (Nottingham, UK: Apollos/Inter-Varsity Press, 2009); and Loveday Alexander. "Luke's Preface in the Context of Greek Preface-Writing." *Novum Testamentum* 28, no. 1 (1986): 48-74.

¹⁸⁷ This is not to say that Luke's gospel does not have strong connections with the OT, but I am only referring to the prologue.

narrative that is about to begin. In Luke's case, the reader can approach the story with the confidence of finding a trustworthy and meticulous work, while in Mark's case the reader leans into the narrative with the expectation of the fulfillment of OT prophecies.

3.4.1.2 The Prologue in the Gospel of John

At a glance, John's prologue seems to be quite different from Mark's, but it is vital to consider the "variety of forms and functions" of prologues around the time of the gospels.¹⁸⁸ Elizabeth Harris states: "the readers would accept that the writer was free to re-present any known account of a personage or god in terms which suited the author's choice and emphasis."¹⁸⁹ John 1:1-18 is considered the Johannine prologue, and R. T. France claims the following when comparing it to Mark's prologue:

It is often suggested that Mark's prologue is similar in conception to that of John, where the first eighteen verses set the scene for what follows, not merely by introducing John the Baptist and Jesus as the main characters around whom the story will begin, but also by offering theological framework against which the story can be better understood.¹⁹⁰

France sees then the similarity between both prologues in: (1) setting up the scene for the coming narrative, (2) introducing the main characters, and (3) providing a theological framework. Harris also agrees that the Johannine prologue provides material about the coming narrative, it presents the main characters, states the central theme for the whole narrative, and prepares the readers "for a true understanding of the state of affairs, which is ordained from heaven, concerning the relationship of humankind to heaven."¹⁹¹ On the other hand, some differences can also be mentioned. One can suggest that Mark's prologue requires a more 'specialist audience' while John "offers a text with a lower, more accessible threshold."¹⁹² Another difference can be seen in the approach to the person of Jesus, where Mark builds more on the Jewish messianic hope, and John

¹⁸⁸ Elizabeth Harris, *Prologue and Gospel: The Theology of the Fourth Evangelist*, 12-16. (Esp.16)

¹⁸⁹ Elizabeth Harris, 16.

¹⁹⁰ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 54.

¹⁹¹ Elizabeth Harris, 16.

¹⁹² Peter Phillips, *The Prologue of the Fourth Gospel: A Sequential Reading*, 15.

emphasizes the “divine side,” in particular “the eternity of the Logos, and His equality with God.”¹⁹³

3.4.1.3 The prologue in Acts of the Apostles

The prologue in Acts is directed to Theophilus providing a sort of “reading contract” for the reader so that one can identify the goals of the narrative.¹⁹⁴ Dupertuis highlights two main aspects of the author’s intentions in the prologue:¹⁹⁵

[1] The narrator inscribes himself “into the community for which the ensuing narrative is relevant”

[2] The author wishes to provide the readers with “surety” or “certainty.”

Marguerat concludes something similar to Dupertuis’s second point, claiming that the book aims to contribute to the construction of Christian identity and provide the community with legitimacy.¹⁹⁶

The prologue in Acts is quite different from Mark’s in its content. The author of Acts seems more concerned with establishing the narrative as a continuation of the previous volume, the gospel.¹⁹⁷ It does not provide preliminary scenes or segments that introduce the reader to the coming story but recounts the previous volume and summarizes the last weeks/months of the main character to build a bridge into the second volume. However, among other things, it is similar to Mark in identifying the main characters of the narrative, building the coming plot against the background of a broader story, and giving elements that prepare the reader for what is to come.

3.4.2 Prologues in Antiquity

In order to provide a concise review of prologues in Antiquity, I will rely on the work of Bradley Johnson throughout this point. After reviewing different biographical

¹⁹³ Robert H. Lightfoot, *St John’s Gospel: A Commentary*, 57.

¹⁹⁴ Daniel Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian: Writing the “Acts of the Apostles,”* 23.

¹⁹⁵ Rubén René Dupertuis, “Acts of the Apostles, Narrative, and History,” 333.

¹⁹⁶ Daniel Marguerat, 30-34.

¹⁹⁷ Rubén René Dupertuis, 330.

works from Antiquity, Johnson claims that it is possible to categorize the opening units of Greco-Roman biographers in two primary types:¹⁹⁸

Prefaces: contains first-person insertions which establish the author's objectives or urgency in writing

Prologues: contain the necessary contextual background to understand or appreciate the importance of the biographical subject. Usually, the author will include background information about the subject as ancestry, family, and birth.

Among these two main categories, one can find variants in many creative ways. In Mark's case, one can observe many elements of Greco-Roman biographies, but it lacks the inclusion of Jesus' ancestry, birth, or youth.¹⁹⁹

Here are some examples that show the use of prefaces/prologues:

3.4.2.1 Philo's Moses:

He was primarily known as Philo the Jew (Philo Judaeus) or Philo of Alexandria, lived from about 20 B.C to about A.D 50.²⁰⁰ Philo writes about Moses aiming to make him known to the Greek world. It is possible to identify a preface and a prologue in Philo's Moses. In I. (1)- (4) Philo starts his writing with "I have conceived the idea of writing the life of Moses [...]" and ends by writing "[...] I have continually connected together what I have heard with what I have read [...] I am acquainted with the history of his life more accurately than other people."²⁰¹ The use of first-person insertions and the need to explain his reasons for writing are visible, so the elements of a preface are present. Then, in II. (5) Philo changes from his explanation of purpose to an introduction to the subject, Moses: "[...] Moses was by birth a Hebrew, but he was born and brought up, and educated in Egypt, his ancestors having migrated into Egypt [...]."²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ Bradley T. Johnson, *The Form and Function of Mark 1:1-15: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach to the Markan Prologue*, 115-116.

¹⁹⁹ Bradley T. Johnson, 116.

²⁰⁰ Philo of Alexandria and Charles Duke Yonge, *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, xi.

²⁰¹ Philo of Alexandria and Charles Duke Yonge, 459.

²⁰² Philo of Alexandria and Charles Duke Yonge, 459.

3.4.2.2 Tacitus's Agricola:

Tacitus is considered the greatest among the Roman historians,²⁰³ he lived in A.D. 55-120,²⁰⁴ and his biography on Gnaeus Julius Agricola contains a preface and a prologue. Right at the beginning, the author explains his motivation for writing “to hand down to posterity the works and ways of [men],” and informs about some issues with this project: “even though I was about to write the life of a man who was already dead, I had to seek permission.”²⁰⁵ Tacitus ends his preface by writing: “[...] I shall not regret the task of recording our former slavery and testifying to our present blessings [...] Meanwhile this book is dedicated to the glory of my father-in-law Agricola.”²⁰⁶ Thus, one can observe elements of a preface: he writes in first person, explains the reasons and motivations for his works, and even dedicates the writing to Agricola. Subsequently, Tacitus begins by systematically informing the reader who Agricola was: “Gnaeus Julius Agricola was a scion of the ancient and illustrious Roman colony of Forum Julii.”²⁰⁷ Then Tacitus moves forward to talk about Agricola's grandfathers and parents with elements that are trademarks of a prologue. Tacitus provides appreciations of Agricola's family, and by doing so, he prepares the reader for the biography which is to come. Tacitus gives statements like: “his mother was Julia Procilla, a woman of rare virtue,” or “[Agricola] was shielded from the snares of sinners not merely by his own good and upright nature but because from the outset of his childhood [...]”; or “no doubt his soaring and ambitious temper craved the beauty and splendour of high and exalted ideals.”²⁰⁸ Hence, Tacitus not only informs on the precedence of Agricola, but he also gives the contextual background to understand and appreciate the subject. Johnson classifies Agricola's preface from 1.1-1.3 and the prologue in 4.1-3.²⁰⁹

²⁰³ Anthony John Woodman, *Tacitus Reviewed*, 13.

²⁰⁴ Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 116.

²⁰⁵ Tacitus, *Tacitus in Five Volumes. 1, Agricola. Germania. Dialogus*, 27.

²⁰⁶ Tacitus, 31.

²⁰⁷ Tacitus, 31.

²⁰⁸ Tacitus, 33.

²⁰⁹ Bradley T. Johnson, *The Form and Function of Mark 1:1-15: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach to the Markan Prologue*, 107-108.

3.4.2.3 Nepos's Atticus:

Cornelius Nepos lived from about 99 to 24 B.C and is the earliest biographer in Latin whose work we have.²¹⁰ He wrote a biography of Atticus “in a plain style with limited vocabulary and short sentences.”²¹¹ Richard Burrige claims that Atticus is the “first surviving example of Roman biography.”²¹² The opening unit of Atticus is called ‘Praefatio,’²¹³ and Johnson identifies the elements of a preface in 1-8.²¹⁴ In this section, it can be observed how Nepos justifies or explains the motivation for his work with statements like: “if these men can be made to understand” or “they will not be surprised that I, in giving an account of the merits of the Greeks, have borne in mind the usage of [...]”.²¹⁵ Later in Nepo’s text, Johnson will identify a prologue in 1.1-3.3.²¹⁶

3.4.3 Summary

Johnson provides even more examples of opening units in writings of Antiquity²¹⁷ but considering the extension and purpose of this thesis, the examples above should be enough to provide a framework from the time around the first century. The same goes for the biblical texts reviewed in 3.4.1. The goal of the current section was to look at other writings which belong to the first century, such as the Markan gospel does. The six texts that I reviewed show that it was common for writers to open their works with prefaces or prologues. The authors included vital information in these units that prepared the reader for approaching the rest of their literary works. This allowed the audience to have background information on the biographical subject, learn the motivation or objectives of the writer, and understand or appreciate the importance of the subject. Nevertheless, even when I have shown similar writing patterns around Mark’s time, it remains

²¹⁰ Cornelius Nepos and John Carew Rolfe, *On Great Generals; On Historians*.

²¹¹ Bradley T. Johnson, *The Form and Function of Mark 1:1-15: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach to the Markan Prologue*, 98.

²¹² Richard A. Burrige, *What Are the Gospels?: A Comparison With Graeco-Roman Biography*, 128.

²¹³ Cornelius Nepos and John Carew Rolfe, 2.

²¹⁴ Bradley T. Johnson, 107.

²¹⁵ Bradley T. Johnson, 98.

²¹⁶ Bradley T. Johnson, 108.

²¹⁷ Bradley T. Johnson, 95-116.

fundamental to analyze the function of the opening units concerning the rest of the text. This will be the aim of the following point.

3.5 The function of the prologue in Mark

So far in this chapter, I attempted to define what a prologue is compared to other introductory sections that are common in opening a literary work. Then, I dealt with issues regarding the extension, structure, and content of the Markan prologue, and I investigated the references to OT prophecies, imagery, and parallels. Finally, in the previous point, I provided examples of different opening units that are more-less contemporaries to Mark. Having done all that, now it remains the need for an analysis of the Markan prologue's significance for the rest of the gospel. There are different ways to approach this analysis, and this is observable in the works of various scholars like Johnson, LaVerdiere, Matera, and Boring. Their studies on the prologue are valuable to this section, and in the following points I will follow Eugene Boring's classification, which encompasses most aspects of the prologue's function concerning the second gospel:²¹⁸

- 1-The introduction introduces the main character(s)
- 2-The introduction introduces the main themes
- 3-The introduction focalizes the following narrative
- 4-The introduction relates the time of the gospel to that of the readers

3.5.1 The introduction introduces the main character(s)

As we have seen in point 3.2, Mark explicitly introduces John and Jesus to his readers. This is a fundamental feature of an opening unit that allows the audience to understand better the person and office of the narrative's leading figures.²¹⁹ Lightfoot already established this feature in the 50s, but Boring adds to that the importance of two aspects:

²¹⁸ M. Eugene Boring, "Mark 1:1-15 and the Beginning of the Gospel," 61-74.

²¹⁹ M. Eugene Boring, 61.

a-The relation of John and Jesus: they are not merely presented, but Mark establishes a connection based on the OT prophecies and imagery background.

b-The implicit introduction of God as a character: Jesus is introduced in the prologue, but his identity is bounded up to God

Now, in addition to the described above, I will argue that other characters of the Markan story are presented in the prologue:

People/crowds.²²⁰ The people of the Judean area and Jerusalem are said to be the recipients of John's message, but then it is also informed that Jesus went to Galilee to proclaim his message. Even when 'people' are not mentioned there, the reader can understand that Jesus preached to someone in Galilee. Thus, an audience of both regions, Judea and Galilee, is mentioned in the prologue. Moving forward into the narrative from 1:16-16:8 (20), the reader will find numerous encounters of Jesus with people to whom he preached, healed, delivered, and interacted.

The Holy Spirit: The Spirit is mentioned three times in the prologue, and surprisingly enough, most scholars do not count him as (at least) a minor character in the story.²²¹ This is indeed an issue crucial to this thesis and that I will attempt to deal with in the following chapters. At this stage, one can state that the reader should have the Spirit in mind while reading the Markan narrative and read the coming mentions of the Spirit in the corpus of the Gospel in connection to the opening unit.

Satan: another character who is introduced in the prologue is Satan.²²² It is only mentioned in the account of Jesus' temptation, but the evangelist will mention him a few

²²⁰ Rhoads, Dewey and Michie include the crowds in their list of minor characters of the Markan story in Rhoads, Dewey and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 134-135.

²²¹ See my introductory comments in 1.1.2 where the history of research is reviewed.

²²² For more on Satan as character see: Elizabeth Shively, "Characterizing the Non-Human: Satan in the Gospel of Mark," 135.

more times in his gospel. If the reader already reads temptation as opposition for the main character, this will be further established in the coming narrative.

What is then the importance of a prologue that informs the reader on the main character(s)? Matera deals with this question about Jesus. He shows the importance of Jesus' introduction as a character in the prologue concerning the quest that the rest of the "human characters" embark themselves in the Markan story to discover who Jesus is. In contrast to the characters in the story, the reader already learns about Jesus' identity from the beginning.²²³ The same can be said about the other characters introduced in the prologue; the reader possesses an advantage regarding the other characters of the story, a sort of 'interpretative key' for the whole gospel.

3.5.2 The introduction introduces the main themes

Not only the main characters are visible in the prologue, but the evangelist in his opening unit lays out essential themes. These themes can be classified in different ways, and it seems that the variety of approaches is as plentiful as the number of studies on the prologue. However, analyzing the main themes in the Markan prologue from different angles will perhaps assure that one covers most of its rich content. The main aim of this point is to show the diversity of approaches and to provide at the end a summary of what we learn from the different analyses.

Eugene LaVerdiere highlights the following topics from the prologue:²²⁴

- a-The role and importance of Isaiah in relation to the whole gospel
- b-The theme of the desert which evokes the exodus, a place for solitude, prayer, and rest. It also symbolizes repentance, temptation or testing, the place for the miraculous feeding of five thousand, and the suggestion of new manna.
- c-The theme of the *way* is also prominent in Mark and has its starting point in the prologue.
- d-Several other themes like proclamation, repentance, forgiveness of sins, the role of the prophet Elijah, the region of Galilee, the Holy Spirit, Jesus' divine Sonship, and baptism.

²²³ Frank J. Matera, "The Prologue as the Interpretative Key to Mark's Gospel," 9.

²²⁴ Eugene LaVerdiere, *The Beginning of the Gospel: Introducing the Gospel According to Mark*, 23-25.

Boring takes another approach, and he analyses the main themes of the prologue from a Markan Christology perspective and finds the following:²²⁵

- a-The *power* of the Christ who is a manifestation of the power of *God*;
- b-The *story* of the Christ as the key, climatic segment of history as the mighty acts of *God*;
- c-The *weakness* of the Christ who is a representation of the weakness and victimization of humanity, and is thus the true power of *God*;
- d-The *secrecy* of the Christ as Mark's literary-theological means of holding divine power and human weakness together in one narrative and the result of Mark's conviction that the Messiah cannot be truly known as Messiah until he is crucified and risen, i.e. raised by *God*;
- e-The *disciples* of the Christ as the messianic people of *God*.

Another exponent is Johnson who studies the importance of the prologue for one's understanding and reading of Mark by dividing the opening unit into three sections (a) 1:1, (b) 1:2-8, and (c) 1:9-15. He proposes the following:

a-The title has basically two functions (1) A descriptive heading that indicates "that the prologue is meant to be read discretely from the Gospel proper;" (2) A pure practical goal: to serve as an identifying label for Mark's roll when distributed.²²⁶

b-This segment shows continuity from the "prophetic office of Isaiah [...] to and inclusive John."²²⁷ This serves to validate the authority of prophecy and provide the possibility of corroborating witnesses.

c-This section shows Jesus as superior to John and provides "legitimization and authorization of Jesus' message and ministry;" the author offers attestations to "support his claim that Jesus is duly authorized as the Anointed Son of God to usher in the Kingdom of God on Earth."²²⁸

²²⁵ M. Eugene Boring, "Mark 1:1-15 and the Beginning of the Gospel," 63-64.

²²⁶ Bradley T. Johnson, *The Form and Function of Mark 1:1-15: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach to the Markan Prologue*, 121-122.

²²⁷ Bradley T. Johnson, 142.

²²⁸ Bradley T. Johnson, 147.

Matera goes the other way around; he lays out a division of the gospel and studies the importance of the prologue to understand each section. In other words, Matera sees Mark's narrative in light of the prologue. His division of Mark's gospel is the following:²²⁹

a-Jesus is the Messiah (1.14-8.30)

b-The Son of Man will suffer and rise (8.31-10.52)

c-From the Entry into the Temple to the Prediction of its Destruction (11.1-13.37)

d-The Recognition of Jesus as the Son of God (14.1-16.8)

Finally, Filannino asserts that 1:1-15 contains the "germ of the main theological themes which will be developed in the rest of Mark's account."²³⁰ He proposes the following themes:

a-Jesus Messiah and Son of God

b-The end time of salvation

c-The remission of sins

d-A way to be followed for a mission to be continued (discipleship and the way-motif)

In summary, there are different approaches to the thematic content of the prologue. LaVerdiere lists most of the topics that Mark will further develop in his gospel, and the other scholars organize the themes under broader categories. Boring provides an exciting approach in light of Christology, and Johnson emphasizes the legitimizing role of the prologue concerning both John and Jesus. Finally, Matera and Filannino analyze the entire Gospel in light of the prologue with two different approaches. Matera attempts to look back at the prologue to understand the whole narrative, and Filannino identifies the main theological themes which he sees further developed in the Markan story. Now, the function of the prologue is more than presenting the main characters and themes, and this will be the focus of the following two points.

²²⁹ Frank J. Matera, "The Prologue as the Interpretative Key to Mark's Gospel," 9-15.

²³⁰ Francesco Filannino, *The Theological Programme of Mark: Exegesis and Function of Mark 1:1,2-15*, 177.

3.5.3 The introduction focalizes the following narrative

At this point, Boring highlights the function of the prologue in locating a “finite” number of *characters* in *space* and *time*.²³¹ Through the prologue, Mark helps the reader situate himself in the narrative where the *characters* are John, the people, Jesus, etc. (as reviewed in 3.5.1). The *space* is by the Jordan river, the wilderness, and the regions of Judea and Galilee. Lastly, the *time* is not precise or bound to temporal references, but the reader gets the sense that the narrative took place in a fixed period of time and not in the fairy tale frame time “once upon a time.”²³²

3.5.4 The introduction relates the time of the gospel to that of the readers

The introduction not only places the narrative in relation to some point in time, but it allows “the reader to relate the time of the narrative to his or her own temporal world.”²³³ Boring claims that fairy tales, which start with ‘once upon a time,’ instantly “divorces the narrative from my time,” but when the story is said to happen at some point in time, “I may look back on these events to see what lines of connection there may be” between one’s world and the story’s world.²³⁴ In the case of Mark, his lack of specificity might be seen as a factor that allows the reader to relate to the narrative “whenever that may be.”²³⁵

3.5.5 Summary

Based on Boring’s analysis, I have presented the views of different scholars. The vast majority focused on the prologue’s function in introducing the main characters and themes, and Boring also adds the significance of focalization and relating the readers to the narrative. What is the function of Mark’s prologue? It provides the reader with the necessary elements for interpreting the rest of the Markan gospel.²³⁶ Now, it is appropriate to conclude this chapter on the prologue and lay out the way forward.

²³¹ M. Eugene Boring, “Mark 1:1-15 and the Beginning of the Gospel,” 67.

²³² M. Eugene Boring, 67.

²³³ M. Eugene Boring, 68.

²³⁴ M. Eugene Boring, 68.

²³⁵ M. Eugene Boring, 68.

²³⁶ Frank J. Matera, “The Prologue as the Interpretative Key to Mark’s Gospel,” 3.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter aimed to analyze Mark's prologue and to do so different aspects were considered. First, I attempted to define what a prologue is in general, and then I dealt with the issue of Mark's prologue length. After that, I analyzed the structure and content of the prologue and gave special attention to the OT references contained there. Then, I compared the Markan prologue to other contemporary prologues and studied its function in relation to the rest of the gospel.

At this point, there should be no doubt about the existence of an opening unit in Mark, which can be categorized as a *prologue*. It is noticeable that Mark's prologue provides the reader with contextual background to understand and appreciate the importance of the biographical subject. Then, the issues with the prologue's length might still be unsettled, but Mark 1:1-15 is established as the Markan prologue in the current study. But what is the relevance of this? Why is the prologue having a special emphasis in this thesis? The main aim of this thesis is to analyze the role of the Spirit in Mark's narrative, and since the prologue is considered an "interpretative key" for Mark, much ink was dedicated to Mark 1:1-15 in this chapter.

Besides what has already been established in 3.5, I will state that the Markan prologue contributes the following:

(1) By situating the opening unit of his narrative against the foundation of previous writings (the OT), the author hints at a continuation and fulfillment of God's promises to his people. It situates the narrative in a determined eschatological time.

(2) By introducing his gospel in such a matter, the evangelist prepares the reader to expect associations with OT writings in the coming narrative.

(3) The strong connections that the prologue has to the OT should also have implications for how one interprets the role of the Spirit in Mark's narrative. This should be reasonable if one considers the number of times that the Spirit is mentioned in the prologue.

Emerson Powery contends that the prologue has a “programmatically function for the entire narrative,” and regarding the Spirit he says:

Despite the infrequent reference to πνεῦμα throughout the whole narrative, the concentration of the activity of the Spirit in the prologue cues the reader—some would suggest—to the importance of the Spirit in the remainder of the narrative portrayal of Jesus and his followers.²³⁷

To further analyze the prologue's relevance for our understanding of the Spirit in Mark, I will provide an exegetical analysis of the pericopes in which the Spirit is mentioned in Mark's opening unit. This will be the topic of the next chapter.

²³⁷ Emerson Powery, “The Spirit, the Scripture(S), and the Gospel of Mark: Pneumatology and Hermeneutics in Narrative Perspective,” 187.

4 The Spirit in Mark's prologue

This chapter is devoted to an exegetical analysis of the three mentions of the Spirit in the prologue. I will analyze not only the verse which contains the word Πνεύμα but the whole pericope. By doing so, I intend to better understand Mark's mentions of the Spirit in the context in which they are introduced and explore features that are contained in the prologue that are relevant to the primary purpose of this thesis.

4.1 *The promise of the Spirit (1:7-8)*

⁷ He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸ I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

4.1.1 The contrast between John the Baptist and Jesus

Mark is trying to establish a contrast between John the Baptist and Jesus. He could avoid the quoting on the lips of John, but the fact that it was included suggests something about his intentions. The statement highlights that Jesus, who is about to be introduced for the reader, is greater than John. The description of John the Baptist is brief, and this might be related to the brief nature of the whole Markan narrative, or as some scholars suggest, due to an assumption of the reader's previous knowledge about the Baptist.²³⁸ The illustration of being unworthy to untie his sandals further emphasizes the comparison and the greatness of the one to come.

4.1.2 John's water baptism

At this point, it is essential to ask the following question: what was the meaning of John's baptism? Answering this question sheds light on the meaning of "baptism with the Holy Spirit" since a clear contrast between John the Baptist and the Greater One to come is established in these verses.

²³⁸ Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26: Word Biblical Commentary*, 16.

John's baptism is introduced in verse 4 where the Greek text reads: βάπτισμα μετανοίας (a baptism of repentance). Guelich claims that even though the noun *metanoia* entails in Greek "a change of mind," the verb *μετανοέω*, if used in this context, will refer to "return" or "turn back."²³⁹ Building upon this, Guelich suggests that John's baptism should be understood as appealing to return to Yahweh, abandoning one's wrongdoings, and voluntarily committing to obey God's Law.²⁴⁰

Collins and Attridge concur with this view and highlight the connection between John's baptism and the rituals of cleansing in the Old Testament. They conclude: "John's baptism should be understood as a transformation of the Levitical type of immersion in light of eschatological expectation based on prophetic texts."²⁴¹ They continue then to indicate a parallel between John's words and ministry with the prophecy of Ezekiel 36:25-28:

²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶ A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. ²⁸ Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

It can be argued that Mark's prologue echoes Ezekiel's prophecy in two stages. First, the work of John the Baptist with the preparatory baptism of cleansing, and Jesus' baptism with the Holy Spirit in the second place.²⁴² What is then the meaning of *baptism with the Holy Spirit*?

²³⁹ Robert A. Guelich, 18. This is based on the connections to the Old Testament within the pericope and the Hebrew verb *shub*

²⁴⁰ Robert A. Guelich, 19.

²⁴¹ Adela Yarbro Collins and Harold W. Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary*, 140.

²⁴² Adela Yarbro Collins and Harold W. Attridge, 146.

4.1.3 Baptism with the Holy Spirit

The Greek text in 1:8b reads: αὐτὸς δὲ βαπτίσει ὑμᾶς ἐν Πνεύματι ἁγίῳ.²⁴³

We can observe the conjunction δὲ (however) which stresses the contrast between Jesus and John. Then, the verb βαπτίζω appears in its future indicative active form which is best translated as "to dip, immerse; to cleanse or purify by washing; to administer the rite of baptism."²⁴⁴ Finally, we find Πνεύματι ἁγίῳ which is best translated as the Holy Spirit.²⁴⁵

R. T. France comments on the idea of immersion in the context of the Spirit and shows how there is some language related to the Spirit and water in the OT. Specifically, France mentions the language of "pouring out" the Spirit upon people. Nonetheless, he warns against connecting that language to being dipped or immersed in the Spirit.²⁴⁶ France concludes that the use of the verb βαπτίζω is "dictated more by the formulation of the antithesis than by any natural metaphorical sense."²⁴⁷

Guelich's understanding of the statement about the Spirit on the lips of John summarizes the interpretation of many other NT-scholars.²⁴⁸ He states:

Rather than interpret "the baptism with the Holy Spirit" in terms of the Spirit's coming in Acts as a gift of power signifying the age of salvation, perhaps one should interpret 1:8 in view of the Baptist's expectation of the ultimate forgiveness of sins. Taken this way, the spirit would be a cleansing agent parallel to water-baptism.²⁴⁹

²⁴³ Richard J. Goodrich and Albert L. Lukaszewski, *A Reader's Greek New Testament*, 85.

²⁴⁴ William D. Mounce, *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, 112.

²⁴⁵ Grimm, Wilke, and Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti*, 521.

²⁴⁶ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 72.

²⁴⁷ R. T. France, 72.

²⁴⁸ E.g.: James D. G. Dunn, "Spirit-And-Fire Baptism." *Novum Testamentum* 14, no. 2 (1972): 81–92; David Hill, *Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings: Studies in the Semantics of Soteriological Terms*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph 5. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1967: 238-241; Joachim Gnilka, "Die Essenischen Tauchbäder Und Die Johannestaufe." *Revue de Qumrân* 3, no. 2 (10) (1961): 185–207; and J. E. Yates, "The Form of Mark i. 8b," *New Testament Studies*, vol.4 (1958): 334-338.

²⁴⁹ Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26: Word Biblical Commentary*, 25.

Thus, Guelich's view indicates *baptism with the Spirit* in Mark 1:8 as referring to the inauguration of a new era where God's foretold salvation is unveiled, and his promise of cleansing, giving a new heart, and a new spirit has finally arrived (ref. Ez. 36:25-28).

Marcus argues that the promise of the Greater One's baptism with the Holy Spirit is a reference to the future, to the events documented in Acts 1 during the post-Easter period. He sees Mark 1:8 as a reference to a "postresurrectional event" arguing that this view concords with Paul (Rom 8:15-17), Luke (Acts 2), and John (20:22).²⁵⁰ Marcus claims that Jesus' status as greater than John has to do with him being empowered by the Spirit to fight against the forces of Satan, meaning "his ability to perform exorcisms and other miracles."²⁵¹ However, the eschatological motif in the introductory verses is so evident by the references to the Old Testament that a more reasonable interpretation of Jesus' greatness should be seen in the light of this. Hence, one might conclude that Jesus was greater than John the Baptist in the sense of his identity as the Messiah, the one who was bringing God's foretold salvation.

In conclusion, it appears to be more consistent with the context of Mark 1:8 to see baptism with the Spirit as a reference to a new phase of God's salvific plan that was taking place in Jesus' arrival.²⁵² Nonetheless, the Spirit's role as an agent of Salvation does not imply that his contribution ends there. As other NT-writers like Paul or Luke will elucidate in their writings, there are other aspects to consider about the Spirit, but they are arguably not the topics for the present pericope.

²⁵⁰ Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 158.

²⁵¹ Joel Marcus, 157-158.

²⁵² Robert Stein is another voice that adheres to this view. He states that the coming of the Spirit is a mark of the new age brought by Jesus to all his followers and argues against baptism of the Spirit as a second stage in Christian life experienced by a minority of Jesus' followers only. See Robert H. Stein. *Mark: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Academic, 2013: 51.

4.2 *The Spirit descends on Jesus (1:9-11)*

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

4.2.1 *Jesus baptized by John in the Jordan river*

After a brief introduction of John the Baptist, the narrator is ready to introduce a new character. This can be observed by how verse 9 starts with "in those days," preparing the reader for a transition.²⁵³ Mark sets up the narrative by the Jordan River. In the previous verses, the author informed the readers that John the Baptist was baptizing people from the Judean countryside and Jerusalem. It will be reasonable to infer that this took place in the southern part of the Jordan River. Jesus arrived at this location coming from Nazareth on the north. In the Matthean account one finds an exchange between Jesus and John in which the latter asks the former to baptize him. This emphasizes the contrast between Jesus and John, showing a servant who does not feel worthy of baptizing the Greater One. In Mark, this contrast has been established on the lips of John the Baptist who differentiates his ministry with the one of Jesus.

4.2.2 *The events during the baptism*

4.2.2.1 *Heavens tore apart*

Mark uses a rather unusual word for describing this event. The Greek text reads: εἶδεν σχιζομένους τοὺς οὐρανοὺς "he saw the heavens tearing open/being ripped apart," while the parallel verse to this passage in Matthew and Luke use the more common verb ἀνοίγω "to open."²⁵⁴ Mark's purpose with his wording in this passage is unclear, but some scholars like Guelich and France suggest that it might be a reference to Isaiah 63:19

²⁵³ Adela Yarbro Collins and Harold W. Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary*, 147-148.

²⁵⁴ Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 159.

(in its MT form).²⁵⁵ There we find a prayer to God where he is asked to "tear the heavens and descend," which implies a divine intervention and can be related to the initiation of Jesus' ministry.²⁵⁶ It is also possible that Mark intended to add a more dramatic impact to the account or that he was aiming to show a parallel between this event and the tearing of the curtain in the temple when Jesus died. That is indeed the only other occasion where the same verb, σκίζω, is used in Mark's Gospel.²⁵⁷ When it comes to the meaning of this episode, R. T. France writes the following: "the opening of heaven is a recurrent theme in biblical and other literature (Jewish and pagan) to indicate a vision which reaches beyond the earthly dimension."²⁵⁸ Consequently, it is reasonable to conclude that Mark's description of the heavens tearing open aims to stress the transcendence of the event that was taking place, which at the same time enhances the importance of the character that he is introducing to the reader. It is also reasonable to assume that, through this image of heavens tore apart, the readers might perceive God's intervention in human affairs, and further develop the sense of a new phase in God's salvific plan.

4.2.2.2 The Spirit descending like a dove

Joel Marcus asks a question that serves as an important starting point to analyze this account: "Is it the *Spirit* that is like a dove, or only its descent?"²⁵⁹ Focusing solely on the Greek noun Πνεῦμα and the participle καταβαῖνον, the phrase can be read as adverbial "coming down *as* a dove."²⁶⁰ Some adherents to this interpretation are Jeremias and Keck.²⁶¹

²⁵⁵ Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26: Word Biblical Commentary*, 32 and R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 77.

²⁵⁶ R. T. France, 77.

²⁵⁷ R. T. France, 77.

²⁵⁸ R. T. France, 77.

²⁵⁹ Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 159.

²⁶⁰ Robert A. Guelich, 32.

²⁶¹ For arguments on this account referring to the Spirit's descent see: L. E. Keck, "The Spirit and the Dove." *New Testament Studies* 17 (1970-71): 41-67; or Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus*. New York: Scribner, 1971: 52.

On the other hand, the phrase can also be read as adjectival "the Spirit (appearing) *like* a dove."²⁶² The most compelling argument for the latter is the fact that Mark specifies that Jesus himself *saw* the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. Guelich argues that Mark's wording here implies a "visual form of the Spirit" and the impossibility of seeing "an invisible Spirit descending 'as a dove.'"²⁶³

In the parallel account in Matthew, we also find the emphasis on Jesus *himself seeing*²⁶⁴ the opening of the heavens and the Spirit descending like a dove: "he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove (Mt.3:16)." Luke, probably attempting to dissipate all doubts, follows a different tradition and specifies *bodily form*: "the Holy Spirit descended on him in *bodily* form like a dove (Lk.3:22)." Finally, we see on the lips of John the following account: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him (Jn.1:32)." Thus, we find both internal and external evidence for the interpretation of the Spirit appearing in a visible and bodily form like a dove.

Finally, Joel Marcus answers the question I presented above by focusing on another aspect of this account. Marcus is not concerned about the Spirit descending *as* a dove or *like* a dove; he emphasizes the symbolism implied in all this.²⁶⁵ He informs that the Greek word ὡς (like) "points to the world of apocalyptic symbolism," which implicates to use earthly comparisons to "approximate heavenly realities."²⁶⁶ This analysis is relevant for the present study. If the Spirit was seen descending *as* a dove or *like* a dove is perhaps not as relevant for us as reflecting on the meaning of this. What does the reader learn about the Spirit in Mark on this account where the Spirit is depicted as a dove?

²⁶² Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26: Word Biblical Commentary*, 32.

²⁶³ Robert A. Guelich, 32.

²⁶⁴ Nolland concurs with the view of Jesus being the subject of the sentence, and the one who sees the descent in John Nolland, *The "Gospel of Matthew": A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 155. Through the whole v.16 it can be observed that Jesus is the subject, by the mention of his name, and the pronouns subsequently referring to him ("Jesus came up from the water," "heavens were opened to him," "he saw the Spirit," and "alighting upon him.")

²⁶⁵ Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 159.

²⁶⁶ Joel Marcus, 159.

4.2.2.3 Why a dove?

Now that it has been established that Mark's narrative describes a dove, it should be discussed why that particular animal is chosen. There are no previous references to doves as symbols of the Spirit in the Old Testament. Scholars have tried to find explanations to provide a background for this imagery, but there has not been agreement on this. Guelich has called the symbolic explanations of the dove in this pericope "tenuous at best," and France argues that "it seems futile to try to provide one [explanation]."²⁶⁷

Nonetheless, the following are some of the elucidations that have been made:

- Birds make a suitable symbol for the Holy Spirit because they cross the barrier between heaven and earth.²⁶⁸
- The dove as a reference to Israel (based on Rabbinic literature) or to Noah's dove.²⁶⁹
- A parallel to Gen 1:2, where we find the Spirit hovering over the waters.

The last explanation is the one that resonates the most among scholars like Marcus, Yarbro, France, and Guelich. Considering the challenges to finding a clear parallel to the dove as a symbol of the Spirit previous to Mark, one should then focus on the meaning of its descent upon Jesus. In other words, the reader of Mark should perhaps not pay much attention to the type of animal that descended upon Jesus but to the event on itself.²⁷⁰ This will further emphasize the view of an eschatological event taking place in the inauguration of Jesus' ministry by the arrival of the Spirit.

²⁶⁷ Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26: Word Biblical Commentary*, 33; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 79.

²⁶⁸ Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 159.

²⁶⁹ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 79. Scholars have presented noteworthy conclusions based on the interpretations of the dove. E.g. the idea of a new beginning based on Noah's dove, or a new creation based on Gen 1:2.

²⁷⁰ John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Mark*, 65.

4.2.2.4 What is the meaning of the descent on Jesus?

Collins and Attridge provide an interesting background to the Spirit's descent on Jesus. They highlight how the association of the Spirit and human beings in the Bible has had different connotations depending on the particular situation that is being described:

It may endow a man with extraordinary physical strength (Judg 14:6, 19); it may induce ecstasy (Num 11:25; 1 Sam 10:6, 10); it may transport a person miraculously from one place to another (1 Kgs 18:12; 2 Kgs 2:16 [...]); or it may endow the charisma of leadership (Judg 3:10; 1 Sam 16:13). The Spirit of God is also associated with the charisma of the prophet (mic 3:8; Neh 9:30) and with the qualities of the ideal king (Isa 11:1-9, esp. v.2).²⁷¹

Why was the Spirit descending upon Jesus then? If we look at Jewish customs concerning the initiation of the ministry of a priest or a prophet, or even the appointment of a new king, all of them were anointed for the new office they were about to take on. The baptism of Jesus is presented as a clear inauguration of his ministry. Therefore, the descent of the Spirit should be seen as part of this inaugural event where Jesus is being *anointed* for his ministry. Collins and Attridge emphasize the narrative context of Jesus' baptism pointing to the Old Testament, specifically Isaiah 61:1-2.²⁷² They state that these verses from Isaiah are "an important precedent for Mark 1:10 and suggest an intertextual relationship."²⁷³

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn (Isa. 61:1-2)

²⁷¹ Adela Yarbro Collins and Harold W. Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary*, 148-149.

²⁷² Adela Yarbro Collins and Harold W. Attridge, 149.

²⁷³ Adela Yarbro Collins and Harold W. Attridge, 149.

Joel Marcus concurs with this idea, and he writes that "Messiah/Christ, after all, means 'anointed one,'" and therefore should this event be taken to imply that it was at this stage that Jesus became the Messiah.²⁷⁴

4.2.2.5 Voice from heaven

Collins and Attridge write: "the best indicator of the significance of the descent of the Spirit is the saying of the divine voice from heaven."²⁷⁵ The voice of heaven is the last piece of this Markan narrative to understand the meaning of it all. Mark initiated his gospel with clear references to the Old Testament by introducing John the Baptist who promoted the Greater One coming after him. Then Jesus is introduced by his public baptism, the descent of the Spirit which resounds in the words of Isaiah 61:1-2, and then the confirmation of him as the Son of God by the audible voice coming from the heavens. In summary, the voice of heaven works as the climax in confirming the message Mark is trying to convey, Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah. He is the Greater One who was pre-announced on the lips of John.

Scholars have attempted to find parallels in the Old Testament to give background to Mark's wording, which will also influence the interpretation of the Markan account. The most prevalent views can perhaps be summarized in Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1. Concerning the text in Psalm 2:7, there is an almost identical wording in the phrase "you are my son." Therefore, one may allude that in the same way that the king was being installed or recognized in Psalms, Jesus is being acknowledged or established as Messiah.²⁷⁶ When it comes to the text in Isaiah 42:1, we find the voice of God identifying his servant in whom his Spirit is set, and therefore the similarity in context and content has drawn some scholars to make a parallel to this Isaianic passage.²⁷⁷

Concerning all the debates around these two passages in the Old Testament, R. T. France concludes the following: "there is a danger, in the complex scholarly debates over the scriptural background and the precise connotations of the words used, that we fail to

²⁷⁴ Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 160.

²⁷⁵ Adela Yarbro Collins and Harold W. Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary*, 150.

²⁷⁶ Adela Yarbro Collins and Harold W. Attridge, 150.

²⁷⁷ Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26: Word Biblical Commentary*, 33.

hear what the voice actually says."²⁷⁸ Without any doubt, the voice is declaring Jesus as the Son of God, and this adds up to the message that Mark is conveying through the whole prologue: Jesus is the Messiah.²⁷⁹

The voice goes on to declare Jesus as God's beloved one. The Greek adjective ἀγαπητός connotes affection, but when found together with 'son' or 'daughter' could also be translated as *only*.²⁸⁰ One might then conclude that the voice identifies Jesus as somebody "having a special relationship with the Father."²⁸¹ Thus we find a juxtaposition of role (Messiah) and relationship (Son) as Guelich describes it,²⁸² or Jesus' person (Son) and mission (Messiah) as France portrays it.²⁸³ Concerning this, Robert Guelich concludes the following:

The juxtaposition of role and relationship in the words of the heavenly voice leaves open the enigmatic nature of that role and relationship. [...] Yet it is precisely this enigma in Jesus' role and relationship with the Father that marks his earthly ministry as depicted in the Gospels. The focus from here on in Mark's narrative, as in the other Gospels, turns ultimately to Jesus' ministry (1:12-13, 14-15) to address this enigma.²⁸⁴

From the beginning of his narrative, Mark attempts to give a clear image of Jesus' identity.²⁸⁵ The references to the Old Testament resound in the ears of the receivers of Mark's gospel, but he will through the rest of his narrative show how the disciples and other people around Jesus struggled to understand or recognize Jesus' identity. However, the emphasis of the present study is on the role of the Spirit, and at this point it can be

²⁷⁸ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 79.

²⁷⁹ On the juxtaposition of role (Messiah) and relationship (Son of God) see Guelich, 34.

²⁸⁰ Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26: Word Biblical Commentary*, 34. Later, in 12:8, Mark will use again the same adjective together with son. In this occasion the Markan Jesus is telling a parable about wicked tenants who rejected the emissaries sent by the owner of a vineyard, killing the man's son at the end. This parable shows continuation in Mark's writing and reinforces for the readers the identity of Jesus and his mission in relation to the larger context of God's salvific plan.

²⁸¹ Robert A. Guelich, 34.

²⁸² Robert A. Guelich, 34.

²⁸³ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 82.

²⁸⁴ Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26: Word Biblical Commentary*, 34.

²⁸⁵ Mark's presentation in the prologue of who Jesus *is*, will be rapidly completed with accounts of what Jesus *does* throughout the rest of the Gospel.

concluded that the Spirit's appearance at Jesus' baptism was intended to stress Jesus' identity as the Messiah sent from God to provide God's ultimate salvation.

4.3 *The Spirit controls Jesus' next move*

¹² And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³ He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

4.3.1 *The Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness*

Mark uses a rather strong verb to describe this event. The Greek verb used by him is ἐκβάλλω (cast out). Throughout his gospel, the evangelist uses this word in the context of exorcisms, and when used in a different setting (1:43; 5:40; 9:47; 11:15; 12:8) the word still depicts a "forceful ejection."²⁸⁶ Because of its strong meaning some scholars prefer to replace *cast out* with *led*; however the message Mark is transmitting to his readers is the same: the Spirit took control over Jesus moving him to the wilderness.²⁸⁷

Joel Marcus finds some precedent to the Spirit's actions, and he states: "In biblical contexts, moreover, the Spirit often acts in a violent, coercive manner, inducing ecstasy (e.g., 1 Sam 10:10), snatching people up and throwing them down (e.g., 1 Kgs 18:12; 2 Kgs 2:16), and miraculously transporting them to a different place (e.g., Ezek 8:3; Acts 8:39)."²⁸⁸ Marcus' assessment of the Spirit's actions as *violent* or *coercive* is at least debatable, but nonetheless his point of showing precedent of the Spirit's active intervention in the lives of different people is valuable.

R. T. France provides a different approach. He highlights Mark's wording as "unexpected" since Jesus is being shown as willingly accepting God's mission for him.

²⁸⁶ Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 167.

²⁸⁷ Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26: Word Biblical Commentary*, 37-38.

²⁸⁸ Joel Marcus, 167.

Therefore, France concludes that the reason for Mark's ἐκβάλλω might be the seriousness of the conflict that is about to start.²⁸⁹

There is still another aspect to consider that, to my knowledge, has not been explored by scholars. Mark's strong wording in 1:12 might have to do with the nature of Jesus' 'transition' from the Jordan River to the wilderness. It will be reasonable to state that Jesus was somehow *transported* from where he was to the desert. Such a view will explain Mark's need for the use of a verb like ἐκβάλλω to describe the account. If Jesus arrived at the wilderness by simply walking from where he was so it would be more appropriate to use verbs that point to the Spirit "motivating, inspiring or leading" Jesus to apart himself into the wilderness. We do not find any other occasion in the whole Markan narrative where Jesus' actions are being 'forced' by the Spirit. Therefore, it will not be appropriate to conclude that 1:12 indicates how the Spirit *dominated* Jesus' actions during his ministry. Thus, it appears that Mark is highlighting the peculiarity of this event, namely the *nature* in which Jesus was moved from the river to the wilderness.²⁹⁰ However, it will still be possible to perceive the Spirit's work in Jesus' life and ministry throughout the Markan narrative, and I will attempt to show that in the following chapters of this thesis.

4.3.2 Intertextuality in 1:12-13

Mark's account of Jesus' temptation bears with it some intertextuality to the Old Testament. I have already mentioned some previous references to Psalms and Isaiah, and Mark's description of the current event might be analogous to Psalm 91:11-13:²⁹¹

For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.
On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against
a stone. You will tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion and the serpent
you will trample under foot.

In Psalm 91 God's protection is assured to the extent of his angels guarding those who love Him and know His name. The account of Jesus' temptation in *Q* is more extensive,

²⁸⁹ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 84-85.

²⁹⁰ The closest parallel to this account is found in the account of Phillip snatched away after baptizing the Ethiopian Eunuch. In this occasion the Greek verb used is ἀπαράζω.

²⁹¹ Adela Yarbro Collins and Harold W. Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary*, 151.

and there we can read a dialogue between Jesus and Satan where references to Psalm 91 are found on the lips of Satan (Mark 4:5-6; Luke 4:9-11).²⁹² Thus, the parallels to Psalm 91 are not unfounded.

The number of days and the location are not to be read as unrelated. Scholars have argued for parallels to the forty nights that Moses spent in Sinai or Elijah's forty-day journey, where he was also waited supernaturally.²⁹³ Further, the flood story of Genesis 7-9 and Israel's forty years in the wilderness might also provide some interesting background to the Markan account.²⁹⁴ For R. T. France the forty years of Israel wandering in the desert are "the most prominent biblical use for forty." He argues that the *Q* account with its echoes to Dt. 6-8 make the symbolism clearer, but when it comes to Mark, the use of the words: *temptation*, *wilderness*, and *forty years* will also echo Israel's time in the wilderness.²⁹⁵ In any case, all the mentioned parallels have in common the wilderness and the dependence on God, and perhaps that is what one should take from the Markan account.

4.3.3 Satan, the wild beasts, and the angels

The Markan account of Jesus' forty days in the desert is brief. There are no indications of the nature of Satan's temptation or the outcome of this period in the wilderness as we find in Matthew 4:1-11 or Luke 4:1-13. Some scholars observe a confrontation between two fronts: Jesus, the Spirit, and the angels on one side, against Satan, the wild animals, and [the assumption of] demons on the other side.²⁹⁶

Guelich observes the differences between the Markan, Matthean, and Lukan accounts. Whereas the *Q* tradition appears to be set against the "Exodus background of Israel's testing as God's son;" the Markan tradition seems to point toward a typology of Adam and the Garden of Eden because of the references to wild beasts and angels.²⁹⁷ Marcus agrees on the Adamic typology seeing Jesus as a new Adam who, after being tested,

²⁹² John S. Kloppenborg, *Q, the Earliest Gospel*, 125.

²⁹³ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 85.

²⁹⁴ Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26: Word Biblical Commentary*, 38.

²⁹⁵ R. T. France, 85.

²⁹⁶ Adela Yarbro Collins and Harold W. Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary*, 153.

²⁹⁷ Robert A. Guelich, 38.

overcomes the Devil and is granted "worldwide dominion," becoming then God's instrument to realize his own dominion over the earth.²⁹⁸ France has his reserves against this typology and sees the wild beasts as part of the rival forces and therefore not as a symbol of the harmony found in Eden.²⁹⁹ Perhaps, the most relevant feature of this account has to do with the opposition that Jesus encountered. Even when a forerunner like John prepared his way, the Spirit was bestowed to him, and he was declared by God as the Messiah, he was going to encounter opposition throughout his journey.³⁰⁰ This interpretation would have a significant impact on Mark's audience who could see Jesus' challenges as similar to their own, but also the guarantee of the Spirit's company and empowerment to resist.³⁰¹

In conclusion there are, in my view, two aspects that appeared to be central to this account concerning the present study on the Spirit's role in Mark's narrative. In the first place: (1) the mere action that is being described by Mark "the Spirit cast Jesus out to the wilderness"; and in the second place: (2) the significance of the event taking place and the Spirit's involvement on this. Concerning the former, one might conclude that the Spirit has the supernatural ability and power to transport a human being from one place to another. When it comes to the latter, it will be appropriate to understand the involvement of the Spirit in the context that Mark presents through the whole prologue. That is, the Spirit is present in the unfolding of a new phase of God's salvific plan. The Holy Spirit is not only confirming the arrival of the Messiah as foretold in the prophecies (e.g., Isaiah 61), but actively playing a role in Jesus' life and ministry. In this particular account, the Spirit energetically moves Jesus into confrontation and accompanies and empowers him.

²⁹⁸ Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 170-171.

²⁹⁹ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 86-87.

³⁰⁰ Adela Yarbro Collins and Harold W. Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary*, 153.

³⁰¹ Joel Marcus, 170.

4.4 Conclusion

I have attempted to show that the Spirit in the prologue is strongly connected to the initiation of an eschatological event. Mark provides us with the context of Old Testament prophecies, the narrative of John's ministry which is also connected to the imagery of the Old Testament, and the contrast between John's water baptism and Jesus' Spirit baptism. All these are indications of the presentation of Jesus as the Greater One coming to fulfill the prophecies and inaugurate an era of salvation. John's baptism was for repentance of sin, and the same goes for Jesus, with the difference that his baptism was the final act of God's salvation. Amid all this, we find Mark's first mention of the Holy Spirit.

Then, the coming of the Spirit at Jesus' baptism reinforces the idea of an eschatological event taking place at the Jordan River. Robinson speaks about the cosmic language in Mark's account of Jesus' baptism and temptation. He concludes that: "together this cluster of cosmic events signifies for Mark a decisive occurrence in the realization of the eschatological hope."³⁰² The echoes of the prophecy in Isaiah 61 are noticeable at this point. The Spirit is descending upon God's servant in a visible way; the Greater One who is being anointed to fulfill God's mission receives the Spirit in the form of a dove. Thus, the two first mentions of the Spirit are found in the context of the new era of God's salvific plan being inaugurated. This can then be seen both in the Spirit as a symbol and confirmation of God's salvation through Jesus, but it also hints at something concerning the Spirit's *role* in this new era.

This takes us to the third mention in which the Spirit is recorded as casting Jesus out to the wilderness. One should be careful in reading some kind of 'complete control of the Spirit over Jesus.' I would rather suggest that one sees this Markan account as an indication of the supernatural way in which the event took place and the seriousness that it entailed. Nonetheless, this shows us something different from what we learned in the first two mentions. In this case the Spirit is not only a symbol or certificate of an eschatological event. The Spirit is now active, and he is energetically moving Jesus to the

³⁰² James M. Robinson, *The Problem of History in Mark*, 27.

wilderness where he is going to face not only confrontation, but also the company and empowerment of the same Spirit.

The so long-awaited "ultimate forgiveness of sins," as Guelich describes it,³⁰³ is emphasized in contrasting John's and Jesus' baptisms. The descending of the Spirit upon Jesus re-emphasizes and personifies salvation in and through his persona, but it also hints that the Spirit is now actively present in the person and ministry of Jesus. Now, moving forward to the accounts outside the prologue, I will argue that few but essential aspects of the Spirit are to be found in the rest of Mark's gospel.

³⁰³ Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26: Word Biblical Commentary*, 25.

5 The Spirit in the rest of Mark's Gospel

5.1 *The Beelzebul controversy*

Then he went home;²⁰ and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat.²¹ When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, "He has gone out of his mind."²² And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons."²³ And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan?²⁴ If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.²⁵ And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.²⁶ And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come.²⁷ But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered.²⁸ "Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter;²⁹ but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"³⁰ for they had said, "He has an unclean spirit." Mark 3:20-30

5.1.1 Background to Jesus' words

Crowds gathered around Jesus to the point that he could not rest and eat at the place where he was staying.³⁰⁴ His own family was worried about the whole situation, and Mark has even recorded what the people were saying about him "he has gone out of his mind." Then Jesus' opponents are introduced: in Mark there are the scribes (3:22), in Matthew the Pharisees (12:24), and in Luke just some people from the crowd (11:15). In any case, the accusation is what interests us: "He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of demons he casts out demons." In response to this accusation, Jesus tells some short parables and states an accusation to his opponents: *blasphemy against the Spirit cannot be forgiven*. There is much to unpack in this pericope, but I aim to concentrate on what is said about the Spirit. Therefore, I will focus on the following questions: What was Jesus doing that provoked the accusation of his opponents? Who was Beelzebul? What do the

³⁰⁴ See Collins and Attridge, *Hermeneia*, 226. For an explanation on the idiomatic use of εἰς οἶκον as "going home," which was most likely a reference to the place where he was staying in Capernaum.

parables tell us about the source of Jesus' power for exorcisms? What is Jesus asserting about the Spirit's role in his life/ministry? What is implicitly declared about the Spirit's role in salvation and forgiveness of sin?

5.1.2 Jesus' opponents provoked by his deeds

In this pericope (3:20-30), we find Jesus' opponents, the scribes, accusing him of being possessed. Their issue in the Markan account is specifically with Jesus' exorcisms. There is no explicit mention of Jesus' teachings or healings, but by reading the previous chapters in Mark it could be argued that the whole person and ministry of Jesus was an issue for his opponents. In Mark's first healing (1:29-34) we find Jesus casting out a demon and after that a broader statement of many healings and exorcisms (1:32-34). Already in these two actions we see how Mark introduces statements on Jesus' identity on the lips of those being helped by him. The next explicit mention of exorcism does not come before chapter three (3:11-12). Hence it would be reasonable to state that these three occasions are the immediate background that Mark is giving as the basis for Jesus' opponents' discomfort with his exorcisms.³⁰⁵

However, we find more healing accounts and questions or pronouncements which start to show some tension between Jesus and some groups. From chapter two until the Beelzebul controversy we find the following points that should also be seen as background to the uneasiness of Jesus' opponents:

- Jesus forgives the sins of a man (2:1-12)
- Jesus eats and drinks with sinners (2:13-17)
- Jesus challenges the expectations about fasting (2:18-22)
- Jesus declares himself as lord of the Sabbath (2:23-28)
- Jesus heals during the Sabbath (3:1-6)

Thus, before the Beelzebul controversy, the narrative shows discontent with Jesus' actions and teachings. The specifically mentioned groups are the Pharisees, scribes, and

³⁰⁵ Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26: Word Biblical Commentary*, 173.

Herodians. A climax is reached in 3:20-30, which ends in the particular charge against Jesus of being possessed by *Beelzebul* and his exorcisms performed by *the ruler of demons*.

5.1.3 Beelzebul

Are Beelzebul and the ruler of demons two different characters or the same? Following the tradition contained in *Q*, Matthew (12:24) and Luke (11:15) stated that Beelzebul was the ruler of demons. This helps us to understand better what Mark is writing, namely that he is only emphasizing the accusation of Jesus as possessed by Beelzebul, who was the source of his power for exorcisms.

Concerning the identity of this character *Beelzebul*, we find an explanation on the lips of the Markan Jesus who replaced the name of Beelzebul from the original accusation (3:22) to Satan (3:23): "And he [Jesus] called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan?" Thus, the text itself hints that Beelzebul was a synonym for Satan.³⁰⁶ R. T. France concludes:

It seems clear from this identification, and from the sequel in vv.23-26, that Mark understands Βεελζεβοὺλ as an alternative name for Satan. The name is not found in this sense in pre-Christian Jewish accounts of demons [...] In the end we simply do not know where Mark got it from or exactly what lexical meaning, if any, he would have understood it to carry.³⁰⁷

There are different ideas concerning the origin of the name Beelzebul and its association as a synonym for Satan. Because of the limitations of this paper and the diversity of theories among scholars, I will not include them in this paper.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁶ Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 272.

³⁰⁷ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 170.

³⁰⁸ See Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 105 (includes a brief account of different notions about the term); Collins and Attridge, *Hermeneia*, 229-231 (build up on the *Testament of Solomon* as main source); Robert Guelich, *WBD*, 174-175 (using Gaston's research proposes a connection between Baal-zebub and Beelzebul); Joel Marcus, *ABC*, 272 (provides a different explanation for the origin of 'Beelzebul,' and similarities with how Jubilees describe the ruler of demons).

5.1.4 Parables to explain the source of power for exorcisms

Mark introduces Jesus' first set of parables here. Parables can include "riddles, metaphors, similes, and other figures of speech, even at times allegory,"³⁰⁹ and on this occasion we see "short metaphorical sayings."³¹⁰ I will propose the following arrangement:

(1) Initial statement: *How can Satan cast out Satan? (3:23b)*

(2) *If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand (3:24).*

(3) *And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand (3:25).*

(4) Conclusion combining the initial statement and the metaphors presented: *And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come (3:26).*

(5) A new aspect is introduced hidden in this metaphorical saying: *But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered (3:27).*

From **(1)** to **(4)** Jesus is trying to show his opponents the irrationality of their accusations.³¹¹ If evil spirits are being cast out, and they accused him of doing it in the power of the prince of demons, what they are actually saying is that the devil is fighting against himself.³¹² From this we can learn that Satan is not the source of Jesus' power for exorcisms.

The new aspect that the Jesus of Mark introduces in **(5)** uses the metaphor of an invasion, and concerning its meaning Guelich concludes:

Clearly the "strong man" stands for Satan; his "possessions" represents those possessed; the "binding" of the "strong man" takes place in Jesus' ministry; and the "plundering" bespeaks Jesus' own exorcisms of those "possessed." Consequently, this saying makes clear the ultimate or eschatological character of Jesus' ministry of exorcism that has accompanied his preaching and teaching

³⁰⁹ Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26: Word Biblical Commentary*, 175.

³¹⁰ John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Mark*, 130.

³¹¹ Adela Yarbro Collins and Harold W. Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary*, 232.

³¹² Robert A. Guelich, 176.

(1:21-27, 34; 3:11-12) as being a consequence of Satan's being "bound" or having "met his end."

This interpretation is consequent with the concepts discussed in the previous chapter about the Spirit in Mark's prologue. Mark continues to suggest that an eschatological event took place in the coming and ministry of Jesus. However, the question about Jesus' source of power is still unanswered at this point: by whose power is Jesus performing his exorcisms?

5.1.5 The Spirit's role in Jesus' life and ministry

Here, in 3:29, we find the fourth time that the Holy Spirit is mentioned in Mark and the first mention outside Mark's prologue. After the Markan Jesus showed his opponents the incongruity of their statements (Satan cannot fight against himself), and that a significant event was taking place in his ministry (Jesus was taking the oppressed from Satan's dominion); He warned them about blaspheming against the Spirit. In the next point I will study Jesus' statement about the unforgivable sin, but for now, I will concentrate on the idea of the Spirit being the source of Jesus' power.

As we have seen in the prologue, the Spirit confirms the fulfilment of God's promise of humanity's final salvation. This was visible in the references to the Old Testament, the 'anointing' of Jesus in his baptism as the Messiah, and the confirmation of his identity in the bestowing of the Spirit and voice from heaven. However, the role of the Spirit seems to be more than a mere symbol or confirmation of the eschatological event taking place in Jesus' life and ministry. We found here a clear reference on the lips of the Jesus of Mark to the role of the Spirit in the *execution* of his ministry. The scribe's claim that Jesus performed exorcisms by the power of Satan was a transgression against the Holy Spirit, who was the source of power for his exorcisms.³¹³ R. T. France argues that Mark's readers "know well" at this point that the Spirit empowers Jesus after reading 1:8, 10, 12-13.³¹⁴ Undoubtedly, the account is primarily about Jesus' exorcisms, but as we have seen in 5.1.2

³¹³ Adela Yarbro Collins and Harold W. Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary*, 234-235.

³¹⁴ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 177.

the opponents of Jesus might also have been provoked but Jesus' healings and teachings. Therefore, it would be reasonable to assume that the Spirit was active in all aspects of Jesus' life and ministry and not only the exorcisms. Joel Marcus concurs with this interpretation and writes: "in Mark's view, the true source of Jesus' exorcistic and miracle working power is not an unclean spirit but the Holy Spirit, the power of God's new age."³¹⁵

What are the implications of this? If the Markan Jesus ministries empowered by the Spirit, what will this mean for the reader's view of Jesus, the Spirit, and the narrative of the rest of the Gospel among other things? I will attempt to answer these questions in the next chapter of this thesis, but now it is important to address the issue of the unforgivable sin.

5.1.6 The blasphemy against the Spirit

Jesus stated that the accusations against him and the source of his power were wrong since the Spirit is the one that empowers him, but then something else is shown in all this. Mark communicates that blasphemy against the Spirit cannot be forgiven. This issue has been long debated among scholars, and many have been interested in the nature of the unforgivable sin.³¹⁶ However, is this account telling us something about the Spirit's role in salvation and forgiveness of sin?

Most scholars interpreted 'blasphemy against the Spirit' as unforgivable because it means an opposition to God's goodness, which is the opposite of evil, and because it also shows that such a person is *closed* to the action of the Spirit.³¹⁷ In other words, the person is culpable of rejecting God's offer and by doing so is one determining one's own eternal judgement.³¹⁸ Reading Mark in the context of the Messiah empowered by the Spirit as part of God's eschatological salvation, Joel Marcus argues: "To misconstrue this liberative divine action as a deed of the Devil is to demonstrate such a complete identification of the

³¹⁵ Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 284.

³¹⁶ Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26: Word Biblical Commentary*, 180.

³¹⁷ John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Mark*, 132.

³¹⁸ Robert A. Guelich, 180.

self with the forces of destruction [...] that no future possibility of rescue remains."³¹⁹ Robert Guelich summarizes these views under the interpretations that set all the burden 'on the individual's response,' but he also warns against overseeing the Christological focus in Mark which points to what Jesus' statement has to say about his persona.³²⁰

With all this in mind, it will be reasonable to see again the role of the Spirit in light of the eschatological event taking place in Jesus' life and ministry. Thus, the issue is failing to understand the nature of Jesus' *powerful* ministry as a sign that God's ultimate salvation had arrived and that, at the same time, Jesus' *powerful* ministry was empowered by the Spirit (esp. the authority against forces of evil).³²¹ One should also read the words on the lips of Jesus remembering at the same time that John's promise of the Greater One who will baptize in the Holy Spirit. As it was mentioned in 4.1.3, Mark 1:8 should be read as a parallel to the cleaning experience through water-baptism. In what sense? In that being baptized with the Spirit is a reference to God's salvific plan, where the Messiah brings salvation, and the Spirit works as a cleansing agent. Thus, the role of the Spirit is crucial in God's salvation working to redeem the person, which will mean that rejecting the Holy Spirit deprives the person of accessing such a salvation.

5.2 *David's declaration by the Spirit*

³⁵ While Jesus was teaching in the temple, he said, "How can the scribes say that the Messiah is the son of David? ³⁶ David himself, by the Holy Spirit, declared, '*The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet."*' ³⁷ David himself calls him Lord; so how can he be his son?" And the large crowd was listening to him with delight. Mark 12:35-37

³¹⁹ Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 284.

³²⁰ Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26: Word Biblical Commentary*, 180.

³²¹ It might be an excess to read from this Markan account elements of the role of the Spirit in 'convincing of sin' and 'leading the person to seek God's forgiveness.' These notions can be traced to other books of the New Testament (e.g., John 16:7-15), but when it comes to Mark it appears to be a consistency in his eschatological view of the Spirit.

Mark sets up the context for this statement recorded on the lips of Jesus. He was teaching in the temple, and he himself brought up the issue of the Messiah's identity. The background to this account is the main character in the story arriving at Jerusalem in what will be his last days before his death. Mark has elaborated through his gospel an element of mystery regarding Jesus' identity, which reaches a climax in 8:27-30 with Peter's confession. Now is clear to the readers that Jesus' disciples have finally learned who Jesus really was, and in chapter nine this is confirmed again with the account of Jesus' transfiguration. However, there is still confusion among the rest of the people about Jesus' identity. Mark then includes:

- The statement on the lips of Bartimaeus: Jesus, son of David (10:46-52)
- Jesus' triumphal (king-like) entry into Jerusalem (11:1-11)
- Jesus' refusal to reveal the authority by which he operated (11:27-33)
- The parable of the wicked tenants (12:1-12)

At this point, between Peter's confession and the pericope that I am about to analyze, the readers have seen more indications of the crowds understanding or questioning Jesus' identity. Then, Mark includes this account in 12:35-37 where Jesus attempts to elucidate something more about the Messiah's identity by making the people reason for themselves.

5.2.1 The Messiah, the son of David

The Jesus of Mark introduces this topic by questioning an affirmation that apparently was well known to his audience.³²² Jesus problematizes the notion that the Messiah was the son of David by asking a question.³²³ However, what does it mean that the Messiah was the son of David, and why was Jesus challenging this concept? It was a

³²² Some scholars see an issue on Jesus starting the exchange by using a question, and therefore they attribute this Markan account to his own redaction, an addition by the early church, or a missing part on the beginning of this tradition (see Craig Evans, *WBC*, 270-272). In this thesis I am approaching the text on its final form through a narrative exegetical analysis, and therefore I will not include these issues of form and source criticism.

³²³ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 485.

well-establish habit to refer to the Messiah as the son of David, based on the hopes of a restoration of Israel's throne with a descendent from David's kingly line.³²⁴ Concerning the question above, Craig Evans proposes an underlying assumption that being the son of someone means "to be in some sense subordinate or even inferior."³²⁵ Having this in mind, one could argue that Jesus was stating: *that the Messiah is not subordinate or inferior to David.*³²⁶ The Markan Jesus does not clarify the identity of the Messiah any further. The account ends with a rhetorical question on the lips of Jesus:³²⁷ *David himself calls him Lord, so how can he be his son? (12:37a)*

There have been many interpretations about this account and what it implicates for the identity of the Messiah³²⁸ and due to space reasons, I will include only two of them:

(1) Jesus is not refuting the Davidic line in relation to the Messiah, but he is stressing the greatness of the Messiah over King David. Regarding this Marcus states: "The Markan Jesus is not denying the Messiah's physical descent from David but the adequacy of the Davidic image to express his full identity."³²⁹

(2) The Markan Jesus is hinting at something about the nature of the Messiah: he is human, but he is also divine.³³⁰ On that note Evans writes: "Evidently Jesus held to a higher view of the Messiah [...] Probably because the Messiah is viewed as "son of God."³³¹

These interpretations will fit with Mark's mystery motif shown throughout the whole Gospel concerning Jesus' identity and the elements of Mark's narrative between Peter's confession up to this point which were mentioned above in 5.2. In any case, what is more relevant to the present study is the reference to the Spirit on the lips of the Markan Jesus which will be analyzed in the following point.

³²⁴ Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20: Word Biblical Commentary*, 272.

³²⁵ Craig A. Evans, 274.

³²⁶ John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Mark*, 359.

³²⁷ Adela Yarbro Collins and Harold W. Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary*, 581.

³²⁸ E.g. Collins and Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary*, 577-582, who present an approach more influenced by form criticism which shapes their interpretation of this pericope.

³²⁹ Joel Marcus, *Mark 8-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 848.

³³⁰ Joel Marcus, 847.

³³¹ Craig A. Evans, 276.

5.2.2 The Spirit inspiring David's words

The issue of the Messiah's identity in Jesus' rhetorical questions is so predominant that scholars do not pay much attention to this reference to the Spirit.³³² This is the fifth time the Holy Spirit is mentioned in Mark's gospel, and the second time it comes enclosed on the lips of Jesus. The fact that this account is presented on the lips of Jesus is not a minor issue. It shows how he himself interprets Psalms, how he connects it to the person of the Messiah,³³³ and how he attributes David's prophetic statement to the work of the Spirit in him. There is enough background to the idea of the Spirit inspiring kings, prophets, or other God's appointees in the Old Testament, and when it comes to the psalms, they were also considered "the product of divine inspiration."³³⁴ Nevertheless, what does this mean to Mark's narrative and the role of the Spirit in it?

Robert Mansfield proposes that Mark is trying to establish the deity of Jesus by attributing the term Lord (Κύριος) to the Messiah. By doing so, he argues that the Markan audience would understand that the Messiah was more than the son of David or the Anointed One; he was Κύριος.³³⁵ Then regarding the reference to the Holy Spirit, he writes:

Mark brings the Risen Christ (Lord) and the Holy Spirit as closely together as his use of tradition allows. He is not interested in explaining further the relationship. The Holy Spirit, the reader now knows, is the source of Jesus' authority and is linked with the confession of his lordship. Without the Spirit's presence and inspiration, right understanding of Jesus and the Gospel remains a "mystery" in parables.³³⁶

Thus, two ideas can be taken from Mansfield's work concerning the role of the Spirit in Mark's narrative: (1) the Spirit in Mark is connected to the portrayal of the Messiah's identity, in this case his lordship. (2) Mansfield affirms the *necessity* of the Spirit's help to

³³² In each of the commentaries published by the following authors Marcus, France, Donahue & Harrington, Collins & Attridge, the only reference to the Spirit included is that "the Spirit inspired David."

³³³ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 483-484.

³³⁴ R. T. France, 487.

³³⁵ Robert Mansfield, *Spirit and Gospel in Mark*, 104-105.

³³⁶ Robert Mansfield, 105.

understand both Jesus' identity and his message. Another scholar that proposes a different approach to this pericope is Craig Keener. He contends that the Holy Spirit in Mark is "the Spirit of prophecy who inspires Scripture."³³⁷ While Keener reads the Spirit in this pericope as an element of the *past* (the inspiration of the psalm now quoted by Jesus), Mansfield sees this inclusion of the Spirit as a reference to a *present* role (communicating and helping to understand the identity of the Messiah whom Mark is portraying in his narrative). I will argue that these views are not mutually exclusive, and the readers might be able to appreciate the Spirit's inspiration in the past, but also in the present.

It can be concluded that the Spirit in this Markan account is used in line with the previous mentions. Previously we have seen how the Spirit confirms the eschatological event taking place in the life and ministry of Jesus. On this occasion the Spirit is giving testimony of the Messiah again, but now it is about his status as Lord who is superior to Israel's beloved King David. Based on this account, Mark's readers can learn that the Spirit testifies of the Son and actively work in people's lives, as seen in the inspiration of David's words.

5.3 The Spirit promised to Jesus' followers

⁹ "As for yourselves, beware; for they will hand you over to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them. ¹⁰ And the good news^[b] must first be proclaimed to all nations. ¹¹ When they bring you to trial and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say; but say whatever is given you at that time, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. ¹² Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; ¹³ and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

³³⁷ Craig Keener, *The Spirit in the Gospels and Acts: Divine Purity and Power*, 61.

5.3.1 The context of Jesus' words

In chapter thirteen we find the Markan Jesus talking with his disciples about the future. He has mentioned to his disciples that the temple will be destroyed, which raised their curiosity about the timing of all this.³³⁸ For the present study, I find it essential to concentrate on verse 11, and therefore at the current point I will shortly look at the verses which come before and after (9-10; 12-13) and then on 4.3.2 I will focus on verse 11.

This pericope comes in the context of Jesus' final days. Mark is bringing his story to an end, and already in the following chapter (14) the readers will find the accounts of the plot to kill Jesus and his arrest. The other synoptic evangelists similarly arranged the material presenting Jesus' eschatological discourse first (Matthew 24:9-14; Luke 21:12-19) and then the Passion Narrative in the following chapters (Matthew 26; Luke 22).

Thus, at this stage of the narrative, the Markan Jesus mentions the Holy Spirit for the sixth and final time. On this occasion it has nothing to do with the Messiah's persona, identity, or ministry but with the promise of future help to his disciples.³³⁹

The Jesus of Mark presents a picture of the future that encompasses:

- Mistreat and being hang over to councils and authorities (13:9-11)
- Betrayal and hate against them (13:12-13)

Collins and Attridge describe these verses (vv.9-13) as a unit that consists of "admonition, prediction, instruction, and promise."³⁴⁰ It is in the middle of this description that we find the assurance of the Spirit's help to Jesus' followers in times of distress.

5.3.2 The Spirit who inspires Jesus' followers

This is the last time that Mark mentions the Holy Spirit in his gospel, and the first time his writing is related to the Spirit's activity or role in relation to Jesus' disciples.³⁴¹ What else can we then learn about the role of the Spirit in Mark on this very last reference?

³³⁸ Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20: Word Biblical Commentary*, 313.

³³⁹ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 517-518.

³⁴⁰ Adela Yarbro Collins and Harold W. Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary*, 606.

³⁴¹ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 518.

5.3.2.1 A helper or source of inspiration

Some scholars see in verse 11 a parallel to John's description of the Spirit as the Παράκλητος.³⁴² Donahue and Harrington contextualize the role of the Spirit with the term "defense attorney,"³⁴³ and R. T. France states: "the Spirit's role as a 'prompter' for the disciples' witness."³⁴⁴ The former points to an active role of the Spirit in leading the defense of the persecuted disciple, and the latter emphasizes the Spirit's contribution in giving the words to the one in need. Joel Marcus proposes a different approach, and he sees verse 11 as echoing the OT and how men like Moses or Jeremiah were promised God's words in their mouths as empowerment for witness.³⁴⁵ Marcus highlights the background provided by the OT in which the Spirit is understood as the "power for inspired speech," and rabbinic traditions that depicted him as "the spirit of prophecy."³⁴⁶ Marcus' viewpoint seems reasonable in light of the OT's influence in Mark's narrative. In any case, all these interpretations point to the idea of the Holy Spirit actively helping the disciple in need. Consequently, Mark's readers can see at the end of his gospel that in the same way the Spirit was present in the life and ministry of Jesus, the Spirit will be now available for his followers. However, can Jesus' promise of the Spirit's help apply to any other than his closest disciples? I will deal with this question in the following point.

5.3.2.2 The Spirit available to all of Jesus' followers

There are no indications that the words on the lips of Jesus were exclusive to the twelve who were surrounding him. In verses 9 and 13, Jesus makes clear that he is the reason for the persecution that his followers were going to face: "because of me" (v.9) and "because of my name" (v.13). One may imply from this that proclaiming Jesus' name can lead to persecution, and in that situation the Spirit will be there helping. Evans argues that "the belief that God will assist the righteous in proclaiming truth" was a well-established

³⁴² E.g. John 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:8-11.

³⁴³ John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Mark*, 371.

³⁴⁴ R. T. France, 518.

³⁴⁵ Joel Marcus, *Mark 8-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 886.

³⁴⁶ Joel Marcus, 883.

idea that circulated during the first century.³⁴⁷ Joel Marcus affirms that “Markan Christians” were going to experience the difficulties described by Jesus.³⁴⁸ Thus, it is reasonable to sustain that Jesus' words were meant for all his followers. Evans goes even further to affirm that the words of the Markan Jesus in this pericope have “inspired many Christian missionaries” to resist difficulties, knowing that the possibility of fierce opposition was already foretold.³⁴⁹ Finally, another parallel is the people that God chose in the OT who in most cases were the unlikely and incapable, and hence wholly depended on God’s power.³⁵⁰ In the same way, Jesus’ followers are encouraged and empowered to witness with the assurance of the Spirit’s help in times of need. I will explore this in the following point.

5.3.2.3 Inspiration for witness

Up to this point I have attempted to establish two ideas concerning the analysis of Mark 13:9-13:

- the Spirit is shown as a helper in times of distress
- the promise of the Spirit’s help applies to all of Jesus’ followers

Nevertheless, what kind of help is to be expected? Is the Markan Jesus talking about any type of speech? What will be the content of these words from the Spirit? R. T. France wishes to be crystal clear on this and states: “The promise that words will be supplied is for hard-pressed disciples on trial, not for lazy preachers!”³⁵¹ The statement in v.10 appears to give context to v.11, meaning that the Spirit’s help can be expected within the context of discipleship and Gospel.³⁵² In other words, the Spirit is not necessarily given to anyone facing a trial but to “disciples” facing opposition by authorities for the sake of the Gospel.³⁵³

³⁴⁷ Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20: Word Biblical Commentary*, 311.

³⁴⁸ Joel Marcus, *Mark 8-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 887.

³⁴⁹ Craig A. Evans, 313.

³⁵⁰ Joel Marcus, 886.

³⁵¹ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 517.

³⁵² Robert Mansfield, *Spirit and Gospel in Mark*, 109.

³⁵³ Robert Mansfield, 109.

Considering the social status and education of most of Jesus' followers, the fact that the Spirit could help them to find and formulate the right words or speeches to defend themselves was a great assurance.³⁵⁴ We can see an example of this outside Mark in Acts 4 and 5 where Jesus' disciples are brought before Jewish authorities who appeared speechless to the apostles' defense, especially since they were "uneducated, common men" (Acts 4:13-14).³⁵⁵

Lastly, when it comes to the content of the words the Spirit gives to the disciples, Robert Mansfield writes the following:

The Holy Spirit provides the revelation, that is, gives the understanding and power of utterance. What are the means and content of the Spirit's utterance? It can be none other than the Gospel itself. The Gospel contains the fullness of the truth about the Spirit's work in Jesus and the nature of discipleship. The testimony the disciples will bear, the Gospel they will preach, and the inspired speech given by the Holy Spirit are all the same "word" or at least representative of the same "word" which Mark designates Gospel (1:1, 14-15, 8:35; 10:29; 13:10).³⁵⁶

I adhere to Mansfield's statement, which aligns with the context in which the Markan Jesus is foretelling his disciples about the future opposition and persecutions, and how the Spirit will help them speak. It is also interesting to identify an element of *witnessing* in all this. That is, the Spirit is not assisting the disciple just to know what to say in front of his accusers, but such a distressful situation will be used as an opportunity to testify about the Gospel.

In conclusion, we see that Mark's last mention of the Spirit in 13:9-13 further contributes to his depiction of the Spirit. As we have seen in through point 5.3, Jesus promises his Spirit to all his followers who will help them in times of distress. In particular, Jesus foretells difficulties and persecution but assures them that the Spirit will give them what to say in the midst of all this. These will also be opportunities to witness about the Gospel.

³⁵⁴ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 517.

³⁵⁵ Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20: Word Biblical Commentary*, 311.

³⁵⁶ Robert Mansfield, 109.

5.4 Conclusion

Throughout the current chapter I have presented an analysis of the three mentions of the Holy Spirit outside Mark's prologue, which complete a total of six mentions in the Markan gospel.

The fourth reference to the Spirit comes in the context of Jesus being criticized for his ministry. Mark presents his 'main character' teaching, healing, and exorcizing many people in different places and settings through the first two chapters. Then comes chapter three where Jesus' opponents denounce that the source of his power is Beelzebul. From this account and the answers on the lips of Jesus it is implied that the Spirit is the *source* of his power. When we look at this in light of what was established in the prologue, the role of the Spirit in Mark is still connected to the eschatological event taking place in Jesus' life and ministry. At this point, Mark's readers can see that the Spirit is not only attesting to the arrival of God's ultimate salvation in Jesus' ministry, but they can now observe a visual element of that salvation, which is the powerful ministry of Jesus (e.g., his authority over demons). Thus, the role of the Spirit in Mark extends to the one who empowers the ministry of Jesus, marking the advance of God's salvation over evil.

Moving on to the fifth mention of the Spirit we find the Markan Jesus interpreting a psalm as written by David, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and concerning the identity of the Messiah. The inclusion of the Spirit at this point is in line with the previous mentions. On this fifth occasion the Spirit is giving testimony of the Messiah again, but now is about his status as Lord who is superior to Israel's beloved King David. Based on this account, Mark's readers can learn that the Spirit testifies of the Son and actively works in people's lives, as seen in the inspiration of David's words.

Finally, the last mention of the Spirit in Mark moves from references that are primarily about the life and ministry of Jesus, and the eschatological meaning of his arrival, to the Spirit's activity in the life of Jesus' followers. In this final mention of the Spirit, the reader can learn that the Spirit can help ordinary people when they find themselves persecuted for the sake of the Gospel. In these situations, the Spirit will aid them and empower them for witness.

6 Analysis

6.1 What have we learned so far?

6.1.1 A reminder of the previous chapters

The main question of this thesis is: “what can we learn about the role of the Spirit in Mark’s narrative?” To answer this question, I have worked in three different areas:

1) Study of the meaning of *Spirit* (pneuma) in Mark

I reviewed contemporary writings, investigated how Mark and others used this term, and the background provided by the OT and the Hebrew word for spirit (rûah). This chapter aimed to provide a better understanding of what *spirit* is for Mark.

2) Study of Mark’s prologue

Since this thesis aims to approach the role of the Spirit regarding the whole Gospel, it was necessary to pay special attention to the prologue. Mark’s opening unit is pivotal for one’s understanding of the entire narrative. Therefore, much attention was given to establishing the extension of the prologue, analyzing its content, and comparing it to other contemporary prologues.

3) Exegetical analysis of the mentions of the Spirit in Mark

Having established the concept of *spirit* in Mark and the importance of the prologue, I proceeded to exegete the six times the Holy Spirit is mentioned in Mark. By exegeting these verses, I aimed to comprehend better what the author said about the Spirit so that I could give a comprehensive picture of the Spirit’s role in the narrative of the second gospel.

6.1.2 Outcomes from each chapter

Chapter 2: Pneuma in Mark

The Greek word *pneuma* means wind, breath, and spirit (s), in the same way as its Hebrew counterpart “rûah.” Mark uses *pneuma* to exclusively refer to unclean spirits, the Holy Spirit, and the human spirit. He writes upon the background of the OT and Early

Judaism and assumes the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Finally, the Holy Spirit is depicted as different from (and battling against) unclean spirits.

Chapter 3: Mark's prologue

In this chapter, the extension and function of the prologue were established. I also analyzed its rich content with particular attention to the OT references. Mark's prologue provides the reader with contextual background to understand and appreciate the importance of the biographical subject and has a programmatic function for the entire narrative. It introduces the main characters and themes, focalizes the narrative, and relates the gospel's time to that of the readers. In addition, the prologue hints at the continuation and fulfillment of God's promises to his people, situating Mark's story in a determined eschatological time. This has implications for the role of the Spirit in Mark, which must be seen in light of those promises, and God's appointed time.

Chapter 4: The Spirit in Mark's prologue

After studying the three mentions of the Spirit in the prologue, one can observe a solid connection to the initiation of an eschatological event. Mark's references to the OT, the description of John and his ministry, and the contrast between two baptisms are all indications that point to Jesus as the one who came to inaugurate an era of salvation. The coming of the Spirit at Jesus' baptism reinforces the idea of an eschatological event taking place at the Jordan River. Finally, the Spirit is not only a symbol or certificate for God's appointed time. The Spirit is active and energetically moving Jesus to the wilderness where he will face not only confrontation but also the company and empowerment of the same Spirit.

Chapter 5: The Spirit in the rest of the gospel

Mark implies, on the lips of the main character, that the Spirit is the source of Jesus' power. At this point, Mark's readers can see that the Spirit not only attests to the arrival of God's ultimate salvation in Jesus' ministry, but they can now observe a visual element of that salvation: the powerful ministry of Jesus. In addition, the Spirit is also depicted as essential to salvation and forgiveness of sin. Then, the identity of the Messiah is further described as superior to David, and in including this account, Mark also elucidated the Spirit's role in inspiring the prophetic voice. Finally, it is mentioned that the Spirit can

empower Jesus' followers to witness, which speaks about the function ahead of both the follower and the Spirit in God's salvific plan.

6.2 *How does the Spirit relate to the plot of Mark's story?*

Having gained a better understanding of the references to the Spirit in Mark's narrative, it remains to show more specifically the Holy Spirit's role in relation to the whole Markan story. There are different approaches and paths for studying the narrative of the second gospel, but in order to have a framework, I will rely on the work of Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie. Their analysis of Mark's narrative has been groundbreaking, and it is considered by some scholars "the book that formally introduced New Testament studies to the discipline of narrative criticism."³⁵⁷ In their analysis of the Markan plot they argue that *the arrival of the rule of God* is the key to understanding the whole story.³⁵⁸ Further, Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie maintain that God's ruling in the world creates conflicts visible in the second gospel.³⁵⁹ These are conflicts with supernatural forces, nature, society, different individuals, and within the characters themselves.³⁶⁰ By showing how the Spirit plays a role in building these core ideas in Mark, the Holy Spirit's importance for the story Mark is telling will become more visible.

6.2.1 **The rule of God**

According to the framework proposed by Rhoads et al., Mark portrays the arrival of God's rule in two stages:

In the story world, God's rule comes in two stages. The first stage opens with Jesus proclaiming and enacting the rule of God, and it continues after Jesus' execution and resurrection into the imaginative future of the story world until the second stage arrives, the final establishment of God's rule in power.³⁶¹

³⁵⁷ Kelly R. Iverson and Christopher W. Skinner, *Mark As Story: Retrospect and Prospect*, ix.

³⁵⁸ Guelich also concurs with them and asserts that Mark's gospel is about "the fulfillment of the time and the coming of God's rule into history" in Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26: Word Biblical Commentary*, 45.

³⁵⁹ David M. Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 78.

³⁶⁰ David M. Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, 77.

³⁶¹ David M. Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 80.

In the following points, I will attempt to show the connections of the Spirit in Mark concerning these two stages of the coming of God's rule.

6.2.1.1 The first stage: Jesus proclaims and enacts the rule of God

Regarding the first stage, the Spirit is an essential player in Jesus' proclamation and enactment of God's rule. In the first mention of the Spirit, on the lips of the Baptizer, the reader can learn that *baptizing with the Spirit* is an integral part of Jesus' ministry (1:8). As mentioned before, this information comes in the context of OT prophecies and the expectation of their fulfillment in Jesus. Thus, the Spirit is not only key in confirming the eschatological time that was taking place in Jesus' arrival and ministry but also in the execution. This last point is enacted by the second mention of the Spirit in Mark, the account of Jesus' baptism (1:10). Here the Spirit descends upon Jesus in a baptismal ritual which echoes the rituals for inaugurating someone to office (e.g., a king, a prophet, or a priest). Jesus is anointed for his ministry, and the Spirit confirms his identity and equips him for his mission. If the reader has any doubts about the Spirit's role, the next mention is even more specific. The first action after Jesus' baptism is his time in the wilderness and confrontation with Satan. In the only reference which shows the Spirit actively intervening in the main character's actions, the author informs that the Holy Spirit cast Jesus out to the wilderness (1:12). As I will show in point 6.2.2, confrontations are essential in Mark's story. Therefore, it is remarkable that the Spirit is moving Jesus into the place where he will face a confrontation with evil forces. This will be crucial for reading the remaining narrative, which contains many elements that point to a battle between cosmic forces.³⁶² Surprisingly, the next mention of the Spirit relates to Jesus' battle against evil spirits.

The fourth mention of the Spirit in Mark comes in the context of Jesus' exorcisms and authority over impure spirits. In answering about the source of his authority, the Markan Jesus clarifies for his audience that he ministries in the power of the Spirit (3:29). Thus, the author shows again the crucial role of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' proclamation and enactment of God's rule, this time on the lips of the main character. On this occasion, it is

³⁶² David M. Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, 82.

related to the battle against evil forces. Later, the fifth mention of the Spirit is found in the second part of the gospel, where the identity of Jesus has been attested by one of the characters (Peter) and reconfirmed for the reader.³⁶³ Thus, when the reader reaches chapter twelve, God's rule is further confirmed by showing how the Messiah (who came to establish God's rule) is above the beloved king David. This affirmation appears on the lips of Jesus who cites the prophetic words of David and attributes them to the Spirit's inspiration (12:36). Consequently, the Spirit continues to play a role in attesting to the ministry of Jesus in proclaiming and enacting God's rule. Finally, the last Markan mention of the Holy Spirit comes again on the lips of Jesus, who promises the Spirit's help in times of persecution and distress (13:11). Here the main character is telling his followers that their testimonies and ministries will continue the proclamation and enactment of God's rule. In that context, the Spirit is promised as a helper who will empower them for their mission.

6.2.1.2 The second stage: the final establishment of God's rule in power

The Markan story leaves the reader with a sense of unfinished business. As Rhoads et al. describe it, there is an 'imaginative future' in the narrative between Jesus' execution and resurrection and the time when God's rule is finally established.³⁶⁴ How is the Spirit involved in the shaping of this second stage?

Perhaps, one should start with the last reference to the Spirit mentioned in the section above. In 13:11, the Markan Jesus promises the Spirit's help to his followers. Even though it is not a reference to the final arrival of God's rule, this informs the disciples about the time before that event. The disciples learned about the hardness and distress that proclaiming and enacting God's rule will entail, and most important of all,

³⁶³ There is great agreement in Peter's confession (8:27-30) as a turning point in Mark's narrative dividing the story in two. See for example: Scaria Kuthirakkattel, *The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry According to Mark's Gospel (1,14-3,6): A Redaction Critical Study* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1990), 45-60. He divides the story of Mark in two parts (1) The Progressive Revelation of the Mystery of Jesus' Messiahship (1:14-8:30), and (2) Revelation of the Mystery of the Suffering Son of Man (8:27-16:8).

³⁶⁴ David M. Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 80.

they were assured of the Spirit's help during those times. Subsequently, one might conclude that the Spirit will still be at work in the proclamation and enactment of God's rule through the lives and ministries of the disciples until the second stage finally takes place. This notion can be further developed if one goes back to the previous mentions of the Spirit. If the reader is able to assimilate that the Spirit will be at work as foretold by Mark's Jesus (13:11), then the reader can also infer that while waiting for the second stage the Spirit can:

- prophetically inspired the follower (12:36)
- empower the follower to battle evil spirits (3:29)
- lead the follower (1:12)
- be bestowed upon the follower (1:8, 1:10)

6.2.1.3 Summary

As shown in the previous points, it is possible to find elements that show the relevance of the Spirit in the Markan narrative. If one follows Rhoads et al. regarding the arrival of God's rule as a central theme for Mark's story, one can see the significance of the Spirit in shaping this idea.

6.2.2 Conflicts inside the Markan story

6.2.2.1 Conflict with cosmic forces:

Mark presents Jesus as a mighty servant of God who comes to inaugurate a new time in God's salvific plan. He is depicted as the Greater One, the Son of God, who right after his baptism is cast out by the Holy Spirit to confrontation with Satan. The narrative continues in the first chapter, and after the calling of the first disciples, Mark records his encounter with an unclean spirit (1:21-28). The reader can sense that Jesus has "power over nonhuman forces that threaten and oppress people –Satan, demons, illness, and

nature.”³⁶⁵ This is observable throughout the whole narrative in Jesus’ exorcisms (e.g., 1:21-28, 5:1-20, 7:24-30, 9:14-29), the parable of the strong man (3:24-27), in his rebuking of Peter when he suggested for Jesus to avoid his destiny (8:33), in his short dialogues with demons (e.g., 1:24-25, 5:7-12), and in his power over illness and disabilities.³⁶⁶ The Holy Spirit is crucial in this Markan portrayal of Jesus’ confrontation against evil. It is the Spirit who sends Jesus to confront Satan in the desert (1:12) after attesting his identity as God’s Messiah (1:10). It is also the Spirit whom Jesus regards as the source of his power (3:20-30), and the one who will be with Jesus’ followers in the oppressions and confrontations ahead (1:8, 13:11).

6.2.2.2 Conflict with the authorities

The ministry of Jesus also disrupted the social order. The ill and possessed were the outcast of society, and the same applied to sinners in the eyes of the religious leaders. Concerning this, Rhoads et al. write: “The rule of God begins among people of no social consequence—not among the rulers but among the peasants, not with the so-called righteous but with the ‘sinners.’ As a result, Jesus comes into conflict with authorities.”³⁶⁷ There were many other sides of Jesus’ life and ministry that provoked the religious authorities:

- His call for a profound renewal of Israel at an individual and national level. In the eyes of the religious authorities this instigated people to do things they considered illegal.³⁶⁸
- His ministry and appealing to people from outside the traditional channels of power. This is also seen in the locations where Jesus spent most of his time, outside of Jerusalem, which was the center of power.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁵ David M. Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 82.

³⁶⁶ David M. Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, 83.

³⁶⁷ David M. Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, 79.

³⁶⁸ David M. Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, 85.

³⁶⁹ David M. Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, 79 & 85.

- His words and teachings challenged the pre-established conception of God who *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative* now crosses boundaries instead of guarding them. Among other things, this dynamic is seen in God becoming available everywhere instead of being limited to the Temple and spreading his holiness to the people instead of withdrawing from defilement.³⁷⁰

The Spirit in Mark's narrative is also central in establishing Jesus' conflict with religious authorities. The mentions of the Spirit in the prologue might give an advantage to the reader who can interpret the posterior conflicts in light of the ministry of the Greater One who came in God's appointed time to fulfill his promises to his people. However, for the characters in the story, the mentions outside the prologue have the Spirit at the center of this conflict with authorities. The Beelzebul controversy is a clear example of this (3:20-30). The religious leaders are provoked by Jesus' powerful ministry, and they accused him of being possessed by Beelzebul. On the lips of the Markan Jesus, these scribes from Jerusalem are warned about blaspheming against the Holy Spirit. By stating this, Jesus assures them that he performs his miracles by the power of the Spirit.

Later, Mark's story continues to show a conflict with the authorities that escalates. Jesus is approaching Jerusalem; his identity has been revealed to the disciples on Peter's lips (8:27-30) and at the posterior transfiguration (9:2-13). Then, he enters Jerusalem (11:1-11), cleanses the Temple (11:15-19), and discusses the source of his authority with the religious leaders (11:27-33). Next, chapter twelve starts with a parable that the religious authorities rapidly understand (12:1-12), which illustrates the rejection of Jesus and predicts the culmination of the conflict: Jesus' death. The discussions between Jesus and the authorities mount up in Mark: about taxes (12:13-17), the resurrection (12:18-27), and commandments (12:28-34). It is at the peak of this conflict that Mark has the account of the Messiah's identity and his fifth mention of the Spirit (12:35-37). The Markan Jesus makes this statement by himself (not as a response to questions or accusations), and he asserts that David's words were prophetic and inspired by the Spirit.

³⁷⁰ David M. Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 79-80.

By doing so, the Jesus of Mark utilizes the Spirit to assert the authority and greatness of the Messiah over King David. The religious leaders' response is not recorded; instead, it follows a direct charge from Jesus against them (12:38-40). Thus, the narrative leaves the rest for the reader's imagination, who might think that the religious leaders were most likely unhappy to hear that the identity of the Messiah as David's son was challenged. What will follow is the culmination of the conflict with the plot to kill Jesus and his arrest in chapter fourteen. But before that, there is a dialogue between Jesus and his disciples.

As it is visible, the conflict with the authorities escalates as the reader gets closer to the end of the Markan gospel. The Markan Jesus foretells his disciples of the challenges ahead and warns them that they will also face confrontation. At this point, the reader can probably relate the opposition that Jesus received because of his ministry with the resistance that Jesus' followers will have in the future. The message that Jesus preached generated resistance, and Jesus' followers, who were to continue preaching the same message, could also expect opposition. In the midst of all these, the author introduces the Spirit for the last time. On the lips of the main character, the disciples are informed of two things: (1) the opposition will continue in their future ministries, but (2) they will not be alone, the Holy Spirit will empower them to witness. Thus, the Spirit plays again an essential role in the narrative Mark is building.

6.2.2.3 Conflict with the disciples

This conflict is different from the previous one, and Rhoads et al. write in this regard: "There Jesus is in conflict with outsiders who want to destroy him; here Jesus is in conflict with insiders who struggle to be faithful to him."³⁷¹ The struggle starts at the moment Jesus calls people to follow him, to establish the rule of God. This entails that the now disciple is exposed to a set of values and conceptions that challenges his own; it is a continuous struggle to decide if one follows Jesus or settles for the status quo's safety.³⁷²

³⁷¹ David M. Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 90.

³⁷² David M. Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, 90.

The narrator will skillfully lead the audience to align with Jesus and wonder how the disciples are unable to understand and have faith in Jesus (e.g., 4:13, 4:40, 6:52, 7:18, 8:17-21). But at the same time, the readers can feel empathy with the disciples and identify themselves with their struggles.³⁷³ Depending on where one stands regarding Mark's ending, this conflict might be left open:

Short ending at 16:8: the reader does not know what the disciples did after the news of Jesus' resurrection and if they continued Jesus' mission of establishing God's rule. Rhoads et al. write: "the disciples are not prepared to lose their lives. In face of persecution and death, they flee and renounce [...] the conflict within the disciples is also resolved negatively. They want to be loyal to Jesus, but they are unable to do so."³⁷⁴

Long ending at 16:20: the reader learns that Jesus' disciples continued with the mission. This shows that they finally understood Jesus' mission and their role in continuing with it after their teacher's departure.

So, does the Spirit play a role in the Markan story's portrayal of a conflict between Jesus and the disciples? Blaine Charette attempts to elucidate this by asserting that 'insight and understanding' are characteristic of the work of the Holy Spirit and even unclean spirits in the Markan gospel (e.g., concerning Jesus' identity: Mk 1:24).³⁷⁵ He claims that "the ignorance of the disciples is ultimately overcome by the transformative work of the Spirit in their lives."³⁷⁶ However, I will argue that Charette fails to prove this statement from the Markan text concerning the disciples and the work of the Spirit in them. As we have seen, there are only six mentions of the Spirit in Mark, and the only mention that explicitly targets the disciples is the last one (13:11).³⁷⁷ Nonetheless, this reference to the Spirit's future work in the disciples' lives is essential. It foretells to the reader that the disciples will understand their mission and go out to witness after Jesus'

³⁷³ David M. Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 90-91.

³⁷⁴ David M. Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, 95.

³⁷⁵ Blaine Charette, "Insight as a Characteristic of S/Spirit in the Gospel of Mark: Spirit and Suffering as the Way of Insight in Mark's Gospel," 21.

³⁷⁶ Blaine Charette, 21.

³⁷⁷ Charette does not analyze this text in his study.

departure. It also hints at the importance of the Spirit's work in the life of the believer whom the Spirit empowers for witness. Understanding this might allow the reader to go back to the previous references to the Spirit and find that John predicted the Greater One who baptizes with the Spirit (1:8), which can also lead the reader to see the Spirit's work in Jesus' ministry and expect something similar in the life of the disciples.³⁷⁸

6.2.2.4 Summary

Through this point, I have looked into different conflicts in the Markan story that are essential for the narrative's plot. I attempted to show the relevance of the Spirit in the various conflicts that Mark portrays through the story. The idea of battling forces will be incomplete without the references to the Spirit who sends Jesus into a confrontation with Satan and empowers him to defeat unclean spirits. The narrator carefully inserts the Spirit in the middle of the conflict between Jesus and the authorities. They accused him of performing miracles and exorcisms by the power of Beelzebul, to which Jesus responded with a strong charge against blaspheming the Spirit, who is also asserted as the source of his power. Finally, in a short reference, the Spirit is promised as the one who will help the disciples to carry on with Jesus' mission. This reference hints to the reader that the conflict between Jesus and the disciples will be resolved, they will understand their mission, and they will be empowered to witness.

6.3 *Final implications*

After informing on the concept of pneuma in chapter one, and the relevance of the prologue as the interpretative key for the whole gospel in chapter three, I researched the Spirit's references in Mark's narrative in chapters four and five. Even when I attempted to study the role of the Spirit in the Markan narrative throughout those chapters, it remained essential to devote a chapter that analyzed the Spirit's role in the story as a whole. Therefore, in the current chapter, I used the framework provided by the literary analysis of Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, to show the relevance of the Spirit in Mark's narrative

³⁷⁸ See point 6.2.1.2, the same logic applies to the current statement.

construction. I perhaps should have considered other aspects of the Markan story, like the characters, the narrator, or the settings. However, I will contend that the study of the plot provides enough elements to present a case for the importance of the Spirit in Mark's building of his narrative. The Holy Spirit is crucial to Jesus' proclamation and enactment of God's rule. The Spirit validates Jesus' identity and empowers him to do his ministry. In addition, the Spirit plays a vital role in the time after Jesus' departure in empowering Jesus' followers to witness. All this is seen more precisely when looking at the conflicts in the Markan plot. There is a resistance to God's ruling, which is shown in the opposition of evil forces and the religious authorities, and the struggle of Jesus' disciples. As we have seen, Mark inserts the Spirit in the building up of these tensions in his story. The Spirit cast Jesus out to a confrontation with the devil in the desert, and the unclean spirits recognize his power and identity throughout the narrative. Jesus is accused of being possessed by Beelzebul, and in response to this he asserts that his source of power is the Holy Spirit. Then, regarding the unsolved conflict with his disciples the narrator hints, on Jesus' lips, that they will witness in the future and be persecuted for this. In informing this, Mark also assures the reader that the Spirit will help the follower of Jesus.

So, what can we learn about the role of the Holy Spirit in Mark's narrative through an exegetical analysis of the six mentions of the Spirit? It is possible then to conclude that the Spirit is central to Mark's narrative, which attempts to show to the reader the arrival of God's ruling happening in two stages and resulting in multiple conflicts. In all this, the Spirit is revealed as essential to the validation of the main character's identity and the fulfillment of his mission, which after his departure will be continued by his followers, empowered by the same Spirit.

7 Conclusion

The main aim of this thesis was to study the role of the Holy Spirit in Mark's narrative through an exegetical analysis of the six mentions of the Spirit in the Markan gospel. In order to do so, it was necessary to first deal with the term *pneuma* and the Markan prologue. Therefore, throughout chapter two I studied the word *pneuma*, and its meaning was established as wind, breath, and spirit (s). The word connotes 'air set in motion' and is considered a special substance with a fundamental emphasis on its intrinsic power. *Pneuma's* counterpart in Hebrew carries the same meaning and is also used when referring to spirit, wind, and breath. It was also observed that Mark's use of *pneuma* concentrates on unclean spirits, the Holy Spirit, and the human spirit. Finally, in chapter two, I also provided some background to Mark's use of *pneuma* from the OT and Early Judaism and two general considerations of Mark's presentation of the Spirit in his narrative. Namely, the divine nature of the Holy Spirit and his depiction as different from (and battling against) unclean spirits.

Subsequently, chapter three aimed to analyze Mark's prologue, and different features were considered. First, I attempted to define what a prologue is in general, and then I dealt with the issue of Mark's prologue length. After that, I analyzed the structure and content of the prologue and gave special attention to the OT references contained there. Then, I compared the Markan prologue to other contemporary prologues and studied its function in relation to the rest of the gospel. It is noticeable that Mark's prologue provides the reader with contextual background to understand and appreciate the importance of the biographical subject. Then, the issues with the prologue's length might still be unsettled, but Mark 1:1-15 was established as the Markan prologue in the current thesis. The relevance of that analysis lays in the prologue's nature as an "interpretative key" for Mark. I argued that Mark's prologue introduces the main characters and themes, focalizes the rest of the Markan narrative, and relates the gospel's time to that of the reader. Besides these four points, I also maintained that Mark's opening unit contributes the following:

- By situating the opening unit of his narrative against the foundation of previous writings (the OT), the author hints at a continuation and fulfillment of God's

promises to his people. It situates the narrative in a determined eschatological time.

- By introducing his gospel in such a matter, the evangelist prepares the reader to expect associations with OT writings in the coming narrative.
- The strong connections that the prologue has to the OT should also have implications for how one interprets the role of the Spirit in Mark's narrative. This should be reasonable if one considers the number of times that the Spirit is mentioned in the prologue.

As Emerson Powery contends, "the concentration of the activity of the Spirit in the prologue cues the reader —some would suggest— to the importance of the Spirit in the remainder of the narrative portrayal of Jesus and his followers."³⁷⁹ Having established the importance of the prologue for the entire Markan story, I proceeded to study the six mentions of the Spirit in the gospel of Mark.

In chapter four, I studied the mentions of the Spirit in the Markan prologue. I attempted to show that these first three references to the Spirit are strongly connected to the initiation of an eschatological event. Mark provides us with the context of Old Testament prophecies, the narrative of John's ministry (which is also connected to the imagery of the Old Testament), and the contrast between John's water baptism and Jesus' Spirit baptism. All these are indications of the presentation of Jesus as the Greater One coming to fulfill the prophecies and inaugurate an era of salvation. John's baptism was for repentance of sin, and the same goes for Jesus, with the difference that his baptism was the final act of God's salvation. Amid all this, we find Mark's first mention of the Holy Spirit.

Thus, Mark's second reference to the Spirit at Jesus' baptism reinforces the idea of an eschatological event taking place at the Jordan River. Robinson speaks about the cosmic language in Mark's account of Jesus' baptism and temptation. He concludes that: "together this cluster of cosmic events signifies for Mark a decisive occurrence in the

³⁷⁹ Emerson Powery, "The Spirit, the Scripture(S), and the Gospel of Mark: Pneumatology and Hermeneutics in Narrative Perspective," 187.

realization of the eschatological hope.”³⁸⁰ The echoes of the prophecy in Isaiah 61 are noticeable at this point. The Spirit is descending upon God’s servant in a visible way; the Greater One who is being anointed to fulfill God’s mission receives the Spirit in the form of a dove. Thus, the two first mentions of the Spirit are found in the context of the new era of God’s salvific plan being inaugurated. This can then be seen both in the Spirit as a symbol and confirmation of God’s salvation through Jesus, but it also hints at something concerning his *role* in this new era. The long-awaited “ultimate forgiveness of sins,” as Guelich describes it,³⁸¹ is emphasized in contrasting John’s and Jesus’ baptisms. The descending of the Spirit upon Jesus re-emphasizes and personifies salvation in and through his persona, but it also hints that the Spirit is now actively present in the person and ministry of Jesus.

This takes us to the third mention in which the Spirit is recorded as casting Jesus out to the wilderness. At this point, I suggested that one should see this Markan account as an indication of the supernatural way in which the event took place and its seriousness. Nonetheless, this showed us something different from what we learned in the first two mentions. In this case the Spirit is not only a symbol or certificate for an eschatological event. The Spirit is now active, and he is energetically moving Jesus to the wilderness where he will face not only confrontation with evil forces but also the company and empowerment of the same Spirit.

In chapter five I dealt with the remaining three mentions of the Spirit in Mark. The fourth reference to the Spirit comes in the context of Jesus being criticized for his ministry. Through the first two chapters, Mark presents his main character teaching, healing, and exorcizing many people in different places and settings. Then comes chapter three where Jesus’ opponents denounce that the source of his power is Beelzebul. From this account and the answers on the lips of Jesus, it is implied that the Spirit is the *source* of his power. When we look at this in light of what was established in the prologue, the role of the Spirit in Mark is still connected to the eschatological event taking place in Jesus’ life and

³⁸⁰ James M. Robinson, *The Problem of History in Mark*, 27.

³⁸¹ Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26: Word Biblical Commentary*, 25.

ministry. At this point, Mark's readers can see that the Spirit not only attests to the arrival of God's ultimate salvation in Jesus' ministry, but they can now observe a visual element of that salvation, which is the powerful ministry of Jesus. Thus, the role of the Spirit in Mark extends to the one who empowers the ministry of Jesus, marking the advance of God's salvation over evil.

Moving on to the fifth mention of the Spirit, we found the Markan Jesus interpreting a psalm written by David, as inspired by the Holy Spirit, and concerning the identity of the Messiah. The inclusion of the Spirit at this point is in line with the previous mentions. On this fifth occasion the Spirit is giving testimony of the Messiah again, but now is about his status as Lord who is superior to Israel's beloved King David. Based on this account, Mark's readers can learn that the Spirit testifies of the Son and actively works in people's lives, as seen in the inspiration of David's words. Thus, the new facet added to Mark's presentation of the Spirit informs on the endorsement of the Messiah's lordship and the Spirit's capability to work in the life of God's servants.

Finally, the last mention of the Spirit in Mark moves from references primarily about Jesus' life and ministry, and the eschatological meaning of Jesus' arrival, to the Spirit's activity in the life of Jesus' followers. In this final mention of the Spirit, the reader can learn that the Spirit can help ordinary people when they find themselves persecuted for the sake of the Gospel. In these situations, the Spirit will aid them and empower them to witness.

Finally, chapter six was dedicated to an analysis of the Spirit looking at the Markan story as a whole. I used the framework provided by the literary analysis of Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, to show the relevance of the Spirit in Mark's narrative construction. I argued that the Holy Spirit is crucial to Jesus' proclamation and enactment of God's rule. The Spirit validates Jesus' identity, empowers him to do his ministry, and does the same for Jesus' followers after his departure. All this is seen more explicitly when looking at the conflicts in the Markan plot. There is a resistance to God's ruling which is shown in the opposition of evil forces and the religious authorities, and the struggle of Jesus' disciples. I contended that Mark inserts the Spirit in the building up of these tensions in his story. The Spirit cast Jesus out to a confrontation with the devil in the desert, and the unclean spirits recognized his power and identity throughout the narrative. Jesus is accused of being possessed by Beelzebul, and in response to this, he asserts that his source of power is the Holy Spirit.

Then, regarding the unsolved conflict with his disciples, the narrator hints on the lips of Jesus that they will witness in the future and suffer persecution, which shows that they will finally understand Jesus' message. In informing this, Mark also assures the reader that the Spirit will help the follower of Jesus.

What can we learn about the role of the Holy Spirit in Mark's narrative through an exegetical analysis of the six mentions of the Spirit? It is possible to conclude that the Spirit is central to Mark's narrative, which attempts to show the reader the arrival of God's ruling happening in two stages and resulting in multiple conflicts. In all this, the Spirit is revealed as essential to the validation of the main character's identity and the fulfillment of his mission, which after his departure will be continued by his followers, empowered by the same Spirit.

Working specifically on the role of the Spirit in the narrative can also leave the reader with some insights into the Spirit from a theological approach. How does the Spirit look like in Mark? I propose the following:

- The Spirit attests to the identity of Jesus as Messiah, the Son of God
- The Spirit is central to the unfolding of God's appointed time
- The Spirit anoints and empowers Jesus for his ministry
- The Spirit plays a role in the conviction and forgiveness of sins
- The Spirit is Holy and opposite to unclean spirits
- The Spirit can prophetically inspire a believer
- The Spirit can empower a follower of Jesus to witness
- The Spirit is present and at work in the remaining time until God's rule is finally established on earth

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