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Petr Pokorný

FROM THE GOSPEL TO THE GOSPELS

HISTORY, THEOLOGY AND IMPACT OF THE BIBLICAL TERM 'EUANGELION'

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From the Gospel to the Gospels

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Preface

This book has its origins in my many years of research into the Gospel of Mark and my lectures at Charles University in Prague, and in its present form it was included by the Centre of Biblical Studies of the Academy of Sciences and Charles University in Prague in the extensive Research Project "Narrative Gospels. Reasons for their Genesis, Function, Impact on the Shaping of Christian Culture" of the Grant Agency of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic (Identification code IAA 901830902).

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The Author

Contents

1. The Problem

1.1 The polysemy of the term "euangelion"

The Greek term *euangelion* (English: Gospel; German: Evangelium; French: Évangile) has been the key word of the Christian proclamation and teaching from the very beginning till today. It can be translated as "good news". However, this would be simplifying the term, because during its semantic development the term *euangelion* has become a technical term that includes a spectrum of specific meanings that are closely linked with the Christian tradition. Without interpretation it is not possible to understand the full meaning of the term. In secular society the term "gospel" is understood vaguely as an archaic expression of something positive. Even Christians, who are familiar with the biblical tradition to some extent, find it difficult to explain the meaning of this basic element of their living tradition to the secular world. Unless Christians come to a better understanding of their common spiritual heritage, it will be difficult for them to preserve and develop their common identity.

As a matter of fact, the Christian heritage is living under the surface of secularised society and still plays an important role in supporting its inner stability. In the course of the almost two thousand years of its existence, Christian teaching was often misused to legitimise violence, but unlike many other great ideologies it has displayed an ability to be reborn and to identify its misuse as misinterpretation. This has led to reforms and renewals. The Christian faith has been transmitted for many centuries and it is admirably persistent. However, it is neither constant nor permanent. It has to be consciously re-discovered and interpreted for further generations. An investigation into the term *euangelion* in all its various transformations, intentions, and impact on history may help us to better understand the Christian heritage and to orient ourselves in European (including Byzantine) and American civilisation.

The method of our research will be predominantly exegetical, the method applied to all ancient texts. Hermeneutics, as the theory of understanding, does not include any "biblical" or specifically "Christian" ways of interpretation. There is only one hermeneutics, for otherwise hermeneutics would not be a theory of understanding. The very specificity of biblical texts can only be recognised when the methodologies of

general hermeneutics are applied. That is why methodologically we avoid categories such as orthodoxy versus heresy and we interpret the biblical texts in connection with other contemporary writings.[1] Since exegesis is only one part of hermeneutics, we shall also include several hermeneutical considerations, such as this introductory one. They reflect our exegetical findings with respect to our spiritual heritage with its continuing impact on our values, habits, self-understanding and consciousness.

Exegesis involves reconstructing the inner structure (texture) of texts. Since Christianity is also a religion, religious history helps us to understand many individual features of biblical texts (such as religious experience, confessions of faith, and sacraments). However, as its essential structure is based on theology, we have to interpret the early Christian texts by grasping their theological intention. We intend to contribute to this ambitious task by analysing and interpreting one important theological term and its changing meanings in oral tradition as well as in literature.

A special problem that we have to deal with in our investigation is the fact that the term *euangelion,* this marker of Christian identity, is used in two or three obviously different meanings in biblical and Early Christian texts. Describing them and defining the differences is a longstanding problem in biblical scholarship. The differences in meaning represent a riddle and a problem in the canonised Christian texts, but once we understand the source of the differences, we will be better able to understand the basic manifestation of the original power of *euangelion*.

We plan to analyse the way in which the Early Church produced the Gospel as a complex literary genre intended for liturgical reading in Christian communities. And, indeed, later the Gospels became a part of the canon of Scriptures, of the so called the New Testament – a counterpart to the Jewish Bible.

The three different meanings of the term *euangelion* are:

a. The message proclaimed by Jesus (see Mark 1:14–15 and the parallel texts),

b. The post-Easter proclamation of the Christian faith,

c. The literary Gospel as the pivotal literary genre of the New Testament,

(d. Metaphorical use and mixed forms.)

1 Cf. Theissen, *The Religion of the Earliest Churches,* 323.

1.2 The link between the oral and the literary gospel

The opening verse of the Gospel according to Mark may serve as a starting point for our investigation:

> "The beginning of the gospel (*euangelion*) of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

"The beginning of the gospel" might be an introduction, an opening phrase of the Gospel in the sense of a book about Jesus. But the term *euangelion* was not used to mean a book or a literary genre until fifty years later[2] at the earliest. (The Gospel of Mark originated in about 70 C.E.) It is more likely that *euangelion* relates to Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God, as mentioned in Mark 1:14–15 (the kingdom of God that has come near) or in Matthew 4:23; 9:35. In that case *Euangelion Iēsou Christou* in Mark 1:1 would be a *genitivus subiectivus* or a *genitivus auctoris* introducing his proclamation (Mark 1:14–15). Yet most of the other occurrences of the term *euangelion* in the Gospel of Mark, such as Mark 13:10 or 14:9, apply to the Easter gospel about Jesus as Christ, as the term was used by the Apostle Paul (*genitivus obiectivus*).

It seems that the author intentionally utilized the polysemy of the term *euangelion* in the literary and theological strategy of his narrative (see below § 6.2). In any case, Mark 1:1 does not mean the beginning of a book called *euangelion*, even if most contemporary readers (or hearers) understand it this way. The first indications of the use of *euangelion* to mean traditions about Jesus may be found with some of Jesus' sayings being described as quotations from "*euangelion*" in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers. Justin Martyr[3] is the first direct example of the term *euangelion* being used to designate the canonical biographies of Jesus. By linking the term gospel with the proclamation and teaching of Jesus, Mark attempted to make his intended readers aware that the Jesus traditions are complementary to the Easter gospel. We shall discuss the problem of the meaning of the term *euangelion* in Mark 1:1 in more detail later, but here we can already say that this verse, which served as the original title of the book,[4] undoubtedly expressed an awareness of a

2 See § 8 below.
3 See ibidem below.
4 The first verse cannot be considered a scribal note marking the beginning of a new book, as some scholars have suggested. As we shall demonstrate below in § 6.1, it is a well reflected summary of the book as whole.

profound inner link connecting the oral Easter gospel with the Jesus traditions of the literary gospels. It is highly probable that the later designation of the biographies of Jesus as Gospels was inspired by the opening verse of Mark. In any case, from the mid-second century until the present, readers have understood "The beginning (*archē*) of the gospel (*euangelion*)" in Mark 1:1 to mean the beginning of the book called the Gospel – a book that can be classified in the Gospel category or subgenre.[5] The Gospel of Mark is a meeting point of all three different meanings of the term "gospel": the message proclaimed by Jesus, the Easter proclamation of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and (indirectly) the later use of this term for a kind of Christian liturgical book (Gospels).

This is the point from which we can start unravelling the knotty problem of the diversity, interrelationship and specific functions of all the meanings of "gospel" we have mentioned. The purpose of our investigation is to understand the inner dynamics of Christian thinking which could be demonstrated by the history of the term *euangelion*.

5 Consequently we shall write Gospel with a capital G when referring to the literary Gospel, in order for the reader to better understand that it is not the oral gospel that is meant.

2. The Pre-Pauline Easter Gospel

2.1 The Three Formulae

The oldest Christian literary attested meaning of the term *euangelion* is found in pre-Pauline formulae denoting the message about salvation in Jesus Christ. We know these formulae from quotations in Paul's letters and therefore we shall start our investigation with a short analysis of these quotations.

Paul considered himself to be set apart for the gospel of God (Rom 1:1). He often speaks about the gospel in a rather general sense – as the proclamation of Jesus as the living Lord and of the hope derived from it (Gal 1:16; 1 Cor 9:23). It is possible to reconstruct his gospel from all that he says in his preserved letters. This, however, would be predominantly his (Paul's) interpretation of the Gospel. To go beyond this to the pre-Pauline Easter gospel we have to concentrate on those cases where there is a visible link between a short formulation of faith and its designation by the term *euangelion*. There are only three such instances where we can conclude that Paul quotes the content of the gospel by means of a short formula, and we shall examine them below.

2.1.1 Salvation from the "wrath of God"

In 1 Thess 1:5 Paul mentions that he brought the *euangelion* to Thessalonica, but it is only in 1:9b-10, after he has described how it was effective (1:6–9a), that he freely reproduces its content. It consists of two parts. In verse 9b Paul describes the conversion of the former pagans he is addressing, from idols to the living and true (*alēthinos*) God – a formulation typical for the Jewish mission of that time[6] (see e. g. *Joseph and Aseneth* 13:11–13; cf. Acts 26:17–18). The second part of the gospel (verse 10) is expressed as waiting for "the Son of God from heaven,

6 According to Acts 7, one of the groups of the Jewish followers of Jesus who were engaged in the mission among the Gentiles were the adherents of Stephen, the first Christian to suffer martyrdom; see H. Merklein, *Studien zu Jesus und Paulus*, 283 f.

whom he [God] raised from the dead and who delivers us from the coming wrath." This is a formulation based on the near expectation of the Last Judgment and the Age to Come, which, at that time, was shared by the Apostle Paul as well (see 1 Thess 4:17). The affirmation that the Son of God (Jesus) was raised from the dead presupposes that he was a human being. It is a very free and short expression of the gospel. Nevertheless, indirect evidence supports the conclusion that here Paul is alluding to a confessional formula and reproducing it in a free way. First, the logic of the paragraph is: the gospel (*euangelion*) had its impact on Paul's addressees in the power of the Holy Spirit (verse 5), = i.e. they accepted the word (of the gospel) as the effective word (verse 6), their faith became paradigmatic (*typos*) for others (verse 7), and they passed on that word to the Christians from Macedonia and Greece. The latter confirm that the Thessalonians responded to the gospel by converting. The death of Jesus is not mentioned, although in 1 Thess 5:10 Paul emphasised that salvation was brought about by the death of Jesus and that his resurrection means hope for the dead as well as for the living.[7] This was what he stressed in his theology. Resurrection is the key testimony in the formula, as it is in the other two formulae, where pre-Pauline liturgical use has been proved (see below).

So far as the rhetorical structure is concerned, the first part (1 Thess 1:9a) is a free characterisation of the conversion of the addressees from a pagan religion to the living and true God, whereas verses 9b-10 express the result of the conversion in two infinitives ("to serve…and to wait…") and, at the same time, it is also the formulation of what was obviously a common confession of faith (note the first person "who rescues *us*") of a religious group assembled for a divine service. Even though they are expressed indirectly through the apostle's report, the two parts (verses 9b and 10) form a balanced whole that obviously represents a twofold liturgical text transmitted by catechetical instruction.[8]

The explicit statement that Jesus is the Son of God, who promises deliverance from the sentence (wrath) at the Last Judgment, obviously

7 This is the meaning of the reference to those awake and those asleep in 1Thess 5:10; see E. Reinmuth, in N. Walter, E. Reinmuth and P. Lampe, *Die Briefe an die Philipper, Thessalonicher und an Philemon*, ad loc.

8 1 Thess 1:9b-10 is not a direct quotation, but originates in an older tradition (see e.g. T. Holtz, *Der erste Brief an die Thessalonicher*, 57). B. Gerhardsson, who argues for the persistence of the Christian tradition, defines its reliability as a consequence of the catechetical use by teachers: The Secret Transmission of the Unwritten Jesus Tradition 17 f. The folklore tradition varies significantly.

inspired Paul and became one of the most important foundations for his later teaching about the justification of sinners by faith. The gospel is "good news" because the raising up of Jesus includes hope for all who belong to his messianic people.

2.1.2 Death and resurrection

The second formulation of the Gospel, found in 1 Cor 15:3b-5 (in verse 1 it is called *euangelion*), is well known and in New Testament scholarship it has been called the *pistis*-formula – the Formula of Faith). In its two parts, it combines two different expressions of Jesus' significance:

a. Christ died for our sins (according to the Scriptures) + was buried
b. He was raised on the third day (according to the Scriptures) + appeared to Cephas and the twelve

Originally, from the historical point of view, the two parts expressed independently Jesus' post-Easter impact:

a. Christ is significant because of his death for others, see the Institution of the Lord's Supper 1 Cor 11:23–25 par.
b. He is significant in spite of his death, because God "raised him": he gave him a new life (e.g. "It is proclaimed that Christ has been raised from the dead" – 1 Cor 15:12).

Both primary statements are supported by (very general) references to the Scriptures (the first probably in Isa 53:5–12, the second in Hos 6:2 or Ps 16:10).

The second parts of a. and b. confirm the authenticity of the first parts: burial confirms the death of Jesus, while the appearances attested by several groups of witnesses confirm the authenticity of the resurrection. Only Cephas (in Greek Peter) and the Twelve appear to have been mentioned in the original formula, as is confirmed in Mark 16:7 ("the disciples and Peter" in connection with a narrative form of the same events in Mark 16:6–7). They have expressed their Easter experience with Jesus Christ as a consequence of his *resurrection*.

The other witnesses were added to the formula when it circulated among different groups of the adherents of Jesus. They were those among the early witnesses who accepted this term ("resurrection," in Greek is denoted by the verb *egeirō* or the noun *anastasis*) in its apocalyptic meaning as the most apt expression of their post-Easter experience with Jesus, even if they might have expressed it originally in anoth-

er way (the continuing spiritual presence of Jesus, the consequence of his sacrificial death). Paul added himself to the group of witnesses who proclaimed the gospel as a message about Jesus' resurrection. He called himself "untimely born" (*ektrōma*) – i. e. an incomplete apostle, since he was not a disciple of the earthly Jesus and he was called by him, the Risen Lord (at Damascus), considerably later than the other witnesses.

This version of *euangelion* is a statement confirmed by a testimony, even though an indirect one, since the witnesses attest only their meeting Jesus after his death and they deduce that "he has been raised" (*ēgerthē*). In fact, this is an indirect testimony in a double sense, since even the indirect witnesses do not speak directly and are referred to in the third person as those who met the Risen Lord. Yet the statement also includes an element of proclamation which is represented by the expression of the significance of the reported fact: "he died for *our* sins". From the socio-rhetorical point of view, this formulation supposes solidarity within the group that used the formula. A proclamation (*kērygma*) would, in the strict sense, include the second person "for your sins". Here we may speak about an indirect kerygmatic function: the community that used this formula attested its impact on itself as a whole. This means that the formula was used in liturgy, as was the case in 1 Thess 1:10. The sentence about resurrection (1 Cor 15:4b) served as a solemn argument for the authenticity of the salvation mediated by Jesus.

This has inspired the dogmatic tradition of the Church as the most influential formula of the gospel (see e. g. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1:10:1), i. e. the Christological parts of the great Christian confessions (the Apostolic Creed as well as the Nicene-Constantinopolitan). However, in these Trinitarian versions which were formulated later, the names of the witnesses and the reference to the Scripture (unlike in 1 Cor 15:3 and 4) disappeared. It was generally supposed that the confessions accepted by the councils were, even in their wording, an apostolic tradition, in which the history of Israel culminated.

The raising of Christ from the dead by God means that he and all that he represented are rehabilitated. Christ (*Christos*) is used as a name here without an article, as is common in Paul, but the meaning "Messiah" is still recognisable. The raising of Jesus as the Messiah from the dead by God confirms that he is not adored as a second god, but as a believer in and representative of the one God, the Lord of Israel (YHWH) himself. His resurrection is expressed by *passivum di-*

vinum (grammatically perfect passive) – a periphrasis of God's name, which the Jews considered sacred and avoided pronouncing. Therefore it was possible to adhere to Jewish monotheism when confessing Jesus.[9]

The resurrection of Jesus became the starting point for solving the problem of the delayed coming of the kingdom of God. The gospel about resurrection functioned as a guarantee of the eschatological fulfilment of God's promise. Here we are at the root of the development inside the Early Christian community, the result of which was that most of the Early Christian groups were able to cope with the problem of a delayed coming of the kingdom of God (the second coming of Jesus as the Lord, *parousia*). Instead of imminent fulfilment, the death and resurrection of Jesus became the decisive act in the process that in theology is called "Salvation History."

We have already mentioned that the formula of the gospel in 1 Cor 15:3b-5 is a complex formulation connecting two basic expressions of the Easter experience. It therefore represents the tendency of the Easter gospel to integrate the various elements of the Christian teaching about salvation – soteriology.

2.1.3 Jesus Christ the Lord

The third formula of the Gospel is preserved in Rom 1:3–4. Again, Paul quotes it explicitly as the *euangelion* that he was called to preach and teach (verse 1). Again, the position of "Jesus Christ, the Son of God" is described in two steps: according to the flesh (*kata sarka*) he was a descendant of David, and through the Spirit of holiness (*pneuma hagiosynēs* – a term for the Holy Spirit that otherwise does not appear in Paul) he was declared to be the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead. "Our Lord" in verse 4 reveals the function of the formula in the liturgy of the Christian community ("our"), as we have observed it in the two previous formulae. Unlike the formula in 1 Thess 1:9–10, this one obviously originated in the Jewish-Christian milieu. In fact, we do not have a direct quotation of any of the formulae, but we can reconstruct them with a high degree of probability. This formula interprets the resurrection of Jesus as the enthronement of Jesus, the Messiah of Israel, as the Son of God. This was its "raison d'être."

9 See G. Theissen, *Die Entstehung des Neuen Testaments*, 100.

The fact that this formulation of the gospel became authoritative among Paul's disciples and followers can be deduced from 2Tim 2:8, where the gospel of Paul ("my gospel") is reproduced as: "Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David – that is my gospel." It is also echoed in Ignatius' letters (*Smyrn* 1:1).

In contrast to the formula in 1 Cor 15:3b-5, which contrasts Jesus' humiliation in his death with his resurrection, here there are only two steps of elevation: the first is the Messiah from the dynasty of David, the second is the Son of God. The followers of Jesus considered themselves to be the true Israel, the messianic people itself, the people of God. This means that those who confess Jesus in the sense of this formula are (through the Spirit) his new Israel, united with the Lord, who transcends the limits of death. This is the version of the good news as proclaimed in the formula in Rom 1:3–4.

Several scholars suggest that Rom 1:16 may also contain a traditional summary expression of the faith, where the gospel is characterised as the power of God revealing his salvific justice (forensic justification). But this is rather an *ad hoc* description of the power of the Gospel and, as far as the character of the gospel is concerned, it is a Pauline interpretation (see Rom 10:9).

2.1.4 A survey of the formulae

In all of the formulae we can find traces of an older tradition that Paul adopted: a liturgically shaped symmetric structure, non-Pauline vocabulary, position in the context. Since these formulae are the basic expressions of the gospel, we may conclude that (a) there were several versions of the pre-Pauline Easter gospel, shaped for use in liturgy, and (b) the theology of Paul was built on the Easter experience of the first groups of Jesus' followers and therefore "his gospel" (Rom 2:16; 16:25) was not his creation but rather his interpretation of one of these formulae or the features common to all of them (in Rom 1:3–4 he quotes one of the three versions, but in Rom 2:16, he mentions the [Last] Judgment as a part of his gospel; this may be an allusion to the formula in 1 Thess 1:10) or, simply, a proclamation of salvation through Jesus Christ, generally inspired by the formulae.

In his theological reflection Paul deliberately removes the differences between the various versions of the gospel, in order that it may be clear that there is, in fact, only one gospel. That is why he often speaks

about the "gospel of God" (*euangelion tou theou* – Rom 1:1; 15:16; 2 Cor 11:7) or the "gospel of Christ" (*euangelion tou Christou* – Rom 15:19; 2 Cor 2:12; 9:13; Gal 1:7; Phil 1:27).

This schema may give a better overview of the structure of the three formulae:

	The one		Death		Salvation in	
	Living God	Messiah	Son of God	For others	Resurrection	Judgement
1 Thess	+	–	+	–	+	+
1 Cor	–	+	–	+	+	–
Rom	–	+	+	–	+	–

In Rom 1:3–4 the role of the Davidic Messiah is the first step in the raising up of Jesus.

2.1.5 Conclusions

We have demonstrated that all three formulae are different from each other.

The differences between these versions are substantial. They are different not only in the wording, but also in the whole structure. This is a phenomenon which we need to discuss. What we have found out can be expressed in the following points:

a) The common denominator is the resurrection of Jesus as expressed by the verb *egeirō* or the noun *anastasis*.
b) The death of Jesus, which Paul stressed in his theology, is mentioned only in 1 Cor 15:3. This confirms our earlier conclusion that the three formulae are, at least in their core, of pre-Pauline origin. Paul himself stressed the death of Jesus as the basic element of his work of salvation, e.g. 1 Cor 1:18–25; Phil 2: 8; Rom 6:1–11 (*thanatos, stauros*). This means that the gospel concentrated on the proclamation of Jesus' resurrection and, thus, the formulae were fixed in the authoritative expression of the "good news"[10] for Paul.
c) Another common feature is the absence of any reference or allusion to Jesus' life or teaching or to the "gospel of Jesus" (see § 3 below). In the formulae, Jesus is not the founder or the announcer of the

10 A different opinion is presented by H. Koester, From Kerygma-Gospel to the written Gospels, 362 f.

gospel but, as the Risen Lord, he is its content.[11] He has changed from being the proclaimer to the one who is proclaimed.

d) In 1 Thess (Jesus rescues us from the coming wrath, i.e. saves us from the Last Judgment) and in 1 Cor (he died for our sins) the central role of Jesus Christ in human salvation supposes that human beings are "sinful" – alienated from their original destination. This is not mentioned in Rom 1.

This analysis of the formulae is the first methodical step in defining the Easter gospel, but it has also revealed the problem of their variety. The differences cannot be explained by the fact that Paul as apostle and bearer of the Spirit quoted and transmitted the gospel in a free way. We can see how the formula in Rom 1:3–4 was reproduced in the Pauline school in 2Tim 2:8. It is a free reproduction, but the basic structure, different from the structure of the other formulae, remains.

For our further discussion it is important that the use of one formula (one version of the gospel) did not exclude the use of another one in the same setting. As we shall demonstrate in the chapter on the Gospel according to Mark, the formulae in 1 Cor 15:3b-5 and Rom 1:3–4 are basically different from each other, but both were well known and obviously used in liturgy (separately from each other) in the Markan community,[12] and they were obviously considered as complementary expressions of the same gospel and as a message of salvation in Jesus Christ.

The difference between the individual formulae can be explained by their different origins in various Christian groups and particularly by their different functions in liturgy and teaching. The formula in 1 Thess 1:9–10 introduces Jesus as the Son of God for recently baptised former pagans, whereas Rom 1:3–4 expresses the resurrection against the background of Jewish messianic expectations. Both of these versions are linked by the title "Son of God". 1 Cor 15:3b-5 is a short narrative opened by the title "Messiah" (*christos*)[13] (death – burial – resurrection – appearances). This formula of the Gospel (the "formula of faith") integrated various groups of early Christians. "Whether, then, it was I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed" 1 Cor 15:11 /NIV/). Agreement on the formula in 1 Cor 15:3b-5 (spontaneous or arranged at a meeting) was one of the conditions that enabled the

11 E. Käsemann, *An die Römer*, 7.

12 See § 6.2. below

13 Non-Jews may have understood *Christos* without an article as another name for Jesus.

associated groups of post-Easter followers of Jesus to dissociate themselves from the synagogue and, at the same time, respect the authority of the Scripture and preserve it for the Church as the Old Testament (see the reference to the Scriptures in 1 Cor 15:3 and 4). These groups developed into the mainstream Church.

Not all Christians joined the "resurrection-gospel". Some groups whose teaching is documented in early Christian texts expressed the Easter experience in another way. In the Gospel of Thomas we read about "the living Jesus" who is active through his words (the opening sentence and logion 1). His promises (the resurrection of other people) are already fulfilled – in the spiritual sense of the inner conversion of his followers, even if most people did not recognise it (log. 51). The version of the Gospel of Thomas that has been preserved originated in the mid-second century. Its core may have originated earlier, in the early post-apostolic period, when it was possible to use the names of apostles as additional support for some theological opinions, but when the apostolic period was not yet too far in the past.[14] The polemic of Paul against the group of Corinthian Christians proclaiming an over-developed eschatology reveals that the Gospel of Thomas represents in an elaborated way opinions (on the fulfilled prophetic promises of Jesus) that became controversial as early as in the time of Paul (1 Cor 4:6–13: "already you become rich…you become kings").

This means that all the various formulae of the Easter gospel represent, in spite of their differences, another tendency among Jesus' post-Easter followers, one which understood the resurrection of Jesus as the anticipation of the not yet fulfilled universal restoration in one person.

The particular role played by Paul was not only that he, like many others, recognised the common denominator of the different formulae, but that he also used the term euangelion for all of them. It is probable that the term was used before him (see 1 Cor 15:1–2), but, for him, it became the marker of all the proclamations of Jesus' resurrection and also of Jesus as the Risen Lord. For him the gospel was equal to the resurrection of Jesus that anticipated and guaranteed the apocalyptic general resurrection at the end of this age. He also used the term *euangelion* and *euangelizomai* in a broader sense to mean any of the dimensions and consequences of the "good news" about the resurrection of Jesus as the basis of hope for all. This soteriological concept of Easter is a clear focus of

14 See P. Pokorný, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Thomas*, 20–25.

his understanding of the term gospel. The frontiers are, however, open and fluctuating. In spite of the abundance of associations (note the accompanying titles and narratives in the three formulae), or perhaps precisely because of them, the Pauline "gospel" became representative of Christianity through the centuries.

2.2 The Gospel and Myth

2.2.1 Apocalyptic myth[15]

All the formulae are dependent upon a worldview in which daily life is framed by a transcendence that has an impact on the human world: the Son of God appeared among humans, was killed (crucified), God raised him from the dead, now he is not visible, but appears (from "outside" or from "above") to some of his followers, and is able to help other people at the Judgment of God that obviously marks the end and the fulfilment of history (the "Final Judgment"). Some elements of this worldview can be traced back to the earliest Jesus traditions, but as a whole it represents a particular system of concepts and signs that were understood as expressions of the meaning – not of a meaning that consists in harmony, but a meaning that enables us to orient ourselves in history with all its ambiguities.

Historically, this concept is influenced by the apocalyptic expectations of that time. Apocalypse is mostly understood as a special kind of myth. And every myth is understood as a narrative expression of the last horizon of personal and social life in a general image. It covers the whole realm of human language and experience. It expresses its horizon as influenced by the super-human powers and reflects the main problems of human history, especially the problems of evil, human guilt and alienation. Compared with fragmentary wisdom and isolated narratives, it includes a primitive reflection on the framework of the human world. It has a stabilising but also conservative function in the society where the myth is narrated.[16] In the formulae of the gospel

15 See G. Theissen, *The Religion of the Earliest Churches, 2*; G. Sellin, Mythologeme und mythische Züge in der paulinischen Theologie, 209–223.

16 Most of the definitions of myth offered by contemporary studies in the History of Religion (e. g. by J. Z. Smith) are not useful for interpreting the beginnings

the elements of apocalyptic myth form a framework to the role of Jesus as the Risen Lord, who thus becomes a figure connecting the present and the absolute (eschatological) future, earth and heaven. The narrative framework of mythical concepts underscored Jesus' extraordinary significance in the eyes of his followers.

In Paul, who reflected on the pre-existence of Jesus (1 Cor 8:6), the basic mythical scheme was supposed to be a "descent – ascent"-centred story (for descent see e. g. 2 Cor 8:9). In the Bible "descent – ascent" is presupposed as the basic structure of communication between God and humans (see e. g. Jacob's vision in Gen 28:10–17, or in the deuterocanonical books Tobit 12:14–20a).[17] Outside the bible, the scheme of a "descent-ascent" myth of salvation can be traced, for example, in Virgil's *Fourth Eeclogue* (a golden human race will start with a boy [Latin *puer*] from heaven) or in the biography of *Romulus* 28: 2–3 by Plutarch.

Apocalyptic is a post-biblical term, artificially created in the 19th century and applied mostly to later developments of the eschatology of the Prophets (not so much for the Wisdom traditions).[18] According to Gerhard von Rad, the apocalyptic is a combination of various genres and literary functions (epiphanies, heavenly discourses, oracles, astronomy, geography, commentaries, visions, symbols, prayers, and admonitions) that are meant to grasp history (this age) in its entirety.[19]

Some definitions from the end of the 20th century explain the word apocalyptic strictly according to its forms and modalities as the divine mediation of mysteries that their bearer has accepted by transcending the normal cognitive potential of humans.[20] Another concept of apocalyptic thought was presented by Lester L. Grabbe. He understands it as a dimension of prophecy which cannot be considered either as an autonomous literary genre or as its later stage, into which the prophecy has developed.[21]

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of Christianity, since they do not reflect their relationship to history or the referential function of Hebrew or Christian narrative, see especially § 6.3 below.

17 See A. J. M. Wedderburn, Paul and the Story of Jesus, 162 ff. For further evidence see C. H. Talbert, *What is a Gospel?* 57 ff.

18 N. Walter, Zur theologischen Relevanz apokalyptischer Aussagen, 51, 53.

19 G. von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments II*, München: Chr. Kaiser 1960, 314–321.

20 This is roughly the definition promoted by M. Wolter, *Apokalyptik als Redeform im Neuen Testament*, 181.

21 L. L. Grabbe, *Prophetic and Apocalyptic*, 107–133; for other opinions cf. E. Noffke, *Introduzione a la letteratura mediogiudaica precristiana,* 54–56.

For our context we prefer a more historical definition of apocalyptic. It places greater emphasis on the common features of the texts that are traditionally called apocalypses, which were written in the period between the third century B.C.E. and the second century C.E. and are oriented towards the near future (often predicted from an antedated position as a *vaticinium ex eventu*) and describe the last period of history and the beginning of the Age to Come – a time that transcends the presently visible horizon. The mediator of the apocalyptic vision is transferred to a "high tower above the earth" (*1 En.* 87, 3) or, in a vision, he anticipates the eschatological future, the fulfilment of history (this age) in its entirety. This is possible only from a position "outside" history. Therefore apocalyptic writings are "revelatory literature with a narrative framework in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality of an Age to Come. It is both temporal in that it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial in that it involves another, supernatural world"[22] (see the spatial images of heaven, earth, and underworld).[23] In its original intention the apocalypse is related to the eschatological destruction of the sinful world (*1En* 83:7) and the fulfilment of history through God's judgment expected in the near future.[24] Various biblical texts were interpreted as the beginning or the prototype of the apocalyptic fulfilment.[25] It seems to have been a pessimistic view of history, but the apocalyptic view does not lack an element of hope. All the righteous people and all the values defended by them will be included in the Age to Come (*1En.* 90:15–42 "New House").[26] With the delayed second coming of Jesus as Lord (*parousia*), the apocalyptic expectation was transformed into an apocalyptic myth. Myths lay claim to absolute validity and durability, but their plurality and the fact that different mythic images can coexist on the boundary of various religions and cultures opens up the possibility of their transformation and re-interpretation. In the Bible we can

22 J. J. Collins, The Jewish Apocalypses, 22; idem, *Daniel*, 105; see also idem, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*.

23 A. Y. Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism*, 15 f.

24 See the comment about the definition of apocalyptic by E. Käsemann, Zum Thema der urchristlichen Apokalyptik (1962), in: idem, *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen*, 105–131, here 105, note 1.

25 See C. A. Evans, *Noncanonical Writings and New Testament Interpretation,* 46 f. (with further literature).

26 See N. Walter, Zur theologischen Relevanz apokalyptische Aussagen, 53, 63.

trace conflicts of various myths (vegetative myth, imperial myth, dualistic myth). The tendency of their transformation is more important for understanding the culture to which the myth is related than the traditional shape of the myth. This applies, above all, to the creation of a Christ-myth in the beginnings of Christianity by transforming the apocalyptic myth of Judaism (see § 2.4 below – Transformation …).[27] The Christ-myth fulfils all the demands of an integrated global view of history, sketched from the transcendent point of view. However, by including a reference to Jesus as a person in history it accepts the norm of its interpretation (its "feedback"). Those who want to concentrate only on the global concept and neglect the conflicts, antitheses and absurdities are warned against ignoring the specific feature of the Christ-myth, i. e. the suffering and death which cannot be erased by any religious shortcut.

2.2.2 Interpreting myth

Transformation is the beginning of interpretation. Rudolf Bultmann recognised that myths as such do not belong to the Christian gospel and in 1941 he introduced the concept of "Entmythologisierung."[28] He concentrated on the existential impact of the gospel as expressed through myth. For Bultmann, existential impact conveys the significance of the gospel as *kērygma* (proclamation, message) for the self-understanding of the addressees and for their decision-making.[29] In analogy to Paul's argument in favour of justification by faith, he stressed the fact that the new self-understanding – the conversion – is initiated by an existential encounter with a new possibility and not by mobilisation of one's own inner capacities. The other side of his analogy to Paul was his statement that myth is as non-essential for Christian proclamation as circumcision is for human salvation (Gal 5:2–6). To demand circum-

27 See G. Theissen. *The Religion of the Earliest Churches*, 24 f.; U. Luz, Der frühchristliche Christusmythos, 40 f.

28 R. Bultmann, New Testament and Mythology, especially 32–40. His concept of de-mythologizing was a conscious alternative to the Nazi interpretation of the Bible in favour of naturally inborn human capacities: G. Theissen, *Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft vor und nach 1945*, 159–162.

29 For the transformation of myth see H. G. Kippenberg, *Ein Vergleich jüdischer, christlicher und gnostischer Apokalyptik*, 759 ff.

cision or consider a myth the subject of faith would mean despising the grace of God. This was an authentic approach.

Its drawback, however, was that it isolated the human personality as the agent of decision-making from the social setting and history that were, at least partially, taken into account by the myth. Later research recognised that *the kerygmatic appeal is only one dimension of the gospel and that another dimension is its reference to the Jesus tradition* that enables people to achieve orientation in history. The interpretation of a myth has to analyse its stabilising function as well as its shortcomings. A gospel totally isolated from the historical setting would be deprived of its decisive dimension that enables us to achieve orientation in history and to act in a meaningful way. Bultmann's interpretation of myth had to be re-interpreted by a critical analysis of all its functions which resulted in the proposal to use myth in a "secularized" (non-ideological) way, i. e. as a metaphor for the context of individual human life. Paul Ricoeur called this the "second naivety".[30] "Second" means a reflected naivety, accepting myth as an analogical model of a reality that, in its complexity, is not accessible by description. Such a metaphor functions in a similar way to a model in the natural sciences. Even in scientific research an analogical model is sometimes the only possible way to grasp the problem of some natural phenomena in all their complexity.

The problem with Bultmann's interpretation of myth can also be demonstrated by his understanding of sin (*hamartia*) as alienation, as the loss of the ability to decide in an authentic way. This is also a correct but an incomplete interpretation. *In history human beings are influenced by supra-individual enduring powers and social, political and cultural traditions ("principalities and powers" in Paul).* According to the biblical narrative and the Christian dogmatic tradition, human sin was derived from the first sin of Eve and Adam and affects the whole of history (2 Cor 11:3; Rom 5:16). This does not mean that human failure and consistent alienation necessarily had their origin at the beginning of the human race in time, as narrated by the Yahwist (the modern designation for one of the narrators/editors of ancient Israelite traditions) in Gen 3. The biblical narratives about creation are not a history of nature, but a kind of confession. They point out that *the various alienated or misused*

30 P. Ricoeur, *Philosophie de la volonté II. La symbolique du mal*; for more on this concept see M. I. Wallace, *The Second Naiveté*, and L. Dornisch, Symbolic System and the Interpretation of Scripture: An Introduction to the Work of Paul Ricoeur, 16 f.

powers affecting human beings have no divine authority. They may influence human activity but they do not determine it. Sin may be interpreted as human resistance against humanisation, against living responsibly according to the divine Law and promises. In the Christian setting this means *that a responsible life inspired by Jesus is possible.* The apocalypses answered the need for orientation in history and in the gospel the early Christian witnesses used the apocalyptic scheme (resurrection) to express the impact of the Easter experience.

2.3 The Gospel and Christian Liturgy

2.3.1 The death and resurrection of Jesus and baptism

The post-Easter transformation of the apocalyptic expectation has been supported by it being linked with the rite of baptism. The formula about death and resurrection is similar in its structure to the rite of Christian baptism. It represents a transformation of the apocalyptic expectation much as Christian baptism represents a transformation of the baptism administered by John the Baptist. Both baptisms include immersion in running water and in both of them God's Judgment plays an important part. In John's baptism, the culmination was the immersion of the baptised person – an anticipation of the Last Judgment. John proclaimed "the one who is more powerful" (Mark 1:7par.), obviously God himself who will come to judge the world, an event which, according to Mal 3:23 f. (=4:5), was to be announced by the prophet Elijah. John the Baptist evidently decided to play the role of Elijah and was identified with him (see Mark 9:12–13par.). The shock of immersion was a reminder of the flood as a punishment for sins and was accompanied by a proclamation of the Judgment by fire – the other element of God's punishment (Matt 3:5–11par.). It was intended to evoke penitence (cf. the characteristics of the baptismal sects of that time in *Sibylline oracles* 4:162–167; 171–180) and lead to obedience to the Law (Jos. Flav. *A. J.* 18, 116 f). Unlike the baptism of John, in Christian baptism (baptism "in the name of Jesus Christ"), the culmination was the moment when the baptised person came up out of the water. It anticipated the future with Christ: "For if we have been united (by baptism – verse 3) with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his" (Rom 6:5).

2.3.2 Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ as a new phenomenon

Baptism was not practised by Jesus or, at least, baptising was not typical for him;[31] the expected one (God himself?) was supposed to baptise with the Holy Spirit and fire (Matt 3:11 /Q/; Mark 1:8 mentions only the Holy Spirit). Baptism with the Holy Spirit was a metaphor for the charismatic activities of the post-Easter followers of Jesus. From the book of Acts we also know about baptism in the Holy Spirit and in the same book we can follow the intention to unite baptism by water and baptism in the Holy Spirit into one event (Acts 2:38). Baptism by water in the name of Jesus Christ became the Christian entrance rite in a surprisingly short span of time. In the time of Paul it was already widely practised (see e. g. Gal 3:27). The time in which Christians started to baptise in the name of Jesus and the time in which the gospel was spread through the formula of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are almost identical. The baptismal rite by immersion or aspersion represented the ablution of sins (1 Cor 6:11) and judgment of sinners through a flood (2 Pet 3:5–6; cf. Gen 6–8), but the oldest comment on the meaning of baptism in Rom 6 culminates in an existential participation in the resurrection of Jesus. The Easter gospel gave the rite an innovative interpretation and supported its introduction among the followers of Jesus. John's baptism was accompanied predominantly by a warning of the coming judgment of God and the descent into the water was the decisive moment of the act. In Christian baptism the decisive moment was the coming up out of the water, which represented the hope in the judgment as the "wrath of God". This is also how Mark reported the baptism of Jesus.

The stimulus for using the baptism of John the Baptist in a re-interpreted form probably came from the gospel as reproduced in 1 Cor 15:3b-5, and Christian baptism started to spread among Christian groups soon after the witnesses agreed that Jesus was the risen Christ as mentioned in 1 Cor 15:5–8.

We have no evidence about the formulae of the gospel so far as an explicit *legomenon* related to Christian baptism is concerned. But the designation "baptism in (into) the name of the Lord Jesus" (Gal 3:27; Acts 19:4 etc.) represents the content of the gospel. The unexpectedly rapid expansion of the Christian baptism was one of the theological and social

31 See the argument in P. Pokorný, Christologie et baptéme à l'époque du christianisme primitive, 371 f.

turning points in the life of Early Christianity. Together with the Apostolic council (Acts 15; Gal 2:1ff etc.) it created an important precondition for emancipating the followers of Jesus from the Temple and the synagogue.[32] Unlike the repeated rite of the Last Supper (the Eucharist), which accompanied the followers of Jesus from the very beginning, baptism, as the ritual counterpart of the Easter gospel, became the rite of entrance into the Christian community.

2.4 The Resurrection

2.4.1 Terminology and theology

The first reaction of Jesus' followers to the Easter experience of a new and specific presence of Jesus was spontaneous joy, lacking any developed reflection. Christians considered themselves inspired by the Holy Spirit. We have already mentioned that in some of the Christian groups the promises of the coming kingdom of God and the rule of the poor (which did not come), were transformed into a spiritual form. This strengthened dualistic tendencies in Christian traditions.[33] We may observe it in the popular traditions about Jesus' healings or his other deeds of mercy, e.g. the healing of the blind is interpreted as inner enlightenment, the feeding of the multitude as a model of a sacral table fellowship. Some of these tendencies are generally accepted in all the Christian traditions and the Gospel writers have stressed, or at least not suppressed, them. These tendencies helped Christians apply the traditions about Jesus to their lives and recognise the impact of Easter on the present. Nevertheless, this dualistic tendency became dangerous.

On the other hand, after Easter, Jesus' adherents also developed a theological reflection against an apocalyptic background. In this context the term resurrection offered the best designation of the Easter experience and was the starting point for further reflection. Those people who today maintain that Jesus was "verbally" raised from the dead fail to re-

32 For the "sacraments" in the Early Church see G. Theissen, *The Religion of the Earliest Churches*, 15 f., 121–138.

33 G. Theissen, *The Religion of the Earliest Churches*, 277 ff., calls it "the motif of renewal" and considers it necessary to deal with the problem of the postponed *parousia*.

alise that the basic meaning of the verb *egeirein* and the underlying Hebrew stem *q-w-m* is get up, or awake, and that the language about the resurrection of the dead was already a metaphorical one. In the apocalyptic literature "resurrection" started to play the role of a *terminus technicus*, but its metaphoric character together with the possibility of its substitution by other expressions and images *reminded those to whom the Christian proclamation was addressed that its very content transcends the individual images that were associated with the term "resurrection".*[34] For example in *4 Ezra* 7:32 the "resurrection" is expressed as a complex event of awakening those who "sleep" and uniting them with their souls. Easter is therefore an event of a specific character, for which there was no lexical code available, and it was necessary to express it analogically – through metaphors. Originally, the "resurrection" of Jesus was understood as a *prolēpsis* (anticipation) of the eschatological general resurrection at the end of time, which was peculiar to Jewish apocalyptic literature.[35] It is expressed explicitly in 1 Thess 1:10: the coming wrath (Gr. *orgē* /Hebr. *'af/*), from which humankind can be rescued through Jesus as the risen Son of God, is the Last Judgment as in Zeph. 2:2–3 or Luke 3:7 (Q). For Jesus it was an event that would take place in a near future (Matt 10:15.23). The expectation of judgment as part of the apocalyptic cosmic scenario developed as a transformation of Israel's prophecy in the Persian and Hellenistic period. In the apocalyptic expectations the culmination of the eschatological events was the resurrection of "many," i. e. of all people, (*4 Ezra* 7:32 f; *Sib. Or.* 4:180–190; *1 En.* 51:1–3) or only of those who were saved (*T. Sim.* 6:2–7; *T. Levi* 18; *T. Jud.* 25; 2Macc 7:7–9; *2 Bar.* 30:1–2 etc.). For the latter the resurrection is the result of their surviving the judgment. The Hebrew verb for resurrection is *q-w-m, '-w-r* or *'-m-d* (in *hip'il* of *hitpa'el*) used in a metaphorical sense. These verbs correspond to the meaning of the Greek *egeirō* (in the passive voice or with God as the subject), or *anistēmi:* to stand up, get up or rise (including the metaphor of rising from the dead).

34 E. Lohse warned against the consistently apocalyptic concept of resurrection (*euangelion theou,* 91); we would rather stress the profound transformation of the apocalyptic image of resurrection.

35 The term "eschatology" designates events, expectations and ideas related to the end or fulfilment in a general way, "apocalyptic" relates to uncovering the mystery of the end in cosmic dimensions, opening a transcendent Age to Come.

The resurrection as a collective event at the end of this age was obviously the basic idea that formed the background against which we have to understand the Easter gospel as it is expressed in all the ancient formulae. Its persistence is documented by Luke's description of Paul's speech in Athens, in which Jesus' resurrection was presented as proof that he would be the coming judge of all people (Acts 17:31), i. e. his teaching and activity represent the will of God. If Jesus had already been raised, it must have been understood, but rather as a promise and hope for all humankind. God vindicated the proclaimer of the kingdom of God, the "friend of sinners" and the one who forgave sins in his name. His resurrection is therefore the guarantee of hope for the rest of humankind.

The idea of resurrection was not typical for Old Testaments texts, but a hope in death (mostly in the form of immortality) was present in some Greek texts and movements.[36] The expectation of a collective bodily resurrection was attested in the pre-Christian period in some apocalyptic texts only, and the post-Easter followers of Jesus transformed it radically (see below). This means that their belief in resurrection was caused by the Easter experience itself.

2.4.2 Resurrection and the Last Judgment

Resurrection means to acquire a new life, as in Ezek 37:1–10, where the concept is applied allegorically to Israel: dry bones are restored into bodies covered with skin. But it is only by the power of the breath sent from God and mediated by the prophet that they stand up (*'-m-d* in *hip'il*) on their feet (verse10). This is the idea of resurrection (cf. *1 En.* 7:32). Resurrection does not occur through the heroic power of the one who was raised, but is caused by the power of God. God's spirit (breath) is the giver of life. In this case the reanimation of dry bones is an image of the revival of Israel as a whole. However, in Daniel 12:2 we read about an eschatological awakening of individual people – "some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Resurrection is expressed as a kind of absolute awakening. What follows is implied in the next part of the sentence about the two contrasting forms of post-existence: life or contempt. This is the general result of the

36 S. E. Porter, Resurrection, the Greeks and the New Testament, especially 80 f.

Last Judgment,[37] which is presupposed here. Resurrection at the Last Judgment (in other texts: as the result of the Last Judgment for the righteous) also means the evaluation and qualification of an individual life.[38] The Christians who accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord through the Easter experience and faith lived their lives with their eyes fixed on the horizon of the Last Judgment and resurrection (Rom 6:1–11). This is the first thing we can and should say about "the resurrection". We must not start with a reconstruction of the historical basis, apart from the fact that the event of the resurrection relates to Jesus of Nazareth. Our first task is to define the meaning of the Easter faith that derives its origin from what Christians soon started to call "the resurrection" through theological reflection. The same event has also been interpreted as exaltation (Phil 2:6–11), and retold in a popular and legendary way (in the apocryphal Gospels), but the ecclesiastical tradition has been shaped by the Easter gospel and its theological interpretations.

2.4.3 Apocalyptic vision as a world concept

The eschatological horizon of the Last Judgment and the Age to Come is elaborated in Jewish texts between the Bible and the Mishnah. As we have already mentioned, in *4 Ezra* 7:32–35 a resurrection is depicted as a re-union of what is asleep in the earth (the corpses) with the souls in "the chambers" as a prelude to the Judgment of God. Justice will decide on the fate of all humans. The main intention of this narrated mythic construction is not the assumption of a post-mortal existence, but the proclamation of the victory of God's plans in history – in this age. This is the source of consolation in times of suffering and distress.

37 By Last Judgment we understand the expected revelation of the justice of God expressed by the image (in several instances consciously understood as a metaphor) of a heavenly legal process which will take place at the end of "this age". E. Brandenburger presented a wider definition of the Judgment of God in the article "Gericht Gottes II-III" in *TRE*, 466–483.

38 This is not an anachronism, since the individual "I" also plays an important role outside the apocalyptic context in the Prophets and Psalms. God deals with prophets as individuals, who call people to personal conversion and the psalmist can confess "God is… my portion … forever" (Ps 73:26). In Job the eternal value of an individual human life is even reflected on against the background of death: "And after my skin has been destroyed …I will see God; I myself will see him" (Job 19:26). See W. H. Schmidt, Gotteserfahrung und Ich-bewußtsein im Alten Testament, especially 217 f.

The Last Judgment is the most vivid image of the victorious justice of God. In *1 En.* 51:1 the righteous and holy ones will be chosen from among the other risen dead and will dwell on the new earth (cf. *Pss. Sol.* 3:10–12; 1QS IV:22; Rev 20:11–15).[39] The resurrection of the dead at the end of this age may be considered a mythic element of late biblical and inter-testamental literature, but it arose out of the real experience of the suffering of the righteous under the Seleucid rule. Resurrection is the presupposition for a reward from God – a compensation for the suffering of the righteous and punishment of the enemies. This can be well illustrated by the story of seven brothers who underwent martyrdom in Palestine because of their faith: they died with the firm hope that the King of the universe would raise them to an everlasting life (2 Macc 7:9). However, the social and religious function of such imagery goes even deeper.

2.4.4 Theological function of the apocalyptic imagery: Interpreting the resurrection I

When interpreting the apocalyptic myth we have to take seriously contemporary research into apocalyptic texts represented for example by John J. Collins or Michael Wolter. HphHowever, what we intend to do at this point is to carry out a theological and philosophical reflection on the apocalyptic texts inspired by some of the results of their critical scrutiny. Its main intention is to confront the function of apocalyptic texts with the contemporary "human world" as described by phenomenology.[40]

In the apocalyptic images used by the Early Christian tradition and the first Christian authors, the story of humankind ("this age") is evaluated from the position of its end and fulfilment. Since all humans are, in general, a part of this human story (we speak of history) and are not able to step back from their own setting, the anticipation of the meaning of human history from the viewpoint of the expected Last Judgment of God created a good position from which it was possible to evaluate history and anticipate the absolute, divine eschatological future. This is the achievement of the apocalyptic, even though it was not reached by a

39 For further material see G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*, Cambridge (USA) – London 1972.

40 P. Ricoeur, *Temps et récit* II, part IV/3.

systematic reflection but rather by a lucky inspiration during the development of older traditions. The far-reaching and long-lasting (in fact till the present) acceptance of this prospect in Jewish and Christian thought is an indirect sign of its importance. Many myths include eschatology, but in the apocalyptic images of the oral gospel and early Christian literature eschatology is the end and fulfilment of history in its entirety. It is the point of view from which all history appears to be its pre-history, a point from which it is possible to recognise the meaning of all that went before it (including our present time).

Such an eschatological perspective was able to grasp the interrelation between human life and the story of humankind as a whole: the hope for justice in history (social hope; the hope of the meaning of history as guaranteed by the Judgment at the end of history) on the one hand and the hope at death (the value of an individual human life) on the other hand do not appear to have conflicting dimensions any more. The future resurrection of humans is only occasionally depicted from the point of view of individuals (as in the story in 2 Macc, mentioned in the previous paragraph). Attention is focused rather on the outcome – the two groups of people after the Last Judgment: the accepted and the rejected. But it is not intended as information about these two groups of people. It serves as an exhortation for the readers/hearers to do everything possible in order that they may be among the elect, among those "on the right side" (cf. Matt 25:31–46). The character of the apocalyptic writings is one of consolation and admonition, even though the form is an apocalyptic revelation and is occasionally linked with elements of a hidden aggression against those who are "outside" the group of the elect.

In our reflection on the biblical apocalypse as used in the post-Easter era by the adherents of Jesus, we have to realise that in human history it was and is common to use human lives as material to achieve success in the "great story" (the historical import). This brutal manipulation with human masses in wars and revolutionary transformations of society causes people to want to escape from evil. Marxist philosophy considered this escapist view as typical for religion in general.

In the Hebrew and Early Jewish view the apocalyptic concept attempts a solution. Through their resurrection individuals will participate in the fulfilment of history even if, during its course, they were among the oppressed. Such a hope does not necessarily mean an endless life in terms of a time sequence, but it can better be expressed as an encounter with God as the supreme truth and power. The human life would lose its individuality in an endless continuation. Individual hope means rath-

er a transformation of the whole human life through God's justice (Judgment) and love (inviting/including into a community). In this way the apocalyptic concept in both the Jewish and the Christian versions recognised the value of a human life – a life that is kept in God's memory (see Ps 8:4–5) and related to his "glory" (Hebr. *kābōd*; Gr. *doxa* – see e. g. Ps 73:24; 2 Cor 3:18; Eph 1:18), a life that may be written in the book of life (Mal 3:16; Phil 4:3; Rev 3:5; "in heaven" Luke 10:20) and that culminates in seeing God "face to face" (1 Cor 13:12).

"Glory" is, in this context, the area in which God is immediately accessible and in which the power of his presence can be experienced. *The purpose of the divine plan for humans is not a union in the sense of merging into God, but rather a communion between God and humans*, as it was prefigured in the experience of Israel accepting God's covenant (Ps 50:5; 89:4 f.; Jer 33:25–26), sharing table fellowship with God (Ps 23:5; Matt 22:21) or "speaking" with God (Isa 65:24) and, in Christianity, in the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:23–26; Mark 14:22–26parr.) We may accept such images and metaphors with a slight smile, but a deeper insight reveals that in them human hope is revealed in its essential features.

When we consider the motif of encounter or meeting – the social language found in many texts dealing with resurrection (e. g. 1 Thess 4:17–18: "*we*… to *mee*t the Lord… *we* will be *with* the Lord forever… encourage *one another*…") – we may conclude that eternity in the biblical sense includes interrelation with other lives (the Last Judgment as a "synoptic" evaluation of humanity).[41] Such a confrontation is a comprehensive process; "eternity" does not mean rest in the sense of an inert state.

All of this is a secondary reflection (ultra-reflection) on the biblical texts and even as such it is not identical with the modern idea of human individuality, and yet it is one of its presuppositions. The older corporate concept of the human being as a part of a wider social group was not abandoned but rather taken to a deeper level when the prophets stressed personal responsibility before God. *The unique value of a human life is based on the fact that it is destined to be in community with God.*

The convergence and the eschatological integration of the two dimensions of human hope, as we have described them (hope at death and

41 P. Pokorný, *The Genesis of Christology,* 196 f.*;* P. Lampe, Paul's Concept of a Spiritual Body*,* 114.

hope in the positive meaning of history), express the horizon of human life.

Reflected in secular terms, it includes a conclusion that is extremely relevant today: *A human being (a person) must not be used as the means or an instrument for achieving any higher aim – social, political or even religious (fusion with the divine substance). The aim of human life and of history as a whole is the same: God's community with individual humans as social beings, where humans are confirmed as humans through community with other humans and with God who is acknowledged as God through their conscious confession.* The individual human life can be defined in a social context only: it is expressed by the apocalyptic image of humans being raised from the dead and enjoying the victory of God's justice. A living organism can be built from non-interchangeable parts only. If the unique character of each human being is not recognised, it can only result in a human mass. The idea of the Last Judgment with the evaluation of each human life impacted in an indirect but suggestive way on the general problem of humanity.

What we have mentioned up till now is not only the fruit of a deliberate theology, but also the result of the process of a theologically selective liturgical reception by early Christian communities. The understanding of the Last Judgment as an expectation that led to the discovery of the value of the individual human life is one-sided, since apocalyptic expectations work predominantly with groups of people and provide the principal alternatives (saved – rejected). But in the tradition of the Easter gospel the apocalyptic image of Jesus as the eschatological Saviour is the subject of personal testimony and appeals to every human being to make a decision.

2.4.5 Shortcomings of the apocalyptic paradigm

One problem with the apocalyptic paradigm comes from the linear and spatial framework of the mythical concept which suggests a feeling of fatality. This is understandable, since in the times and situations in which the apocalyptic texts originated, most people did not usually have the chance to change the course of events by their intervention. They were compelled to be passive. The apocalyptic description of the catastrophes coming at the end of this age in a given sequence may at most lead to the ethics of passive resistance and inner solidarity inside the group. These are not negative values, but such ethics can

be effective for a short time only. Ultimately this may cause depression and degeneration. Apocalypse is "good news" just for a short and dangerous time, e. g. when the people to whom the apocalyptic texts were originally addressed were under immediate threat from apocalyptic plagues. Such a situation might lead to the impression that the danger was so great that God's plans might come to nothing. And an apocalyptic prophecy, according to which this was foreseen and included in the divine plan, might have stabilised their faith. Furthermore, the apocalyptic texts say that all this suffering is not yet the end, for the end is still to come (Mark 13:13 "Who endures to the end, will be saved"). However, the spatial images of the future are not able to express the openness of the concrete course of history: What are individuals to do in the face of the pre-programmed course of history and the expected division of humankind into those who are saved and those who are rejected? That is why the early followers of Jesus had to transform the apocalyptic myth and interpret it in the light of the basic Easter experience with Jesus, who had such a profound impact on history even after his crucifixion.

Another problem with the apocalyptic myth is the gap between the death of the righteous on the one hand and the Last Judgment at the end of this age on the other. Do the righteous "sleep" during this time, as they are supposed to in most of the inter-testamentary apocalyptic texts? Or are they provisionally separated into the Garden of Eden or into Hell (Hebr. *sheol*; Greek *hadēs*) as is indicated, for example, in the Gospel according to Luke (12:20; 16:22 ff.: "The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham"; 23:43)? These are secondary problems; nevertheless, they demonstrate the complexity of the issues that have to be considered when interpreting the consequences of the apocalyptic vision of human hope.

The most important problem was the derivation of apocalyptic images from an extraordinary revelation through a dream or some form of special inspiration. The dubious verification and unclear character of such revelations were already criticized in the Law and the Prophets (Deut 13:2–6; Jer 23:25–32). In Jesus' movement and the old Christian tradition the apocalypse appears in a new context: as a reflective expression of the event of Jesus' resurrection, confirmed by the testimony of witnesses which related to their inner encounter with Jesus, the Risen Lord. And when Paul interprets this Easter confession by means of reflection and logical conclusion (1 Cor 15:12–57), it is an ultra-reflection that deprives the myth of its ideological character. This is the beginning of the Christian transformation of mythical imagery.

2.4.6 The Christian transformation of apocalyptic imagery

The decisive change in the Christian concept of the "good news" can be expressed by describing the grammatical operations that were already present in the shortest sentences describing the resurrection of Jesus: the plural (humans) was changed into the singular (he – i. e. Jesus); the general designation "humans" was replaced by a proper name (Jesus or "Christ," used as a name); and the future tense (will be raised from the dead) was replaced by the past tense (has been raised/ he was raised/ God has raised him/ he is risen). Since the past in which the formulae were rooted was not a primordial, archetypal past, but a past attested by persons who, at the time when this transformation was in progress, were still alive or had it fresh in their memory, the myth was reinterpreted by a transposition into history. "Revelation" became a special part of history.

From the original apocalyptic structure of the Easter proclamation it could be deduced that Jesus' resurrection is not simply a happy ending to his story, but that it has a profound and positive significance for other people as well. This means that:

(a) Jesus' resurrection was considered to be an anticipation and a guarantee of Jesus' second coming in glory (1 Thess 1:10)[42] and the general resurrection at the end (presupposed in Paul's argument in 1 Thess 4:16–17). For those who believed in him, it became a promise of resurrection to eternal life (see Paul's argument in 1 Thess 4:14–17; 1 Cor 6:14: "God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power"; Rom 6:8: "If we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him"). In this way the problem of the gap between the time of the individual life and the time of the eschatological fulfilment receded into the background. Once God had given a guarantee of his power over death and corruption in history through the resurrection of Jesus, the timing of the fulfilment is no longer a pivotal problem.

(b) As for Jesus, who "was raised from the dead as the first" (1 Cor 15:20), his resurrection was considered to be practically identical

42 E. Käsemann, Zum Thema der urchristlichen Apokalyptik, 105–131; cf. N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 477.

with his exaltation to a position equal to God (*kyrios, 'adonāy, YHWH* – Phil 2:6–11).[43] His promises are therefore validated.[44]

(c) Paul summarised the consequences of Easter for other people by saying that the communion with Jesus Christ cannot be interrupted by death: "I am convinced that neither death nor life … will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (Rom 8:38–39).

In this manner, as we have already mentioned above, the apocalyptic image is split into two parts: one rooted in the past (Christology) and the other in the future fulfilment (eschatology), which we shall discuss below. This meant a complete re-shaping of the apocalyptic mythical image. The Easter gospel implied a way of solving the delayed coming of the kingdom of God (the "second" coming of Jesus in glory) and at the same time it meant postponing the fatal catastrophes that were due to come according to the apocalyptic myth. They are not a fatal necessity any longer. The apocalyptic confrontation now runs right through the history of humankind as we shall demonstrate under (d) (and see also in the Gospel of Mark, § 6.2).

(d) As with the apocalyptic visions, humankind is divided into two groups after the Last Judgment. However, Paul developed an alternative view in 1 Cor 3:10–17. According to this view, the fire of the Last Judgment will make visible what each individual has used to build upon the only foundation which cannot be destroyed, i.e. Jesus Christ: whether they built using gold, silver, wood or straw. What was built out of wood or straw will be destroyed by fire, but even in such cases the builders may be saved "as through fire" (verse 15). They will be saved because the firm foundation is provided by God and accepted by the believer through faith. Faith enables individual human beings to find some orientation in what transcends them, and in this way take a step back from themselves. Paul wrote this for the Christian community as an exhortation to them to reconsider their own ideas and activities in the light of the overall goal. Nevertheless, it may be a useful and effective model for any human life plan, if we logically add a totally negative

43 It was only Luke who decomposed Easter into two events – resurrection and ascension – in order that the two dimensions of Easter might be better reflected on and experienced.

44 U. Wilckens, Überlieferungsgeschichte der Auferstehung Jesu, 53.

option: those who fully identify themselves (their "I") with their possessions and achievements will be destroyed together with their work as described, for example, in Luke 12:13–21. The others may draw a lesson from the misfortune of their work, and the Judgment through fire may become the cause of their transformation for eternity.

We did not intend here to anticipate a discussion of the Pauline concept of the gospel, but rather to present a sample of the possible transformations of the apocalyptic scheme which demonstrate that apocalyptic images were open to creative transformations. This is the reason for the fact that, as metaphors, apocalyptic images are still used today and they influence the scheme used by systematic theology to interpret the main statements of Christian faith. Interpretation for the individual life means that it acquires its meaning in relation to what transcends it (prayer being the marker), that this relationship is expressed and reflected in social terms and realised in social relations (You and I), and that the communion with the transcending reality (God) includes individual humans; otherwise it would be a deficient community. A community, like any living body and even like any machine, can consist only of different parts.

In this way, individual human beings can participate in the other, wider dimension of hope to which they are related – the hope of a righteous consummation of history as "this age" (the kingdom of God or the "Age to Come" as a common horizon).

2.4.7 A miracle? Interpreting the resurrection II

The current category used to characterise the resurrection of Jesus is that of a miracle. But the reluctance to describe it, this almost ascetic attitude towards describing such a fundamental phenomenon of Christian faith, calls into question the attempts to interpret the resurrection as a miracle (a unique and shocking wonder).

As we have demonstrated, the common denominator of the three formulae of the *euangelion* as an oral proclamation is the resurrection of Jesus. In order that we may better understand the meaning of resurrection, we have to examine the texts that we have at our disposal. Jesus' resurrection is described in none of them. A description of Jesus leaving his grave is a later phenomenon, attested first in the Gospel of Peter,

which originates in the mid-second century. There we read a report of how Jesus left the tomb as a huge figure reaching up to heaven (*Gos. Pet.* 34–42). In the canonical Gospels the witnesses of resurrection, as mentioned in 1 Cor 15:5–8 (Peter, the Twelve and others and, finally, Paul), encountered Jesus as the living one. From this experience they deduced that after his death he must have been re-animated in a new status; N. T. Wright calls it "transphysicality.[45] Quite soon they obviously began to use the term resurrection, which in Judaism, as we have seen, was associated mainly with the apocalypses. In various layers of the Early Christian literature (the Gospels, Paul, the Revelation of John, Acts) the nature of Jesus' post-resurrection existence is described in different ways: as a human being, an extraordinary human being, a light, a voice, etc. The features of theophany (light, shocked witnesses) are often present, but they do not play any decisive role. In all cases the Risen Lord has the character of a person or, at least, he makes people persons by calling them to testify to his new presence. The intention of such texts is clear, but a description is not easy. The bodily resurrection, in the tradition of the Christian confessions, means that Jesus' resurrection (a) applies to the earthly Jesus of Nazareth and thereby affects history, and that (b) his new status is a social phenomenon – he communicates with humans in the world. His body is a means of communication. That is why Paul in 1 Cor 15 speaks of the spiritual body (*sōma pneumatikon*). This does not mean that the material of the body is spirit. Rather, it means that irrespective of the material, the body (and the communication it mediates) is governed by the Spirit of God. Once we admit that Jesus as the Risen Lord has been transformed, it is quite difficult to make the empty tomb a necessary part of the faith in his resurrection.[46]

To stress the significance of the bodily resurrection, N. T. Wright insists on the historical authenticity of the narratives about the empty tomb, so that even the appearances of Jesus as the Risen Son of God are in his view a *necessary supplement* to the discovery of the empty tomb.[47] We understand this thesis as a reaction to the criticism that

45 N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 606 f., 612, etc. We could accept this as a characteristic of the way it is depicted in the Gospels except for Mark. It is not a category which enables us to understand the event by means of contemporary natural science.

46 Cf. A. C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1201, 1279 ff.

47 N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 695.

takes too seriously various alternative explanations for the origin of the resurrection kerygma and narratives without any attempt to interpret the intention and function of the related texts. This applies to some solutions proposed by the liberal research of the 19th century and by some individual scholars of the Third Quest for the historical Jesus at the end of the 20th century. We have to start with the interpretation of the related biblical passages as literary and theological texts.

From the historical point of view we have to be aware of the fact that Paul did not know the narratives of the empty tomb, even if his idea of resurrection included the transformation of the body, or that he may have known them, but did not use them as a part of his testimony of the Risen Lord. This conclusion has theological ramifications. It means in both cases that the empty tomb, even if we may consider it as historically probable, cannot be the only or even primary constituent part of Christian faith.[48] The real impact of Jesus in history is not derived from the manner of his resurrection, which the earliest testimonies do not describe, but from the fact that Jesus is present and active in a new way (Easter appearances)[49], that he impacts history and wins the hearts of people. Wright himself admits that what is crucial is the present "Jesus-centred spirituality",[50] obviously inspired by God himself. We all know the story in Luke 24 about two disciples walking to Emmaus after Easter. The disciples sadly share their disappointment with Jesus and even mention the story about the empty tomb and the vision of angels. And they are still sad. They do not recognise the new presence of Jesus until they are in Emmaus, when he "took bread, blessed and broke it"– i. e. in the Eucharistic meal. This experience of encountering the impact of Jesus' presence, so authentic that it is indeed Jesus *in persona*,[51] is the source of the Easter faith that is transmitted by witnesses, by oral testimony, or by the whole life of the witnesses and their community. It includes a call for a creative and innovative response communicating the power of the resurrection into the burdens and pains of the contempo-

48 For another opinion see ibidem, 636.

49 The reports about the appearances do not say anything about the way in which Jesus was present. In the Greek and Latin literature of Late Antiquity, appearances in visions are mostly understood as the consequence of an ecstatic experience or apotheosis (D. Zeller, Erscheinungen Verstorbener, 19).

50 N. T. Wright, *The resurrection fo the Son fo God*, 721 f.

51 E. Schillebeeckx, *Jesus,* 388.

rary world and anticipating the consummation of God's plans for humankind.[52]

The empty tomb, be it an authentic story or a legend, is an illustration or supplement. The "point of reference" of the Easter faith in the sense of the "point of orientation" or even the "feedback" of ethical practice, is Jesus of Nazareth in the whole of his life. The event expressed as "resurrection", which Christians now understand by faith only, is part of history, since it applies to Jesus of Nazareth who lived at a certain time and place, and impacted history from that time on.[53] However, the Christian faith does not mean believing in resurrection but in Jesus of Nazareth as the Risen and present Christ (Lord, Son of God, etc.). For the methodology and in particular for the characterisation of Christian faith in resurrection we may refer to Dale Allison, especially to the last pages of his book on the resurrection of Jesus.[54]

As we have demonstrated above, an important argument against understanding Jesus' resurrection as a miracle is the fact that within the apocalyptic scheme the resurrection was an event concerning humankind in general (Mark 12:23), and the resurrection of Jesus was considered to be an anticipation of a general resurrection – Jesus Christ was soon called the "firstborn from among the dead" (Col 1:18). Paul developed this idea because of the Christians who died before the *parousia,* which was expected soon: "Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died" (1 Cor 15:20). Being submerged in water during baptism meant dying with Jesus Christ and submerging "into his death". And similarly – this is the pivotal argument – the subsequent "walking in newness of life" opened the way towards a union with him "in a resurrection like his" (Rom 6:3–11; see § 2.3 above).

Consequently, according to this theological interpretation, the apocalyptic imagery acquired a new function in the Christian context: being linked with the person and life of Jesus of Nazareth, it expressed the depth and universal validity of his impact and claim.[55] However,

52 G. Thomas, Resurrection to New Life, 276.

53 This link with history has theological significance and the lack of reflection of this phenomenon may distort the results of research. This is for example the case with G. Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, last part (6).

54 Dale C. Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus*, 373–375.

55 This is also stressed by R. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, II, 535. However, according to him the appearances confirm what Jesus foretold about his death and resurrection. The source of the Easter experience (appearances) is in his view Jesus of Nazareth. The earliest traditions, however, say that resurrection refers

since it was Jesus who played the decisive role, the apocalyptic imagery had to be transformed: attention was concentrated primarily on Jesus as an event of the past, the images of the fulfilment of history were adapted in keeping with the character of the experience with him, and they became as a matter of principle open towards new interpretations, such as we may see in the reflective interpretation of eschatology mentioned earlier, in Paul (the main texts are 1 Thess 4:13–18; 1 Cor 15:12–58), in the Revelation of John 20–22, or in the Gospel according to John (e.g. John 5:25–29). Even the resurrection of Jesus itself was partially emancipated from the apocalyptic scheme. In many cases it was conceived of as an individual lifting up into heaven like those we are familiar with from the Jewish tradition, e.g. that of Enoch (Gen 5) or of Elijah (2 Kings 2), or as a reanimation, later followed by ascension into heaven. It was similar to the Greek tradition of *apotheosis*, when a mortal man was (because of his *aretē*) taken up to heaven and accepted among the deities. This is the model used in the reports about the lifting up of Jesus in Luke 24:39 and 24:50–53 and Acts 1:9–11.

A theological hint that can help us in interpreting the resurrection is the conclusion that gradually developed concerning the characteristics of God himself. The Jews characterised God according to his deeds in history: God was the one who "brought Israel out of the land of Egypt" (Ex 20:1). Now he is primarily the God who "raised Jesus from the dead" (e.g. 1 Cor 6:14; 4:24; Acts 3:15) and even the God who "gives life to the dead" (Rom 4:17), "who raises the dead" (2 Cor 1:9; cf. Acts 26:8). The conclusion is that *the resurrection does not belong to the category of a miracle in the sense of a singular intervention into the laws of creation, but it was rather an event, through which a special power* (*dynamis*) *of God as Creator and Saviour was revealed in history*. In Rom 1:4 the agent of resurrection is the Holy Spirit (called there *pneuma hagiosynēs*).[56] *This means that the gospel centred on Jesus was recognised as an event of universal validity*. As Hans Weder puts it: "the *concretum* of the existence of Jesus becomes the *concretum universale* of God's incarnation".[57] This is meant as an expression of Jesus' universal impact on history.[58]

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to Jesus by mediation. It is a new event –God's answer to the life of Jesus which ended on the cross, the answer to what is represented by his cry of dereliction.

56 U. Wilckens, Der Brief an die Römer (Röm 1–5), 65.

57 H. Weder, 'Evangelium Jesu Christi' (Mk 1,1) und 'Evangelium Gottes' (Mk 1,14), 406.

So far as the interpretation of resurrection in the New Testament is concerned, we have to note these individual features of the theological intention and ethical consequences: the resurrection as a promise for other humans expressed the unique value of human life, it is a social event and, in particular, it has been witnessed as an act of God.

The confrontation of exegetical findings and their interpretation with the natural sciences, especially anthropology or cosmology, is a necessary but secondary task. The differences of methodology between science and the humanities prevent us from creating a closed and complete image. What we can do is express the results in a critical and sober way and prevent any ideological deviation from occurring in the different images. In some ways this is the "apophatic" method, saying what the experience of faith is not. In this respect the statement that resurrection in the Pauline *euangelion* is not any form of re-animation or resuscitation is maintained. The most we can do in attempting a dialogue with science is to search for certain analogies in other areas of life or nature in general. And our prophetic function as regards scientific endeavours consists of keeping the world view open. This means in secular terms maintaining a critical distance from any transformation of human knowledge into ideology and in theological terms the acknowledgment of the superiority of the supreme truth over current human knowledge. This corresponds to the theological thinking of most of the New Testament authors who in spite of their poetic imagination and narrative art leave open the question of HOW the hope is given by God. This applies especially to Paul.[59]

When interpreting the resurrection as it is presented in the formulae of the *euangelion* and their use in Paul, we may use the terms "reveal" or "revelation" in the broader sense, not in the sense of apocalypse, but rather in the sense of the later Christian dogmatic tradition,[60] according to which some events attested by the congruent testimony of a community of individual witnesses can attest for other people events tran-

58 For W. Pannenberg, *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 97–103, the empty tomb represents a reality which is present only in anticipation and will be verified only in its eschatological fulfilment. For criticism of his worldview see A. Kendel, "die Historizität der Auferstehung ist bis auf weiteres vorauszusetzen", 161 ff.

59 P. Lampe, Paul's Concept of a Spiritual Body, 114.

60 This category of revelation is derived from short summaries of faith in the Apostolic Fathers, which are often introduced by the verb *fanerō,* e. g. Ignat. Magn. 8:2, where we read that the one God revealed himself through Jesus Christ his Son.

scending the current world view.[61] So it is with the resurrection. (See below *Interpreting the resurrection IV*).

2.4.8 Resurrection and testimony: Interpreting the resurrection III

Paul Ricoeur pointed out that such events are not accessible by descriptive research. They can be recognised and attested through the testimony of concrete people. A testimony does not belong to the non-critical category. Not only theology, but also law and history as scholarly disciplines are based on testimony.

Testimony is valid under specific conditions only if:

(a) It agrees with other testimonies about the same event,
(b) It is not attained by means of violence or corruption,
(c) There is no reason to suppose that the witness produced the information on the basis of his/her own wishes and intentions – and
(d) The testimony fits the other (verifiable) information that we possess about the events, data, and affairs which are related to the attested event. In the case of the testimony of Jesus as the bearer of hope, these are the data about his teaching and activity, and – indirectly – about the response of the society of his time.

Testimony always includes an element of interpretation which must not disagree with this historically accessible information. In our case it means that *euangelion* is a revelation that vindicates the historical Jesus and guarantees that his story is the basis of human hope. However, at the same time, it means that the interpretation of the gospel must not contradict the teaching and the attitude of Jesus as we learn about it from the historical research.

Testimony is not a substitute for logical evidence. Testimony concerns important issues that need more than mere verification. A solid testimony, meeting the conditions mentioned above, has to be taken seriously. Influenced by a testimony, we have to take responsibility for our own decisions, and we have to decide whether we accept the testimony or not. If not, we have to know why and say so. Judges in court are in the same situation. They may have persuasive evidence at their disposal, but this does not absolve them of the responsibility of making a decision.

61 See P. Ricoeur, Toward a Hermeneutics of the Idea of Revelation, 101–107.

The Easter gospel has been presented till the present time as a testimony attesting the key role of Jesus' story for human hope and confirming the identity of the present Risen Christ with Jesus of Nazareth.

If a credible testimony is ignored, one dimension of human life is suppressed.

2.4.9 Revelation: Interpreting the resurrection IV

From what we have said about testimony and about the proclamation of resurrection as preserved in the ancient Christian texts it follows that the term resurrection was used to denote the event that led to the appearances of the crucified Jesus as the living one. These appearances were thus situated within a broader picture of the apocalyptic consummation of history. The category "revelation," which was later introduced into theology as the designation for the whole story of Jesus (his incarnation), was derived from this apocalyptic context. Such a revelation as a theological concept does not imply supernatural information about something; rather it presents an event in history[62] as a unique expression of a reality with general significance that had not previously been discovered. In this way the communication of God with humans as attested in Christianity is fundamentally different from the spiritual experience of the "other world" which we are familiar with from dualistic religions or, for example, from Gnosticism.[63] Some of the Christian Fathers, like Athanasius or Cyril of Alexandria, developed a concept of resurrection, which may be interesting even for theological reflection today, but which is only indirectly an interpretation of biblical texts.

The Swiss Protestant theologian Karl Barth limited this revelation to the resurrection of Jesus itself. It relates to the life of Jesus, but unlike his teaching and the whole of his life story including his crucifixion, which are all historically attested facts, the resurrection should be considered as "an original and exemplary act of revelation"[64] linked with the fact of resurrection in a time sequence. "Original and exemplary" express that *Barth* intended to articulate the character of the resurrection as an event (it is not simply an expression of the significance of Jesus or

62 For revelation as a communication in time see G. Etzmüller, Ich lebe und ihr sollt auch leben, 234.

63 Cf. also the paragraph on F. Overbeck in § 7 – The Gospel of Luke and Acts.

64 K. Barth, *KD IV, 1*, 336.

his influence on history or his memory) and, at the same time, avoid the category of miracle. For Barth it was a special part of the divine creative power which had not been discovered previously because of human alienation through sin. *If the attested experience of Christian faith with Easter as a revelation*[65] *of God's decisive intention is valid, then the experience with positive, surprisingly persistent ideas, deeds and living traditions present in history and resisting the tendency towards alienation are an indirect trace of this power and intention (logos) which was fully represented in Jesus' resurrection.*[66]

In the New Testament in 1 Cor 15:36–38 or in John 12:24[67] (cf. 2 Cor 9:10–13) the power of growth in nature is declared to be an analogy of resurrection on a lower level. In *1 Clem* 24 the rising of the sun in the morning is also given as an analogy. The non-self-evident character of these phenomena helps us discover the importance of spiritual traditions that influence our lives with surprising persistence.

These considerations belong to the realm of systematic theology or philosophy, but when discussing the term *euangelion* we have to be aware of all its implications and inner potential. In representing the ultimate effect of the power of God as Creator and Saviour, the "good news" acquired decisive authority for the movement of the post-Easter followers of Jesus who were, shortly afterwards, expelled from the synagogue and eventually became the Christian church.

The Resurrection of Jesus as a guarantee of the eschatological power of God's good will towards humans motivated human activity. Humans can be fully committed to a cause only when it has a future that does not depend on them only. On this point the biblical heritage disagrees with many ideologies of the present day.[68]

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65 In Paul the verbs *faneroyn* (2 Cor 2:14 f.) and *epifainomai* (Tit 3:4 ff.) are sometimes also used in this sense. However, *epifaneia* refers mostly to the manifestation of the Risen Lord at the end of history (Tit 2:13).

66 It was R. Bultmann, Revelation in the New Testament, especially 87 ff., who recognised the importance of the concept of revelation for interpreting Christian faith. However, he concentrated on revelation as an existential occurrence only and did not consider the consequences which it has for orientation in history.

67 For interpretation see M. Theobald, *Herrenworte im Johannesevangelium*, 397–400.

68 More than a hundred years ago this problem was discussed by the Marxist philosopher G. V. Plekhanov (later expelled from the Communist party for his revisionist views) in his study about the role of the personality in history ("*K voprosu roli litchnosti v istorii*", 1898, the end of chapter I). His argument from history is derived from the activism of the Calvinists as a consequence of

2.5 Euangelion[69]

Euangelion can be translated as "good news" or "good tidings", even though a better expression of "good news" in Greek would be *euangelia* (fem.) or *kalē angelia*. In all cases the motif of mediation by a messenger (*angelos*) is implied. Why did the followers of Jesus use this particular expression for the central message of their movement? Can this term be derived from the teaching of Jesus himself? To answer these questions we have to review the history of the term in Greek documents and literature as well as in the Hebrew Bible.

2.5.1 Lexical problems

Since the formulae of the gospel that have been preserved are all written in Greek, we should start our survey with an analysis of the Greek term *euangelion* and some of the expressions derived from the same root. They are attested from the beginnings of the Greek literature. For example, the noun *euangelos* for the proclaimer of good (lucky) tidings is common in Euripides (*Medea* 975; 1010: "you will be called *euangeloi*").

In Plutarch's *Pompeius* 66:3:7 *euangelizomai* relates to a message about the end of a war. In the novella *Philopseudes* (31) by Lucian (died 180 C.E.) it refers to news about expelling a demon. In Flavius Josephus (*B. J.* 3:503:1) it is used in a message about the imminent capture of Jerusalem, as seen through the eyes of the Romans.

The Septuagint is the closest neighbouring literary area to the *"gospel"* as a term of the Christian oral proclamation. The verb *euangelizomai* or *euangelizō* (in the active voice) is used in 1 Kings (=1 Sam in the Hebrew Bible) 31:9 (parallel in 1 Chron 10:9 – in the passive voice) for Philistines proclaiming the death of Saul as good news (bad news for Israel), or (in the passive voice) in 2 Kings (2 Sam) 18:31 about the death

their consciousness about the necessity (predestination) of what they are doing. He also mentioned Luther and his proclamation "Hier stehe ich und kann nichts anders" – an attitude that gave him inexhaustible energy. As an example of the opposite attitude he mentioned Hamlet with his doubts about the meaning of human existence.

69 For the problem as a whole see J. Schniewind, *Euangelion*; E. Käsemann, *An die Römer,* 4–11; H. Koester, From the Kerygma-Gospel to Written Gospels, 361–365; U. Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 74–75; W. Horbury, 'Gospel' in Herodian Judea.

of Absalom (good news from the point of view of Israel's history, bad news for David as father). In all these cases it is used in the context of battle and war and, as in the Greek usage, it reflected the meaning "news of victory", or, more generally, "news from the battlefield."

Especially interesting for us are the prophetic promises of the eschatological messenger who will bring the message of salvation (Hebr. *mbaśśer*) for Israel, e. g. Isa 52:7 [parallel in Nah 2:1]; 40:9; 41:27; cf. Ps 39:10; 67:12 [LXX]). Salvation is conceived of as the definitive liberation from all inimical powers. Isa 61:1, where the prophet is authorised to "preach good news (in the Septuagint: *euangelizomai*) to the poor" (NIV) is the most important instance where the messenger of "good news" appears in the Prophets.

The equivalent of these Septuagint texts in the Hebrew original are expressions derived from the root *b-ś-r* (mostly in *pi'el*, partially in *hitpa'el*; the noun *b^{e}śōrāh*). We have just mentioned that the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek "good news" originally meant simply "news" (see 1 Sam 4:17) and sometimes it is linked with the Hebrew adjective *tōb* – good (Isa 52:7 or 2 Sam 18:27; 1 Kings 1:42), but in most instances it already implies a positive meaning – "good news."[70]

In Isa 61:1 the good news (expressed by the verb *b-ś-r* in *pi'el*) about the Year of the Lord's Favour (Deliverance) is a metaphor for the eschatological salvation of Israel which became popular in Israel in the Hellenistic period, as can be documented by allusions in the Messianic Apocalypse from Qumran (4Q521:6–8, 12–13; in verse 12 the verb *b-ś-r* appears). In Luke 4:16–21, the text of Jesus' first sermon in Nazareth, *euangelisasthai ptōchois* (to proclaim good news to the poor), sums up the "good news" or "good tidings" (they are good in the eyes of God), and this can be followed in Early Christian literature, e. g. in *Barnab*. 14: 9:2. In Luke 4, this is considered not only a prophetic message, but also a programmatic message of Jesus himself. And, as we shall see below (§ 3), in this case the Lukan editorial strategy may have coincided with a real trace of the teaching of Jesus.

The noun *euangelion* does not appear in the Septuagint in the singular. We find only the plural *euangelia*, which most likely means the reward for a messenger bringing good news (2 Kings [MT 2 Sam] 18:22) and is not commonly understood as "good news", since in the same context in 18:27 we read about *euangelia agathē,* Hebr. *b^{e}sōrāh tōbāh* ("good good news"). Only in 18:25 does *euangelia* without any at-

70 J. Schniewind, *Euangelion,* 29 f.

tribute mean "good news". However, William Horbury demonstrated that "good news" expressed by the noun *bᵉsōrāh,* the synonymous *shᵉmūʿāh*, or the Aramaic *bᵉsorᵉthā*, "were used in Judea by early Judean Christians and possibly by Jesus".[71] For example, the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch (2 Baruch), which dates from the early second century and was translated from the Greek translation of the Hebrew original,[72] mentions a message which will be "made known" and mean a turn for the better for the faithful Jews (44:6; cf. 77:12). The Hebrew and Greek equivalents may have been the nouns *bᵉsōrāh* and *euangelion*. The same applies to the Aramaic tractate "On the Public Fasts" from the Mishnah containing a calendar of 36 days of joy, on which fasting is not allowed. Here we read that on the 28th Adar (the 12th month), in the time of the Macabbean wars (about 3rd April 162 B.C.E.), the Jews received the "good news" (*bśwrt' tbt'*) allowing them to keep the commandments of the Law.[73] These observations support the conclusion that in some instances the Semitic and Greek expressions for "good news" were used as terms related to salvation and integrity of hope.

Nevertheless, the verb *euangelizō* (*euangelō*) in the passive voice (*euangelizomai*), less frequently in the active voice, was more common than the noun in the Greek of the Septuagint, which Paul used in his mission. Paul also used the verb in a more general meaning, as when he referred to Timothy reporting (*euangelisamenou*) about the faith and love of the Thessalonians (1 Thess 3:6). But the most important use of the verb *euangelizomai* in the New Testament is where it is applied to the message or teaching of Jesus in Matt 11:5 (parallel in Luke 7:22): *ptōchoi euangelizontai* – a saying from Q and an indirect quotation of or an obvious allusion to Isa 61:1.

2.5.2 The noun "euangelion"

In Greek literature the noun *euangelion* (also in the plural – *euangelia*) is originally attested as a reward given to the messenger for good tidings (a tip or baksheesh), as in Homer, *Odysseia* 14:152, or in Plutarch, *Demetrios* 17 (Demetrios' victory announced to Antigonos). It seems that a

71 W. Horbury, 'Gospel' in Herodian Judea, 86. See also M. Hengel – A. M. Schwemer, *Paulus zwischen Damaskus und Antiochien,* 154 f.

72 A. J. Klijn, 2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch, 616 f.

73 For the text with an introduction see in: K. Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer*, 354 and 358 f.

similar meaning was represented by the Hebrew *bᵉśūrā* (from *b-ś-r*) in 2 Sam 4:10 or 18:22. It is most likely to have been an analogy in semasiological history; it is less probable that it is a mutual influence in history. In Greek, *euangelion* later became an expression for a thank-offering to gods for good news: Isocrates (436–338 B.C.E.), *Orationes* 7:10; Plutarch *Demosth.* 22:3:1; *Demetr.* 11:4:5; cf. Josephus *B. J.* 4:618 (Vespasian proclaimed emperor).

In the Hellenistic and early imperial period *euangelion* is especially used for good news in the sense of political propaganda.[74] Only Jewish texts avoid this usage. A well-known documentation of this use is the Inscription of Priene in the south-eastern part of Asia Minor (in the area of the former Roman province Asia), apparently from 9 B.C.E. The inscription represents a decree of the provincial assembly and relates to the emperor Augustus. The term *euangelion*, as used here and in several similar inscriptions,[75] is part of the official imperial cult. The term *archē* also plays an important role in this cult (cf. Mark 1:1), since the "good news" of the new divine Emperor is, at the same time, confirmed as the beginning (*archē*) of a new era. The emperors mostly regarded it as ceremonial propaganda, but some of them (Caligula, Nero, Domitian) took the cultic adoration seriously. From Domitian on, the Christian *euangelion* about Jesus Christ as the Lord could have provoked conflicts with the Roman authorities with fatal consequences for the Christians.

To sum up: Isa 61:1 played an important role in the earliest Christian teaching and theology. However, the pre-Pauline formulae of the gospel (*euangelion*) cannot be understood against this background only. These short texts seem to be primarily liturgical and catechetical formulae, whereas in Isa 61 we have a prophetic promise. In terms of the content, the formulae of the gospel are confessing statements about Jesus' (death and) exaltation, whereas in Isa 61 we have a set of concrete promises given to the poor. The only common denominator with the Easter gospel is the eschatological horizon, including the Last Judgment, and the hope of salvation that was represented by the promise. It follows that the reception of the term *euangelion* by Paul was also influenced by the use of this term in the imperial cult. He did not mean it as an explicit polemic, but rather as an expression of the decisive significance of Jesus.

74 For the evidence and discussion see C. Ettl, Der Anfang der.. Evangelien, especially 138 ff.

75 See the evidence in A. Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten*, 266 f.

2.5.3 Sequence in history

We have demonstrated that the roots of the Christian term gospel (*euangelion*) originate in the Hebrew Bible and its Greek translation (the Septuagint). If we analyse the three formulae of the gospel as we have found them in Paul, the inevitable conclusion is that they must have originated in the Jewish setting. The one God, the expectation of the Last Judgment (the "wrath of God"), the messianic function of Jesus, "according to the Scriptures" as a certificate of authenticity of the content, Hebrew lexical elements (*pneuma hagiosynēs* – a phrase intended to avoid pronouncing the word God) – all this reveals that the groups of followers of Jesus inside the Jewish Hebrew- or Greek-speaking community were the original milieu for these versions of *euangelion*.

The term *euangelion* as the designation for each of the formulae and as a summary of them has entered into Christian literature and teaching through Paul. Nevertheless, it can be deduced from 1 Cor 15:1–3a that the proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus was already referred to as *euangelion* in the oral tradition before Paul: "…the good news (*euangelion*) that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received … through which you also are being saved… For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received …" Thus it is very probable that *euangelion* was used for the Easter message before Paul. His argument in 1 Cor could also be interpreted as a description of his communication with the Corinthian Christians in his own terminology. However, it is more probable that the members of the groups mentioned in 1 Cor 15:5–8, who accepted 1 Cor 15:3b-5 as the common basis of their proclamation, already spoke about *euangelion*. It is certain that they accepted the text that we know from 1 Cor 15:3b-5 as the basis of their confession, which Paul called *euangelion*. The fact that in Rom 1:3–4 *euangelion* seems to be linked with the quoted formula from an earlier oral tradition changes the probability into what is virtually evidence. Paul had not visited the Roman congregation before but he still assumed that *euangelion* was familiar to its members. Already before Paul it was related to the Easter experience. Some of the witnesses enumerated in 1 Cor 15:6–8 may earlier have expressed the Easter message in another way, but, through an ecumenical agreement, they all accepted the proclamation of the resurrection as the most appropriate expression of their experience and proclaimed it as *euangelion*.

When mentioning "the other" gospel in Gal 1:6, Paul makes the reader aware of the fact that it is not a different gospel.[76] All three formulae are concentrated in the same gospel. According to him they are only different expressions and applications of it. In the next chapter Paul speaks about the gospel for the uncircumcised and another gospel for the circumcised (Gal 2:7), i.e. the gospel as applied to the uncircumcised and to the circumcised. "Other" does not mean "basically different". A different gospel */heteron euangelion/* was obviously a different and false interpretation and understanding of the *euangelion*, as was offered by those who "pervert the gospel of Christ", in this case: who make the validity of the gospel dependent on circumcision (Gal 1:7b). That is the different gospel. It means that the fundamentally different understanding (interpretation) of the main Christian proclamation is not the *euangelion* – the good news.[77] In 1 Corinthians the gospel is regarded as the concrete formula that Paul taught the Corinthians . . . *to euangelion ho euēngelisamēn hymīn*. This means that the gospel (apparently as a proclamation of the resurrection in general) has special versions (here the one from 1 Cor 15:3b-5), which Paul received from tradition. Other expressions of faith in resurrection (as in 1 Thess 1:9–10 or Rom 1:3–4) belong to the gospel and are also proclamations of the resurrection (1 Cor 15:12), but they are not the gospel as it was originally proclaimed by Paul in Corinth. When comparing the three formulae, we find that it might be the death of Jesus for he sake of others (1 Cor 1:18, 23–24) that was the specific feature of the gospel proclaimed and interpreted by Paul in Corinth (cf. e.g. 1 Cor 15:12; or "our gospel" in 1 Thess 1:5.10; 2 Cor 4:3–6 mentioning only the resurrection)

To sum up: at the beginning of the Christian proclamation was the message about the resurrection of Jesus, which was soon (before Paul) called *euangelion* in some of its versions. Some of them took a short and fixed form and were passed on as the normative catechetic tradition (see the chain of *paralambanō* – *paradidōmi* – *paralambanō* in 1 Cor 15:1–3a). The "ecumenical" version in 1 Cor 15:3b-5 (death – resurrection), the gospel that Paul proclaimed and taught in Corinth, with an addition containing the list of other witnesses of Jesus' Easter appearan-

76 *Heteros* means "other," "further," "different in interpretation" *allos* rather "different in content".

77 A. Oepke, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galate*r, 48–50; for a detailed exegesis see J. Schröter, *Von Jesus zum Neuen Testament*, 152 ff.

ces, became the most influential formula of the gospel. We shall see that this version played the key role in shaping the literary Gospels.

The problem is that the pre-Pauline, post-Easter formulations of the gospel are clearly related to the Jewish milieu, but in terms of content they are not related to Isa 61:1. This means that in the Jewish (Greek-speaking) milieu *euangelizō/ euangelizomai* expressed salvation in a broad sense. After Easter (and most probably before Paul) some of the followers of Jesus started to use the term *euangelion* in the absolute sense (without indicating why it was "good", or what the object of the proclamation was) as a short expression for the hope that was linked with Jesus of Nazareth as their Risen Lord (*kyrios*). That they adopted the language of Isa 61 is understandable. But the fact that they switched from the verb to the noun was obviously influenced by the role of *ta euangelia* in the imperial cult.[78] It expressed the unique character (the *novum*) of Jesus as the universal Messiah and Saviour. The shift from plural into singular (*euangelion*) reflects the good news as expressed in the Easter experience in one event, namely the (death and) resurrection of Jesus. The formula in Rom 1:3–4, where Jesus is proclaimed as the Davidic Messiah (without explicitly mentioning his death), may be directly influenced by this tradition. The Hellenistic-Jewish followers of Jesus usurped the Hellenistic and Roman imperial term *euangelion* and used it more often than the verb *euangelizomai* in order that it might serve the Christian proclamation. Paul started to use it as the designation for the message about the resurrection of Jesus in all its versions or, at least, he introduced this use of the term *euangelion* into all Christian communities (congregations) created or influenced by him or his co-workers. In fact, he also used this term in a wider sense, denoting the act of proclaiming the "gospel" ("good news")[79] or spreading the message about salvation , especially to non-believers ("Missionspredigt" in German). However, the awareness of the central significance of the resurrection and elevation or enthronement of Jesus into his position as *kyrios* of the Christian community and as the representative of God in the whole world was always present.

The Christian *euangelion* was presumed to be valid from the time of Jesus' resurrection until the eschatological fulfilment of history, the end of "this age". From what we have said it may be deduced that having a

78 G. Theissen, *Die Entstehung des Neuen Testaments*, 88, note 43; C. Ettl, Der "Anfang der … Evangelien", 146.

79 U. Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer* I, 74.

special term for a concrete good message means that such good news is well known and important for a wide social group over a period of time. *Euangelion* should be understood as a *terminus technicus*. In the ecclesiastical sociolect of many languages the word is simply transcribed. The drawback is that such a term is not understood by those outside the Church. On the other hand, the advantage is that the positive meaning is generally accepted (even in a metaphoric, secular use) and that the term invites interpretation that may avoid simplification of its understanding.

The problem of the difference between the gospel in Isa 61 that, according to the Synoptics, was quoted by Jesus, and the Easter gospel remains open. Before discussing the problem of the literary Gospels, we have to take into consideration this difference between the proclamation of the good news as a vision and a program in the Hebrew Bible, in the Septuagint, and in Jesus traditions on the one hand, and the Easter gospel with the mere fact of Jesus' existence stressed by Paul as the key point of a cosmic myth connecting earth and heaven on the other. The cause of the difference lies predominantly in the Easter experience, as we have tried to express above: as the validation and legitimacy of Jesus' story it acquired priority over the narrative tradition about Jesus' life and teaching. For Paul the gospel was the "gospel of his (God's) Son" (Rom 1:9). We need to discuss this development.

2.5.4 The "doubled" eschatology

The first reaction of the earliest Christian communities to the Easter experience was enthusiasm, lacking any developed reflection. Soon it was necessary to modify the expectations of its fulfilment. The promises of the coming kingdom of God and the rule of the poor were not fulfilled in the near future as had been expected, and some events and phenomena were interpreted as the fulfilment of the promises of Jesus in a spiritual way. This development strengthened dualistic features inside the emerging Christian movement.[80] The Christians, linked with Jesus Christ as their Lord through baptism and guided by the Holy Spirit, lived in this world a new life – a life related to the prospect of resurrection (Rom 6:1–11).

80 G. Theissen, *The Religion of the Earliest Churches*, 276 f.

The Easter experience was soon verbalised as the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus and thus it changed the global view of the world of the early Christians. The "gospel" is the concise expression of this insight. The eschatological perspective split into two parts. We may speak about a double eschatology: the Messiah has come – his messianic kingdom is not yet here. In the formula of the gospel in 1 Thess 1:10 we hear about waiting for Jesus, the Son of God from heaven, whom God raised from the dead. The decisive part of history unfolds between the resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection of all humankind (Jesus' "second coming" and the "Last Judgment"). This is the most ancient expression of the horizon of Christian faith in a formula. The fulfilment, the Age to Come, will be a real social entity, but in the present it is a human horizon – a hope for the absolute future.[81] It is important to realise the nature of the Easter experience and how it could be interpreted (cf. § 2.2 *Interpreting the resurrection* above). The visions of Jesus as the Risen Lord must have been so unique and impressive that the witnesses were convinced that this was the fulfilment of the messianic apocalyptic expectations. And since the surrounding world did not change, it was necessary to adapt the image of the eschatological fulfilment. This seems to be a defensive manoeuvre. But in fact, if the Easter testimony had matched the expectations that the early Christians accepted as the pre-history of their faith, they would have been suspected of having created an artificial religion. And the traces of a tension between the previous expectation and the real experience of fulfilment, for which it was necessary to look for a new expression, confirm the authenticity and depth of their new experience.

Unlike the first spontaneous reactions to the Easter experience, the pre-Pauline post-Easter formulae are the first conscious attempts to express the specific character of the Easter experience. They represent the beginnings of Christian theology. They dared to transform the apocalyptic myth and speak about the resurrection of Jesus as an event of the past. It is an image that differs substantially from the expectation of Jesus and his role in introducing the kingdom of God. However, from the ruins of his vision a new experience emerged that became the basis of hope. At the beginning the interval between Easter and the general resurrection was understood as a necessarily short one (see

81 The problem of the "doubled" eschatology has been formulated by Josef B. Souček, see P. Pokorný, In Honour of Josef B. Souček, in idem and J. B. Souček, *Bibelauslegung und Theologie*, 13–14.

1 Thess 4:15). However, later Paul considered the time between the resurrection of Jesus and the (postponed) "second coming" as a special period. This was a shift in the apocalyptic image. The future role of eschatological fulfilment is not denied, but the continually increasing distance in time is no longer a decisive problem. Luke elaborated this experience into a new Christian view of history. In the Acts of the Apostles the eschatological future is the time of "universal restoration (*apokatastasis*) that God announced long ago" (Acts 3:21) and to the Greek philosophers the "Lukan" Paul says that God "has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). This means that the apocalyptic myth has been substantially transformed, but the main structure is still recognisable.

These considerations crossed the border from biblical exegesis into the domain of systematic theology. But the character of the text we are discussing produces such a reflection on a more profound level. Let us add another consideration concerning the apocalyptic scheme of the Easter gospel as a part of the Christian spiritual and cultural heritage. In the time of the Enlightenment, European thinking was influenced by the idea of progress. In the twentieth century the foundations of the idea of progress were shaken. The two world wars and cruel totalitarian regimes seemed rather to support a catastrophic view of history. However, the totalitarian regimes collapsed and the Declaration of Human Rights was accepted (although not yet necessarily invoked) by practically all nations. The oppressive powers with all their destructive potential dissolved and the tendencies and groups who do not reject the ethics of Jesus are active in history again. History is neither catastrophic nor optimistic. When observed, it appears unclear, but open. Only the view inspired by faith recognises that the negative powers are a reaction against the values and powers represented, in a nutshell, by the person and story of Jesus. This is a general reflection of history inspired by the Easter faith in the resurrection of Jesus, but, as a matter of principle, communicable to all.

The problem arises with Paul. Yet, before we discuss the Pauline gospel, we have to glance back and discuss the problem of the Gospel of Jesus. The general impression about the Hebrew roots of the term "gospel" (*euangelion, euangelizomai*) can only be verified by an analysis of the ancient Jesus traditions.

3. The Gospel of Jesus

3.1 Jesus proclaimed the gospel – an early tradition

In Mark 1:14–15 we find the first Markan summary of Jesus' activity: "After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news (*euangelion*) of God. 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near (*ēngiken*), repent and believe in the good news (*euangelion*)'." The Markan summaries do not sum up what was said in the immediate context of the Gospel, but they repeatedly make the reader aware of the typical actions and themes of the teaching of Jesus.[82] Also, according to Luke 10:9b (Q), Jesus commissioned his disciples to proclaim the kingdom of God. This might reflect an older tradition about Jesus' activity. However, the formulations may be influenced by Mark. This also applies to the term *euangelion.* The choice of this expression may have been taken from the designation of the pre-Pauline formulae about Jesus' resurrection. In spite of all these facts, the summary remains a valuable piece of evidence for Jesus as proclaimer of the gospel, even if, in the tradition, it may have been expressed by the verb *euangelizomai* (see e.g. Luke 16:16par. Q).

The most important text of this kind appears in the source Q: Matt 11:5 // Luke 7:22:

> "…the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them (*euangelizontai*)."

The proclamation of "good news" to the poor (quotation of Isa 61:1):

> "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 poor") is the culmination of the list of saving acts of Jesus that qualify his activity as the fulfilment of various prophetic promises of Isaiah. In Isa 61:2 we read about the Last Judgment and the eschatological salvation. And in Isa 52:7 the messenger who brings good news says to Zion: "Your God reigns." This is an

82 Charles W. Hedrick, The Role of 'Summary Statements' in the Composition of the Gospel of Mark, 303 f.

analogy to Jesus' proclamation of the coming kingdom of God.[83] The return of YHWH to Zion (see e. g. Isa 40:3–5; Mal 3:1), the pilgrimage of the nations to Jerusalem (e. g. Isa 2:2–4 = Mica 4:1–3; Ps 22:27–28) and the general resurrection (Isa 26:19; 1QH / [a]/ XIX: 12–14; *Shemoneh Esre 2*; see also § 2.2 above) are the three main features of the reign of God that were popular in Israel, especially in the post-exilic period. The Kingdom (Reign) of God was therefore expected as an eschatological phenomenon that Jesus expected in the near future (Matt 10:23),[84] but at the same time it was a phenomenon that had an impact on the present and changed the life orientation of those who took it seriously, i. e. those who accepted it as the horizon of their lives (as the subject of a prayer as in Luke 11:2par., or present in some actions such as Jesus' exorcisms in Luke 11:20par. [Q]).

This dimension of the kingdom of God has often been interpreted in the sense of a permanent transcendent counterpart of history.[85] Indeed, we have to admit that so far as his estimation of time was concerned (the imminent coming), Jesus was mistaken (the classical Christian confession insists on his humanity and a miscalculation is not a sin). Such an interpretation is acceptable only if Christians, even if they accept the postponement of the fulfilment of the kingdom of God on earth, neither reconcile themselves to violence, war and corruption in the world, nor reject the whole world as wrong and escape from it into a spiritual realm. This is the only responsible interpretation of Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God as a promise, an interpretation that is compatible with praying every day the Lord's Prayer with its petition that the kingdom might come.[86]

Jesus' final act of salvation is the raising of the dead as fulfilment of "Your dead shall live" from Isa 26:19. It might be expected that within the enumeration of Jesus' messianic prerogatives this would be the apex but, surprisingly, the proclamation of the gospel appears as the last ele-

83 M. Merklein, *Studien zu Paulus,* 282 ff. (Zum Verständnis des paulinischen Begriffs "Evangelium").

84 J. Gray, *The Biblical Doctrine of the Reign of God*, 354 ff.

85 E.g. J. Gray, *The Biblical Doctrine of the Reign of God*, 356 f. It is an interpretation along the lines of C. H. Dodd's theory about the "realised eschatology". N. Perrin, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom,* especially 198 f., and J. D. G. Dunn, Jesus and the Kingdom, 34–36; idem, *Jesus Remembered* 388 f., interpreted the kingdom of God as we find it in the Jesus traditions as a metaphor in the full sense of this word, as a designation for something for which the common language does not (yet) have a generally accepted code (see P. Ricoeur, J. M. Soskice, extended information and discussion in P.Pokorný, *Hermeneutics as a Theory of Understanding I*, § 4.2).

86 H. Merklein, *Jesu Botschaft von der Gottesherrschaft*, 57 f.

ment in the series. It is a clear allusion to Isa 61:1, even though it is not formulated as a verbal quotation. The penultimate statement obviously refers to the resurrection as the re-animation of individual people by Jesus as an argument for the real power of the coming kingdom of God and for his messianic authority. Similarly, Jesus (according to Q: Matt 10:7–8, shortened in Luke 9:2) sent his disciples to proclaim the good news about the kingdom of heaven (Luke 9:2: "kingdom of God"), heal the sick and raise the dead. In this case it is clear that the proclamation of the gospel is not a subsequent event, but it seems that it was supposed to be an activity occurring in parallel with resurrection. It is the same in Peter's sermon in Acts 10:34–43: Jesus, as the eschatological judge (verse 42), healed in the power of the Holy Spirit those who were oppressed by the devil and proclaimed the good news of peace (verse 43). This was, however, written as a recollection of Jesus' deeds during his earthly life, which is no direct evidence for Jesus using the expression "good news" either in Hebrew (*bsōrā* as influenced by the Hebrew Bible) or in Aramaic.

And still, a careful assessment of these facts can serve as indirect evidence that Jesus considered his proclamation of the kingdom of God to be identical with the prophetic proclamation of good news. The fact that the two earliest documents including traditions about Jesus (Q and Mark) indicate the use of the term *euangelion* in his lifetime, may speak in favour of a traditional consciousness according to which Jesus proclaimed the "good news" which, in this case, is identical with his teaching about the kingdom of God. The antedating of the Easter gospel into the life of Jesus cannot be the only motif for including the two short pieces into the text of the literary Gospels. In Q (Matt 11:5par.) the good news is addressed to the poor and the oppressed, and the statement is clearly an allusion to Isa 61:1; in Mark 1:15 the "good news" should apparently be the "gospel of God" (*euangelion tou theou*) in 1:14.[87]

(*Euangelion tou theou* in Rom 1:1 is another case. What it means here is the pre-Pauline Easter gospel. In Rom 1: 9 the same thing is evidently called "the gospel of his Son": Paul serves God by announcing the gospel of his Son. "Of God" [*tou theou*] is most probably *genitivus auctoris* [*subiectivus*], of his Son *genitivus obiectivus*, i. e. the gospel is defined as the gospel "about his Son". Yet the structure of these sentences reveals the influence of the proclamation of Jesus. This means that Pauls under-

87 P. Stuhlmacher, *Das paulinische Evangelium*, 236 f.

stands the enthronement of Jesus as the Son of God as the first step towards the coming of the kingdom of God (see 1 Cor 15: 20–28.)

In Mark 1:15 the term "gospel" appears once more, this time in the absolute sense. It is the only instance in Mark where this word used in the absolute sense relates to the message proclaimed and taught by Jesus.[88] The Gospel writer may have been influenced by Paul and is obviously responsible for this innovation – for introducing the noun *euangelion* into the tradition about Jesus. In the other places where the Markan Jesus speaks about the gospel, the term (*euangelion*), even though we hear it from the mouth of Jesus, could (and in Mark's intention should) be simultaneously identified with the Easter gospel as Mark adopted it from the Pauline tradition:[89] Mark 8:35 can be understood as suffering for the Easter gospel and as the way towards eternal life; in 10:29–30 it is even the way towards a fuller life on earth within the groups of post-Easter followers; according to 13:10, it is the "good news" that has to be proclaimed to all nations before the end of this age; and in 14:9 it is the message about the suffering and death of Jesus and his resurrection as the pivotal part of the literary Gospel. The only instance in Mark where *euangelion* cannot be understood as a coded Easter proclamation is, indeed, Mark 1:14–15. Thus Mark intended to bridge the gap between the proclamation of Jesus and the Easter gospel. He gave hints to his readers (hearers) in order that they might understand the proclamation and teaching of Jesus as the preliminary part (a pre-history) of the Easter gospel. However, he must have been aware of the "good news" in the Jesus traditions. Whether he was familiar with it only from the Greek traditions about Jesus or whether he knew about Jesus using some expression derived from the Hebrew root *b-s-r* and Isa 61:1 is, in this context, an open although secondary question. Undoubtedly he was interested in using the noun *euangelion*, in order that the link between the proclamation of the gospel by the earthly Jesus and the post-Easter proclamation of his early adherents might become visible.

88 See also H. J. Klauck, *Vorspiel im Himmel*, 73 f.

89 See R. Schnackenburg. 'Das Evangelium' im Verständnis des ältesten Evangelisten, 318; cf. G. Strecker, Das Evangelium Jesu Christi, 215 ff.

3.2 The prophecy in Isa 61:1 ff. and the self-understanding of Jesus

Jesus' answer to John the Baptist in Matt 11:5// Luke 7:22 (Q)[90], where we read the verb *euangelizomai*, includes an apparent allusion to Isa 61:1 in the climax. The whole cluster of sayings in Luke 7:18–35par. (Q) contains snippets of Jewish eschatological expectations and allusions to Isaiah (cf. Isa 35:5–6; 42:18). Luke 7:33–34par. (Q) reflects a situation in which John the Baptist (mentioned first) was more popular than Jesus and his disciples, and the slander against both of them was still fresh in people's memories. We do not find any influence of the Easter *euangelion* in this segment of the text. This does not mean that the text as whole is an authentic Jesus tradition. It simply means that Isa 61:1 played an important role in the Jewish eschatological expectations that inspired Jesus in his proclamation of the Kingdom of God. Therefore it is probable that Jesus has understood his own mission on the basis of the book of Isaiah (mostly the parts that we ascribe to the Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah). As a part of a cumulative argument this plays an important role.

The crucial argument in favour of this interpretation of the given evidence is the fact that the sayings from the source Q – from the Sermon on the Field/Mount – include several themes and phrases that appear in Isa 61, especially "Good news to the poor" (*ptōchoi euangelizontai*; Luke 7:22par.; cf. 6:20par.. *makarioi hoi ptōchoi*[91] – as an allusion to Isa 61:1) or "Blessed are those who weep now (*hoi penthountes*; Matt 5:4par.– Isa 61:2). The fact that these clear allusions/quotations are not patently linked with the book of Isaiah by mentioning the prophet's name is an argument in favour of their pre-Easter origin. In the post-Easter period the relationship between the Jesus traditions and some of the texts from the Law, the Prophets or the Psalms was explicitly mentioned and stressed, since it supported the argument for the scriptural basis of the Jesus movement in the eyes of the other members of the synagogue.

90 This belongs to a cluster of sayings that have been composed by the editor of Q: J. S. Kloppenborg, *The composition of Q*, 100 f. However, the argument in Luke 6:22–35 includes several arguments that belong to the most ancient Jesus tradition. According to P. Hoffmann, *Vom Freudenboten zum Feuertäufer* 96–97 it undoubtedly belongs to the most ancient Jesus tradition. See also G. Theissen – A. Merz, *Der historische Jesus,* 335 f.

91 Compared with the Matthean version, this is the more original wording. Cf. also Gos. Thom. 54 and see J. M. Robinson, *The Critical Edition of Q,* ad loc.

It follows that the early Christian term "gospel" ("good news") may be influenced by the teaching and proclamation of Jesus (he used the verb or the noun derived from the root *b-ś-r* as it was used in Isa 61:1 ff.), even though in the Septuagint we find only the verb *euangelizomai,* and the Greek expression *euangelion* entered into the Christian religious language predominantly as the Easter gospel. The gospel of Jesus, the gospel of the coming kingdom of God, became the preform or presupposition of the Easter gospel and, as we shall see, influenced the written Gospels. However, our interpretation of the role of *euangelion* does not depend on the reliability of this thesis.

(Another eschatological gospel [*euangelion*], but still like Isa 61:1, is proclaimed in Rev 14:6–8: all creation has to fear God. The "good news" here is identical with the proclamation of the Last Judgment. Only the presence of Jesus as the Lamb of God makes this proclamation of the gospel different from the message of the great prophets of ancient Israel.)

The problem of the basic difference in the content between the gospel of Jesus and the post-Easter formulae (see the end of § 2 above) has not been resolved but rather has become more acute. For our further investigation it is important to realise that the main problem is the striking difference between the gospel of Jesus and the post-Easter gospel, or, to express it better: between the gospel of Jesus and the Pauline understanding and theological development of the post-Easter gospel. It was only the appearance of the literary Gospels that balanced the one-sidedness of the post-Easter gospel and introduced a complex literary work of a new kind, integrating, among other elements, the oral gospel and the gospel of Jesus. Before we analyse the origin of the literary Gospels, we have to clarify the Pauline concept of *euangelion*.

4. The Pauline Gospel

4.1 EUANGELION in Pauline Theology

4.1.1 Paul as seen by liberal researchers

The liberal and early post-liberal critical research recognised and described the striking absence of some typical elements of the Jesus traditions in the letters of Paul.

Nevertheless, as we have demonstrated, Paul took the term *euangelion*, together with its content, from an older tradition. In this respect he cannot be considered the second founder of Christianity, as was maintained by some liberal theologians in the 19th century, represented by William Wrede. According to Wrede, Paul replaced the moral teaching of Jesus by the dogmatic Christology of the Church.[92] In our days this view is maintained by Burton L. Mack ("His [Paul's] gospel really may have been his own construction")[93] and has been adopted by some contemporary schools of thought in the History of Religion field.

This opinion was expressed in a more general and abstract form in a lecture by Martin Kaehler (Kähler) in 1892 entitled "The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ". "Historic" here does not mean "historical" in the sense of a descriptive history, but rather "historic" in the sense of an event as a challenge. This is the Christ of the Easter gospel. Kaehler deduced the dominant position of the Easter proclamation from the fact that it was considered by the first Christians as Jesus' rehabilitation by God. This was more important for them than all the traditions from his earthly life. Thus Kaehler called into question the relevance of the Jesus Research. In short: the true Christ is the preached Christ.[94] In our following discussion we will examine this problem and look for methodologies for its solution.

92 W. Wrede, *Paulus*, 90.

93 B. L. Mack, *The Myth of Innocence*, 98 f.

94 M. Kähler, *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ*. Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1964, 40, 42.

4.1.2 Paul as servant of the gospel

Paul derived his own apostolic authority from a divine vocation (a special private revelation) to proclaim the gospel of God.[95] As an apostle he was "set apart" to fulfil this task (Rom 1:1).

The content of the gospel was the Easter message of the resurrection of Jesus. We have already mentioned that Paul insisted on the gospel (*euangelion*) in the sense of the post-Easter proclamation of Jesus' resurrection as the only way to salvation. In terms of its function, the emphasis shifted from the formula to its originator – to God as the Creator and his power (*dynamis* – Rom 1:16) – on the one hand, and to its impact – the re-birth of those who accept it in faith –on the other (1 Cor 4:15). The gospel is coming in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction (1 Thess 1:5). This is still a possible echo of Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God. A quotation from Isa 52:7 (culminating with the proclamation of God as the Lord) in Rom 10:15 supports the conclusion that Paul consciously presented the Easter proclamation as the fulfilment of Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God.[96] *Euangelion* is thereafter salvation (*sōtēria*) anticipated in the present (Rom 1:16; 2 Cor 6:2).[97]

4.1.3 The incarnation and death of Jesus as the basis of human hope

In this concept, the central role of Jesus was emphasised, as it had already been emphasised in the Easter gospel, in which he himself became a part of the gospel that was proclaimed. Paul elaborated this intention theologically, especially in terms of the death of Jesus, as it is already understood in the formula of the gospel in 1 Cor 15:3 ("Christ died for our sins"). In one of his metaphorical statements Paul explained the death of Jesus as a sacrifice for the sake of others (2 Cor 5:21 or Gal 3:13). He may have had in mind Isa 53:4–6 as the scriptural basis. Because of Jesus' substitutionary death, all who believe in him as the Christ may pass muster at the Last Judgment, may be released to freedom as the

95 P. Stuhlmacher, *Das paulinische Evangelium*, 70 f.

96 H. Merklein, Zum Verständnis des paulinischen Begriffs "Evangelium," in H. Merklein, *Studien zu Jesus und Paulus,* 275–295, here 287.

97 P. Stuhlmacher, *Das paulinische Evangelium*, 107: "To sum up this concept (of the gospel by Paul) we have to say that the Pauline gospel represents the revelatory power and reality of the Age to Come" (transl. P.P.).

righteous ones, and may become members of the messianic people. A reflected expression of the meaning of the death of Jesus for other people is that his life culminated in his (sacrificial) death for the good of other people.[98] Some of the Pauline statements were later transformed into the teaching about justification by grace – one of the programmatic articles of the reformation in the 16th century. In this context Jesus plays the role of a martyr, whose death has a redemptive power and a cosmic dimension. His birth is conceived of as a descent from heaven. The third step was that he would come back to earth again at the end of this age, and the fourth was that he was even the mediator of creation. This means that what Jesus represents through his teaching and his life expresses the meaning of the entire universe, of all creation (1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:15 f.; Heb 1:1 f.; John 1:1–5).[99]

Albert Schweitzer in his book *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle (Die Mystik des Apostel Paulus,* 1930) recognised these mythic elements and interpreted them as a transformation of the eschatological expectation of Jesus for the post-Easter period. He supposed that Paul accepted the spatial imagery of the myth as the basis of his theological reflection.[100] This was true only to some degree. For Paul the mystic concept was more a framework for expressing his own religious experience with Jesus as the Lord (*kyrios*). Admittedly, Paul did not interpret Jesus of Nazareth in his teaching and his activities; or, at least, this was not his primary intention. For him the encounter with Jesus was a mediated confrontation with God himself, who in all his sovereignty promised him his protection and authorised him to be his witness (Rom 1:1; 8:38–39).

The soteriological dimension of the incarnation (humiliation "for us" – 2 Cor 8:9; humiliation as the way towards exaltation Phil 2:6–11) is, at the same time, the motif for Christian ethical admonition (2 Cor 8:9–15; Phil 2:1–11, 12–16). Some scholars consider this emphasis on the humility of Jesus as an argument for the fact that Paul was inspired by the traditions about the earthly Jesus. This is very probable, but it is certain that for him the highest expression of humility was Jesus' incarnation and his sacrificial death, the obedient and voluntary descent from heaven (2 Cor 8:9; Phil 2:6–8) which is strikingly different from

98 K. Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens* chapter VI/1; K. Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik* IV/1, 181.

99 We shall discuss Pauline soteriology again in § 6.2.

100 See the chapter Mysticism of Death and Resurrection with Jesus Christ.

the unhappy fall of the Gnostic heavenly Saviour to earth. The words about Jesus' humiliation and humility in Rom 15:3 and 2 Cor 10:1 are to be read in this context. According to Paul the mythically expressed incarnation of Jesus was a better inspiration for human ethics than Jesus as a moral paradigm in his earthly life. This is the reason why only this "passive" part of the "earthly" life of Jesus (the "cross") was mentioned and reflected on by Paul.

This does not mean that in Paul the cosmic myth – the background to the formulae of the gospel – swallowed up the earthly Jesus. Rather it is admirable that Jesus, the crucified one, became the centre of the all-embracing mythical framework. Here we can see the theological basis for the programmatic return to the Jesus traditions about one generation later. Paul demythologized the Christ-myth by linking it firmly to history. It was well known that Jesus was sentenced in Jerusalem at the time of the Emperor Tiberius. In addition, in Gal 1:19 Paul mentioned that he saw James, the brother of the Lord. By using the title Lord for Jesus and combining it with a report about the meeting with his blood-related brother in Jerusalem, Paul subconsciously offered a good illustration for the later teaching on Christ's incarnation and a firm argument for Jesus' historicity. But he was so fascinated by the power of the sacrifice of Jesus, his present influence and spiritual activity, that he did not realise that not only Jesus' humiliation and death are important for human salvation, but also his teaching and earthly activity can be inspiring in shaping individual lives and gaining orientation in human history. The Easter gospel confirmed that Jesus plays the decisive role for human hope and that such a hope can be substantiated by the experience of his new presence and action among Christians. This was the testimony of the Christian faith. For Paul, the attitudes and deeds of Jesus, which represented what was decisive for human hope, would have expressed only a nice idea if the hope had not been rooted in the post-Easter experience. This was the logic of Pauline theology.

4.2 Paul and the Jesus Traditions

4.2.1 Was Paul reluctant to quote the words of Jesus?

For readers of the canonised books of the Bible the one-sidedness of Paul is not so apparent, since they read Paul in the context of narrative texts and Jesus' sayings in the Gospels. But once we realise the situation,

the absence of the Jesus tradition in Paul's letters becomes a serious problem. In his own way Wolfgang Wiefel formulated this problem in 1981 when he recognised the striking difference between the traditions about Jesus as preserved especially in the source Q on the one hand and the Easter gospel on the other. The Jesus traditions were unable to bridge the gap between the activity of Jesus as an eschatological prophet and the postponed eschatological fulfilment.[101] The exposition of this problem is one of the major tasks confronting us when interpreting the gospel.

One hypothetical reason for Paul's reluctance may be that his knowledge of the Jesus tradition was limited. Otherwise he would have quoted Jesus when he preferred faith (*pistis*) to (the ritual of) circumcision. His use of analogy was masterly, but to demonstrate the secondary importance of circumcision as compared with faith as a life attitude, he did not avail himself of the analogy of the priority given to obedience to God over the dietetic prescriptions as proclaimed by Jesus according to Mark 7:15.[102] On the other hand, he may have quoted Mark 7:15 in Rom 14:14a: "nothing is unclean in itself", which is not a fully anonymous allusion since Paul introduces it by saying "I know and I am persuaded in the Lord" (verse 14a)[103] and so we can observe that his knowledge of Jesus traditions, even though it was limited, was still more far-reaching than it might have seemed, and so the problem remains open.

In Gal 1:18 Paul recalls his visit to Jerusalem, where he "got acquainted"[104] with Peter. In Greek the phrase "got acquainted" is expressed by means of the verb *historeō*, which here most probably means "to get information from".[105] He certainly concentrated on Easter and its interpretation in the sense of the oral *euangelion*, as we dis-

101 According to him the bridge was the Passion and Easter-Kerygma transmitted as *kanōn* together with the Jesus traditions: W. Wiefel, Erwägungen zum Thema Jesuanismus im Urchristentum, especially 21 f. He did not reflect on the character of the gospel.

102 E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 11–12, 264–266.

103 U. Luz, The use of Jesus-traditions in the post-Pauline letters and Paul, part III.

104 This is what O. Hofius suggested as a translation of *historēsai Kēfan* in Gal 1:18, *ZNW* 75, 73–85.

105 G. D. Kilpatrick, Galatians 1:18, 144–149; J. D. G. Dunn, The Relationship between Paul and Jerusalem according to Galatians 1 and 2, and idem, Once More Gal 1,18 "*historēsai Kēfan*"; others support the translation "to get known by Cephas" (O. Hofius, Gal 1,18 *historēsai Kēfan*; N. Walter, *Paul and the Early Jesus tradition*, 64–66).

cussed it above. But we may suppose that he also got some information about the life of Jesus and learned some of his sayings, since this was a tradition that was not accessible to him in Damascus or Antioch. In Acts 19:9 we read about his daily teaching in Corinth in the hall of Tyrannus. He may have commented on the various versions of the oral gospel about the resurrection of Jesus, but this could not have filled up all the time.[106] It is also improbable that he would have taught for hours a day what he had learned from Peter during their one encounter in Jerusalem. If we are to judge from his arguments in his letters, he may have spoken about the prophecies and prototypes of Jesus in the Jewish Bible (the Christian Old Testament) and about a new understanding of the Jewish religion from the point of view of the Easter experience of Jesus as the living Lord of the Christian community.

In 1 Cor 7:25 Paul mentioned that he did not have any command from the Lord about virgins. This means that he must have known at least one collection of sayings from which he (probably only from his memory) selected the appropriate ones. They may have been inspired by the Holy Spirit and some of them may have been formulated by early Christian prophets.[107] Their authority was derived from the Risen Lord. But for Paul the Risen Lord was identical with the earthly Jesus, the brother of James (Gal 1:19). Paul must have known several traditions about the life of Jesus. It is self-evident that he knew that Jesus was a Jew (Gal 4:4), that he had brothers (1 Cor 9:5) one of whom was James (Gal 1:19; cf. 1 Cor 15:7), and that he gathered a group of disciples, one of whom was named Cephas/Peter (Gal 2:14; 1 Cor 9:5; cf. 15:5a) and another John (Gal 2:9).[108]

However, he explicitly quoted the "commands of the Lord" only three or four times. In 1 Cor 7:10 (concerning divorce, cf. Matt 5:32

106 According to codex Bezae (D) this was for the equivalent of from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. our time. This does not mean that Paul taught for five hours each day, but rather that he rented the hall for this time, i. e. before the evening lectures of Tyrannus (evidently a philosopher) started.

107 D. E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity* 210, 235, 242, 255 f.

108 For more on this theme see V. P. Furnish, *Jesus according to Paul*, 11–13. An extant knowledge of the Jesus traditions in Paul is assumed, for example, by D. C. Allison, The Pauline Epistles and the Synoptic Gospels, especially p. 25, N. Walther, Paul and the Early Christian Jesus-Traditions, 54, and G. Theissen, Jesusüberlieferungen und Christuskerygma bei Paulus 119–138. See also Labahn, The Non-Synoptic Jesus, in: T. Holmén – S. E. Porter (eds), *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus 3,* 1933–1996, here 1941 f.

par.; Mark 10:11 f. par.) and in 9:14 (the rights of an apostle, cf. Matt 10:10b par.) we find two sayings related to basic problems of the early Church: the problem of marriage, especially marriage between a believer and a non-believer (cf. 1 Cor 7:12–16) and support for those who proclaim the gospel. Paul himself was neither married nor did he need any support from the congregations, so he quoted the word of the Lord as valid in specific situations only. Nevertheless, he rightly interpreted the sayings as a statement on the value of marriage (rather than a commandment) and the necessity to support the proclamation of the gospel financially or materially.[109]

In 1 Thess 4:15 he introduces "in the word of the Lord" (*en logō kyriou*) an apocalyptic saying about the future resurrection of the dead. His understanding of the traditions about Jesus can be illustrated by the text known as the Institution of the Lord's Supper and quoted by him in 1 Cor 11:23–25. He claims to have received (*parelabon*) it "from the Lord", even though he never met Jesus. He must have received this tradition from some of the apostles or other followers of Jesus (as was the case with the gospel in 1 Cor 15:3b-5 according to 1 Cor 15:1). However, he became spiritually convinced about its authenticity and authority through some special religious experience, most probably his conversion at Damascus.

We can find further Pauline allusions to Jesus traditions, such as the word about the thief in the night in 1 Thess 5:2 as an allusion to Luke 12:39 f. (Q), but a reluctance to quote the sayings of Jesus and the absence of references to stories from Jesus' life or to his parables that would provide good illustrations of Paul's theological statements, still remain a problem. It is surprising, since the authority of the Lord would have strengthened the effect of his teaching and preaching.

He could have expressed the activity of Jesus at least in a short summary as in Acts 2:22: "Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonder and signs that God did through him…" Even in the non-Christian pseudonymous "Letter of Mara bar Serapion to his son" (most probably from the beginning of the second century C.E.) we can find short characterisations of Jesus as the "great lawgiver of the Jews" (p. 46). All these images were overshadowed for Paul by the characterisation of Jesus in the Easter gospel as the one who was crucified and raised from the dead by God and also by his messianic titles of Christ (Messiah), Lord (*kyrios*), or the Son of God. Behind each of

109 M. and R. Zimmermann, Zitation, Kontraktion oder Applikation, 96, 100.

these titles we may find a story in which the title played a role, but for the Christians the definitive confirmation of their validity was the proclaimed resurrection of Jesus.

This means that the decisive reason for the infrequent references to the words of Jesus in Paul cannot have been the difference in literary genres nor the fact that Paul may have supposed that his addressees would have had a knowledge of the Jesus traditions, but it was his deliberate theologically motivated reluctance to use Jesus traditions in his argumentation. We do not appreciate this problem, since we understand Paul and the Jesus traditions in the Gospel as a complementary whole because of their common appurtenance to the Christian canon. We shall demonstrate that Mark in his book on Jesus reconciled these different traditions, which was an admirable theological achievement – by no means self-evident.

4.2.2 The reasons for Paul's reluctance

When discussing Paul's reluctance to quote the sayings of Jesus and the reflective parts of his teaching, the reasons are predominantly theological:

1) One could be Jewish monotheism, which Paul took seriously and which allowed him to proclaim the commandments of God, the Lord himself. Only Jesus who was raised from the dead by God could be considered his trustworthy representative. That is why Paul stressed the role of Jesus as the one who achieved his position through an act on the part of God.[110] On the other hand, we have to take into consideration that at the time of Jesus there were already Jewish teachers (Hillel, Shammai) whose interpretation of the Law and concrete admonitions were transmitted as important for life.
2) Another reason is linked with the Easter experience and the Easter gospel, which changed the concept of the coming kingdom of God as proclaimed by Jesus. According to the post-Easter "doubled" eschatology human lives take place in the time span between the death and resurrection of Jesus on the one hand and the Age to Come on the other. Some of God's promises were already fulfilled. The Messiah is already known, he is even accessible through prayers, but his

110 G. Theissen, *Die Entstehung des Neuen Testaments*, 100.

full presence and the establishment of his kingdom are a matter of the eschatological future, of his second coming. Instead of the message of Jesus, his promises, expectations and deeds, it was now he himself, his life story as a whole, including his resurrection, which moved into the foreground. The Announcer became the Announced one. His story, connecting earth and heaven, guaranteed the future he proclaimed. This did not devalue the Jesus traditions and it cannot fully explain the absence of Jesus traditions in the letters of Paul. However, it changed the priorities of the Christian proclamation in favour of the Easter gospel. This will be even more apparent in the absence of narratives about Jesus in Paul.

3) One reason for Paul's reluctance to quote the sayings of Jesus must have been the fact that the collections of sayings of the Lord did not offer instructions for all the problems that arose in the Christian groups and communities (see the argument of Paul in 1 Cor 7). And even if he had possessed a collection of sayings of Jesus covering most of the problems, he would not have decided to regulate moral issues in a casuistic way. Paul's personal decision of faith was based on the application of Jesus' attitude towards humankind as expressed in his Love Commandment. In his eyes this was sufficient to resolve social and inter-personal problems (see Phil 2:1–14). Such an attitude was implied in the Easter gospel.
4) Some sayings of Jesus are alluded to anonymously. The reason why some words of Jesus were re-interpreted and others avoided can be found in the spiritual re-interpretation of the Jesus traditions by some Christian prophets who interpreted their Easter experience in a different way from Paul.

In 1 Cor 4:6–13 Paul argued against those who experienced salvation in their present spiritual conversion. They assumed that they would overcome all troubles by suppressing their earthly needs and focusing only on the promises in Jesus' beatitudes. This can be deduced from a mirror reading of Paul's polemics against them: they are filled (satiated, not hungry), they are (spiritually) kings (heirs of the kingdom of God), wise etc.[111] The beatitudes of Jesus are being alluded to here (Luke 6:20–22/Matt 5:3–5), but the understanding of them corresponds rather to the sayings of the "living Jesus" from the Gospel of Thomas.

111 See J. M. Robinson, Kerygma und Geschichte im Neuen Testament, in Koester and idem, *Entwicklungslinien durch die Welt des frühen Christentums*, 21–66, here 41–43.

According to these sayings the kingdom of God is already present (log. 3, 22, 49 or 82) and the resurrection is not proclaimed because it has already (spiritually) happened (log. 51): "Whoever finds the meaning of these words will not taste death" (*Gos. Thom* log. 1 = *Papyr. Oxyrh.* 654, 1–5[112]).[113] Paul refused such purely spiritual interpretations of the divine promises as influenced by the religious atmosphere of the late Hellenistic period. From the second century onward they found their expression in the Gnostic movement and here they can be called pre-Gnostic.

4.2.3 The religious situation

Historically *Gnosticism* was of non-Christian origin, though it shared some features of spirituality with the post-Easter followers of Jesus, and in this way it infiltrated Christianity. This was most likely the position of those who denied the resurrection of the dead in 1 Cor 15:12 ff. They were not representatives of an ultra-apocalyptic clique according to whom the resurrection applied only to those who would still be alive at the imminent second coming of the Lord and the cosmic transformation connected with the establishment of the Age to Come. Paul had such people in mind in 1 Thess 4:13–18. Those who denied the resurrection in 1 Cor 15 were rather representatives of a pre-Gnostic religiosity. They were not sceptics who denied any hope at death, since they obviously did not deny the gospel in 1 Cor 15:3b-5.[114] They were people who simply denied the resurrection of the dead, since according to them the true (i.e. spiritual) resurrection had to be experienced in this life before death.[115] Death was, according to them, only liberation from the body. This purely esoteric, spiritual understanding of salvation corresponds to the position of the opponents in 1 Cor 4 and, more than a hundred years later, was attested in the *Gospel of Philip* from Nag Hammadi (*NHC* II/3; 56:15b-20). There we find a bitter criticism of those who maintained that the Lord died first and then

112 Translation "Berliner Arbeitskreis für Koptisch-Gnostische Schriften".

113 Similar spiritual tendencies likewise influenced the Gospel of John, in spite of its different theology: "…anyone who hears my word and believes in him, who sent me, has eternal life, and does not come under Judgment, but has passed from death to life" (John 5:24).

114 See J. Becker, *Auferstehung der Toten im Urchristentum*, 72–75.

115 W. Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (4th part), 113 f.

rose (56:17–19). According to the Gospel of Philip, the correct sequence is resurrection – death. Death cannot do any harm to those who have already been (spiritually) raised from the dead. Such an interpretation of the sayings of Jesus the "Lord" was not an exception as can be attested by a warning in the letter of Polycarp from the first part of the second century:[116] "Whoever misinterprets the sayings of the Lord according to his own and denies resurrection and Judgment is the firstborn of Satan" (*Polyc.* 7:1). This was the most important reason why Paul was reluctant to use the traditions of Jesus' sayings and preferred to adhere to the Easter gospel.

Since the Jews expected the Messiah from the family of David to be a deliverer from foreign domination and Jesus was confessed as Messiah, many of the Jewish Christians understood his Messiahship as liberation from enemies in a purely spiritual sense. This is the reason why soon (from the end of the first century till the mid-second century) many Jewish Christians accepted pre-Gnostic and Gnostic ideas. If Jesus is the Messiah, his messianic kingdom must be a purely spiritual reality. In Epiphanius (died 403 C.E.) we read about a Jewish-Christian group of prophets who legitimized their teaching by saying "Christ has revealed this to me" (*Pan.* 30:18:9). In this way the two fronts of Paul's opponents – the Judaists and the pre-Gnostics – were brought close to each other.

The consequence of our argument is that Paul was reluctant to quote the sayings of Jesus because he was afraid of their misinterpretation. He distinguished the attested resurrection of Jesus from the expected resurrection of other humans at the end of this age (1 Cor 15:23)[117] and he elaborated the "doubled eschatology" of the Easter gospel. History is, according to him, a period of active patience, a time of expectation and testing the faith, a time of "living honourably" (Rom 13:11–14). Since everybody has to struggle against sin until the end of their life, no one can judge others ("do not pronounce Judgment before the time" – 1 Cor 4:5). The eschatological salvation will be a social and cosmic event (Rom 8:18–24). Those who interpreted the mes-

116 H. W. Kuhn, Der irdische Jesus bei Paulus als traditionsgeschichtliches und theologisches Problem, 316 f.

117 A survey of the discussion about the concepts of resurrection among Paul's Corinthian opponents was presented by G. Barth, Zur Frage nach der in 1Kor bekämpften Auferstehungsauslegung. The possibility that these opponents were those who understood the resurrection as having already (spiritually) occurred is, however, the most probable one.

sianic expectations as having already been fulfilled, obviously argued against Paul by quoting the sayings of Jesus with their own prophetic interpretation. The same practice of his opponents that caused his reluctance to quote the sayings of Jesus may lie behind his re-interpreting some of the sayings of Jesus on his own apostolic responsibility, quoting them anonymously or avoiding using them.[118] His theology was, in principle, built upon the firm basis of the Easter gospel. Paul interpreted the life of Jesus from the point of view of his death and his raising from the dead by God. And he understood all the ethics of Jesus from the point of view of the Love Commandment, which, according to him was represented by Jesus' descent from heaven to the human world (2 Cor 8:9). He would not have been able to put forward the concept of the literary Gospels in the same way as Mark did. However, his interpretation of the Easter gospel with the "not yet" of the eschatological fulfilment was able to create a need for orientation in history and so it was an indirect presupposition for the re-introduction of the Jesus traditions in catechesis and the liturgy.

According to Paul Christians gained the boldness to address God as *Abba* – Father from the Holy Spirit (Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15), who was closely linked with the resurrection (Rom 1:3–4, see above § 2 *Jesus Christ the Lord*). In spite of this, the Lord's Prayer, the only part of the Jesus tradition transmitted orally down to the present time, represented with its openness toward the kingdom of God a piece of the Jesus tradition in Pauline communities.

It was very probable that in several Pauline congregations the collection of sayings called Q was known and used. If Mark was influenced by Pauline theology (see below § 6.2) and was used in Pauline communities, the shape of the Gospel according to Luke and Matthew reveals that, in the eighties, Mark and Q were both used together in various Christian communities. This is a very indirect (and somewhat anachronistic) argument which may support the tendency towards a harmonizing explanation, but once we are aware that the Christian canon in its complex structure was not yet in use at that time, we realise even more how serious is the problem of the mutual relationship between the Jesus traditions and the Easter gospel in Pauline theology.

118 It is not helpful to suppose that he quoted some sayings of Jesus without indicating the source since the addressees of his letters knew them by heart from his catechesis (so P. Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments I,* 304).

4.2.4 The problem of Christian prophecy

Christian prophets felt entitled to interpret, select, combine and reproduce pieces of Scripture or Jesus tradition from memory, and to apply them and comment on them according to their prophetic inspiration and insight into the needs of the community and the given situation.[119] Paul considered himself to be an apostle first of all, and then a prophet, and he supposed that the gift of prophecy, at least in terms of the topical interpretation of the Jesus traditions and the Scripture, was part of his apostolic mission. Early Christian prophets did not only speak about topical issues under the influence of divine inspiration (like Agabus, who predicted famine all over the world – Acts 11:27; cf. 21:11), but their function was also that of inspired interpreters of the Scripture and, especially, the sayings of Jesus.[120] Unlike speaking in tongues (*glōssolalia*), prophecy (in the Pauline terminology) was not ecstatic but rather a rational and theologically reflected reading in the given situation.[121]

In 1 Cor 13:2b Paul even took a well-attested radical saying of Jesus about faith moving mountains (Mark 11:23parr.; Matt 17:20 [Q]; *Gos. Thom.* 48), and subordinated it to the Love Commandment,[122] since some of his opponents considered extraordinary and supernatural abilities to be a sufficient legitimation for their authority in Christian communities.

In Rom 13:9 and Gal 5:14 Paul quoted the Love Commandment as "the fundamental principle and fulfilment of the Law".[123] The exhortation "to overcome evil by good" in Rom 12:17–21 is probably a Pauline re-interpretation of the commandment to love one's enemies taken from the Jesus tradition (Luke 6:27–36parr.) or, even, of the exhortation not to resist the evildoer (or the evil – *tō ponerō* in the Greek text; it

119 See D. E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 245, (a balanced conclusion); cf. M. E. Boring, *Sayings of the Risen Jesus*, 110; 225 P. Pokorný, Words of Jesus in Paul, 520 ff., 534. We may call this a creative prophetic transmission. In the Old Testament some themes of the prophet Isaiah were reinterpreted by the Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah (Isa 40–66). This was admitted even by Scandinavian scholars like S. Byrskog, who insist on the continuity of traditions in the Bible.

120 M. Eugen Boring, The Continuing Voice of Jesus, 154, 270–274.

121 U. Luz, Die korinthische Gemeindeprophetie im Kontext urchristlicher Prophetie, 284 ff.

122 Cf. G. Theissen, *Die Entstehung des Neuen Testament als literaturgeschichtliches Problem,* 98.

123 Th. Söding, *Das Liebesgebot bei Paulus*, 210 f.; Luz, The Use of Jesus-traditions in the Post-Pauline letters and Paul, part III.

may be translated in both ways), which may have been understood as capitulation in the face of injustice.[124] He places the commandment in the wider context of suppressing the power of evil (or the Evil One). Incidentally, this is in accordance with an important saying about Jesus' exorcisms in anticipation of the kingdom of God (Luke 11:20 [Q]). He does not say that this is the commandment of Jesus as the Lord, probably because he changed the wording using his prophetic authority.

It may help us to compare Paul's use of the sayings of Jesus with his quotations and allusions to the Scripture. He also acted in the freedom of the Spirit in this area ("Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom", 2 Cor 3:17; cf. Gal 5:1). His application of Scripture was based on one single point – its fulfilment in Jesus Christ and the impact of his death and resurrection on the Church. His Bible exegesis was "not overt but allusive",[125] as is the case with his Israel-Church typology in 1 Cor 3:1–6, which is full of allusions to Exodus combined with individual references to prophets, or the discussion of the problem of Law and Faith in Gal 3. However, the difference is that Paul was acquainted with Jesus' sayings through oral teaching only, whereas he knew the Law from reading it or from hearing the reading of the written text. In both cases the Easter gospel determines the interpretative tradition.

4.2.5 The absence of narratives about Jesus in Paul

Paul was reluctant to quote the words of Jesus. What may be more surprising is that his theology of Jesus' cross and resurrection (his gospel) excluded any narratives about the life of Jesus. In his letters we do not find the parables of Jesus, not even a story from his life, nothing about his healings and miracles, the disputations with his opponents, how he approached sinners or wandered through Galilee. This fact is so striking that we have to offer at least some explanation, differing from the reasons we have given for Paul's reluctance to quote the sayings of Jesus.

124 P. Pokorný, Römer 12, 14–21 und die Aufforderung zur Feindesliebe. . . , 109–110.

125 R. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the letters of Paul*, 155 f.; cf. U. Luz, The Use of Jesus-traditions in the Post-Pauline letters and Paul, part III.

1) It may be that, particularly in Mark and the Lukan special traditions, such narratives framed Jesus' sayings as stories related to his typical activities (they were known as chries [Gr. *chreia*], pronouncing stories, apophthegms or paradigms).[126] Apparently, Paul mostly learned about the sayings from collections of sayings which did not contain the descriptions of the (typical) situations in which such words were pronounced ("Concerning virgins, I have no command from the Lord" – 1 Cor 7:25).[127]
2) The "novels" (short stories mostly dealing with Jesus' healings and other miracles) were theologically rather suspect, since Paul must have known them from the folklore tradition, adapted as legends. In the second part of the 20th century several scholars formulated a hypothesis according to which in Early Christianity there was a special group that based its faith on Jesus' miraculous power, Jesus as the divine man (*theios anēr*).[128] Paul hesitated to mention the miraculous healings and other wonders that belonged to the Jesus tradition, since he feared that they could become an external support for Christian life, overshadowing the faith: "For Jews demand signs…" (1 Cor 1:22a). This may have been the consequence of his theological orientation. For that matter neither Q, nor the Matthean special material, nor the Gospel of Thomas contain narratives about miracles.[129]
3) The emphasis he placed on Easter as the rehabilitation of Jesus by God and the validation of his whole work (for Paul, Jesus' work was, in fact, the incarnation culminating with his death on the cross – Phil 2:6–11) changed the whole perspective in which Paul saw Jesus. In 2 Cor 5:16 he said that Christians no longer knew Jesus "according to the flesh" (*kata sarka*). The "according to the flesh" does not apply to the earthly Jesus, Jesus as a human

126 See § 5.2 below.
127 J. Schröder, *Von Jesus zum Neuen Testament*, 98 ff., supposes that collections of isolated sayings (*logia*) are a secondary phenomenon and the living Jesus tradition always combined narratives and sayings.
128 T. J. Weeden, The Heresy that Necessitated Mark's Gospel, 146 ff., suggested interpreting some of the features of Markan theology as polemic against the adoration of Jesus based on the Hellenistic idea "divine man" (the miracle worker and exorcist). This may also have been the case with some Christians in Corinth.
129 C. Breytenbach, Das Markusevangelium als traditionsgebundene Erzählung?, 95 f.

being, but to the fleshly knowledge of him, to the view of Jesus that does not take into consideration his resurrection and exaltation.[130] The Risen Lord validated all Jesus traditions. Nevertheless, this caused the earthly Jesus to be undervalued to some extent. Bultmann emphasised this viewpoint in an exaggerated and clear way: The earthly (*kata sarka*) Christ does not concern us.[131]

4) We may interpret the tension between the Easter gospel on the one hand and the proclamation and the story of Jesus on the other as a temporary problem of different kinds of tradition and different genres of literature: the narrative one in which the memory of Jesus survived, and the kerygmatic or catechetic one which includes the oral gospel. Ulrich Luz wrote: "Letters are part of an ongoing communication between two partners and normally not an initial communication. In an ongoing communication a lot of information is presupposed. The genre of texts is an important vessel, but also a limitation for the transport of information."[132] Luz also mentioned the fact that in the Johannine community, there is a similar difference between the epistles and the literary Gospel of John.[133] Indeed, when reading the epistles (in fact only 2 and 3 John are real epistles), we would never suppose that the same community (or even the same author) would also produce a Gospel.

In spite of all these arguments, the gap between Paul and Jesus, as attested by the early traditions, still remains a mystery to some extent. What we can say for certain is that this mystery is connected with the overwhelming experience of Jesus' new impact on his followers after his crucifixion. The key that unlocks the mysterious code is the resurrection of Jesus as the revelation of God's wisdom, by which he demonstrated his intention and his definitive power on Jesus (1 Cor 1:24).

For Paul, Jesus was primarily the proclaimed Saviour and not so much a teacher who represented divine philanthropy in daily life.

130 J. B. Souček, Wir kennen Christus nicht mehr nach dem Fleisch, passim.
131 R. Bultmann, Zur Frage der Christologie (1927), in: idem, *Glauben und Verstehen I*, 101.
132 U. Luz, The use of Jesus-traditions in the Post-Pauline letters of Paul, part IV.
133 Ibidem, part II.

4.2.6 An inner analogy between Paul and the narratives about Jesus

We know that in spite of Paul's reluctance to quote the words of Jesus and the gap in Pauline use of Jesus traditions, the traditions of Jesus, in the end, influenced the liturgy and the life of the Church and shaped the canon of the Christian bible in a decisive way. To some extent this was contrary to Paul, and we may feel a certain tension between the two parts of the New Testament – the Gospels and the letters of Paul. It is, in some respects, a paradox that Paul calls the oral Gospel *euangelion* and the four narrated biographies of Jesus with their vision of the coming kingdom of God bear the same designation. According to Rudolf Bultmann, the expected Age to Come is already present in Pauline theology through the fact that the crucified Christ is proclaimed Lord and Saviour.[134]

However, there are some common elements in the gospel proclaimed by Jesus and the gospel attested by Paul. We can trace the inner links between the two general concepts of *euangelion* in early Christian literature. When comparing the common points of the structure and intention of both versions of *euangelion*, the interpretation of Christian faith by Paul is surprisingly not so very different from the intention of the narratives about Jesus that we find in the Gospels. For Paul, too, Jesus in his incarnation and death represents the grace of God, which will be revealed at the time of the eschatological end of this age.

Eberhard Jüngel devoted his well-known monograph ("Paulus und Jesus", 1962) to the problem of the theological relationship between Paul and Jesus. Both Jesus and Paul construct their soteriology (build up their hope) on the eschatological intervention of God. In this context, eschatological intervention means an action fulfilling the final good intention of God in his relationship with humankind. With Jesus it is the eschatological future (the kingdom of God) that qualifies the present as the time of (the acceptance of) salvation, whereas in Paul it is the past (the death and resurrection of Jesus) that opens the future as the time of hope.[135]

As we have seen, Paul interprets the individual commandments of the Mosaic Law from the point of view of the Love Commandment

134 R. Bultmann, Die Bedeutung des geschichtlichen Jesus für die Theologie des Paulus, 211.

135 E. Jüngel, *Paulus und Jesus*, 272; cf. P. Ricoeur, Biblical Hermeneutics, 136.

(cf. Rom 13:8–10 or Gal 5:14 with Mark 12:31par.). For Paul, loving one's neighbour has its source in the love with which God loves humankind. In Romans he introduced his exhortation to love as the strategy for the struggle against evil by an appeal in the name of the mercies of God (Rom 12). Paul seems to have alluded to the love of God here as it was mentioned in the Jesus traditions (cf. Luke 6:27–28, 32–36 [Q]); *oiktirmones – oiktormōn* may be a Lukan re-interpretation of the Q text from Matt 5:48 – an interpretation of a Jesus tradition from the viewpoint of Pauline theology. This confirms the inner analogy between Paul and Jesus.

Paul's theological intention based on the Easter gospel and his insistence on the future fulfilment led him to a similar concept of hope as is represented in the Jesus traditions. The reason is the inner analogy between the Easter gospel and the Jesus tradition in their view of the future fulfilment, in spite of their different narratives and source of hope.[136] *This openness toward the future fulfilment was missing in the spiritual pre-Gnostic piety of Paul's opponents and also, most likely, in the teaching of some of his disciples who shared with him the emphasis on Easter as a new beginning.*[137] *The other opponents in Galatia were obviously Jewish Christians, so that Paul had to engage in polemics on two fronts,*[138] *but both these (for Paul) dangerous movements drew close to each other in a comparatively short time on the basis of a spiritual, a-cosmic concept of salvation.*[139] *On the other hand, Paul and the Jesus traditions were later integrated into the literary Gospels on the basis of their common commitment within history as the way towards the horizon offered by God. It was not the number of Jesus traditions in the traditional movement that was decisive, but rather the degree of social responsibility and the common horizon of human lives and history in its entirety.* This orientation eventually led to the integration of the Easter confession and the Jesus traditions. The integration itself was a first-class theological achievement.

From the discussion with his opponents in 1 Cor 4:1–13 it follows that Paul was familiar with the beatitudes, and from the instruction on

136 R. Bultmann understood the analogy rather as the consequence of a similar understanding of human "self" in its relation to the world ("Jesus and Paul", 193 ff.).

137 This is why Paul, with his different theological orientation, was attractive for Gnostics: See E. Pagels , *The Gnostic Paul*, passim.

138 See the classical study by W. Lütgert, *Freiheitspredigt und Schwarmgeist in Korinth*. 7.

139 G. Strecker, Judenchristentum und Gnosis, 277 ff.

unconditional love for one's neighbour in Rom 12:9–21 it also follows that he knew the commandment to love one's enemies. We know both of these units of tradition from the Sermon on the Mount/on the Plain (Matt 5/Luke 6). In the first case Paul, when contrasting his apostolic poverty, thirst and weakness, with his opponents' feelings of being kings already, rich and satiated, obviously criticized their spiritual experience of perfect salvation. He considers himself poor and weak, but his firm hope is in the (second) coming of the Lord (1 Cor 4:5). This is stated explicitly in 1 Thess 1:10: the one, whom "we" already know as the Son of God, rescues us from the coming "wrath of God" (the Last Judgment). Here the span of time between the appearance of Jesus Christ and the eschatological salvation plays a similar role to that of the span between the present blessing of the poor and their promised rule in the kingdom of God.

The three formulae of the *euangelion* are influenced by the Jesus traditions. The ecumenical federation of groups mentioned in 1 Cor 15, who verbalised their Easter experience as the resurrection of Jesus, used the eschatological concept of the resurrection, as did Jesus (and, obviously, also John the Baptist), and as it was translated into Greek and later took on a fixed form in the literary Gospels (Mark 12:25par.; Luke 14:14; cf. Mark 12:18par.). Even though they transformed the concept of resurrection by declaring one person (Jesus) to have risen before the time of the general resurrection, the "firstborn from the dead" and the key person for the rest of Christian history, most of them assumed that a certain period of time would still remain between the resurrection of Jesus and the eschatological salvation.

So the analogy between the general structure of Jesus' proclamation and teaching on the one hand and the Easter gospel on the other is, to a large degree, dependent on the Pauline reflection on the Easter proclamation. Paul reflected on the fact that God exalted a simple man of Galilee who was sentenced to death on the cross and who empowered his followers to proclaim his new presence and the eschatological hope represented by his story.

The problem of Paul and te traditions about Jesus arises from the fact that Paul experienced the post-Easter visions of Jesus as the Risen Lord in such an intense way that the THAT of his new presence overshadowed the WHAT and HOW of his teaching and his activity. The resurrection of Jesus as Christ and Lord (*kyrios*) was, in his view, a guarantee of hope for all who are linked with him by faith even in THEIR humiliation and death.

4.3 Social Background

The Easter gospel that was firmly rooted in the resurrection of the earthly Jesus and still never omitted the eschatological horizon, influenced the social structure of the early Christian communities and rectified the tendencies towards an a-cosmic orientation of piety.

Pauline communities represented a specific social phenomenon. In Israel, religion (the cult of YHWH) was basically bound to an ethnic group and the kings were considered as representatives of God (see Ps 2 or 110). The prophets could, in the name of God, to whom they promised obedience, warn the kings and the officials of Israel against injustice (Jer 26), and the people against self-evident trust in the unity of nationality and faith. They called for a conscious decision in favour of faith in the one God. In the first century B.C.E. the Jews even lost their limited political rule and preserved only an unstable autonomy under Roman rule. In the diaspora their social position was not much different from that of the other new religions. The situation of the adherents of Jesus as Messiah was even more complicated. Already in the time of Paul of Tarsus they were expelled from several synagogues, and after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. the Pharisaic movement dominated the synagogues even in the diaspora and the Christians had to separate from Israel. Christians became Christians by decision, through their faith. In this respect, they resembled the groups of adherents of new (mostly eastern) deities and their mystery cults in particular. And yet the ambition to create a social structure corresponding to the inner intention of their faith still remained. They did not oppose the structures of the Roman Empire, but they created an alternative culture, an alternative social space, in which they the key events of their life took place.[140] Such an alternative space, although it may be considered a dangerous phenomenon, offers an inspiration for society as whole. The social solidarity of early Christians was greater than in other religious (cultic) associations. Among other examples of this we could mention the collection for the poor in Jerusalem (see e. g. 1 Cor 16:2), and the social solidarity misused by devious characters, as satirized by Lucian, the Greek author of Syriac origin from the second century C.E., in his *Peregrinos* 11–16. In fact it documents Christian social sentiments. In this respect the church preserved a part of the social heritage of Israel.

140 For the alternative culture (counter-culture) see § 6.3 (*The Son of God and other titles*).

This is also reflected in the self-designation of the Christian communities. In less than two generations from the beginning of Christianity, Christians adopted the Greek self-designation *ekklēsia* (the translation used in the Septuagint for the Hebrew *qāhāl* – the assembly, i.e. of God's people). It is first attested in the Pauline milieu (1 Thess 1:1; for the whole of the church 1 Cor 15:9; Col 1:18). In Greek, the religious associations, based on the conscious choice of their members, were mostly called *thiasos, eranos* or *leschē*. The Christians opted for *ekklēsia*, not for the term *synagōgē* – another translation of the same Hebrew word and designation of the same phenomenon. The choice of *ekklēsia* was intentional. In the Greek setting *ekklēsia* ebrew word also meant a public assembly of the free citizens of a Greek city, called together by an official announcer (*kēryx*). Thus the emerging Church was saying that its proclamation, the *kērygma,* had a public implication, open for all: "…this was not done in a corner" (Acts 26:26b). This was a marker distinguishing the Church from the mystery cults, and was specific to the Christians.

This is why Christian communities became an influential minority within society in the Roman provinces, and in the city of Rome they united a wide spectrum of social groups and classes including a large number of slaves.[141] They expanded over a large territory, mostly in provinces that were not occupied by Roman legions (belonging under the authority of the senate).

The proto-Gnostic groups of Paul's opponents lived as internal factions of the Jewish synagogues or penetrated into the Pauline (Corinth) and other Christian congregations (Alexandria). They did not participate in the leadership of the Christian communities of former Jews and former pagans as members, but they considered themselves to be the spiritual core of each such group and ridiculed the bishops and deacons who were their representatives (*Apoc. Pet. NHC VII, 3;* 79:21–31).[142]

It was the Easter gospel which helped the Pauline communities and the main stream of Jesus' followers and sympathizers to build up a new confidence in Jesus after his expectation of the imminence of the Last Judgment was not fulfilled, and which inspired the specific social structure of the emerging church.

141 See P. Lampe, *Die stadtrömischen Christen*, 121 ff.
142 Cf. K. Koschorke, *Die Polemik der Gnostiker gegen das kirchliche Christentum*, 64.

The necessary consequence was that Christians had to formulate theologically their attitude towards the pagan governing authorities. This is a special chapter of early Christian history and theology. Here we will confine ourselves to mentioning that, in accordance with the gospel, Paul exhorted Christians to accept earthly rule as the instrument of a preliminary justice, and to accept rulers as people whom they should also love. However, the reason for this was not the will of the rulers, but the commandment given by the one true God himself (Rom 13:1–10). This means that the highest authority is God himself and the rulers depend on him and obviously are also subject to his judgment. In 1 Pet 2:13–14 earthly rule is explicitly described as a human institution (in Greek *ktisis* – creation; cf. Rom 13:1).[143] These were problems that were unknown in the Jewish Bible (our Old Testament), apart from the texts relating to the period of Babylonian captivity. A certain analogy can be found in the instruction in Jer 29:7: "But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare." A similar attitude towards earthly power is expressed in 1 Tim 2:1: "I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity". At the present time, after the great (and probably necessary) experiment with the whole of society as *corpus christianum*, the question of the Christian attitude towards non-Christian rulers and systems of rule has become a topical one once again. The early Christian attitude is derived from an orientation in history rooted in the gospel as the revelation of God's good will in Jesus and looking forward towards the eschatological coming of the "kingdom of God". Consequently, the relationship to earthly rulers is also derived from and conditioned by confidence in God.

4.4 "Good news" in Deutero-Pauline Texts

The context in which *euangelion* occurs in Deutero-Pauline letters confirms that it was the key term in the proclamation and teaching of the later Pauline tradition, too. In 2 Tim 2:8 we find a paraphrase of the

143 B. Blumenfeld, *The Political Paul* (JSNTS 210), 378 f., called this tendency, already visible in Romans 13, a secularisation of the state.

gospel from Rom 1:3–4 described as "my gospel," i. e. a living heritage of the Apostle.

Three new motifs and connotations became associated with the gospel in the post-Pauline period.

With the progress of time, as the apocalyptic expectation disappeared from the centre of Christian hope, the role of the gospel as the guarantee of (personal) heavenly salvation (eternal life) came to be stressed more (Col 1:5; Eph 1:13 f.; 2 Pet 1:4; 2 Tim 1:10; cf. 2 Thess 1:8).

However, the strengthening of individual hope was formulated against the background of the universal validity of the gospel, which applies to both Jews and pagans (*ethnē*, Hebr. *gōjīm* – Eph 3:1–6), and even to the whole of creation (Col 1:23; cf. Rev 14:6). This was regarded as a special mystery. It was derived from the formulae in which Jesus was seen as the mediator of creation (Col 1:15 f.; Heb 1:1.2; John 1:1–5), and which are already attested by Paul (1 Cor 8:6), but it developed into a special chapter of Christology. Some texts, like the hymn in Col 1:15–20, were commented on by the author of the letter and thus re-adapted for use among those Paul was addressing.

The third new development in Paul's sayings, as in 1 Thess 2:2 or Phil 1:13, is the necessary risk of suffering for the sake of the gospel (2 Tim 1:8; cf. 1 Pet 4:17–19).

All these developments demonstrate how the basic nucleus of the gospel was open to re-interpretation.

4.4.1 The prospect

The next document we need to discuss is the Gospel of Mark. It is almost contemporaneous with the Deutero-Pauline letters to the Colossians and Ephesians, but it includes older traditions. In addition, as we have mentioned above, it represents a link between the oral Easter gospel and the literary Gospels. However, before we deal with Mark, we have to examine the Jesus traditions. They were overshadowed by the Easter gospel in the Pauline letters and are therefore accessible only in an indirect way. For the reconstruction of the role of these oral traditions (and most probably also a few written ones) prior to Mark, we have to use later writings (the other canonical Gospels, and writings from the first part of the second century up to the time of Justin Mar-

tyr), which may have conserved and reflected something of the pre-Markan situation. We know that the Jesus traditions and their documentation survived at least one or two generations after some of them were incorporated into the written Gospels and became an important part of the Christian liturgy.

5. The Survival of the Jesus Traditions before Mark

In this chapter we would like to describe the pre-history of the Jesus traditions – the majority of the content of the written (literary) Gospels. In the time in which we are interested, these traditions had not yet been incorporated into the Gospels. In this sense this chapter deals with the Gospels only indirectly. On the other hand, since the Jesus traditions represent the majority of the content of the Gospels, they constitute a material of primary importance for our theme.

5.0 The general character of the Jesus traditions

The problem is that the traditions about Jesus, which go back about twenty years further into the past than the earliest letters of Paul, are mostly accessible only as a part of the literary Gospels – texts that originated about fifteen years after the letter to Romans. The reason was, first of all, the fact that the Jesus traditions – narratives and sayings – were transmitted predominantly orally throughout their "hidden period". In addition, the school of "form criticism" has demonstrated that the oral tradition includes an element of creativity and does not preserve the text as reliably as most written texts do. In the traditions that were incorporated into the literary Gospels the element of creativity is increased by the impact of the Easter experience.

We know that the Jesus tradition was orally transmitted in pieces corresponding roughly to the size of individual pericopes, connected by various features, ranging from connection by time sequence (then, next day, etc.) to theological logic (e.g. the prediction of suffering after Peter's confession of Jesus as Messiah in Mark 8:27–33). Human memory, unless it is trained and reproduces texts that are poetically shaped in an epic metre,[144] is able to retain only small isolated text

144 This is valid from the time of the Homeric epic until the present in some rural cultures, as demonstrated by A. B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales,* 124 ff., even if the recited versions are never identical (ibidem p. 125). It is inappropriate to apply

units for a longer time.[145] Even these memories gradually become mixed with fantasy.[146] Interrelationships between individual sayings or stories disappear from human memory after a short period. That is why the Gospel writers had to create a framework for the story of Jesus that enabled them to interpret the tradition in the light of their Easter experience, of their faith in Jesus as the revelation of God's will.

In addition, most of the Jesus traditions were originally a re-telling of Aramaic sayings or narratives and, before they reached the first Gospel-writer, who was evidently "Mark" – i. e. the author of the Gospel according to Mark – they were translated into Greek.[147] Since the inhabitants of Galilee were mostly bilingual, it is possible that some parts of the tradition were re-told in Greek by the original hearers. And it is very probable that Jesus himself spoke Greek. His hometown of Nazareth was one hour's walk from the predominately Greek-speaking city of Sepphoris – the centre of South Galilee in the time of his childhood. If the crowds from the Decapolis did indeed follow him (Matt 4:25), he must have spoken to them in Greek,[148] since after the Roman conquest of Palestine in 64 B.C.E., the Decapolis rejected Jewish influence, which had violently been imposed on them by the Jewish Hasmoneans. In spite of all this, we have to suppose that the majority of the tradition was translated into Greek at the time when the number of Greek-speaking Jewish Jesus-people increased and early Christianity extended into the Greek-speaking territories (beginning with Antioch on the Orontes and Alexandria). On the other hand, there is no persuasive evidence that the Aramaic influence on the language of the Gospel exceeded the average amount of Semitisms in the Greek spoken in the Mediterranean by both Jews and pagans.[149]

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the laws of rhythmic orality to the Jesus traditions, see W. Kahl, review of A. B. Baum, Der mündliche Faktor, in: *ThLZ* 135 (2010), 47–49.

145 Cf. the rabbinic tradition; on this discussion see P. Pokorný – U. Heckel, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 324–329.

146 V. Karbusický, *Anfänge der historischen Überlieferung in Böhmen*, ch. 1.

147 Reconstructions of an Aramaic Pre-Mark are however dubious, see J. H. Charlesworth, Can one Recover Aramaic Sources Behind Mark's Gospel? 257 f.

148 See S.E. Porter *Criteria of Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research,* 126–180.

149 M. Reiser, *Syntax und Stil des Markusevangeliums,* 160 ff.

5.1 Reconstruction in retrospect

5.1.1 Jesus traditions that survived in the liturgy

It holds true for most of the Jesus traditions that their transmission was controlled by regular use on fixed occasions in the life of the Christian communities – in their liturgy and teaching.[150] The price for this transmission, in some respects a more conservative one, was a partial accommodation of the traditions to the needs of the communities. This was a substitute for their explicit interpretation. Such an adaptation by transparent retelling of some stories and sayings enabled the Christians to read them as a direct instruction or exhortation for their life. The same aim could have been reached by using the Christian sociolect in their reproduction: resurrection in the sense of re-animation (the daughter of Jairus – Mark 5:41–42) became a prototype of the resurrection from the dead to eternal life; the teaching of Jesus was transmitted as a model of Christian catechesis which is, in the preserved texts, clearly linked with the Easter gospel. There may have been other principles for interpreting the older traditions (the Messiahship of Jesus, conformity with prophecies, dualism), but their interpretation from the viewpoint of the Easter gospel was the most effective, and it survived in the literary Gospels.

Sometimes the adaptation was quite profound, and some of the sayings presented as words of Jesus were individual sayings of Christian prophets that were formulated in the name of Jesus as the living Lord. Nevertheless, almost all of the Jesus traditions have some, at least indirect, relation to Jesus. They did not originate *ex nihilo*. In addition, the advantage of the institutionalized tradition is that we know the general tendency of all the adaptations and we also know what we have to abstract when reconstructing the older strata.

From what we have said, it follows that an investigation into the Jesus tradition prior to the canonical Gospels has to be linked to a reconstruction of the communal life of Jesus' followers who gradually emancipated themselves from the synagogue and became Christians. This was the subject of the research carried out by "Form Criticism" in Germany before World War II, as represented by Martin Dibelius[151] and Rudolf

150 K.L.Schmidt, *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu*, VI: "The oldest Jesus tradition is dependent on cult and therefore metaphoric and trans-historical."

151 M. Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*, ch. I

Bultmann.[152] Form Criticism did pioneering work in the investigation of the survival of the Jesus traditions in the time before they were incorporated into the Synoptic Gospels. They used some of the findings and insights of folklore studies concerning the workings of human memory and, since we have no testimonies for that period, they concentrated on the analysis of the literary form of small units of the text of the Synoptic Gospels. In 1919, Karl Ludwig Schmidt convincingly demonstrated that the general structure or scheme of the canonical Gospels was a secondary creation of the Gospel writers.[153] Bultmann and Dibelius supposed that the shape of these small units was influenced by the needs of the liturgy and catechesis of the Christian communities. The repeated use of such small orally reproduced texts on special occasions – their position and function in the life of the community (in German "Sitz im Leben") – can to some degree be traced through the analysis of their grammatical (number, person, mode) and literary structure (lexical and stylistic level, modus, subgenre).

Form Criticism underestimated the theological and literary achievement of the Gospel writers that was evaluated by Redaction Criticism, which started in the middle of the 20th century. Dibelius consciously attached little importance to historical analysis, and so reading his book on Form Criticism of the Gospels, we sometimes get the impression that the community not only adapted but even created the pericopes. In spite of this, the methodology of Form Criticism shed the first light on the hidden pre-history of the Gospels. An especially useful feature was the way it redistributed the individual parts of the Gospel to the literary "forms" (modalities) in which they survived before being incorporated into the Gospels. Some of these forms, like short sayings, parables or prayers on the one hand and, for example, disputations (polemic dialogues), legends (narratives related to real persons developed in a popular laudatory sense) and extant narratives from history (with legendary elements) on the other hand, were well known, but the definition of an *apophthegma* (Bultmann) or *paradigma* (Dibelius) was a step towards a better understanding of an influential unit of the Jesus tradition.

An *apophthegma* is a saying (of Jesus) framed by a short narrative, as was the case of the Greek *chreia* – a form in which we often find an abbreviated expression of the teaching of philosophers. The denotation

152 R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*. For his approach see the introductory paragraph.

153 K. L. Schmidt, *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu*, 17.

paradigma or "Pronouncement Story" refers to the same phenomenon but from a different point of view. The saying is the key to the story; the story illustrates the saying in the same way as a story narrated by a preacher illustrates the text of his sermon. The problem of the historical origin of the two parts and their combination lies outside the scope of the form-critical view. They may be original or secondary, but what is important is the meaning that the teller or witness intended to share with the hearer or reader.

By analysing the structure and function of the *apophthegmata,* we can trace the tendencies of interpreting and reshaping the individual pieces of tradition: they were selected, combined and adapted. For example, the two-act story about the calling of Levi (Mark 2:13–14 + 15–17) combines two sayings of Jesus: one is a parable which would not be understandable without the story ("Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick" – verse 17a), the second is a saying which summarises the whole of Jesus' endeavour ("I have come to call not the righteous ones, but the sinners" – verse 17b). Since the individual units of tradition were narrated separately (the pericopes of the Scripture are still being read in a similar way today), most of them have a tendency to allude to the whole of Christian existence as it developed from the Easter gospel. In this case the "come" in the second sentence may and should be related to Jesus' coming into this world in accordance with the teaching of his pre-existence and as it had already been presented in Paul (1 Cor 8:6; Phil 2:6–7), not only to his coming into Levi's house.

The individual forms of tradition as described by Form Criticism are mostly constructs that are rarely clear-cut. Dibelius admitted this, and on several occasions he gave the same pericope as an example of two different forms. Even the story about the calling of Levi is a *paradigma* combined with a short disputation. Some of the combined units are linked together by the same temporal and geographical location, for example the "Day in Capernaum" in Mark 1:21–34.

For example, the story of the sinful woman is a *paradigma* extended into a dialogue. It circulated in several versions and the one in Luke 7:36–50 is most likely the oldest one. After the woman had anointed Jesus during a table fellowship and the host was upset, Jesus told a parable, commented on it and concluded it with several important sayings such as "…her sins, which were many, have been forgiven, since she has shown great love…..Your sins are forgiven…Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (verses 47–50). The post-Easter adaptation is very

slight here: The faith (*pistis*) that Jesus may have understood as confidence in his deeds in anticipation of the kingdom of God was, in the post-Easter communities, understood as Easter faith – an attitude of openness and confidence in God based on the experience of Jesus' resurrection as we interpreted it above. – The other version as represented by Mark 14:3–9 and the parallel in Matthew and partially also in John is located in Bethany and in his answer Jesus mentions that the woman has anointed his body beforehand for its burial. The act of love is transformed into an act incorporated into the story of his death for the sake of others – the story has been adapted to the Easter gospel.

As the second and last example in this context, I would like to mention the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen in Mark 12:1–12parr. This has an interesting parallel in the Gospel of Thomas logion 65. The Gospel of Thomas is a collection of Jesus' sayings fully preserved in the Coptic translation only (Texts from Nag Hammadi, codex II/2). In the present version it originates from the mid-second century, but the core of the collection probably already existed at the end of the first or at the beginning of the second century. The compiler of the Gospel of Thomas knew some of the Synoptic Gospels, quoted from them, and added some sayings of Jesus in a radically spiritual adaptation (transformation). But in several cases it is possible that he presents the sayings (parables) in a version that is older than the ones in the Synoptics. In Mark the owner of a vineyard sent his servants and eventually his own son to the tenants in order that he might collect the fruit belonging to him, but the tenants beat and killed them. The parable is an allegory of Jesus as the Son of God and the Messiah, as the crucified Lord of Israel, the vineyard of God. This is confirmed by a quotation from Psalm 118:22 f. at the end of the story.

The version from the Gospel of Thomas (log. 65) seems mysterious since it concludes with the killing of the son and seems to yield to the injustice. Recently a new translation[154] has won favour: the text of the damaged papyrus may be read so that the owner of the vineyard was not a "good man" (in Greek *chrēstos*) but a "usurer" (Gr. *chrēstēs*).[155] The

154 Already considered (but rejected) in 1974 by B. Dehandshutter, La parable des vignerons homicides. . . see the list in the Bibliography. This is the translation of the Berliner Arbeitskreis für Koptisch-Gnostische Schriften; for the interpretation see U.-C. Plisch, *Das Thomasevangelium,* 171–173; P. Pokorný, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Thomas,* 11–114.

155 Coptic used many Greek words.

Coptic translation preserved here the Greek expression. Then the wording of this version is better understood: The farmers do the work and the usurer receives the fruit. He exploits them. But he does not realise that his human planning is flawed. The farmers revolt against him and he loses not only his possessions, but also his own son, who was his heir and his representative and for whom he had accumulated the possessions. The resistance of the farmers is not evaluated, since this was outside the scope of the parable. Its intention was to demonstrate how uncertain and unstable a greedy life based on accumulating possessions is. This corresponds to the other similar sayings and parables of Jesus, e.g. the parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:13–21), which also has its impressive short parallel in the Gospel of Thomas (log. 63). If this is a true interpretation and the Gospel of Thomas preserved an older version, it would mean that some texts underwent considerable transformations during the course of their being handed down in the Christian communities. We have to admit that this argument may seem suspect, since an older version is found in a newer text. We have to be very careful in such cases. But here some findings support our conclusion: in the Gospel of Thomas there are also other sayings that are preserved in a form that is obviously older than those in the Synoptic Gospels. They represent a minority of the 114 sayings, but they are not exceptions. For example, the Parable of the Sower in Mark 4:1–9 appears in logion 9 without the allegorical explanation applied to the life of Christian communities which is to be found in Mark 4:13–20. Unlike in the parable, which tells the hearers that the power of the kingdom of God, even if shared only by a minority, is stronger than all the various weapons of Satan, the allegorical interpretation concentrates on the individual reaction of various people to the (Christian) proclamation of the Word (the *kērygma*). This would have been an appropriate form for spreading the teaching and piety of the dualistic groups that used the Gospel of Thomas. If we do not find this explanation in the Gospel of Thomas, it means that the version of this parable used by the author of the Gospel of Mark is a post-Easter addition.

We have already mentioned the tendency to group several units into collections that we can reconstruct from the Gospel of Mark. This was mostly for teaching purposes. H.-W. Kuhn described several such collections:[156] Disputations or polemics (Mark 2:1–3:6), parables (4:1–34), parenetic apophthegms (10:1–45) and miracle stories (4:35–6:52).

156 H.-W. Kuhn, *Ältere Sammlungen im Markusevangelium*, 47 and passim

Our investigation and discussion in these paragraphs demonstrate that the material for the Gospel of Mark and the other canonical Gospels was passed on in smaller units. Many of them were already combinations of several elementary parts: clusters of sayings (mostly arranged according to the themes or at least catchwords), locally concentrated stories (the day in Capernaum – Mark 1:21–34), stories related to the same event (the complex of the Passion Story), etc.

5.1.2 Transformations of the Jesus tradition before Mark

In the previous paragraph we reviewed the form-critical attitude and the methodology used in the critical examination of the Jesus traditions in their post-Easter setting in the early Christian communities (we can call it, at the risk of oversimplification, the "ecclesiastical" setting.). We used some of the generally accepted results of Form Criticism and placed them in a diachronic context. This is not in full accordance with the main intention of Form Criticism, which concentrates on the relationship between the Jesus traditions and their ecclesiastical setting, but it is not contrary to it. Form Criticism investigates the text units in a synchronic way in order to define their function in the pre-literary layer of the Gospels. All the protagonists of Form Criticism, especially K. L. Schmidt, were also interested in the diachronic dimension of the problem.

We found that the Jesus tradition was "disciplined" predominantly by the Easter gospel and reflection on it. As we have seen, this meant a good deal of reinterpretation, but it was a transformation that can be recognised as such. The Jesus traditions were subordinated to the Easter gospel as prefigurations, predictions, or allegories of it, or even as its primary part (the Passion Story). This does not mean that the Jesus traditions were totally re-shaped. Many parts survived untouched because of their inner authority or because they fitted the needs of the community without adaptations being necessary. But the overall horizon in the autosemantic (i. e. understandable without any additional information) lexemes, clusters of sayings and legends was always linked with the Easter gospel. On the other hand, the Jesus traditions played only a secondary part in terms of the programme of the Easter gospel and of Pauline theology which is based on it. Later we shall attempt to evaluate it theologically, but already at this stage we can draw useful consequences from comparing the forms of the Jesus tradition that were

selected by the Gospel writers with those that survived through apocryphal channels.

The extra-canonical Christian literature which has survived comes almost exclusively from Christians of pagan origin or pagan ancestry, whereas the canonical books of the New Testament were written by Jewish followers of Jesus; only "Luke" was probably originally a God-fearer (*sebomenos* or *foboumenos*) from among the uncircumcised Greek-speaking adherents of the Jewish religion. The extra-canonical Christian literature can mostly be divided into two major groups, which were formed more or less spontaneously and, additionally, were defined by scholars.[157] One group consists of the writings of the so-called Apostolic Fathers, the other group is the New Testament Apocrypha. The difference is that the Apocrypha mostly (without success) claimed that they belonged in the canon and in fact were pseudonymous, which the writings of the Apostolic Fathers were not. The latter mostly bear the names of their true authors and did not claim to be part of the canon. Of the corpus of the Apostolic Fathers, only the apocalyptic text known as The Shepherd of Hermas was a case of liturgical reading for a particular region (Rome) and time (till the third century). The rest of the writings of the Apostolic Fathers are predominantly letters, whereas the Apocrypha are mostly narratives: Gospels, Acts, and Apocalypses.

When analysing the literary level and the degree of theological reflection, we find that the apocryphal Gospels (as well as Acts) mostly[158] belong to a popular category of writings that combine popular piety, miracle stories and the intention to celebrate Jesus on the one hand and to amuse the reader on the other with a dualistic view of the world, ascetic morals and also, occasionally, a genuine sentiment. They promoted the self-identification of Christians as a spiritually privileged minority in a hostile world. Apocryphal stories circulated mostly outside the liturgical reading of the communities. Some of the texts were influenced by the Greek genre of a tale (novel) and have a corre-

157 J. H. Charlesworth, The Fourteen Literary Collections for Studying Early Judaism and Christian Origins, 185.

158 The Gospel of Thomas, as we have seen, is a special case; see U.-K. Plisch, *Das Thomasevangelium*, 24 ff.; P. Pokorný, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Thomas*, 5–10

sponding literary structure,[159] while others spontaneously extended and developed the Synoptic or Johannine narratives.

None of the apocryphal Gospels originated as a whole in the first century, and some of them were composed in the Early Middle Ages. However, they represent a style of celebrating Jesus by a fable-like reproduction of the traditions that may already have existed in the popular traditions in the second half of the first century. Insofar as they reproduce some miracle stories and legendary elements, the canonical Gospels and Acts also belong to this genre and represent the same kind of piety (e. g. Matt 17:24–27; Acts 16:25–34). However, they are mostly framed by a theologically elaborated concept and combined with other kinds of traditions.

Luke probably knew a collection of stories about Jesus that circulated outside the Christian liturgy, but he carefully selected only the Birth Story together with its associated narratives and the story about the child Jesus in the Temple.

Now we can understand at least some of the reasons for Paul's reluctance to use the Jesus traditions and we can admire the Gospel writers for obviously selecting the best of the available material, generally from the older layers.

5.2 Fragmentary Testimonies of Jesus Traditions outside of Mark

The other method of investigating the Jesus traditions before their incorporation into the Gospels is to read carefully the letters of Paul (see §4 above), extra-canonical testimonies, and inconspicuous notes about developing and organizing the tradition in the Gospel, and combine our findings with what we have already described.

159 J. Lukeš, *Raně křesťanská rétorika,* 349 f. (Early Christian Rhetorics; with an English summary).

5.2.1 The Synoptic tradition in the Apostolic Fathers and in the Gospel of Thomas[160]

The emphasis on the authority of Jesus as the Lord (*kyrios*) has its counterpart in the use of the term *euangelion* in the Apostolic Fathers. The Easter experience was considered the reason for his elevation to the rank of Kyrios – the representative of God (YHWH), the heavenly Lord. This was how the tetragrammaton was pronounced out loud (Hebr. *'ādōn).* The argument in Scripture for this was Ps 110:1 "The Lord said to my lord: 'Sit at my right hand…'" Without this scriptural background, in which God as Lord installed the Messiah as the Lord representing him on earth, using the title Lord for Jesus would have been sheer blasphemy to Jewish ears. This new post-Easter use soon penetrated into the Jesus traditions (Luke 6:46 [Q]). It was not seen as a polite form of address only (a Greek version of the Hebrew *rabbi* – my lord, as it was understood in Jesus' time), but as a messianic title.

The oral traditions of Jesus' sayings received their authority as direct commandments and promises of the living Lord. In this they differed from the narrative traditions. The traditions "about" Jesus could not have the same authority as the sayings did. The oral transmission did not disappear after the Gospels were written and it survived almost until the end of the second century.[161] The Apostolic Fathers already knew the Synoptic tradition, but they quoted it freely since they also knew the Jesus traditions from oral teaching, including the Gospel of Thomas or some of the traditions included in it (see *2 Clem.* 12:2 and cf. *Gos. Thom.* log. 22).

The main reason for the preference for the sayings of Jesus in the Apostolic Fathers was the fact that the sayings were the Risen Lord's direct address, as was already the case with the apostle Paul. In the First

160 See a general survey in H. Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 49 ff. We shall concentrate only on examples of sayings that explicitly claimed the authority of the voice of the risen Lord and help us to learn better the material which Mark collected in connection with the gospel of Jesus. Recently the appearance of the study by S. E. Young, *Jesus Tradition in Apostolic Fathers*, has been announced. According to the abstracts, he has concentrated on the influence of the oral tradition. Unfortunately this work was not yet available when the present monograph was being written.

161 This is the general conclusion of the monograph by H. Köster, *Synoptische Überlieferung bei den apostolischen Vätern,* see especially 258: the Apostolic Fathers find themselves in the living flow of tradition.

Letter of Clement, explicit references to the "Sayings of the (Lord) Jesus" prevail over anonymous allusions.[162] In *1 Clem.* 13:1c-2 such a reference introduces a mixture of *logia* included in the Sermon on the Mount by Matthew (Matt 5:7; 6:12, 14 f.; Luke 6:31, 37a, 38a);[163] in *1 Clem* 46:7c-8 ("recall the words of the Lord" – *mnēsthēte tōn logōn Iēsou*) it introduces sayings known to us from Mark 14:21; 9:42 and Matt 26:24.[164]

Didache 1:3–6 introduces a cluster of sayings known to us from the Sermon on the Mount/on the Plain as "The teaching of these words" (1:3) i. e. "of the Lord" (1:1), but all of them are slightly adapted or interpreted through additions.[165] The exhortation of Jesus that we know from Luke 6:27 "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you" is shortened in *Did.* 1:3: "Love those who hate you" and supplemented: "and you will have no enemy". The unconditional commandment was transformed into a piece of pragmatic wisdom. The Roman authorities persecuted only those Christians who were denounced by a concrete person (not anonymously),[166] and so good relations with pagan neighbours might have saved lives. On the other hand, the commandment to love one's neighbour may have been stressed by a parallel addition, in order that the group identity of the Christians might be strengthened: "You shall love the neighbour more than yourself (*hyper tēn psychēn sou*)" (*Barn.* 19:5) or "Love your brother as your soul (*psychē*), keep him as the apple of your eye" (*Gos. Thom.* log. 25).

2 Clem. 9:11 quoted ("The Lord said") the saying that we know from Matt 7:21 (about doing the will of God).

All these texts may be dated to the period between 122–132 C.E. The saying in *Did.* 1:3 looks like an addition of the editor, who linked together the opening (originally non-Christian) teaching about Two Ways of Life (*Did.* 1–6) with the other three Christian parts which go to make up the Didache. This finding illustrates the surviving role of the oral tradition at a time when the Gospels were already quite widely used in Christianity, and it helps us to understand the far-reaching achievement of Mark in composing his biography of Jesus.

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162 Ibidem, part II.

163 For a detailed survey and evaluation of this and the next cluster of sayings from *1 Clem* 46 see H. Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 66–70.

164 See H. C. Lona, *Der erste Clemensbrief*, 496 f.

165 See H. Koester, *Synoptische Überlieferung bei den apostolischen Vätern*, 238 ff.

166 See Pliny the Younger *Ep.* 96 and 97.

The *Gospel of Thomas*, which we just mentioned, included some sayings (all introduced by "Jesus said") that are probably not derived from the Synoptic Gospels but originate in the oral tradition: Jesus struggling (sayings 35, 47, 58, 82), sayings from the social ethics of Jesus (25 and 39) and especially the sayings about the kingdom of God as the eschatological future (log. 54, 57, 63, 64, 76)[167] – valuable evidence about the importance and persistence of the tradition about Jesus as the proclaimer of the kingdom of God. – From the texts in the Nag Hammadi collection we can also add another phrase that speaks about the followers of Jesus as the "generation without a king" (*Orig. World* NHC II/5; 125:2, 6; 127:10–15; cf. Hippolytus *Haer.* 5:8:2) – a valuable testimony to the persistence of the tradition relating how Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God ("kingless realm" (*Orig. World* – NHC II/5; 127:13). It was an old tradition that survived in the Jewish-Christian setting in a radically spiritualized form.

In all these cases the living Lord was the guarantee of the authenticity of the Jesus tradition. However, in Early Christianity such sayings did not represent the purpose of the Jesus tradition in all cases. We have already mentioned that the Christian prophets may have substantially transformed them, and so their authority was often controversial. The members of the Christian communities may have asked whether a person speaking in the name of Jesus was really speaking with his authority. The instructions to test the prophets in *Did.* 11–13 reveal the problems associated with the living oral traditions. This is the reason why the position of the Gospels gradually became stronger. This tendency became visible in the writings of Justin Martyr in the mid-second century and it culminated at the end of the second century.[168] Irenaeus of Lyon was still stressing the oral tradition (*Haer.* 3:4:1–2) as late as the eighties of the second century, although in the Christian Church of his time most of the writings of the New Testament that were later to be canonised were considered scripture with equal authority to those of the Law and Prophets.

The first conclusion from our observations is that the material that Mark collected and transformed into a biography of Jesus and which he wrote with a clear idea about the close relationship between the gos-

167 The sayings about the kingdom of God that are interpreted in the sense of fulfilled eschatology are: log. 3, 81, 82, 96–98 (here: the "Kingdom of the Father".)

168 See § 8 below

pel of Jesus and the gospel as an Easter proclamation was in many cases (a) preserved in small clusters of sayings of Jesus, (b) claiming the authority of the Risen Lord, and (c) the traditions were adapted, translated and sometimes interpreted in a prophetic way during the process.

5.2.2 Only a few traces of the narratives of Jesus in the Apostolic Fathers

The examination of the Apostolic Fathers confirmed in many respects the results of the form-critical examination of the Synoptic tradition before Mark.[169] The only difference is that in the Apostolic Fathers we find the sayings of Jesus more often introduced as the living voice of the Lord (*kyrios*). As for the narrative traditions about Jesus, allusions to them are just as scarce as in Paul.[170] The few exceptions are:

- A short note on the signs (*sēmeia*) and wonders (*terata*) done by Jesus directly linked with the figurative allusion to the commissioning of the apostles to proclaim the gospel (*euangelion*) in the Epistle of Barnabas 5:8–9.
- Allusions to the Passion Story in the same epistle (tractate) in 7:3–6.
- An allusion to the story of the Anointing in Bethany (Mark 14:3) in Ign. *Eph.* 17:1.
- An expanded confession (Lat. *regula fidei*) including the birth of Jesus into the family of David (cf. Rom 1:3), his baptism by John, his death under Pontius Pilate and resurrection in Ign. *Smyrn.* 1:1.
- A report on the encounter with the Risen Christ in Ignat. *Smyrn.* 3:1–3, and instructions obviously relating to the Institution of the Lord's Supper in *Did.* 9:1–5.
- Uncertain allusions.

In addition to this the Apostolic Fathers quote several sayings or verses from the Scripture that come from a story of Jesus in the Gospels (e.g. Zech 13:7, which was included in the Passion Story in Matt 26:31). This may reveal their knowledge of the related stories. Obviously a scriptural quotation was more valid than a written story about Jesus. Nevertheless, the absence of practically any use of stories about Jesus in teaching, discussion or exhortation is surprising. None of the possible

169 Cf. H. Koester, *Synoptische Überlieferung bei den apostolischen Vätern*, 261ff.
170 Cf. ibidem 266.

explanations is fully satisfactory, but together they still help us to go a step forward:

1) The Gospels had not yet become liturgical readings.
2) The model of the Pauline letters that concentrated on the Easter gospel was still effective. It was not only a matter of genre, as it is commonly understood. As we have demonstrated, for Paul it was, first of all, a matter of theology: without the Easter gospel, the Jesus traditions would be ineffective.
3) The most important reason behind all these partial explanations is the discrepancy between the needs of the emerging Church and the proclamation of Jesus: in the Church the acceptance of sinners was linked with the ritual of repentance (the famous Parable of the Prodigal Son, where the Father welcomes the son before he is able to confess his sins, is not mentioned), caring for the sick was rooted in the Love Commandment rather than in the model of Jesus' miraculous healings (which were typical for the apocryphal non-liturgical Gospels and Acts), and the itinerant disciples of Jesus were not an appropriate model for the settled urban Christian communities.[171] Christian communities did not live from the support of their settled sympathizers as Jesus and his disciples did (see Luke 8:1–3); rather, they tried to support the others themselves. This tension could be overcome only after a certain time and by reflection about the meaning and intention of Jesus' sayings and deeds.

Our attempts at explaining the lack of Jesus narratives in the Apostolic Fathers helped us to understand the problem. However, at that time, a wide acceptance of the narrative traditions about Jesus was based on the premise that the Gospel according to Mark and the other Synoptic Gospels already existed. In the time of the Apostolic Fathers these texts were available, but most of the Christian leaders – bishops, presbyters and teachers – did not recognise their validity yet. It took several decades until the impressive theological achievement of the author of the Gospel according to Mark spread over a wide area of Early Christianity, through its liturgy and teaching.

171 G. Theissen, *Soziologie der Jesusbewegung,* 23–26.

5.2.3 The Passion Story

Martin Kähler wrote that the Gospels were, in fact, a "Passion Story with a detailed introduction."[172] This applies especially to the Gospel according to Mark. It cannot be understood as an expression of the theological intention of the Gospel writer but rather as a description of the structure of the Gospel of Mark.

The Passion Story is a large subunit of the Gospel of Mark.[173] Here the pace of the narrative slows down, counted by hours – unlike in the other parts of the Gospel of Mark. If we suppose that Jesus' public activity lasted one year only, three quarters of the text of Mark deal with 363 days and one quarter with his last two days.

The problem of the search for older materials that Mark had at his disposal is that we do not know the form and extent of the Passion Story before Mark. Some scholars doubt the existence of a pre-Pauline Passion Story. According to Burton L. Mack the first (Markan) Passion Story was created from smaller units of tradition and shaped according to the soteriology of Paul, i. e. it presents the death of Jesus as the substitute death of an innocent.[174] Even Raymond E. Brown in his impressive commentary on the Passion Story of the four Gospels and Ulrich Luz in his commentary on Matthew doubt that it is possible to reconstruct the pre-Markan Passion Story, even though they both suppose that such a short, fixed text did exist.[175] In 1 Cor 11:23–35 we have the oldest written record of what is known as the Institution of the Lord's Supper

172 M. Kähler, *Der sogenannte historische Jesus und der geschichtliche, biblische Christus* , 60, note 1 on page 59.

173 An important role in the modern research into the Passion Story is played by the article of M. Dibelius, Das historische Problem der Leidensgeschichte, see especially 249, 251 and 256.

174 B. L. Mack. *The Myth of Innocence*, 262ff; a similar opinion is expressed in most of the articles in the volume *The Passion in Mark*, ed. by W. H. Kelber, especially J. R. Donahue, From Passion Traditions to Passion Narrative, 1–20, especially 20.

175 R. E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 48ff; for a report on the discussion see *ibidem* as an attachment (1492–1524) written by M. L. Soards.; U. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (Matth 26–28)*; 13. For the social background of the pre-Pauline Passion Story see G. Theissen, *The Gospels in Context*, 166 ff. The many hypotheses about a pre-Markan form of the Gospel cannot be substantiated because of the absence of positive evidence; current traces of Markan editing on the one hand and the signs of oral transmission on the other hand are arguments against such a possibility.

– a piece of the Passion Story (cf. Mark 14–15parr.; John 19–20) as a part of the Gospel. At the beginning we read that Jesus pronounced these words "on the night when he was betrayed" (verse 23). This means that Paul must have also known the story of the Betrayal of Jesus by Judas and, most probably, at least the pre-Markan core of the Passion Story. It is not likely that he would have known the story about Judas' betrayal and not known the report about Jesus' trial and his execution.

The indirect evidence for a pre-Markan Passion Story is the superfluous information about Judas Iscariot as one of the Twelve (Mark 14:10), which the reader would have known about from Mark 3:19, or the role of the verb *paradidōmi* (to hand over, betray) in the report about what happened to Jesus between his arrest and his crucifixion (Mark 14:10 f., 18, 21, 41 f., 44; 15:1, 10, 15). If we abstract the pericopes in which *paradidōmi* does not appear, even if it would have been easy to add it, we may have the skeleton of the Passion Story that was at Mark's disposal. What Mark may have added are the opening verses in 14:1–2 (the Plot to Kill Jesus), the Anointing at Bethany (14:3–9), the Prediction of Peter's Denial (14:26–31), the Young Man who Fled (14:51–52), Jesus before the Council (14:53–65), Peter's Denial (14:66–72), the Soldiers Mock Jesus (15:16–20) and the Burial of Jesus (15:42–47). This is only a working hypothesis that illustrates the plurality of the traditions related to the Passion of Jesus and the established plot that existed before Mark. It does not mean that the sections added by Mark are less valuable or a later layer. It only means that they were passed on as isolated units or that they were re-told by the Gospel writer. Traces of Markan redaction are visible throughout the Passion Story and so is his theological intention: the opening of the Passion Story in 14:1–2 is redactional, and a substantial interpretation of the received tradition is visible in Mark 15:21–32 – the pericope about the crucifixion of Jesus (see § 6 below). As a whole, the Passion Story bears many traces of post-Easter confessions, and includes the vindication of Jesus.[176] It is no wonder that it became the pillar of the Gospel of Mark.

The pivotal argument for a pre-Markan Passion Story is the difference between Markan Christology and the traces of another concept of the trial and suffering of Jesus in Mark 14–15. Some features of the narrative are modelled on the paradigm of the suffering of the righteous

176 A. Y. Collins, From Noble Death to Crucified Messiah, 492 f.

(*passio iusti*): godless people despise Jesus and mock him as in Ps 22:7–9 or Wis 2:12–20. The biblical paradigms helped the followers of Jesus cope with the suffering and helplessness of Jesus. Jesus' words "I am deeply grieved, even to death" (Mark 14:34) were prefigured in the fate of the psalmist in Ps 42:6, 11; 43:5; Jesus at the trial expects his vindication by the Son of Man (Mark 14:62). Originally "Son of Man" was not a pseudonymous "I" used by Jesus, but an apocalyptic heavenly being – a real man in the image of God, different from the rulers whose substance was that of beasts, as in Daniel 7. It was the same expectation of the Son of Man as attested in Luke 12:8 (Mark 8:38). The apocalyptic concept of the Passion Story, which aims at the eschatological vindication of Jesus, is also visible in the motif of darkness (Mark 15:33; cf. Joel 3:15) and the loud cry similar to the roaring voice of the Lord from Zion that will announce the justice of the Age to Come (Mark 15:37; cf. Joel 3:16) and signify the coming end of this aeon. All of this is different from the Markan soteriological concept of the death of Jesus as a sacrifice for the sake of sinful humankind, as we shall demonstrate below. Mark integrated both the different interpretations of the Passion Story in a theologically brilliant way. Matthew added further episodes (e.g. Matt 27:19).

An interesting saying commenting indirectly on the way the various pieces of Jesus tradition are collected together, supported by the Easter gospel, is the pericope of the Anointing in Bethany (Mark 14:3–9par.), which we mentioned in § 5.1. The statement that the woman anointed Jesus for burial is followed by another sentence (verse 9) declaring that "whenever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance (*eis mnēmosynon*) of her." This is most likely a Markan formulation, since it was he who introduced the term *euangelion* as the key word into the Christian literary narratives. In terms of the form (a saying of Jesus), it is the gospel of Jesus, while in terms of the content (relation to a world-wide mission), it is the Easter gospel of the early Church of the time of Mark. *Euangelion* became, as we shall see, the overarching structure keeping the whole book of the Gospel according to Mark together. If the story about the Anointing in Bethany had to be narrated together with the proclamation of the (oral) Easter gospel, it means that according to Mark the proclamation of Jesus' resurrection should also be accompanied by stories from his life. It is possible that the Anointing Story was linked with the Passion Story by Mark, but the approach whereby the proclamation is accompanied by stories from Jesus' life obviously reflects the practice

in early Christian worship of that time. The Anointing in Bethany confirms the special role of the Passion Story, which could include various additions and bridge the gap between the Easter gospel and the Jesus traditions. This may have been one of the inspirations for Mark when he extended the Passion Story into a special kind of biography of Jesus.

Some scholars assumed that fragments of an old layer of the Passion Story are preserved in the Gospel of Peter. At the end of the 19th century the Passion and Resurrection Story from this writing was discovered in a Coptic translation in Egypt. The hypothesis that this is an independent witness of the Passion Story was considered by John Dominic Crossan in his book "Four Other Gospels" (1985) and also in his monograph "The Cross That Spoke" (1988). However, Raymond Brown demonstrated the presence of a number of elements (details of the narrative, a description of Jesus' resurrection) that are typical for popular secondary developments.[177] This does not mean that the Gospel of Peter is a secondary combination of Synoptic narratives. Rather, it is a later written reproduction of older testimonies in the style of epiphany stories. For example Jesus' cry of despair on the cross is reproduced as "My power, O power, you have forsaken me!" (*Gos. Pet.* 19).[178]

5.2.4 Mark and source Q[179]

The collection of the sayings of Jesus called Q (the Germans refer to it as Quelle – source) may be the oldest accessible Christian piece of literature, the roots of which may go back to the time of Jesus. Mark may have known it at least in an early written version that had already been composed in Greek. Only the roots of individual sayings go back possibly to the Aramaic layer of the oral tradition. It is accessible to us only through reconstruction. Roughly expressed, it is the double (parallel)

177 R. E. Brown, The Gospel of Peter and Canonical Gospel Priority, especially 340–343.

178 For a translation based on the edition of R. M. James see J. J. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 155 ff.; for more about the Gospel of Peter, which evidently supposes the existence of the other Gospels and tries to overshadow them by the authority of Peter, see: Th. K. Heckel, *Vom Evangelium des Markus zum viergestaltigen Evangelium,* 287–300.

179 For general information see J. S. Kloppenborg, *Q – the Earliest Gospel* or J. Schröter, *Erinnerung an Jesu Wort*e. For discussion, see M. Labahn – A. Schmidt, *Jesus, Mark and Q*, 70–80.

tradition within the Synoptic Gospels. "Double" means that it is preserved by Matthew and Luke only and not included in Mark. The long Synoptic segments of such parallel texts suggest that they must depend upon a common source as the triple tradition depended on the Gospel of Mark. With a few exceptions Q consists of sayings of Jesus: promises, beatitudes, exhortations, parables, allegories, forensic sentences of the divine Law (Q 12:8–10), apophthegms[180] and, exceptionally, dialogues in a narrative frame like The Temptation (Q 4:1–13) and The Centurion of Capernaum (Q 7:1–9).
(We assume that Matthew and Luke depended on Mark and Q. The other explanations of the similarities between the Synoptic Gospels raise more problems than they solve.)

In some cases of the triple tradition, where there are striking internal agreements between Matthew and Luke as compared with Mark, we may suppose that the text was included in Mark as well as in Q and that the other Gospel writers combined the overlapping texts or preferred that of Q, e.g. in the Beelzebub Controversy both Matthew and Luke have an opening passage depicting the situation (Luke 11:14) and both of them omit the words "How can Satan cast out Satan?" from the Markan text. The extent of Q is difficult to determine. The majority of the double tradition must have belonged to it, but what about the sayings and parables that in Matthew and Luke differ even in their intention as is the case with the Parable of the Great Supper (Q 14:15–24), where the Matthean version has a second climax? One theoretical solution is to see Q as consisting only of the textual units that correspond word for word.[181] But such a conclusion would ignore the influence of the oral tradition and the possibility that Q circulated in various versions and was mainly conceived as a help for memorizing and quoting Jesus' sayings, the authoritative form of which was the oral transmission as verbal interventions of Jesus as the living Lord.

In its structure (the sequence of the sayings) Q seems to have several features in common with Mark: John the Baptist – the temptations of Jesus – the core of the Sermon on the Mount/level place – the Beelzebub Controversy – the apocalyptic sayings. However, this may have been caused by the approach used by Luke and Matthew, who associated some of the sayings from Q with the appropriate text units within

180 For a classified survey of the forms used in Q see G. Theissen, *Die Entstehung des Neuen Testaments als literaturgeschichtliches Problem*, 69.
181 S Th. Bergemann, *Q auf dem Prüfstand*, 62 ff.; 229 ff.

the skeleton of the Markan text. The most striking difference is that, in addition to the absence of the narrative framework, the Passion Story (and indeed any notion about the suffering and death of Jesus) is also missing, as is the Easter message. The title Messiah (Christ) does not appear either. Jesus is the coming Son of Man (e. g. Q 17:24)[182] and the powerful messenger of the kingdom of God – his words are the truth of God (Q 7:35; 11:31). The ethic taught by Jesus is not based on moral appeals, but rather on a pragmatic appraisal of a situation in the face of the eschatological victory of God's good will. This also applies to the commandment to love one's enemies (Q 6:27–36).

In terms of literary genre, the source Q resembles the sapiential literature (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Sirach, Wisdom, Jewish (Greek) Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides, 1Clement, Didache etc.), but the Japanese scholar Migaku Sato considers the prophetic books of Scripture as a closer parallel.[183] This is not a substantial problem, since in Q 11:49–51 (cf. *Sir* 24:33–34) we read about sending the prophets by the wisdom of God and in Q 11:31–32 the wisdom of Jesus is praised as the divine proclamation that will be vindicated at the Last Judgment.

The literary shape of Q and its theology are interdependent. Most of the sayings were proclaimed by itinerant radical followers of Jesus in Galilee in their preserved form.[184] Jesus' parables of the kingdom of God in their openness towards the future expressed the kingdom of God in its full presence. The eschatological judgment and the expectation of the Son of Man reveal that the validity of all the wisdom sayings depends on the apocalyptic fulfilment. The apocalyptic dimension cannot be ascribed to the secondary layers only.[185] For the compilers of Q, the words of Jesus possessed such an authority that the prospect of the coming kingdom of God was reliable and trustworthy, even if the full

182 Q is here quoted according to the chapters and verses in the Gospel according to Luke. Q 17:24 denotes the text of Q as recorded in Luke 17:24 + the Matthean parallel.

183 M. Sato, *Q und Prophetie*, 409–411. By contrast, the wisdom character of Q is demonstrated by J. S. Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q,* 317–328.

184 G. Theissen, *Fortress Introduction to the New Testament*, 34 ff. For the sociology of Jesus' movement see idem, *Studien zur Soziologie des Urchristentums* – collected contributions on the theme.

185 B. L. Mack, Q and the Gospel of Mark, 15–27, supposes that apocalypses were part of the later layer of Q. But in view of the character of Q as a collection of clusters of sayings, any stratification of Q is problematic, see e. g. Ch. M. Tuckett, On the stratification of Q, 215 ff.

presence of the kingdom was delayed. The absolute use of the expression "faith" (*pistis*) in the mouth of Jesus (see Luke 7:9; 17:6 or Luke 17:19 and cf. Mark 2:5; 4:40; 5:34; 10:32) expresses this confidence in Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God. In Q the Easter experience is identical with the (new) inner rootedness of trust in the gospel. On the other hand, Q did not accept the soteriology of the dualistic groups as expressed in the later collections of sayings and dialogues with the Saviour, such as the Gospel of Thomas (NHC II/2), the Dialogue of the Saviour (NHC III/5), the Book of Thomas the Contender (NHC II/7), the Apocryphon of John, which must have been a text popular in some scattered Christian groups, attested three times in the NHC codices II/1, III/1 and IV/1, in Berlin Gnostic Papyrus [8502,2], and in Irenaeus *Haer.* 1:29), or the Gospel of the Saviour.[186] According to these writings, salvation consists in accepting the (secret) teaching of Jesus as the living Lord, unlike in Q where the hope is directed towards the prospect of the coming kingdom of God.[187]

It is important for us to know that at the time of Mark there was already an extant written collection of Jesus' sayings and – that Mark did not incorporate it into his book. It is improbable that he did not know Q, since a few years after his book was finished, two independent Christian writers ("Matthew" and "Luke") in two different places were familiar with Q as well as the Gospel of Mark and integrated both of these texts into their books.

Why Mark did not integrate Q into his book, about one third of which also consisted of sayings of Jesus, is not clear. Some scholars supposed that he was influenced by Q or that he used at least some sayings.[188] Indeed, some parts of Mark overlap with the content of Q: e.g. The Commissioning of the Disciples is to be found in Mark 6:6b-13 as well as Q 10:2–12. Luke used both versions, Matthew only one. However, this only means that Mark and Q used (obviously from short oral or written units of the tradition) the same stories or narratives. In some cases the "minor agreements" between Matthew and

186 Also known as *The Unknown Berlin Gospel*; text edition, translation and commentary: Ch. Hedrick, *Gospel of the Saviour*, (later the text has been complemented).

187 J. M. Robinson in the *Critical Edition of Q*, 174, interprets the Greek *ēngiken* (has come near) in the mention of the kingdom of God in Q 10:9 (Luke 10:9) as "… the kingdom has reached you", cf. idem, *Jesus,* 165.

188 B. Weiß, B. H. Streeter, J. Lambrecht, W. Schenk, Der Einfluß der Logienquelle auf das Markusevangelium,160–165.

Luke in the wording of a saying (e. g. the Parable of the Mustard Seed in Luke 13:18–19 and Matt 13:31–32, as compared with Mark 4:30–32) mean that Matthew and Luke took the parable from Q or that they combined both versions. In this particular case, the main difference consists in the fact that Mark concentrates on the contrast between the small seed and the big plant with great branches, whereas in Luke and Matthew the mysterious power of growth is the focus. It is only possible to suppose an influence of Q on Mark if we assume that the Gospel of Mark underwent several revisions.[189] This is a hypothesis which cannot replace the explanation assuming the influence of the oral tradition on Matthew and Luke.[190] It follows that any direct influence of Q on Mark cannot be substantiated.

This means that Mark obviously avoided Q for theological reasons. Being influenced by Pauline theology, as we shall demonstrate in the next chapter, he did not trust the theological intention of the material of Q nor the feasibility of some of the radical exhortations of Jesus from the core of his Sermon on the Mount/Plain, including the exhortation to love one's enemies.

On the other hand, we do not find any traces of a polemic against Q in the Gospel of Mark. He obviously did not consider it dangerous (heretical), and he intended to create a counterbalance to Q with his book, in order that it might not be misunderstood in the sense of a continuing revelation of God in the teaching of Jesus and his instructions that might be, in a prophetic way, applied to new problems that appeared. The Pauline theology based on the testimony of the attested death and resurrection of Jesus was for him a firm basis for hope. That is why he constructed his Gospel with the Passion Story and the message of the resurrection of Jesus as its climax.

The fact that Q had an authority in the Christian communities of that time and also a legitimacy as a liturgical text and a subject of prophetic interpretations helped Mark to decide in this way. It is understandable that when introducing a new integrative literary genre into the liturgy, he avoided any disruption of traditions or conflicts with the given order, in order that his book might spread as quickly as pos-

189 *Ibidem*, 144 f.

190 See J. Schüling, *Studien zum Verhältnis der Logienquelle und Markusevangelium*, 167–187.

sible and become the heart of liturgy, to which all the other parts might be related.[191]

5.2.5 Special Sources of Luke and Matthew

The material from the supposed special sources of Luke and Matthew is not mentioned by Mark. Kim Paffenroth suggested that Luke probably used a written source containing many parables of Jesus originating earlier than Mark, about the same time as Q.[192] The Infancy Narrative is based on popular traditions. The hymnic parts (*Magnificat, Benedictus and Nunc Dimittis)* are part of the psalmodic renaissance of that time; they use various motifs and traditions from the Jewish milieu, but their composition is probably the work of Luke. Matthew had at his disposal Mark and Q and, in addition, he incorporated some parables (20:1–16; 25:1–13; 25:31–46, etc.), a popular miracle story (17:24–27), and sayings (e.g. 6:16–18), which were interpreted in keeping with his concept of the Sermon on the Mount.

5.2.6 The written texts

We have already mentioned two written texts, the core of the Passion Story and Q, in which some of the Jesus traditions were fixed before the Gospel of Mark originated. A very popular text was the Gospel of Thomas, partially depending on the canonical Gospels, but also drawing on individual sayings from other traditions. We have already mentioned it as a document of the surviving oral tradition as well as a testimony to re-interpretations of that tradition, but it cannot be used in our context. The same applies to the Gospel of Peter, which we have discussed in the previous paragraph.

The most important of these written texts is the one found in Papyrus Egerton 2, first published by H. Idris Bell and T. C. Skeat in 1935. A part has been identified in Germany (Papyrus Köln 255) and published

191 The assumptions according to which Mark and Q are one in their theology are unconvincing harmonisations.

192 K. Paffenroth, *The Story of Jesus according to L,* 97, 146–158 /reconstruction 158–165/.

by Dieter Lührmann.[193] Papyrus Egerton is comprised of three fragments of papyrus containing four pericopes: a disputation with Jewish representatives of that time (some sentences resemble John 5), a story about cleansing a leper (cf. Mark 1:40–44parr.), a question about paying taxes to kings (Jesus refuses to answer, cf. Mark 12:13–15), and a miracle story on the bank of Jordan without a parallel in the known materials.

The third fragment contains only a few isolated words.

Papyrus Egerton was at first considered to be a mixture of stories inspired by the canonical Gospels and intended to imitate them. The elements of the text of the canonical Gospels speak in favour of this assumption.[194] However, the early date of the document (as old as the most ancient testimonies to the text of the New Testament) points rather towards a pre-Synoptic collection. Some of the sayings were later used in the Synoptic Gospels, but because non-Synoptic narratives are also included and because it is difficult to find a reason for a post-Synoptic composition of such a collection, a pre-Synoptic origin seems more likely.[195] It is a valuable document, demonstrating that the Jesus tradition was not exclusively transmitted orally, as the form-critical school supposed. Papyrus Egerton was a collection of sayings and short stories without any common framework, but their collector may have had higher aspirations than simply to assist the memory. He gathered materials of different forms and from various Christian tendencies and groups, in order that it might inspire their dialogue and possible integration.

Mark did not include it in his book, but a similar collection may have inspired him to attempt an integrative writing on a higher level – as a theologically elaborated biography of Jesus.

Other fragmentary texts including independent traditions about Jesus are the Papyri from Oxynhyrchus Nr. 840 (about cultic chastity, resembling Mark 7:1–23) and Nr. 1224 (about Jesus' table fellowship with sinners and his exhortation to pray for one's enemies, cf. Mark 2:16–17 and Q 6:27 f), Papyrus Fajjum (Vindobonensis – sayings at

193 For edited versions see Bibliography: Sources. English translation: J. Keith Elliott, *The Apocryphal Gospels*, 37–40; K. Erlemann, Papyrus Egerton 2, 32–34.

194 F. Neirynck, Papyrus Egerton and the Healing of the Leper, *EThL* 61 (1985):153–160; cf. Th. Heckel, *Vom Evangelium des Markus zum viergestaltigen Evangelium*, 308.

195 This is also the result of the lifework of G. Mayeda, *Das Leben-Jesu-Fragment Egerton 2*, 73 ff. and passim; H. Koester, *Einführung in das Neue Testament,* 621.

the Last Supper – cf. Mark 14:27–30) and others, which, however, substantially reinterpreted the Jesus traditions (Jewish-Christian apocryphal Gospels).

By their forms, and irrespective of the dates of their origin, all of these texts represent some individual elements of traditions that have been included in the Markan concept. Their literary fixation was supported by various theological tendencies, but an overarching theological reflection that would be able to maintain an extensive literary plot is not yet recognisable.

6. The Gospel in the Gospel according to Mark

We mentioned at the beginning that the title of the Gospel according to Mark (*euangelion kata Markon*) is secondary, originating roughly in the first part of the second century. Since Mark is the oldest Gospel, this applies to all literary Gospels. Why did these books on Jesus become "Gospels"? In order to answer this question we need to discuss the origin of the Gospel of Mark and its theological presuppositions. Our intention now is, first of all, to understand the inner logic and theology of such a development. This is something we have to keep in mind during all our investigations.

Chronologically, Mark is the first Gospel and its author is the founder of a special literary (sub)genre, characteristic for the Christian Bible. We know the four canonical Gospels and fragments of three or four other Gospels, probably of a similar kind, and a few other writings which usurped the title Gospel (*euangelion*), because they claimed canonical authority.

6.1 A New Literary (Sub)Genre

The decision by Mark to fix Jesus traditions in a literary work corresponds to the role of Scripture in Judaism.[196] His work does not only assist the memory, but it was written with the intention of creating a new literary basis for the followers of Jesus, who saw in him the fulfilment of Jewish eschatological expectations. The switch from an oral tradition to a written text was in itself an important turning point in early Christian history and theology. Some biblical scholars, like Werner H. Kelber[197], consider it a weakening of the original power of the Christian message passed on in a living community. Their doubts are based on the studies of Walter J. Ong[198] and Eric A. Havelock,[199] who analyse the "silence" of the written text that cannot answer the

196 B. D. Schildgen, *Crisis and Continuity* , 67 f.
197 W. H. Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel*, 207
198 *The Presence of the Word*.
199 *Preface to Plato*.

readers' questions, and the fact that neither Socrates nor Jesus, the two pivotal personalities of human culture, wrote anything at all. However, we would not know about them without the writings of those who reported about them and attested their impact.[200] And the Christian communities soon developed liturgical, catechetical and theological instruments that provided substitutes for dialogue in the form of meditation, discussion of the written texts, their application in sermons, and their interpretation in commentaries.[201]

By writing his book about Jesus, Mark made an essential contribution to the proliferation of Christian communities.

6.1.1 Biography

A literary genre includes a set of properties (vocabulary, themes, literary figures) and functions (education, entertainment, information, liturgy) common to all its individual representatives, and helps readers (or hearers of a public reading) to orient themselves in the text. Many 20th-century scholars, especially the school of Form Criticism, refused to interpret the Gospel of Mark in terms of literary genres, since it was considered to belong to the category of popular oral traditions and story-telling, lacking any overarching concept for its structure.[202] However, in the last few decades investigations have demonstrated that it does in fact have a profound literary and theological concept. This entitles us to discuss the genre of Mark, which is not easy, since this book displays many specific features overlapping the definitions of several different genres. However, the specific features of each specific text can be plausibly defined only against the background of a common genre.[203] In this sense the "Gospel" may be characterised as kerygmatic-historical literature,[204] influenced by the Hebrew narrative traditions. Historically and even theologically, this is its true background.

However, since the Gospels belonged to Greek literature from the very beginning (we have no evidence about their older Aramaic layers),

200 For discussion see D. N. Peterson, *The origins of Mark*, 23 ff.
201 See P. Pokorný, *Hermeneutics as a Theory of Understanding I*, § 3.6 and 3.9.1.
202 M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel,* ch. I.
203 For the discussion on the genre of Mark see B. D. Schildgen, *Crisis and Continuity*, 44 ff. and especially D. Dormeyer, *Das Markusevangelium*, 166–185.
204 D. Dormeyer, *Evangelium als literarische und theologische Gattung*, 173–189.

their Hebrew heritage acted as a specific element within the framework of the (Greek) genres of that time. This contributed to their attractiveness. From the literary point of view they may be considered a part of the Late Hellenistic and Early Imperial (about second century B.C.E. – second century C.E.) boom of interest in Ancient Eastern Cultures (Babylonia, Egypt, Phoenicia, etc.). That period produced several important writings that assumed that the East was not spiritually disrupted by Western civilisation. Nevertheless, these texts are still written in Greek and interpreted the Eastern traditions from the perspective of the Greek culture (*interpretatio Graeca*). The Gospels succeeded in interpreting the specific character of the experience with Jesus of Nazareth for Greek-speaking neophytes, but, unlike the earlier literary fixed parts of the Jesus tradition (especially the source Q), they are already part of Greek literature. In Mark the influence of the Semitic narrative is still palpable and the reader feels that the biographical framework is being used to present a unique message. Matthew and Luke adapted the Markan framework so that it fitted in more with the classical scheme of biographies (see § 7), but they stressed the significance of Jesus even more by means of a special combination of Hebrew and Greek categories.

Luke defined the genre of his book about Jesus (later called a Gospel) in general terms as a written narrative (*diēgēsis* – Luke 1:1). It was different from the older fragmentary traditions used in catechesis and the liturgy, and it was not a myth, since it was closely bound together with history. Narrative and account were indeed apt common denominators for both the "books" (Gospel and Acts) in Luke's literary work. This is why the Gospels have been treated as a kind of historiography by some scholars.[205]

Nevertheless, the Gospels would be a very strange historiography and placing them in this category would rather complicate our understanding of them. The concentration on a short period of the last few months (not more than two years) of the life of a personality does not fit the model of a description of history, and the message of the resurrection would make such a story into a classical tragedy ending with a crisis and a divine intervention (*theos ek mēchanēs*; Lat. *deus ex machina*).

This is why the Gospel of Mark and the other canonical Gospels are classified as biographies instead. An exception may be the Lukan writings (the Gospel and Acts). They have a common preface in Luke

205 H. Cancik, Die Gattung Evangelium, 92 ff., 110; J. Moles, Luke's Preface, 462,480 f.

1:1–4, and the book of Acts belongs more to the genre of historiography. Nevertheless, it is strictly limited to the apostolic period and its intention is to demonstrate the initial and ideal impact of the gospel in history. For this reason, the Lukan Work can be considered a text of a specific kind. Nevertheless, comparing it with the genres of biography and historiography can be helpful for its exegesis.

The term *biographia* originated in the fifth century C.E., but writing about the lives (*bioi*) of important historical or semi-mythical personalities had been common since antiquity,[206] and it flourished in the Hellenistic and Early Imperial period. The Gospels could be considered ideal biographies, like the biographies of ideal rulers or other extraordinary personalities. In this case, another parallel to the Gospels would be the Life of Moses by Philo of Alexandria (died between 45 and 50 C.E.). In this text, Moses is depicted as a king, even though he never claimed such a title. The same applies to Jesus in the Gospel of Mark and his proclamation as the Son of God, as we shall see. Other examples of such glorious personalities might be philosophers like Pythagoras of Samos (sixth century B.C.E.), whose life story was written by the Neoplatonic philosopher Porphyrius in the third century C.E., or even the magician Apollonius, whose life was recounted by Philostratus Flavius at the beginning of the third century B.C.E. Moses Hadas and Morton Smith named these and other similar texts "aretalogies"[207] (as an example they also give the Gospel according to Luke). The introduction of a new genre of this kind was not accepted, but what is important for us is that Hadas and Smith collected texts that were comparable to the Gospels in this respect from the non-biblical world. Their typical features and the striking characteristics of this kind of biography are: the extraordinary character of the literary hero, his divine paternity, confrontation with worldly potentates who consider him subversive, and a divine vindication at the end of their lives. To this group we may also add the Parallel Lives of Greek and Roman personalities written by Plutarch (46

206 For the problem of the genre of biography as related to the Gospel of Mark see A. Y. Collins, *Is Mark's Gospel a Life of Jesus?*, especially 11 ff.; cf. A. Dihle, Die Evangelien und die griechische Biographie, 383–411, and R. A. Burridge. *What are the Gospels?* 55 ff.

207 For the characteristics of this genre see M. Hadas – M. Smith, *Heroes and Gods*, 17 f., 72.

– after 120 C.E.) or the Lives of Philosophers [*Bioi*] by Diogenes Laertius (third century C.E.).[208]

Another related genre is the Greek novel, which mostly has a historical setting, but the heroes (lovers or warriors) are ideal personalities. The religious background is, in most cases, a dominant motif (see Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* from the second century, chap. XI).[209] However, the strange combination in the novel of the intention to amuse and the religious dimension does not allow us to consider the genre of the book written by Mark as belonging to this category.

A Gospel as *bios Iēsou* is linked with the genre of biography by concentration on a single important person depicted principally on the basis of memories. This does not mean that these are historically exact memories; it does mean, however, that the narrative relates to history. This is the difference between writing a biography and telling a myth. The Gospel of Mark also has its specific features. It was written for a clearly defined religious group, and yet it was not considered a secret book, since all guests at Christian services were allowed to hear it. The cult of Jesus influenced the intention of the Gospels but the genre remained easily recognisable.[210]

Other specific features of the Gospel of Mark as a biography are its intertextual connections with the Jewish Bible (in the Greek translation of the Septuagint), its themes, attitudes and forms. These features increased the work's likelihood of becoming a liturgical and canonised reading.

Furthermore, it is the influence of the oral traditions[211] that makes the Gospel a special subgenre of biography (Justin Martyr called the

208 For further information see D. E. Aune, Graeco-Roman Biography, 108–110 and especially R. A. Burridge, *What are the Gospels?*, especially 66, 111, 152.

209 B. E. Perry in his pivotal monograph *The Ancient Romances* underestimated this dimension (31 ff.), whereas R. F. Hock, The Greek Novel, had stressed it.

210 For the position of Mark within the genre of biography see R. T. Francis, *The Gospel of Mark:* "His book represents something distinctive within the field of biographical writing in terms of subject, its origin, and the use for which it was intended" (p. 6). According to G. Bornkamm the uniqueness of the Gospels depends on the uniqueness of the Christian *kerygma*, see idem Evangelien, 750; E. Lohse, Vom einen Evangelium zu den vier Evangelien, 69. For the discussion of the genre of Mark as biography see the excellent survey in A. Y. Collins, *Mark* 19–33; cf. 33–52 (the influence of other genres).

211 J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 333, 336, stressed the dependence of the Gospel writers on the oral tradition. We would prefer to stress their critical selection of transmitted texts.

Gospels "Memories of the Apostles," see § 6.3 and 8 below) – a feature that we shall evaluate in the following paragraphs. There was a short span of time between the death of the hero and the time the biography was written.

Another specific feature of the Gospel of Mark within the genre of *bios* is the concentration on the end of the life of the person described, and so it is not a biography in the modern sense. The other Synoptic Gospels included the birth story of Jesus, but the major part of Jesus' life was absent. In spite of this fact, we shall speak about the biographies of Jesus instead of the Gospels, when it is necessary to make the reader aware of the fact that for the first thirty years of their existence the canonical Gospels were not called *euangelion*.

Together with the simple style in which the Gospels were written (see below § 6.5), this made the Gospels a special kind of biography accessible to a broad range of society, including the illiterate majority that heard the Gospel being read in worship. And the fact that all the canonical Gospels share these specific characteristics reveals how far-reaching an achievement it was when Mark wrote his biography of Jesus. That is why some scholars have considered classifying the Gospels as a genre of their own. The problem is that a genre can include various themes and stories (plots), which is not the case in the Gospels. They all deal with the life of Jesus. That is why we speak about the Gospel as a subgenre of biography.[212]

6.1.2 Material and structuring: Editor or author?

We discussed the material that Mark had at his disposal in the previous chapter. Now we will simply add a few short remarks concerning Mark's literary techniques[213] and the structure of his Gospel. From the available material, he selected those units of the Jesus tradition that were used in teaching or liturgy and that he considered characteristic of Jesus. He was quite strict in his selection. He intended to create an integrated whole, bridging the gap between the Easter gospel as interpreted in Paul's letters and the Jesus traditions – an ambitious plan. At the same time, he did not accept Q as a collection of sayings; he con-

212 See A. Dihle, Die Evangelien und die griechische Biographie, passim.

213 In our context we shall not discuss the language of Mark. For this theme see P. Dschulnigg, *Sprache, Redaktion und Intention des Markus-Evangeliums*, 258–352.

sidered it a literary genre susceptible to various misinterpretations since it was not bound together with the life and attitudes of Jesus.[214] He included in his work only shorter collections of sayings of Jesus, like the parables in chapter 4[215] and the apocalyptic composition in chapter 13, which in the context of the Gospel had a new function.

He intended to prepare a book which would enable the readers/hearers to orient themselves in the various Christian traditions – ranging from the individual sayings through Q to the popular narratives of Jesus (the material of the later apocryphal Gospels) which circulated among Christians. For some reason he did not include the Lord's Prayer, although it was already an established part of all kinds of liturgy in various Christian congregations including the Pauline ones (see Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15–16).

He accepted the Passion Story since it fitted into his scheme as a whole, and he hoped that the biography of Jesus would replace the recitation of the Passion Story during Passion Week, in addition to individual parts of it being read at weekly services.

The elementary editorial procedure he used was to create a sequence of the individual narratives, sayings, short tales and apothegms along a time axis. Mark did this in a simple way. He took material from the oral tradition, added a simple "and" (*kai*), sometimes extending it by an indication of the sequence of time ("Then he…", "On the other day") or space ("Jesus came from….to"). The frequent use of the Greek *euthus* (just as, immediately, used in Mark 1:10, 12 until 15:1)[216] stresses the interrelation of the events by marking key points of the narrative. The linear flow of time (*chronos*) is interrupted by indicating the special occasion (*kairos*) of an event influencing a large "space" of linear time.[217] He created larger units by framing one story by another one (known as the "sandwich compositions"), the purpose of which was for each of the stories to influence the interpretation of the other one.[218] This is not only a literary technique. It is also used by Mark to express his theological intentions. For example, the story about the miraculous healing of the woman with a haemorrhage is

214 M. E. Boring, *The Continuing Voice of Jesus*, 271 f.
215 See H.-W. Kuhn, *Ältere Sammlungen im Markusevangelium*, discussed above, in chap. 4.
216 Cf. E. J. Pryke, *Redactional Style in the Markan Gospel,* 87
217 See B. Schildgen, *Crisis and continuity*, ch. 2.
218 See Paul J. Achtemeier, Mark as Interpreter of Jesus Traditions, 342–346.

framed by the story about the raising (re-animation) of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:21–43). Mark narrates the story intentionally in the language of the Easter message, using interchangeable Greek verbs for resurrection (*egeirō, anistēmi*) together with their Hebrew/Aramaic equivalent *q-w -m*. On the other hand, the anointing of Jesus at Bethany is framed by accounts of hostility towards him and the threat of death (Mark 14:1–11).[219]

The whole of Mark, in spite of all his editorial interventions, displays the highest respect towards the traditional units that he used and so the literary "seams" are clearly visible in many places. In addition, the rhythm of the oral narration is preserved and even developed (see e.g. Mark 1:1–8 or 4:35–41).[220] In fact, this indirectly confirms one important part of the report of Papias, according to which Mark set down the memories of Peter in sections, as Peter taught them on various occasions. This is not reliable historical information; however, it confirms that most of the text originates in the older oral tradition, but Mark himself is responsible for the sequence and structuring.

Yet, in spite of his respect for the individual traditional text units, he acted not only as an editor but also as an author: he created a special text-world "in its own space and time, in its own ideological system."[221] He narrates in a simple way, in the third person, inspired by the traditions he used, and he includes comments that help to bridge the gap between the world of the text and that of the readers/hearers (5:41; 15:22). He appears as the omniscient narrator, knowing what Jesus did when he was alone (1:10–11; 6:46–48; 7:33–35; 14:35–36), and even informing the reader about the thoughts of the protagonists (their inner world), e.g. 2:6–8; 3:5; 6:19–20. His "point of view" as a narrator is a complex one – he placed himself simultaneously in different positions.[222]The reader is told who Jesus was from God's point of view (Son of God; Mark 1:11; 9:7), who he was in the eyes of his opponents (14:61 – false Messiah), and also who he was from the point of view of a pagan centurion (15:39 – Son of God = model of the later

219 See J. R. Edwards, Markan Sandwiches, especially 157 f.

220 See esp. J. Dewey, Oral Methods of Structuring Narrative in Mark, 37 f., or G. Lüderitz, Rhetorik, Poetik, Kompositionstechnik im Markusevangelium, 168–176; D. Rhoads – J. Dewey – D. Michie, *Mark as Story*, 39, 73.

221 Boris Uspenskij, *A Poetic of Composition* (1973), quoted after N. R. Petersen, Point of View, 97.

222 R. Rhoads – J. Dewey – D. Michie, *Mark as Storyi,* 41.

Christian confession).[223] In spite of this, Mark the author is also an editor. The inclusion of the Jesus traditions in his book was a part of his intention as an author. Through a transparent re-telling of some of the stories of Jesus, he gave the readers or hearers hints on how to understand them in their own situation.

The allusions to the Scripture are not understood as predictions, but rather as comments pointing towards the divine necessity as expressed by the Greek *dei*. In the Passion Story, the allusions predominantly to the Prophets and the Psalms make the reader aware of its relationship to the eschatological dimension of history: see Ps 42:6, 11; 43:5 for Mark 14:34 or Dan 7:13; Ps 110:1 for Mark 14:62.[224] Here, however, the allusions and quotations may have been introduced during the liturgical use of the Passion Story before Mark. In most instances the Scriptural allusions relate to the story in a very general sense only, and so the Passion Story was not built on the basis of the biblical predictions, except for some details based on Psalm 22. If at the beginning of Jesus' movement the biblical quotations legitimized the expectations of Jesus in the eyes of their Jewish brothers and sisters, later, the biblical quotations illustrating Jesus' story were intended rather to legitimize the Jewish Bible in the eyes of the followers of Jesus who were not linked to the synagogue.

6.1.3 The literary structure

The reconstruction of the structure of ancient literary texts whose chapters and verses were added centuries later is quite difficult. The first problem is a literary one: the boundaries between the individual parts are mostly not clearcut. There are transitory passages between them. In the Gospel of Mark the confession of Peter is clearly a turning point where the story of Jesus starts to develop in a tragic way and Jesus has to cope with imminent danger. The dividing section, however, includes the passage in Mark from 8:27 to 9:13. The other important places in the narrative are the beginning of the Galilean ministry of Jesus in Mark 1:14, the death of John the Baptist (6:14–29, already

223 N. Petersen, Point of View, 108–118.

224 K. S. O'Brien, *The Use of Scripture in the Markan Passion*, especially 68 f.; J. Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark*.

mentioned in 1:14), the Entry into Jerusalem (11:1), the beginning of the Passion Story (14:1) and the beginning of the epilogue (16:1).

6.1.4 The problem of the ending

The Gospel of Mark ends with 16:8. 16:9–20 is known as the Ariston ending (these verses are ascribed to a certain Ariston in an Armenian manuscript), and is found in the manuscripts A, C, D, W and others. The two most ancient codices Aleph and B (*Sinaiticus* and *Vaticanus*), and several other Greek, Coptic, and Armenian manuscripts, end with 16:8, as well as the quotations from the ending of Mark in Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and other Fathers. The most convincing argument for the secondary character of the Ariston ending is the fact that it consists of elements resembling the concluding verses of the other canonical Gospels. – Another addition is known as the Freer-Logion, which is included in the Ariston ending in codex W between Mark 16:14 and 15. A short, third alternative extension following Mark 16:8 is preserved in manuscripts dating from the fifth century. In many manuscripts the additions are often combined or introduced in brackets. This all supports the conclusion that the original intention was for the book of Mark to end with 16:8. The only complication seems to be the fact that at 16:8 the Gospel would have ended with the conjunction *gar* = for, so then. Nevertheless, there are several places where a book, or at least one paragraph, ends with *gar*.[225]

The fact that the Gospel ends with 16:8 cannot be explained by the loss of some letters from the original. The author or his students would not have allowed such a defective copy to circulate. And if it had happened later, some copies of the original version would surely have been preserved. The conclusion is that the original Mark is Mark 1:1–16:8.[226] This will play an important role in characterising the theological intention of this book.

225 P. W. van der Horst, Can a book end with ΓΑΡ? His argument is based especially on Plotinus, *Enneads* V:5 and the end of the pericope in Mark 11:18.

226 The fact that the Gospel ends with 16:8 has been accepted by the majority of scholars. It is not accepted in the commentaries by R. H. Gundry (250) and C. Evans (599). They quote C. A. B. Cranfield, who supposed that a narrative about the appearances of the Risen One was necessary. This opinion is, however, influenced by the model of the other three canonical Gospels.

An open ending is a suggestive literary technique because as soon as it is obvious that something has not been said, the un-said is present as a challenge to the reader and the text is protected against ideological misinterpretation.[227] This seems to be a modern element, anachronistic in the first century. However, the book of the prophet Jonah, the canonical book of the Acts of the Apostles, and smaller text units, such as the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15,[228] have a similar open ending.

The rough structure of the Gospel can be expressed by the literary technique of *anagnōrisis* – recognition – frequent in Greek tragedies (e. g. Euripides, *Iphigenia in Tauris*) and in Greek novels (including the Christian *Pseudo-Clementines /Recognitions*). In this technique, the readers/hearers are invited to follow the story from the perspective of various protagonists in the narrative, and to search for the true identity of the hero. This strategy can be seen in Mark 1:27: "They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another: 'What is this?'" From this point on the readers know that the other people appearing in the Markan narrative are not competent to answer the crucial question. The readers learn the answer from the "other side", from "the voice from heaven" at the baptism of Jesus and his transfiguration (Mark 1:11; 9:7): Jesus is the Son of God. The narrator (the mysterious literary witness who has all the necessary information) supplies the readers gradually with further information which goes beyond what the protagonists, who live "inside" the narrative, could have known, and which they come to realise only at the end (Mark 15:39): "Truly this man was the Son of God." Furthermore, the readers learn more than the fact that Jesus is the Son of God. They learn who this Jesus is, what the true character of the Son of God is, and how he differs from the "false messiahs" (*pseudochristoi* – Mark 13:22). And since the son was at that time entitled to represent the father, the readers/hearers come to know the character of God himself. They were privileged to learn the full identity of Jesus right at the beginning, they know its source ("the voice from heaven"), and they gradually come to recognise the content and the value of this testimony, the authenticity of which is confirmed in the Easter proclamation in Mark 16:6–7. The mysterious fear of the women at the grave of Jesus (16:8) confirms that they experienced the presence of God and the message came from him.

227 See J. L. Magness, *Sense and Absence*, ch. II.

228 For the open ending see J. Dewey, Oral Methods of Structuring Narrative in Mark, 43 f.

Jesus asked his disciples for their opinion of his identity several times (Mark 8:27–29 – the answers were John the Baptist, Elijah, one of the prophets, or the Messiah). Other people also express their opinion about Jesus' identity several times: 3:21–22 (a mad person, one possessed by Evil); 6:14–16 (John the Baptist re-animated, Elijah, the prophet). In 14:61–62 the high priest asked: "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" The first human voice that confirms the double divine revelation of Jesus as the Son of God, as in the formula of the gospel in Rom 1:3–4 or 1 Thess 1:9, is the Roman centurion in Mark 15:39 beneath the cross of Jesus. Here we enter an explicit theological area: the literary form cannot be defined without revealing Mark's theological plot. The best literary structure is one that is connected with the principal idea behind the text; in our case it is the theology of the book about the "beginning of the gospel" (Mark 1:1) written by Mark.

In Mark the recognition is closely bound together with the so-called "Messianic Secret". But this is the theme of another important chapter of Markan exegesis (see below § 6:3).

6.2 The Gospel (*euangelion*) as the Overarching Concept which Structures the Gospel of Mark

6.2.1 Pauline influence[229]

Before examining the theme of this sub-chapter, we have to mention one presupposition that (rightly) plays the role of a "positive prejudice" in Markan exegesis. This is the conviction that Mark was influenced by Pauline theology. The first scholar to introduce this theme in a monograph (1923) was Martin Werner.[230] According to him Paul and Mark (see Mark 10:45) made the death of Jesus on the cross the basis for human salvation. Paul discussed this problem clearly in 2 Cor 5:14–21 and Rom 5:8–11. In both these passages the verb *katallassō* and

229 For this problem see especially J. Marcus, Mark – Interpreter of Paul, passim; cf. M. Bouttier, Commencement, force et fin de l'Évangile, especially 476. They both realised that the Pauline proclamation of Jesus' cross was the theological precondition for integrating the proclaimed gospel with the Jesus traditions.

230 M. Werner, *Der Einfluß paulinischer Theologie im Markusevangelium*, for evaluation see J. Marcus, Mark – Interpreter of Paul, 473 f. 484 ff,

the noun *katallagē* express *reconciliation* as an offer by one side to live with the other person or group in friendship – an offer conveyed by a messenger or mediator.[231] God's decisive step in reconciliation is that he sent Jesus as his ambassador and representative who demonstrated the authenticity of the reconciliation that was offered through his life and dismantled the very character of the powers that humankind serves. The wage paid by sin is paradoxically death (Rom 6:23). Once Jesus, as the representative of God, identified with humans to the point of dying, and was then raised from the dead through God's power, death lost its fatal influence and the human situation fundamentally changed. Human beings were able to understand that they are not fated to serve sin and they may accept God's offer of reconciliation, which means freedom and life. This is an important feature of Pauline theology.

Another image used for expressing the positive meaning of Jesus' death is the sacrifice of *atonement* (*hilastērion* – Rom 3:25), which for humankind opened up the possibility to approach God and pray to him in the Temple. This Pauline theme was later developed in the Letter to the Hebrews. The last concept we have to mention in this context is to be found in the image of *redemption* – paying a price for liberating others from slavery or prison. In Rom 3:24 it appears in close proximity to the image of the sacrifice of atonement. In the redemption concept, Jesus' death is the ransom paid for the liberation of humankind. According to Rom 8:23 it is liberation from the alienating domination of sin, which affects the whole of creation. Paul used different, and in some respects contradictory, images in order that the higher idea of the positive meaning of the death of Jesus might be expressed.

It is necessary to mention the Pauline concepts of the death of Jesus on the cross. Otherwise we would not be able to recognise their traces in Mark.

These include the popular "Son of Man came" saying in Mark 10:45: "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom (*lytron)* for many."

In this context we can look at a related saying in Luke, which ends: "For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves" (Luke 22:27). This is a version unaffected by the soteriology of sacrificial or substiutionary death. This is connected with the endeav-

231 C. Breytenbach. *Versöhnung*, 69–81, 223 f.

our to avoid bloody rituals in religions in late Hellenism and the early Roman period, which the author of the third Gospel supported. This does not mean that he invented the text replacing Mark 10:45. He could simply have left that verse out. It seems more likely that he found a saying that represented a pre-Markan form of the same or a similar saying in his special source or in the oral tradition. In this case Mark 10:45 would be the Markan interpretation influenced by a saying from a Pauline tradition (cf. 1 Tim 2:5–6 – *antilytron*). This is an example of Mark introducing Pauline elements into the memories of Jesus. The ransom-saying was one of the alternative ways of expressing justification by the grace of God (Rom 3:24). This will be confirmed by our further investigation of Markan theology.

Another striking similarity with Pauline theology is the statement in Mark 7:19 according to which Jesus relativized all the dietary regulations of the Jewish tradition: "Thus he declared all foods clean." This resembles the Pauline proclamation "Everything is indeed clean" in Rom 14:20 (cf. "Nothing is unclean in itself" – Rom 14:14). The pericope in Mark originates from an old Jesus tradition and the argument is understandable without this summary. The fact that Matthew left it out may be an indirect argument for the secondary character of this saying, but it is more likely to be an example of the Matthean polemic against the Pauline tradition (see Matt 5:17–20 "not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished"). Luke did not include this pericope in his book on Jesus, since Christians of non-Jewish origin obviously prevailed in his area and the issue of cultic defilement was therefore not important.

The last trace of Pauline influence that we will mention is to be found in the pericope next to the one about cultic defilement: the story of the Syrophoenician woman. This account is undoubtedly part of the oldest layer of Jesus traditions (Mark 7:24–30), and for Mark the woman represents the Christians of non-Jewish origin, who are included in the community of the Messianic people through their faith. The woman asks to receive the bread of life from the children's table. She is ready to accept an alternative, which still means life. She is a model of faith and, at the end Jesus fulfils her demand and expels the demon from her daughter. This seems to be an illustration of Paul's opinion that the gospel (*euangelion*) is the "power of God that

brings salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom 1:16).[232]

The main argument for Pauline influence is the conclusion of the dialogue of Jesus with the Syrophoenician woman: She answered "Lord (*kyrie* – vocative), even the dogs…" Then he said to her, "For saying that, you may go – the demon has left your daughter" (Mark 7:28–29). The pre-Markan tradition understood *kyrie* as a polite form of address like *rabbi* or Sir. But in a specific theological reinterpretation, where a piece of tradition is used to help resolve the problem of the common Table of the Lord for Christians of Jewish origin and Christians of non-Jewish origin (an issue that threatened the unity of the Jesus movement in Antioch – Gal 2:11–21), this polite form of address is transformed into a confession of faith that, after Easter, dares to approach Jesus in prayer as the Living One and leads to salvation: "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom 10:9).[233]

These are some of the Pauline elements, in various forms, that are understandable as such without any consideration of the overarching theological and literary structure of the Gospel of Mark. This means we can also take seriously other traces of Pauline influence.

6.2.2 The beginning and the ending of the Gospel

The opening verse of the Gospel according to Mark, mentioned already at the beginning of this study, speaks of the gospel (*euangelion*) in programmatic terms: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ." We have already (§ 1) said that *euangelion* did not mean a book (literary genre) before the first third of the second century (see § 8 below). "The beginning of the gospel" could be related to the proclamation of the gospel by Jesus and relate to Mark 1:2–13, 1:2–15 or 1:2–20. In that case the *euangelion* would be the content of Jesus' proclamation.[234] Several writers of ancient Greek, Hellenistic, or Latin literature

232 J. Marcus, Mark – Interpreter of Paul, 487.

233 P. Pokorný, From a Puppy to the Child, especially 82–85.

234 This is the position of M. Hengel, *The Four Gospels*, 92–96, as well as J. A. Kelhoffer, ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ as a Reference to 'Gospel' Materials, 33. This is a serious alternative to our solution. However, it underestimates the prevailing meaning of *euangelion* as Easter gospel, especially in Pauline and Markan settings.

open their works by mentioning the theme with which their narrative will begin.[235]

However, this analogy does not fit our case for the following reasons:

The form of Mark 1:1 is not like the majority of such opening sentences ("Hereby begins…" or "I intend to start with…" etc.).

The use of *Euangelion* to mean the summary of the Jesus traditions was not common at that time. Jesus' preaching and teaching was in Greek expressed by the verb *euangelizomai* (see § 3 above).

Before Mark, *euangelion* was, under the influence of the imperial propaganda (as an anti-*euangelion*), used for the Easter gospel only (see § 2.5).[236]

Mark never called the earthly Jesus "Jesus Christ".[237]

In this manner we come to the conclusion that the meaning of *euangelion* in Mark 1:1 is, first of all, the oral proclamation of the Easter gospel as it was documented by Paul, whose theology influenced (inspired) the Gospel writer. Further exegesis will confirm this. The book (formally a biography) is related to the Easter Gospel and, obviously, is part of it; it is linked to it as a commentary or an introduction.

The Gospel of Mark thus intends to make clear that the Easter Gospel is (should be) inseparably linked with Jesus in his earthly life.[238] And since Jesus' proclamation of the gospel about the kingdom of God is also part of his life story, the *euangelion* in Mark 1:1 is a term integrating both meanings. The Easter gospel is, however, the main meaning. In all instances where *euangelion* appears in Mark, except 1:14–15, it is the Easter gospel that Mark is talking about. He interpreted various sayings of Jesus by relating them to the post-Easter situation and linking them together with the noun *euangelion*, and so the gospel of Jesus became a prediction of the Easter gospel: leaving home, family and possessions for Jesus' sake and for the sake of the gospel will be rewarded on earth as well as in the Age to Come (Mark 10:29); losing one's life for Jesus' sake and for the sake of the gospel means saving it (Mark 8:35 – in both these cases the word gospel was obviously added by

235 G. Arnold, Mk 1,1 und Eröffnungswendungen in griechischen und lateinischen Schriften, passim.

236 G. Theissen, *Die Entstehung des Neuen Testaments,* 88.

237 R. Schnackenburg, "'Das Evangelium' im Verständnis des ältesten Evangelisten," 322.

238 Among the authors of prominent textbooks this view is supported by U. Schnelle, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament,* 169–171.

Mark); the gospel has to be proclaimed to all nations (Mark 13:10 – mission is predicted); and the story of the anointing in Bethany will be told together with the proclamation of the gospel (Mark 14:9 – the Easter proclamation accompanied by stories about Jesus). This means that the narratives are not a direct part of the Gospel, but they are inseparably bound with it as its "beginning."

The "beginning of the gospel" therefore means the story of Jesus that culminated in the gospel, i. e. the Passion and Easter. The book as a whole narrates the beginning of the Easter Gospel that is echoed at the end of the book. As we have mentioned above, in the most important ancient manuscripts the book ends with 16:8. In 16:6–7 we hear the Easter Gospel from 1 Cor 15:3b-5 re-told in a narrative way:

1 Cor 15:3b-5	Mark 16:6–7
Christ died	was crucified
was buried	they laid him
was raised (*egēgertai*)	has been raised (*ēgerthē*)
appeared (*ōfthē*)	you will see him (*auton opsesthe*) °
to Cephas + to the twelve	his disciples + Peter

The analogy, right down to the first (original) group of witnesses is striking. The rules of a narrative demanded only a few changes in sequence and in the tense (marked by °) of the last part of the formula. Since the women meet the messenger dressed in a white robe after the crucifixion, the burial and the resurrection, but before the first appearance of the Risen One, the appearance is announced in the future tense (*opsesthe*). The shock ("terror and amazement" – *tromos* + *extasis*) of the women confirms that what they heard was a direct message from God, evoking the fear of God (*efobounto gar*). Unlike in 1 Cor 15:3b-5, the proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus is mentioned before the comment on his burial, since his grave was already empty. However, the empty grave does not appear as an argument for the (miraculous) resurrection,[239] it is rather its illustration.[240]

The ending is the key to the beginning: the gospel (*euangelion*) in the opening verse is, indeed and first of all, the Easter gospel, which is thus the overarching concept which structures the Gospel as a literary text. It is a very appropriate way of keeping all the text units together, since the

239 For interpreting the resurrection see § 2.2 above – *Interpreting the resurrection II.*
240 See A. Lindemann, Die Osterbotschaft des Markus, 305.

Easter gospel is at the same time the theological point of view from which the story is narrated. The presence of Jesus as the living Lord in the Christian community is the reason why we take an interest in Jesus in his earthly life and remember him. The earthly story of Jesus has its end and fulfilment in the Easter Gospel.[241]

These observations about the interrelation between the beginning and the ending of the Gospel of Mark are a valid argument in favour of our thesis about the Gospel of Mark as an intentional introduction to the Easter gospel: the "beginning of the gospel" may relate to the book as a whole.

This thesis is a far-reaching one; therefore it has to be supported by other observations that can support or modify it as additional cumulative arguments.

At the beginning of Acts (1:1) we read that the first book dedicated to Theophilus (the Gospel according to Luke) deals with "all that Jesus began to do and to teach" (NIV). This means that in this context the earthly life of Jesus is understood as the beginning of his present activity in the power of the Holy Spirit, as it began after Easter and is described in the book of Acts. Luke must have deduced this concept from the literary Gospel of Mark, which he excerpted,[242] even though, for reasons of his own, he does not use the term *euangelion* (see § 9).

Still more important is the outline of Jesus' story in Acts 10:37–41. Charles H. Dodd considered it a skeleton transmitted by tradition and used as the structure of the Gospel.[243] In so doing, he opposed the thesis of Karl L. Schmidt, according to which the framework of the Gospels as books is derived from the Easter gospel and then developed. Dodd's theses soon gave rise to polemics.[244] In fact, Acts 10:37–41 is a skeleton of the Gospel of Luke, the first volume of Luke's work dedicated to Theophilus, a skeleton derived from the Gospel of Mark:[245] In 10:37–39a we read about the beginning (*arxamenos*) of Jesus' preaching and healing after being baptised by John. The crucifixion, resurrection,

241 Th. K. Heckel, *Von Evangelium des Markus zum viergestaltiugen Evangelium*, 32 ff., 51.

242 See P. Pokorný, *Die Theologie der lukanischen Schriften*, 30 f.

243 C. H. Dodd, The Framework of the Gospel Narrative, passim; repeatedly advocated by idem, *The Apostolic Preaching and its developments*, 48–49.

244 D. E. Nineham, The Order of Events in St. Mark Gospel, 230–31.

245 In connection with the whole problem of the Gospel genre, this issue is discussed by R. Guelich, The Gospel Genre, 212–218. However, he relates the *archē* in Mark 1:1 to the opening verses only.

and appearances to witnesses (*martyres*) are reported in 10:39b-41. The whole is reported as the gospel (*euangelizomai*) of Peter.[246] It follows that Acts 10:37–41 is essentially an abstract of the first volume (The Gospel of Luke) of the two books dedicated to Theophilus. It is also an indirect witness to the influence of the Markan composition of Jesus' biography as the beginning of the gospel. Robert Guelich considered Acts 10:37–41 to be the link between the structure of the Gospel of Mark and that of John.[247]

The Gospel according to John obviously developed the programmatic structure of Mark. The opening paragraph (John 1:1–18), including the term "beginning" (*archē*) and sounding like Genesis 1:1 (*en archē*), is an expanded re-interpretation of Mark 1:1. It includes not only the pre-existence of Jesus and his coming into the world as light, but also his rejection by his own people. This means that he understood Mark 1:1 as a summary of the whole book. The witness of John the Baptist (John 1:19–23) is placed after this expanded summary, as an analogy to Mark 1:2–8.

The end of the "Beginning" is not indicated. Was it the combined prophecy as quoted in verses 2 and 3? Or is it the proclamation of John the Baptist, who is, in fact, not proclaiming the gospel, but whose proclamation would have been a pre-history rather than the beginning of the gospel? Verse 9 does not seem to indicate the gospel itself, since it introduces the baptism of Jesus and the temptation of Jesus follows immediately (verse 12). It is supposed that there is a time span between Mark 1:13 and 14, but in 1:14–15 the proclamation of Jesus' gospel simply begins and another item in the narrative, namely the death of John, is by no means the end of the beginning.

Since the designation "gospel" is used without any attribute, the intended (as well as the first real) readers, who most probably knew some of Paul's letters and his religious language, would have understood *euangelion* as the Easter Gospel about the resurrection of Jesus. However, for the people from the second and third Christian generations, and especially for the non-Jews, it was necessary to supplement the Easter Gospel with information about the man who was raised from the dead and is adored as the Son of God. The idea of introducing various

246 This is probably an echo of the tradition about the origin of the Gospel of Mark in the Petrine tradition.

247 R. Guelich, The Gospel Genre, 215 ff.; cf. § 7.

pieces of information about him as a kind of preface to the Easter Gospel fully fits the needs of the Church of that time.

The argument against Mark 1:1 as the title of the book can be called into question. We have already mentioned that the openings of various books introduced as analogies are formulated in full sentences, whereas *Archē tou euangeliou Iēsou Christou*[248] may be considered the title of the book, especially as there is no other title available.

If "The Beginning of the Gospel" was a kind of title of the book, the "As it is written" would, admittedly, be an unusual opening for the text proper. Normally "as" (Gr. *kathōs*) follows after a preceding statement.[249] But the combination of a Scripture quotation + an indication of what it should be applied to, as is the case in Mark 1:2–4, is not an uncommon narrative structure. In Mark 7:6–9 the application of the word of the Scripture follows a quotation as well (cf. 2 Cor 6:2). A quotation from the Prophets may open the book, because Mark tried to place it in the context of the liturgical books in the synagogue. Also the Synopsis by Kurt Aland supposes that verse 2 is the beginning of a new paragraph.[250]

The author of the first Gospel in the canonical sequence, whom we call Matthew, understood the "beginning" at the beginning of the Gospel of Mark as a parallel to the Hebrew designation of the book of Genesis (Hebr. *bᵉrēšīt*; Greek: *en archē*) and opened his own book in analogy to its Greek title *Biblos geneseōs* – The Book of Genesis or Genealogy. John also claimed the authority of the Law for his version of the Gospel and opened it in the same way as we find in the Greek translation (Septuagint) of Genesis: *En archē*… Did Mark intend the same thing? It is difficult to prove this, since "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ" is a title rather than an opening (Lat. *incipit*), which would later serve as a designation because it was in the Hebrew tradition. The main intention was to link the Jesus traditions with the Easter Gospel and give them a position of priority on the time axis and, at the same

248 The "Son of God" is missing in some of the ancient manuscripts (Sinatiticus, Coridethi) and some quotations in Patristic literature.

249 J. K. Elliott seriously considered the possibility of Mark 1:1–3 being a secondary addition: Mark 1.1–3 – A Later Addition to the Gospel? 586 ff. The balanced interrelation between the beginning and the ending speaks against this hypothesis.

250 Among recent English commentaries on the Gospel of Mark, Mark 1:1 is considered as a title by J. Marcus (p. 145), R. T. France (p.49) and M. E. Boring (p. 29), while R. H. Stein (p. 39) opposes this idea.

time, maintain the central position of the Easter Gospel in the theological discourse. However, we also have to acknowledge that Mark did intend to place his work on the level of the Law and the Prophets. Not only because he depicted Jesus as the one who was entitled to decide about the authentic interpretation of the Law (Mark 7:3,8,13) and to present the messianic interpretation of the Ten Commandments (the Decalogue) (Mark 12:28–34), but because he dared to write it as a book, obviously intended for liturgical reading and not only as an aid to memory. In contemporary Judaism the interpretation of the Law circulated only in the oral tradition until Jehuda ha Nasi, at the beginning of the third century, initiated the literary fixation of the teaching of the tannaim (teachers, tellers = rabbis of the first generations), which was called the Mishnah (repeated teaching).

Mark's decision to produce a literary text for the Christian liturgy was an important step that was an indirect foreshadowing of the idea of the Christian canon that originated before the mid-second century (see § 8 below).[251] The literary fixation of an important tradition stresses its authority and is itself a presupposition for its canonization (*littera scripta manet*). At the same time the framing of the Jesus traditions by the proclaimed Easter gospel linked the words and deeds of Jesus with the present time of the readers. The narrative of the Gospel was not only a memory that evoked the past of Jesus' earthly life, but it was intended as its living re-presentation.[252] The re-presentation mostly takes place though re-telling, meditation or interpretation, but the text itself invites the reader/hearer to understand it as an address and proclamation.

In movements based on a new experience and attested by many people from the first generation, the production of written texts starts in the second wave, when the direct oral testimony is not accessible any more. Since in the case of the Christian Bible the decisive religious experience was evoked by an event in history (the story of Jesus), the literary form had a referential function relating it to history. It was possible to acquire an authentic orientation on the way towards the future

251 The impression that Mark was composed as an oral traditioun arises because Mark worked with individual pieces of oral tradition, but the overarching literary strategy is unthinkable without a literary concept (contrary to Ch. Bryan, *A Preface to Mark*, 152 ff.).

252 J. Schröter, Nicht nur eine Erinnerung… described the representation of the story and sayings of Jesus in the Gospels; our observations may support his thesis.

only through following this route. This is the approach to religious experience common to the Christian and Hebrew traditions.

In this section we have sketched the far-reaching importance of the Gospel according to Mark. It linked the Easter proclamation, which was deeply rooted in the Easter experience of the present impact of the crucified Jesus and was open towards the future fulfilment of God's will in history and human lives, with a view into the past, to the time of Jesus of Nazareth, as the determining element for all responsible activity by his followers. We may call this function of Jesus in the Christian proclamation "feedback", in the sense that he is not the immediate cause of the (Easter) faith, which is the "resurrection", but rather its regulator or point of orientation. The proclamation in all its consequences must not disagree with or contradict what we know about the Jesus of history. In the Gospel of Mark this is expressed by including Jesus traditions within the framework of the Easter Gospel. We maintain that the term *euangelion* in the opening verse and the narrated paraphrase of the *euangelion* according to 1 Cor 15:3b-5 at the end of the Gospel (16:6–7) expressed this theological and literary backbone of the Gospel. We consider it very probable that Mark 1:1 served as the title of the whole book,[253] and we think that Mark may have written a biography of Jesus as a text that would be a counterpart to the books of Law. However, within a few years his book had a similar position in the Christian communities as did the scrolls of the Law and the Prophets in the synagogue.

What we have just demonstrated excludes the concept of the Gospel of Mark as a text that is open towards the coming *parousia* of Jesus soon and the establishment of the kingdom of God, as was supposed by Ernst

253 So P. Pokorný, "Anfang des Evangeliums", 241 f.; H. Baarlink, *Anfängliches Evangelium*, 60 ff., 291 ff.; G. Rau, "Markus-Evangelium", 2046; L. Schenke, *Das Markusevangelium*, 148–153; J. D. Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark's Gospel,* 69; D. Dormeyer, *Das Neue Testament im Rahmen der antiken Literaturgeschichte*, 199 ff.; B. M. F. Van Iersel, *Mark*, 90 , and especially Th. K. Heckel, *Vom Evangelium des Markus zum viergestaltigen Evangelium*, 51–53; within a different interpretation of the theological framework of Mark this was also maintained by E. Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus*, 10, and Pesch, *Markusevangelium I*, 62; cf. H. Weder, 'Evangelium Jesu Christi' (Mk 1,1) und 'Evangelium Gottes' (Mk 1,14), 400. – R. H. Gundry, "ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛ.ΙΟΝ: How Soon a Book?, 321, does not consider it to be the title, but relates it to an orally proclaimed gospel which is the content of the book. This would be a striking new development of the Pauline term gospel that concentrated on Jesus' resurrection.

Lohmeyer,[254] Norman Perrin,[255] Willi Marxsen or Werner Kelber on the basis of Mark 14:62 (the coming of the Son of Man) and 16:7 (the risen Jesus going ahead to Galilee – the place of *parousia*). In this view, the Gospel of Mark was a preparation for the coming of the kingdom of God on earth and Jesus' resurrection was the real beginning of the general resurrection as the beginning of the new age that would start in Galilee. In our view, the book written by Mark was intended to prepare the coming of the kingdom of God in Galilee, since the promise to see the risen Jesus in Galilee was fulfilled after Easter and the Gospel of Mark does not express an imminent expectation, but tells the history of events mentioned in the Easter gospel. According to Mark, the apocalyptic events have started on earth, as expressed in the "doubled eschatology" of the Easter gospel. This was not a spiritual transformation of the eschatological expectations, since the community of disciples was a real social phenomenon consciously acting in history.

6.3 Christological Titles and the Messianic Secret

The titles of Jesus expressing his dignity in the eyes of the Christian faith are part of the gospel, but may appear paradoxical. They are substantiated only by the confession of believers. They are intended as short versions of basic testimonies of faith, as were, for example, "God the Lord," "God of Abraham" or "Lord of Hosts."

In terms of the inner structure of the Christological titles of Jesus, "the Messiah" (the Anointed One) expresses the dignity of Jesus through his relationship to God (a privileged direct relationship and authorisation), "the Lord" (*kyrios*) through his relationship to humans (sovereignty), and "the Son of Man" through his prominence among humans (his real human quality in relation to sinful humankind and in relation to the inhuman "bestial" rulers in Dan 7). The differences arise from the various historical situations in which they were used.

254 E. Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus*, 356.

255 N. Perrin, *New Testament. An Introduction,* 148; idem. The High Priest's Question and Jesus' Answer, especially 95.

6.3.1 The Son of God and other titles

In the opening verse of Mark, some manuscripts add the title *Son of God*. We mentioned in § 6.1 that it is probably a secondary addition, since Mark, as the narrator, never mentions a messianic title himself. It is only the protagonists in the plot of a narrative who mention it as witnesses or opponents. In spite of this, the "Son of God" in the incipit, even if added by a later scribe, is a useful hint announcing the content of the book. Son of God, as the title of Jesus, represents the second overarching technique for structuring the book of Mark. It is also a part of two formulae of the Easter gospel, which we mentioned at the beginning: 1 Thess 1:9b-10 and Rom 1:3–4. In Rom 1:3–4, where the formula is more easily recognisable, Jesus is confessed as the Son of David (the Jewish Davidic Messiah) who was, according to the Spirit of Holiness, enthroned in power as the Son of God by resurrection from the dead. It can be demonstrated by Psalm 2:7 that this sonship was not understood in the sense of a physical or metaphysical descent from God. It is rather a consequence of a legal act according to which the Son was entitled to represent God in the world.

As we have already mentioned, the whole of the Gospel of Mark describes the ways followed by humankind, oscillating between enmity, sympathy combined with doubts, devotion to the true faith, and confession without understanding.

The *first* time we come across the title Son of God in the book of Mark is at the very beginning, in 1:11. It is the culminating point of the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. When Jesus came out of the water, the heavens were torn apart, the Spirit descended on him like a dove, and "a voice came from heaven" (from God) said: "You are my beloved Son, with you I am pleased". What the voice proclaims is a combination of several testimonies related to the Servant of the Lord in Isa 42:1, to Israel in Isa 44:2, to Isaac in Gen 22:2 and, especially, to the king of Israel as in Ps 2:7.

Since in verse 10 we hear that it was (only) Jesus who saw the heavens torn apart, it was only he himself who heard the voice from heaven. So in this moment Jesus' sonship is known only to God, to Jesus, to the omniscient narrator who is not part of the narrative but expresses his relationship to Jesus by narrating the story, and to the reader/hearer who is invited to enter the world of the narrative. In the narrative strategy of Mark, Jesus' divine designation as the Son of God is similar to the

anointing of David by Samuel in 1 Sam 16, long before he was openly anointed the king over Judah by his people in 2 Sam 2.

Meanwhile the Son of God started his apocalyptical struggle with Satan (Mark 1:12–13) and "unclean spirits" who possessed supernatural knowledge about his unique relationship to God (The Holy One of God – *hagios tou theou* – Mark 1:24–25). But this kind of knowledge does not lead to faith and confidence. The opposing powers uttered his title with the intention of gaining power over him by knowing his true "name". The name represented the person and a number of magical practices consisted in doing something with the names of opponents, such as writing, invoking, or cursing them. Mark tells his readers that Satan, the strong one (Mark 3:27), should be tied up. And the stronger one whom John the Baptist announced (Mark 1:7) should obviously, according to Mark, be Jesus himself. The reader/hearer learns that the apocalyptic conflict, which the apocalypses expect at the end of this age, is in fact concentrated in Jesus' story, and even though the struggle continues, it is clear who will have the upper hand in the future.

The *second* time we come across this title is in the exact centre of the Gospel. It is in the story of the transfiguration, where a voice from a cloud pronounces virtually the same phrase as was uttered at Jesus' baptism, and three of Jesus' disciples are present as witnesses. They are, however, asked by Jesus not to tell anybody until the "Son of Man" (in this early Christian meaning Jesus himself) has risen from the dead (9:9). In this case the voice of God is the true answer to the question about his identity that Jesus had asked his disciples in Mark 8:29, when what other people had said about him (8:27–28) was not correct. Peter identified him with the *Messiah*. For Jesus it was an ambiguous answer. It expressed the importance of his mission, but since the Messiah was generally expected as a warrior who would restore the Davidic Empire, it did not correspond to its character. However, Mark considered the title Messiah (Christ) the appropriate title pertaining to Jesus, as expressed in the title of the book in Mark 1:1. But he was aware of the fact that the role of the Messiah has to be explained. Therefore he immediately linked it with a warning against a false understanding and the first foretelling of his death (Mark 8:31–9:1).

The problematic character of the messianic expectations of Jesus' disciples can be deduced from Jesus' saying in which he called Peter Satan: "Get behind me, Satan!" (Mark 8:33). In the Markan context it is a reaction to Peter's attempt to persuade Jesus not to act according

to the scenario of the Easter gospel as expressed in 1 Cor 15:3b-5. In the three Markan predictions of Jesus' suffering (8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34), the first of which follows after the messianic confession of Peter, the passion, death and the resurrection of Jesus are predicted in a kind of *vaticinium ex eventu* – an ante-dated prophecy which is constructed according to the real course of events. In this way Mark makes his readers aware of the fact that the life story of Jesus is part of the gospel that is proclaimed in the Church and that it does not end with the crucifixion. It is very probable that Mark inserted the predictions of Jesus' suffering and resurrection into the Jesus traditions in the places where Jesus talked about how he had to face the enmity of some of the representatives of Israel of that time and the danger he was in. Nevertheless, the wording is Markan and it represents a consistent attempt to correct the messianic ideas of that time. In this respect the predictions of suffering reflect the fact that Jesus distanced himself from the messianic expectations of many of his contemporaries, and when he addresses Peter as Satan (obviously authentic, and emphatic as all Jesus' language was), it is a reaction to Peter's false understanding of Jesus' Messiahship. Jesus also rejected the request of the sons of Zebedee to sit at his side in glory, and the dialogue in Mark 10:35–45 concludes with: "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."[256]

Jesus clearly distanced himself from the political idea of a Messiah by his answer to the question of the Pharisees and Herodians about paying taxes in Mark 12:13–17par. Levying taxes was a demonstration of the imperial power, which concerned all inhabitants of the Roman Empire and was the cause of political protest, riots and upheavals. Jesus' answer – "Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's" – does not mean a declaration of full loyalty to the emperor, but it definitely rejects any violent resistance, i. e. the attitude of a contra-culture. Jesus' followers, and later Christians, built up a counter-culture not by violently opposing the central values of the majority, but by creating an alternative social space.[257] In the plan of Jesus this corresponds to the proclamation of the kingdom of God, which is coming in the power of God and is not built up by human

256 W. R. Telford, *The Theology of the Gospel of Mark*, 45.

257 These categories (counter-culture and contra-culture) are defined by Keith A. Roberts and applied to Early Christianity, by V. K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse,* especially 169–174 (incl. bibliographical data).

power; in Markan theology this meant a rejection of the political Messiahship of Jesus. Neither for Jesus nor for Mark did it mean that the kingdom of God was not successful in the world. Its power was visible in Jesus' exorcisms and in creating a new community of his followers that survived the world empires. However, the difference in strategies is striking. Jesus' answer (though often misunderstood) characterised the specific direction followed by the Church in history and became influential. It is quoted in all the Synoptic Gospels, in *Papyrus Egerton* (fragment 2r. – Jesus refuses to answer at all) and in the Gospel of Thomas log. 100. It was important for Mark, since he must have been aware of the political context of *euangelion* and *archē* as documented in the inscription from Priene (see § 2.3 above), and yet he mentioned it at the very beginning of his book.[258]

As in Mark 8:27 and 29, and also in Mark 12:35–37, Jesus asks a question and so introduces a definition of his mission which compares it to that of the Davidic Messiah. Through his exegesis of the royal messianic Psalm 110 he proves that his mission is not identical with that of the Son of David: in Ps 110 David calls the Messiah his Lord (*kyrios*), which was one of the messianic titles of Jesus after Easter. The statement that the messianic Lord is representing God as the supreme Lord and cannot be judged according to the expectations of a Davidic Messiah is included. This hierarchy of competencies (God – Messiah – Davidic king) is deduced from the sentence in Ps 110:1 ascribed to David: "The Lord said to my lord". This is a Christian exegesis that reflects the disputations in Jesus' time about his mission and its historical shape is difficult to reconstruct. Mark included it since it illustrates the gospel in Rom 1:3–4, according to which the Son of God is higher than the Davidic Messiah.[259]

The title Son of God appears (indirectly) in the interrogation of Jesus when the High Priest asks Jesus whether he is the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One (Mark 14:61). It seems to be a combination of two titles, the second one (the Son of God) being higher than the (Davidic) Messiah. The Markan meaning, however, is that the Son of God is the specification of Jesus' Messiahship: "Are you the Messiah-

258 See M. Ebner, Evangelium contra Evangelium, 32 f.

259 See S. H. Smith, "The Function of the Son of David Tradition in Mark's Gospel," 539.

Son-of-God?"[260] It was meant as an accusation, because the Son of God in this context meant a being of divine rank, and to transgress the border between the human and the divine was blasphemy. Jesus (only in Mark) answers, "I am" (14:62), and in a combined Scripture quotation (Ps 110:1 and Dan 7:13) he refers to the coming revelation of the justice of God: "You will see (*opsesthe*) the Son of Man…" It corresponds to the "they will see (*opsontai*) the Son of Man" in Mark 13:26 and "you will see" (*opsesthe*) the living Jesus of Nazareth at the very end of the Gospel in 16:7. This means that "you will see" is used by Mark with a double meaning: in Mark 14:62 it refers to the "global" eschatological theophany (with the clouds of heaven), in which Jesus will appear in the role of the Son of Man as a judge, witness or agent of God who mediates God's will. This is why Jesus was immediately accused of blasphemy (Mark 14: 53–64). In 16:7 seeing Jesus of Nazareth refers to the future Easter appearance (see 1 Cor 15:5), albeit crucial for the global future and attested as the "good news" during the time of Mark.

The readers of the Gospel of Mark understood the reference to the Son of Man as Jesus' self-presentation as the representative of supreme (divine) justice when he faced his judges, since previously (8:38–9:8 and 10:45) they (the readers/hearers) had learnt that Jesus was indeed identical with the Son of Man.

The last time the title Son of God is to be found is after Jesus' death, when the Roman centurion (a pagan in Jewish eyes) comments on his death in a sentence sounding like a confession: "Truly, this man was God's Son" (15:39). This statement is followed immediately by the curtain of the temple being torn apart – an expression analogical to heaven being "torn apart" at the moment of Jesus' baptism (Mark 1:10) as an introduction to the revelation of Jesus' true identity. Here we hear the title from a human mouth and in a positive (not ironical)[261] sense. If we compare it with the other occurrences of the title Son of God in Mark, it may have been understood by the Gospel writer as a confession representing the end of the human attempts to recognise (*anagnōrisis*) Jesus' true identity. The past tense does not fit in with the form of a

260 This is the suggestion of J. Marcus ("Mark 14: 61"), which seems to me helpful; for Markan messianic titles see especially C. Breytenbach, Grundzüge markinischer Gottesssohn-Christologie, 173 f.

261 R. Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition,* 306 f., mentioned the analogies in the martyrological literature; cf. A. Y. Collins, *Mark,* 768–771.

confession, but since the centurion's words are a reaction to the way Jesus died, it is obvious that Mark has understood it positively ("truly", *alēthōs)* as a frank confession, underlined by the fact that a representative of political violence in the name of the emperor attests the imperial authority of a man who was sentenced at the emperor's command. We cannot answer the historical question as to whether it was really said and how it was meant. However, it is undoubtedly the first human confession of Jesus as the Son of God in the Markan context, representing the faith of Christians of non-Jewish origin.[262]

The struggle of his disciples with the opposing powers to acknowledge Jesus' identity and Jesus' struggle is depicted as the decisive part of the apocalyptic struggle occurring not in heaven, but in human history. Both exorcism and disputations are part of the same struggle[263] to fulfil his mission in the last weeks of his life when he experienced enmity and misunderstanding and he realised that his personal fate was to become a part of what he proclaimed – this is all a dramatic documentation of what is summarised in the formula of the gospel in Rom 1:3–4, according to which Jesus, as the Son of David (his Davidic origin is assumed), was elevated as the Son of God through his resurrection. His unsuccessful attempt to reform Israel was not his failure but rather a step towards fulfilling his (universal) mission.

The title the Son of God proved to be the backbone of Markan theology, since Jesus is the Son of God in the eyes of God.

The title the *Son of David* was the most popular type used for the Messiah. In Mark, it is used by people or disciples who intend to be on Jesus' side, but because of their "blindness" they have not yet understood the true core of his mission.

The "*Son of Man*" expressed in Jesus' view of himself his inner functional identification with the one who reveals (proclaims) God's will.[264] The Son of Man never appears as a messianic title in the full sense. We never find anyone confessing "Jesus is the Son of Man", or "You are the Son of Man;" not even a self-predication of Jesus "I am the Son of Man." The messianic self-understanding of Jesus developed against

262 See e g. R. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium* II*, 500*; D. Lührmann, *Das Markusevangelium*, 264; J. R. Donahue – D. J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark,* ad loc.

263 J. M. Robinson, *The Problem of History in Mark*, 45–46.

264 The Son of Man plays an important role in Mark's Christology as well as in source Q; see e.g. P. J. Achtemeier, He Taught Them Many Things, 481 and J. Schröter, *Jesus und die Anfänge der Christologie*, 140 ff.

the apocalyptic background, and for Mark, Jesus' life story became the decisive conflict between the divine and satanic powers, which decided the outcome of the anticipated apocalyptic battle. That is why Mark, who included an apocalyptic section in his book in chapter 13 (the "Little Apocalypse"),[265] also accepted the expectation of the victorious coming of the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven (13:26) – the Son of Man who will gather the elect (those who accepted the proclamation of the gospel, as previewed in 13:10) from the "four winds". When Jesus appeals to the Son of Man in Mark 14:62, the reader already knows who this was and what it meant. The Son of Man is the background of Jesus' appearance, as seen by Mark. Historically, the "Son of Man" was the eschatological figure from whom Jesus expected his vindication and tried to act accordingly. For Mark, the Son of Man was identical with Jesus (see § 5.2 above), the son of God.[266]

Lord (*kyrios*) is mostly a polite form of address. Only in the story about the Syrophoenician woman does it signify esteem for the head of God's people.

The titles of Jesus, as we have seen them in the formulae of the gospel, indicated his position on the map of values, hopes, and expectations of the contemporaneous world. The Markan narrative demonstrated their function and, as we shall see, their openness towards new interpretations.

6.3.2 The Messianic Secret

The "Messianic Secret" is a modern term invented by William Wrede in his book that appeared in 1901 to refer to a set of specific literary and theological features of the Gospel according to Mark.[267] These features include especially Jesus' commands to keep silence about his miraculous healings (Mark 1:44; 8:26) or about his Messiahship (Mark 8:30; 9:9), the incomprehension of his disciples in regard to his messianic mission, and the theory of his parables as a mystery in Mark 4:

265 Some exegetes assume that Mark 13 was additionally inserted into the Gospel of Mark (R. Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 264 ff.). It differs from the rest of the Gospel because it belongs predominantly to the apocalyptic genre, but theologically it fully fits into the Markan theological framework and it confirms the apocalyptic connotations of the term *euangelion* in the post-Easter formulae.

266 J. D. Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark's Gospel*, 22 f.

267 *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien*, 66 ff.

9–10. Wrede discovered the secondary character of the three predictions of Jesus' suffering and resurrection, the problem of his specific messianic self-understanding, the key role of the resurrection as it was expressed in the Easter gospel,[268] and the authorial role of Mark.[269] Wrede was writing before the results of Form Criticism became known. He did not assume there was a period of oral transmission of the Jesus traditions between the time of Jesus and Mark, and therefore he wondered why Jesus forbade people to speak about his miracles, when the ban was not complied with (7:36). In fact, this motif was intended to stress the miraculous character of his activity in popular oral tradition:[270] in spite of his forbidding people to speak about him, his fame became widespread and could not be concealed. Similarly, Jesus' attacks against unclean spirits and his silencing them (Mark 1:25.34; 3:12) were understood as part of a cosmic conflict[271] with opposing powers,[272] as we have already mentioned. But on the whole, we are indebted to Wrede for his description of this phenomenon. His explanation is historical: Mark did not know the real life of Jesus, but he only knew the Easter gospel about the resurrection, which soon became linked with messianic titles and miraculous stories about Jesus' activity. The fact is, according to Wrede, that Jesus' life was not messianic and to explain it, Mark had to interpret several phenomena in the Jesus traditions, including the admonitions to silence, as an explanation of the fact that there are no memories about Jesus' messianic signs, and the miracle stories only originated after Easter.[273]

Having the results of Form Criticism at our disposal, we have to state, first of all, that there was a literary reason for the motif of the misunderstanding and the bans on speaking about the transfiguration and about his messianic role. The reason was just the opposite of what Wrede assumed: it was not the lack of messianic features in the pre-Markan traditions, but their abundance that led the author (Mark) to have Jesus command silence and postpone the full understanding of his mission to the time after Easter. Before their inclusion in the book of Mark, small units of tradition were used as illustrations in the

268 *Ibidem* 67, 114.
269 *Ibidem* 129.
270 This function was recognised by H.– J. Ebeling in 1939 (*Das Messiasgeheimnis und die Botschaft des Marcus-Evangelisten*, 11).
271 J. M. Robinson, *The Problem of History in Mark*, 33.
272 E. S. Malbon, *Mark's Jesus*, 46 ff.
273 W. Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien*, 229–235.

sermons about Jesus' redemptive work and, in the course of passing them on, most of them were enriched by motifs pointing to the Easter experience. In Christian sermons this is still done with segments from the Gospels (pericopes) till the present day. It was necessary to allude to the climax of Jesus' story in every sermon, so that the Easter gospel would be visible under the surface of each text (see § 5.1 above). Consequently, it was not possible to create a sequential narrative. The plot would have remained split into small units and the climax would have been missing. The commands to keep silent are, admittedly, always unsuccessful from the viewpoint of the readers/hearers, since the latter know what it was that should not have been disseminated, but they need to be aware that without the Passion and the Easter Gospel Jesus' story cannot be understood in its true intention and mission. The true recognition of his identity (*anagnōrisis*) comes at the very end.[274] The recognition of the true identity of the hero is the true literary intention of Mark. Jesus' disciples, not comprehending the role of Jesus, demonstrate how difficult it is to orient themselves, so several marginal figures take on their roles at the end: Bartimaeus, an anonymous woman, Simon of Cyrene, a Roman centurion, or Joseph of Arimathea.[275]

So the main intention hidden in the phenomena subsumed by Wrede under the term the "Messianic Secret" (Mysterious Messiahship of Jesus) is theological: without his suffering and death, Jesus' powerful impact on history would not be fully understandable.[276] Mark deduced this from his sacrificial understanding of the death of Jesus as expressed in Mark 10:45. However, the roots of this view reach deeper. The quality of every philosophy of life is best tested at a time of imposed passivity. Jesus is not the model of a hero who survives by mobilising his extraordinary abilities, but the Son who, in his suffering and crisis, remains consciously dependent on God as the Father.

274 To interpret the elements of the "Messianic secret" as markers of the literary strategy of *anagnōrisis* means to solve the problem of the "mystic" Christology of Mark as it was sketched by C. Focant, Une christologie de type 'mystique' (Marc 1.1–16.8), 18 ff.

275 R. C. Tannehill, The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role, 404–405. Cf. E. Best, *Mark*, 83 ff.

276 W. R. Telford, *The Theology of the Gospel of Mark*, 40 f. Cf. E. K. Broadhead, *Naming Jesus*, passim.

According to Theodore J. Weeden, Markan Christology represents a reaction against the concept of Jesus as a miracle worker.[277] He is right insofar as Mark makes the reader aware of the fact that wonders do not reveal the full truth about Jesus. In Mark 15:32 his opponents ask Jesus to descend from the cross in order that they can believe in him. This may be exactly the attitude that Mark may have seen as typical for some of the opponents of the Church in his time. He developed this piece of tradition into a fascinating image of the very intention of faith. The problem with Weeden's thesis is the historical reconstruction of such Christology, which is an abstract idea formulated in the 20th century.[278] Making death a taboo and the tendency not to reflect on the passivity imposed on a hero are general tendencies of an alienated humanity.

So far as the Parable Theory in Mark 4:10–12 is concerned, the mystery here is not so much an intellectually incomprehensible phenomenon, but rather the "narrow gate" leading to the proclaimed kingdom of God, which is too demanding a way of life and was therefore rejected by many contemporaries of Jesus who "hardened" (Mark 3:5; cf. Rom 11:5–8).[279] The additional allegorical interpretation of the Parable of the Sower in Mark 4:13–20 reveals the true character of the mysterious incomprehension. The readers are aware that the public (*parrēsia* – Mark 8:31–32) proclamation of that mystery foretold Jesus' death and resurrection. For the readers, the Easter gospel is the leitmotif of Jesus' story. The disciples and other protagonists in the story understood this only after Easter.

6.3.3 Life of the messianic people

The messianic secret of the Messiah, who has to suffer, may be misunderstood. This is the second possible distortion of the Christological concept: only against the background of the resurrection as the vindication of Jesus and his mission was it possible to discover the importance of his death. To say that Mark linked together the messianic hope of salvation with the death of Jesus is a fallacy. The Passion Story is indeed

277 T. J. Weeden, The Heresy that Necessitated Mark's Gospel, 145 ff.
278 B. Blackburn, *Theios Anēr and the Markan Miracle Traditions*, 263 f.
279 G. Haufe, Erwägungen zum Ursprung der sogenannten Parabeltheorie des Markus 4,11–14, passim.

the decisive part of his book, but the ultimate attention is directed towards the resurrection. For Mark, the death of Jesus was the last part of the beginning of the gospel before the proper Gospel in 16:6–7. Otherwise Jesus' life would have been the tragedy of a noble hero. But his death, whenever it is predicted, is always linked with the proclamation of his resurrection. The saying about the suffering Son of Man in Mark 10:45 is understood as leading towards "being great" (10:43 f.). Even in the Institution of the Lord's Supper his coming death is proclaimed against the background of the prospect of the kingdom of God (Mark 14:24–25).

And since this is all attested and narrated as part of an apocalyptic movement involving all humankind, this story includes a basis for hope for all human lives, as we shall see (§ 6.4 below). Its impact can be interpreted by looking at the consequences for the social life of the Markan community, as expressed by a saying of Jesus.

The special consequence is that the life of those who confess Jesus as their Lord and try to follow him is a full life even now, in the present – here on earth. The perspective of dualist Christian groups that has deeply influenced the atmosphere of quite a broad section of Christianity right down to the present – the perspective promising heavenly joy after a life full of self-sacrifice and tears – is alien to the Markan view. In Mark 10:17–31, Jesus warns his disciples against holding on to possessions and protecting their own lives, but, at the same time, he makes it clear that a life in discipleship is not an unhappy human life: "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news (*euangelion*) who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age – houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields with persecutions – and in the Age to Come eternal life. But many of the first will be last, and the last will be first" (Mark 10:29–31). Fathers are not mentioned in the community of disciples, since they are all children of one heavenly Father. The persecutions are not specified and we do not know whether concrete persecutions are meant. What we can deduce is that a full life, a committed life, is always accompanied by effort and sometimes by suffering and risk. A life concentrated on happiness only is never really happy. Many Christians of the first century lived in communities whose members faced mistrust, enmity, and in some cases even persecution. However, they created a large community and got the chance to live a fuller human life than those who did not have the kingdom of God on their horizon. This is the model of life

that was already omitted in the parallel pericope in the Gospel of Matthew (19:29) and had to be rediscovered in the course of history.

It is often said that Jesus' passion and death are the turning point of the Gospel of Mark. They do unambiguously constitute its climax. But the point of view that marks the position from which the whole story of Jesus is narrated is his resurrection. That is why Mark was able to interpret the soteriological power of Jesus' story in a profound way, which remains relevant today – indeed especially so today. We shall discuss this in § 6.4.

6.4 Jesus as Determining Element of the Christian Proclamation

Until now we tried to demonstrate that the framework or even the backbone of the Gospel according to Mark is the oral gospel as the message about Jesus' death and resurrection. It seems that he intended to subordinate the traditions about the "earthly" Jesus to this "word". So it was indeed. The term *sōzō* (save) appears 13 times in the Gospel of Mark, and it hints at the fact that all Jesus' activity may be understood as a prefiguration or metaphor for salvation for eternal life. The first scholar who applied Redaction Criticism to the Gospel of Mark, the German Willi Marxsen, supposed that Mark wrote his book as a sermon called gospel (Evangelium), in which the Risen Lord proclaims himself. The fact that he also used traditions from the past does not play any major role. His work is a proclamation like the Easter Gospel, not a report about Jesus.[280] This was the radical interpretation of Mark according to the pattern of the Easter Gospel. Nevertheless, in fact, it was the Easter Gospel, with the concept of "doubled" eschatology, that implied turning back to the earthly life of Jesus, to the Jesus traditions, and to the clear definition of Jesus of Nazareth as the point of orientation of the Christian faith, its proclamation and Christian life.

280 W. Marxsen, *Der Evangelist Markus*, 87.

6.4.1 Believe in the gospel

The term faith (*pistis*) denotes a specific phenomenon in the Hebrew-Christian tradition that may help us to understand the difference and interrelationship between the two pillars of Christianity: the Easter Gospel and the Jesus traditions.

"Faith" in Mark, as in Paul, means trust in God[281] – reliance on his good will towards humankind and his promises, concretely, the faith that he raised Jesus from the dead – that he is the God who raises the dead (see § 2.4 above – *Interpreting resurrection II).* At the same time, the Markan concept of faith interprets the sayings about the faith in the Jesus traditions, where trust in God as the Creator is closely related to belief in miracles. All the sayings where faith (*pistis*) is used in the absolute sense imply concrete confidence in God – confidence that Jesus is coming in his name. This applies especially to the miraculous healings: the faith that God is stronger than fatality can bring about a fundamental change in the human situation, as in Mark 5:36 (Jairus' daughter raised from the dead); 9:23–24 (exorcism); 10:52 (healing a blind person); 11:24 (fulfilling prayers). Mark also took the extreme saying about faith moving mountains from the Jesus tradition, which Jesus must have meant metaphorically (Mark 11:22–23; see §4.2 above), but, on the other hand, he (Mark 2:1–12) corrects the faith in healing that is almost magical by means of one of his "sandwich compositions": the true answer to the faith in God's power is that God (even) forgives sins (Mark 2:5).

The reference to faith in the gospel in the introductory part of Mark (1:15) also has to be understood as a positive change (*metanoia* – repentance) in the human attitude to God and other people. "Believe in the gospel (*euangelion*)" means: "Believe that God invites you to be in communion with him." The mysterious saying about the heavy punishment (expressed in a metaphor again) for those who put a stumbling block before one of those "little ones believing" most probably did not relate to a specific belief in miracles but rather to the openness towards the "kingdom of God" proclaimed and anticipated by Jesus. Faith overcomes fear of the super-individual powers, as is demonstrated in the story about calming a storm in Mark 4:35–41, especially verse 40: "Why are you afraid? Have you not faith?" Here it seems as if the mi-

281 J. Roloff, *Das Kerygma und der irdische Jesus*, 152; cf. Th. Söding, *Glaube bei Markus*, 309.

raculous intervention of Jesus (a miracle affecting nature, but in fact an exorcism, see verse 39) would not be necessary if the disciples had faith in the profound sense of the word. (Another trace of Pauline influence?)[282]

After reflecting on these findings we can try to interpret them. Faith in this deeper meaning is trust in God as the transcendent reality, which enables people to take into consideration God's point of view and the power of his absolute future ("the kingdom of God"), and to do new things. It is clear that such faith cannot arise without a direct testimony about the inspiring presence of Jesus (in religious language: mediated through the Holy Spirit) as the risen representative of God (the Son of God). However, faith is not a "leap in the dark". It is always linked with a good deal of information that enables believers to orient themselves in society and history. This information can be derived from the Jesus traditions. This is what Mark intended to communicate to his readers: Jesus in his time and in the Galilean region represents a piece of human history that has been vindicated by the resurrection and belongs to the eschatological future. The reader of Mark needs to know what is viable for the future, what corresponds to the coming kingdom, what Jesus as its proclaimer said, how he acted and how he behaved even in moments when passivity was imposed on him. Mark realised this when he came across different interpretations of Jesus' sayings, his personality and his story. He realised the specific function of the Jesus traditions. Even if Jesus as the living Lord evokes faith, it is the Jesus of memories (of "history" in our sense) who is the determining point of Christian life, the hermeneutic key to all Christology,[283] and the point of orientation in history. That is why Mark gathered and selected those items that he considered to be specific for Jesus and his mission, and he brought them together in such a way that his readers had to understand the voice of God "this is my Son, my beloved, listen to him" (Mark 9:7) as an exhortation directed at them, and that they would take seriously the invitation to follow Jesus as his disciples did: Mark 1:17–18; 2:14–15; 6:1; 8:34. The Risen Lord without any connection to the Jesus of history would be a phantom whom nobody could follow.

Ernst Käsemann summed up the problem as follows: "The earthly Jesus had to protect the proclaimed Christ from dissolution in the pro-

282 F. G. Lang, *Sola gratia im Markusevangelium*, passim.
283 G. Ebeling, *Theology and Proclamation*, 55.

jection of an ethical self-understanding and becoming the object of a religious ideology."[284]

6.4.2 Turning back to the time of Jesus

It seems to be self-evident that after a time it proved necessary to put down the traditions about Jesus in writing, in order that they might not be forgotten. We already know from the form-critical analyses that the traditions about Jesus played the role of illustrations of the individual sayings conceived as the voice of the Risen Lord in the present. Here we are not speaking about the theology of the groups who did not accept the Easter Gospel about the resurrection of Jesus. We are speaking about the Pauline theological setting, in which the death of Jesus was proclaimed as the first part of the Easter Gospel and the incarnation of the Son of God was stressed as an act of God's mercy. The time and place of Jesus was not yet recognised as the reference point for all Christian preaching and teaching. The theological precondition for this was provided by the formulae of the Easter Gospel, which differentiated between the pre- and post-Easter Jesus, but in the liturgical reading from the Scripture the fixed past was the time and place of the patriarchs, kings and prophets of the Israelite Law and the Prophets. This was what was used for the texts of early sermons, as can be seen, for example, in the Epistle of Hebrews, which is a set of Christian exhortative sermons on texts from the Jewish Scripture (Ps 8 and 95, Jer 31, Ps 40). The Pauline emphasis on the death of Jesus overshadowed any interest in his life story.

Mark linked all the Christian proclamations and all the sayings of Jesus with the story of his earthly life.[285] New interpretations and additions to Jesus' words could not contradict his deeds and attitudes, made manifest in his life story. At the same time the material about Jesus was reduced. It became clear that the Jesus traditions were not a bottomless supply of instructions for individual situations and that it would be necessary to solve new problems by reflecting on Jesus' general attitudes and counsels, by making analogies and obtaining new insights as to how Christian communities should live. Jesus' life became the text. It grad-

284 Sackgassen in Streit um den historischen Jesus, 69 (translation P.P.).

285 J. Marcus, Mark – Interpreter of Paul; 476 ff. This concept of Mark had already been formulated in 1956 by J. M. Robinson, *The problem of history in Mark*, 82.

ually acquired the position of a text in the Jewish Bible, and in the Christian canon it also overshadowed the letters of Paul. By alluding to the "beginning" in Gen 1:1 Mark underlined this ambition. In methodological terms, understanding the theological concept needs to come before a diachronic analysis of the traditions that Mark used.[286]

Thus the Christian proclamation had a clear referential function. It referred to the normative past of Jesus' time and places of activity and suffering. However, it was a turning back to the past in such a way that, at the same time, there was an anticipation of the absolute future, the kingdom of God/the Age to Come. It was the remembered past of the Risen One.[287] However, it was such a turn back to the normative past, that in the same time anticipated the future, the absolute future.

We can express the general strategy of the Gospel of Mark as "memories of the future".

The resurrection divided the present from Jesus' earthly life, which occurred in Galilee and Jerusalem years before. Mark often depicted history in a transparent way, in order that the present impact might be visible, but the intention of his narrative strategy was unambiguous: *It is not the present experience of faith that serves a better understanding of the intention of Jesus, but rather that the present effect of his resurrection evokes interest in his past story.* Jesus of Nazareth is the criterion for shaping the present Christian community confessing him as the Risen Lord. Jesus of Nazareth is the one who has to be followed and obeyed.

For our interpretation of the origins of Christian literature this reorientation of faith has two consequences. One consequence is the fact that together with the Jesus traditions the Church also saved precious information about history. The second is that *history as such became an important phenomenon of Christian thinking. "Memory" is the present dimension of history. And the later historical-critical investigation of the Jesus tradition and the canonical books is a contemporary qualified tool of memory. This is the theological justification for the historical-critical investigation of canonical books through exegesis.*

Jürgen Roloff in his pioneering article (1969) summed up the achievement of Mark as follows: The author of the Gospel of Mark supposes "a thinking which differentiates between the past, present and fu-

286 C. Breytenbach, Das Markusevangelium als traditionsgebundene Erzählung, 83 f., 92. This does not mean that the diachronic analysis is not a necessary second methodological step.

287 Cf. P. Bonnard, *Anamnesis*, 2–11.

ture of salvation and is aware of the relevance of a specific time and space of the past for the present. Mark describes it as a past history from the appearance of John the Baptist to the Easter morning. The unexpected ending of the Gospel with 16:8 may be a consequence of this concept: What followed on Easter morning cannot be reported in the same way as the previous story was."[288] The remark about the women's silence was originally conceived of as a shock caused by theophany. However, in the Markan intention the true recipient of the Easter Gospel is the reader, who may feel responsible for what the women learned on Easter morning and who knows that the gospel has to be proclaimed to all nations (Mark 13:10).

The relevance of a specific time and place in the past (the incarnation of Jesus Christ) was acknowledged in most of the Christian groups and movements at the end of the first century. Even in the dualistic Johannine group it was expressed, not only in the prologue of the Gospel of John (1:14, 18), but also in the maxim or rule laid down in 2 John 7: "Many deceivers have come out into the world, those who do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh; any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist!" In 1 John 4:1–3 the idea is even developed like this: "Beloved…test the spirits to see whether they are from God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and…" This was the definitive acceptance of turning towards the Jesus of history and the fulfilment of the intention of the Easter Gospel with its "doubled eschatology". The faith evoked by the proclamation of Jesus as the Risen Lord has its criterion in Jesus of Nazareth. The Gospel as the literary *euangelion* included especially the past dimension of the "doubled eschatology"[289] – the memories of the apostles (see Papias in Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 3, 39 15 [Peter *hosa emnēmoneuse, akribōs egrapsen*], and Justin, *Dial* 101:3 and 104:1 etc. [*apomnēmoneumata*]).[290]

Unlike in Judaism, as exemplified in the Law and the Prophets (the Christian Old Testament), the narrative (*haggadah*) prevailed over the commandments and wisdom (*halakha*).

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288 J. Roloff, "Das Markusevangelium als Geschichtsdarstellung", 92; C. Focant, *Marc,* 357 f.

289 This was in a representative way demonstrated by the monumental work *Jesus Remembered* by J. D. G. Dunn, see especially 881 ff.

290 For further evidence see § 8. For *apomnēmoneumata* in early Christian texts see R. M. Grant, *The Earliest Lives of Jesus*, 119 f.

Here I would like to add an interpretative comment: *This finding can be interpreted in the sense that Jesus included in his story the concrete features and values of the Kingdom of God as it impacts on history: his compassion for the poor, exploited, sick, ritually unclean, those possessed by demons, helpless children and women, and his contacts with strangers and foreigners* (from Samaria, the Decapolis, or Phoenicia). *This cluster of his attitudes and activities represents an eschatological concept of a new world and a current in history that faith recognises as the inconspicuous backbone of history*. It indirectly influenced the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that most countries of the world have accepted as their constituting document.

By preserving the inspiring expectation of the kingdom of God as introduced by Jesus, the Gospel of Mark transformed the apocalyptic myth into an inspiring vision of the fulfilment and meaning of history. It was such a powerful vision that it was capable of overcoming all the aberrations and distortions introduced by both heretics and orthodoxy.

Turning back to history does not mean that Mark was a historiographer in the modern sense or even in the sense of pragmatic historiographers of antiquity like Thucydides (460 – after 400 B.C.E.). His work was a testimony about Jesus Christ's central role in human salvation and fulfilling the course of history. It was a reproduction of history in the style of *mimēsis* – a narrative intending to reconstruct history in its inner intention, in this case to display the divine power that leads the story of this age towards its eschatological end. To succeed in this approach it is necessary to deal with history, gather the data about Jesus, and make the reader aware of the fact that the decisive revelation of the power transforming history occurred within history in the person and story of Jesus. The resurrection says that this is indeed the victorious power that is at work under the surface of history and that the eschatological future belongs to it. The testimony is not a report or a verifiable finding, but it is a personal statement by a witness whose objective character is recognisable only in its inner bias, in the witness's confession according to which he or she is influenced by a stimulus from outside (a psychologist would be able to offer an alternative or parallel explanation), and in its impact on history. The way towards fulfilment is open, but the way of action is given by Jesus as a paradigm in an extreme situation.[291]

Since the whole life of Jesus is conceived of as a journey towards the cross, the image of Jesus oscillates between "having authority" (*exousia*),

291 M. E. Boring, *The Christology of Mark*, 142 f.

when he healed the sick and expelled the unclean spirits, and "defenceless", when he cried out on the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34). These are the situations in human life that Jesus coped with in a specific way and Mark decided to comment on this from the perspective of the gospel about the resurrection. We will need to give this phenomenon special consideration in the next paragraph.

6.5 Interpreting the Normative Past

We have already demonstrated that turning back towards Jesus of Nazareth did not replace the proclamation of Jesus as the living One, but was rather intended to protect the Easter Gospel from being applied in incorrect ways or turned into a pious ideology. This fact also affected the Markan way of interpreting the Jesus traditions for the Christian communities of his time. Rather than transforming the sayings of Jesus into direct instructions for the post-Easter requirements of Christian communities, he narrated the stories about Jesus in the past tense, although in a transparent way. He did not ignore the time gap between the time of Jesus and his present, but he was able to give the readers/hearers a hint that it had a special impact on the present life of the community.

6.5.1 The "Good News" of the Passion Story

We discussed the pre-history of the Markan Passion Story in § 5.2 and we also mentioned the fact that from its very beginning it had a structure based on apocalyptic references. The most important of them was Jesus' claim to be the Son of Man as the representative of the highest (divine) tribunal during his interrogation by the high priest in Mark 14:61–62. The readers would have known from the previous apocalyptic chapter that the Son of Man in Jesus' vision was the "heavenly" victorious power in the apocalyptic struggle between God and the powers that tried to attack his coming kingdom (Mark 13:24–26). For Mark, Jesus was identical with the Son of Man. The readers can recognise this in Mark 8:38, where Jesus claims to be the Son of Man coming in glory and then again in Mark 9:1–8. Mark 9 is introduced by the saying in verse 1 about "some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power." This

was originally an expression of the delayed coming of the kingdom of God before all the present generation had died out. However, in the following story about the Transfiguration of Jesus (9:2–8), under Markan direction Jesus plays the role of the Son of Man coming in the glory of the Father, as it had been announced in Mark 8:38. He appears as a celestial being and a voice from heaven declares him to be the Son of God, Jesus. The Markan Jesus, who speaks about himself as the Son of Man, is in the eyes of God his Son, his legal representative. So in the Markan view Jesus, the Son of Man and the Son of God are all identical. This was hinted at in the prophecy in Mark 8:38 about the Son of Man coming in the glory of God.

When Jesus announced the coming of the Son of Man (Mark 14:62), he originally appealed to a higher (supreme) court than the Council in Jerusalem.[292] According to Mark he thus proclaimed his messianic mission. He did so in a situation where it was evident that he did not intend to play the role of a political Messiah and where his Messiahship was defined as Messiah-the-Son-of-God.[293] We may assume that the Markan Passion Story is in fact identical with the decisive battle of the apocalyptic expectation (see § 2.3 above – on the "doubled" eschatology). This means that a special time and place in human history are attested as a part of the eschatological revelation. The reader may guess that it will be the fulfilment of the saying about the Son of Man who came to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). But what does it mean to say that he (Jesus) will pay a price for liberating many (Gr. *lytron*) at the last judgment of God? "Many" denotes here an unlimited number of other people. A more general expression of the same event is provided by the formula of the gospel in 1 Thess 1:10, according to which the Son of God will rescue "us" from the coming wrath of God. The Last Judgment was an understandable part of the apocalyptic expectation which most Christians shared. Some of them may have understood it as a kind of

292 In his monograph about the Son of Man in Mark (*Endgericht durch Menschensohn?*) M. Reichardt maintains that the Son of Man in Mark was not an eschatological judge (151 f.). However, he was a representative of God. He rightly maintains that the Son of Man in Mark is (in most cases) identical with Jesus, but he tends to deny the difference between Jesus and the Son of Man in pre-Markan traditions (including Q /Luke/ 12: 8).

293 A suggestion of J. Marcus, Are You the Messiah-Son-of-God?, see above, § 6.2 (Son of God and other titles).

metaphor, but it was not easy to understand how Jesus' suffering and death could liberate sinful (alienated) people from God's judgment.

Mark did not quote the Pauline formulation of a Jesus who bore human sins and who – through his death on the cross – became cursed for "us" (2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13). However, he does include the Institution of the Lord's Supper, which he used together with the Passion Story (cf. 1 Cor 11:23), and in which the death of Jesus, represented by the cup of covenant, is "for many" (Mark 14:24). In 1 Cor 11:24 it is the bread that represents "the body for you". This "sacrificial" interpretation of Jesus' death was not understood outside the Palestinian Jewish setting, where the cult of YHWH was concentrated in the Temple. The pagan concept of sacrifice was different and Mark most probably wrote his work at a time when the Temple had been destroyed, i. e. after 70 C.E. If the Gospel of Mark was written in Rome, as an old tradition asserts[294] and as is mostly assumed,[295] the need for a new interpretation would have been even more pressing.

That is why Mark wanted to offer a new interpretation of the Pauline theological heritage. The formulae about a Jesus who bore human sins and the divine punishment are not the only Pauline expressions for the experience of his faith that Jesus lived and died for other sinful people. Another one is reconciliation (Rom 5:8–11), and yet another one humiliation in obedience to God (Phil 2:6–11). These are the various possible interpretations of the simple phrase about the death of Jesus "for" (*hyper, peri, anti)* sinners, many, our sins, us, etc.

Mark concentrated on the image of the ransom that Jesus paid (Mark 10:45). As a theme (not as the term *lytron, lytrōsis* or *lytrousthai*)[296] it appears in Rom 6:16–23. The themes of humiliation and obedience (see Phil 2; expressed by the Greek *dei* – it is necessary – Mark 8:31; 9:11; 13:7, 10) are also present in the Markan Passion Story. However, he was aware of the fact that the "For others" may still be interpreted in various ways. He was bold enough to outline his own interpretation.

Together with the older pieces of the Passion Story he used the Gethsemane pericope (Mark 14:32–42) about Jesus praying to God

294 Irenaeus *Haer.* 3,1,1; Eusebius *Hist. ecl.* 5,8,3.

295 B. M. F. van Iersel, *Mark*, 36–39; A. J. Collins, *Mar.* 8; similarly C. E. B. Cranfield or H. C. Kee ; on the other hand, H. G. Kümmel and especially G. Theissen presented arguments for a Syrian origin (*Die Entstehung des Neuen* Testaments, 79; idem, The *Gospels in Context*, 239), as did J. Marcus (*Mark 1–8* , 36).

296 These terms appear only in Tit 2:14 and Heb 9:12.

and asking him to remove from him the cup (of suffering). Jesus must have had an idea about avoiding the conflict without giving up his mission, which he experienced as given by God. He may have expected the coming of the kingdom of God before he was sentenced or he may have supposed that he could be taken up into heaven like Enoch or Elijah. However, he realised that his personal fate had to become a part of the eschatological process of salvation that he proclaimed. His personal struggle, full of distress and the fear of death, was deeply human. God did not answer his prayer and Jesus did not hear any voice from heaven, as had been the case after his baptism (Mark 1:11) or in the transfiguration (9:7), and his disciples fell asleep.[297] The Gethsemane scene also impressed the authors of other texts of early Christian literature, see John 12:27 and Heb 5:7. However, Luke omitted the phrase "I am deeply grieved," which he did not consider fitting for the Son of God. According to Celsus, the Gethsemane scene proves that Jesus was not a god (*Contra Celsum* 2, 23–24).

Jesus' crisis culminates on the cross, where in his distress he asked God why he had forsaken him. This is also quoted in Aramaic, and it is therefore one of the historically most reliable pieces of the Passion Story. Here we can sense how all the visions of the kingdom of God that Jesus proclaimed were collapsing. His fear of death and his disillusionment are manifest. His messianic consciousness and his identification with the Son of Man and the Son of God were at stake. There was only a very thin link that still connected him with God: the fact that he shared with him his anxiety and doubts – and avoided the solution which the wife of Job recommended to her husband: "Curse God and die!" (Job 2:9).

The attempts to tone down the image of Jesus' personal crisis by explaining his prayer in Gethsemane as a quotation from Ps 55:2–6 or his cry of dereliction on the cross as a reference to Ps 22 express a tendency that is already to be found in the early Church, according to which the suffering of the Messiah was acceptable as the suffering of the Just One and as the suffering of Jewish and Christian martyrs, but doubts and fear had no place in martyrdom. In Luke Jesus commends his spirit into the hands of the Father (Luke 23:43).[298] However, Mark was aware of the fact that it was precisely here, in the most controversial scene, that the

297 For the whole of the pericope see R. Feldmeier, *Die Krisis der Gottesssohnes*, esp. 246.

298 See G. Sterling, *Mors philosophi:* The Death of Jesus in Luke, 393 ff.

essence of the suffering of the Saviour for others was to be found. He instructed his readers how it should be understood.

When Jesus was hanging on the cross, shortly before his death, the passers-by mocked him. They mentioned his saying about the destruction of the Temple and called on him to make use of his supposed supernatural power and descend from the cross. The chief priests and scribes likewise mocked Jesus. The priests were dignitaries of the Temple that had already been destroyed when the Christian community heard this pericope being read, whereas the scribes were those who maintained the continuity of faith through the following centuries. They mocked Jesus, saying: "He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe" (Mark 15:31–32; cf. Wis 2:17–18: "Let us … test what will happen at the end of his life; for if the righteous man is God's son, he will help him"). This is a deliberate insult: his death on the cross calls into question all his previous activity.

And yet, *in the Markan literary strategy, this is paradoxically a decisive and positive message for the reader/hearer, a new interpretation of the "for us" or "for the many" of the Easter gospel. His opponents unconsciously tell the truth about Jesus.*[299] *From the biographical point of view the "He saved others" (allous esōsen – verse 31) is a summary of his public activity – his healings, exorcisms, and his fellowship with ritually unclean people and sinners. From the perspective of the Easter gospel this is a firm basis for hope and the "salvation" brought by him. The words that follow immediately afterwards, "He cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the king of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe", cannot cancel out the previous statement about salvation. Those who experience loneliness, disillusionment, pain and fear of death, and vainly expect an answer to their prayers know well that a report about someone who miraculously got rid of his cross would be no consolation for them, as they do not have such abilities or opportunities. It would only confirm their hopeless position. Since Jesus stood on the side of mortal and sinful people, he could not have come down from the cross. Only the resurrection of a crucified person in the form of an action coming from the other side, from the "Father," could form the basis of the hope and faith in salvation in those who feel alone, are forced into passivity, and face death.* This is the Markan interpretation of Jesus' death for others, revealing the depth of his theology.

299 In the Gospel of John we find a similar strategy of telling the truth by unconscious statements of Jesus' opponents: The inscription on the cross says that Jesus is the "King of the Jews" (John 19:19–22).

It is only understandable if we ask whether this is not too bold and anachronistic (modern) an *interpretation*, whether we are not interpreting Mark through the eyes of our contemporaries, whether experiencing one's own fate in such an emotional and deeply-considered way would not have been alien to people two thousand years ago, and whether they would have been able to understand such a refined and sophisticated literary strategy, expressing the substiutionary impact of the Easter gospel.

In response we can say first of all that a feeling of suffering, an inner crisis and the fear of death were not alien to the biblical people. This is attested in many Psalms. The cry of dereliction in Mark 15:34 had already been adapted before Mark as a quotation from Psalm 22:1, a psalm which expresses all the feelings and terror that we find in the Markan narrative about the last hours of Jesus' life. Mark was fully aware of this inner continuity when he decided to link the model of death "for others" with Jesus. Jesus experienced a genuine crisis without knowing how it would end. And it was only the Easter gospel that enabled Christians to confess the crucified Jesus as the Son of God. It is a story that proclaims that nobody is ever, even in death, forsaken by God. This was a theological achievement with far-reaching consequences. All the other canonical Gospel writers recognised the inner affinity of Ps 22 and Wis 2 with the Passion Story, but only Matthew used the main features of the Markan Passion Story, whereas Luke and John opted for another interpretation, influenced by the model of a suffering Stoic hero or a spiritual being in a human body respectively. It is generally accepted that the journey towards a more profound humanity is inseparably bound up with sacrifices, and the elementary interpretation of the substitutionary death of Jesus as the essential sacrifice is the vindication of every sacrifice for others.

Since popular Christian piety was in early times (and also at the present day) marked by a moderate monophysitism, which admitted that Jesus was not omnipresent, but must have been omniscient, the Markan interpretation of Jesus' substitutionary suffering remained on the periphery of Christian theology. The only "non-heretical" way of interpreting the story of Jesus is, according to the later Christological definitions, to suppose that he was fully man (including his fallibility), and fully God by his identification with the will of the heavenly Father. This was consistent obedience in the sense of spiritual community with God.

The other problem is whether the Markan way of expressing this in the "second level" of the narrative was understandable to the readers/hearers of the Gospel of Mark. Mark was convinced that the centurion who stood at the cross did understand that "He saved others" was true and it inspired him to confess Jesus as the Son of God (see § 6.2 – Son of God). The main argument for the intentional presence of the "second level," as we have described it, was a similar "second level" in the story of the Syrophoenician woman (see § 6.2 – the Pauline influence) and the way Mark associates the sacraments with the life of Jesus, which was done by means of a similar literary technique. This also applies to Mark 8:14–21 (see below).

6.5.2 "Earthing" the sacraments in Mark

Narrating traditions about Jesus with a second level seems to contradict our thesis about Mark consciously turning to the normative past of Jesus' life. However, the transparent retelling only confirms the fact that the cause of Jesus Christ's authority in the early Church was the Easter message about his resurrection. This lay behind the return of the Easter faith to Jesus from Nazareth as the norm and point of orientation for the formation of social life.

When Jesus' life story was updated, the emphasis lay, at least in Mark, on the normative past of his earthly life. The transparent interpretation tells the present reader/hearer how important the normative past is for people of the present day and how important it will be for the future. The memory of Jesus is the memory of the future – a memory of what is in store in the future. Prophetic direct speech in the name of Jesus Christ, the Lord, was not protected from voluntarism. Only a detour via the earthly Jesus (Jesus of Nazareth) offered a firm basis and norm. The same applied to the interpretation of the ritual acts of the Lord's Supper (the Eucharist) and baptism and their accompanying texts (*legomena*). Baptism was the entrance-rite for every Christian, while the Eucharist was celebrated frequently, not just once a year as the Jewish Pesah was. After the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., their authority increased even among the Christians of Jewish origin. Later (at the end of the second century) they were subsumed under the general Latin term "sacraments" (*sacramentum*).

Baptism does not have a direct beginning in the life of Jesus, but Matthew, who tended to base the rules and traditions of life in Christian

communities on the life of Jesus, placed the institution of baptism as a Christian rite in the time after Easter. Mark saw in Jesus' life turning points that related to Jesus' death and resurrection and were suitable (see § 2.1 above) for interpretation as events expressing the dependence of baptism on the Passion and resurrection of Jesus. In Mark 14:51 we read about a young man who, dressed in a linen cloth, followed Jesus when he was arrested and the disciples had deserted him and fled (14:50). He was caught, left the linen cloth in the hands of the armed people and "ran away naked." The linen cloth saved him. A young man dressed in a white robe appears in Jesus' grave on Easter morning, proclaiming (confessing) the resurrection of Jesus. We have shown that the Christian baptism was linked with the gospel about Jesus' death and resurrection (1 Cor 15:3b-5) from the very beginning. We do not know whether in the first century this formula of the gospel was already part of the baptismal liturgy, but it certainly belonged to the post-baptismal catechesis (1Pet 3:18–22).

If all this is true, both the white (linen) robes, *stolē leukē* in 16:5 and *sindōn* in 14:51–52, could be understood as symbolising the white baptismal robe of the Christian neophytes. The young man, who was near Jesus in his Passion (and saved his life because of his baptismal robe, whereas Jesus died)[300] and was near him at his resurrection and proclaimed him as the Risen One, could represent a Christian, who in his baptism died with Jesus and would be raised with him as expressed in Rom 6:1–11; cf. Col 2:12–15. The problem is that a white robe as a baptismal garment in the 1st century C. E. is attested only indirectly through the image of the multitude of the saved dressed in white in Rev 7:9, 13 (cf. 3:4–5, 18 and 6:11; cf. Hermas *Sim*. VIII, 2, 3). However, since the semantic field of dressing (taking off old clothing, putting on new clothing) is common in Paul and Paulinism in connection with the Christian (new) life associated with baptism (Rom 13:12, 14; Col 3:9–12; Eph 4:24), it is still not impossible that Mark coded the message about salvation through Jesus' death and resurrection once again as the second level of these narrative elements, as has been suggested by some contemporary scholars.[301] (Cf. the second level in the novel by

300 See a similar saying when Jesus faced his death in John 18:8–9. John may have been influenced by Mark.

301 For this problem see R. Scroggs – K. I. Groff, Baptism in Mark, especially 537 ff. A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 688–695, considers this interpretation to be less probable.

Apuleius [died C.E. 123] *Metam.* 11:13–15, 21.) Unlike our former argument in favour of Mark's theological and literary achievement this remains a hypothesis. The motif of the flying disciple may be only an illustration of the fulfilled saying of Jesus: "You will all become deserters" (14:27).

As for the *Eucharist,* the institution of which we discussed in the previous section, Mark tried to sketch its meaning by his transparent telling of other traditions from Jesus' life, especially the Feeding of the Five Thousand in 6:30–44, The Syrophoenician Woman's Faith in 7:24–30, the Feeding of the Four Thousand in 8:1–10[302] and the Yeast of the Pharisees and Herod in 8:14–21. The transmission of the first two was deeply interpretative, and so we are not able to determine the way they related to history. That may have happened several times, and they may have impressed the participants so deeply that the memory of them was overshadowed by the attempts to express their impact. Nonetheless, they are explicitly introduced as events from Jesus' life.

In Mark 6:30 Jesus' disciples are called apostles, which marks the post-Easter situation. In Mark 3:14 the term apostles is used by Jesus himself (according to three ancient manuscripts – Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Coridethi – and the Coptic translations). In this way the mission of the Christian apostles was characterised as an activity continuing the activity of Jesus. At a deserted place, where Jesus intended to rest, he was sought by many people who came to meet him. Here the reader realises how the opportunity to be with Jesus was regarded as something precious. What follows is characterised as an act of compassion towards people in need (cf. Mark 6:34; 8:2; 9:22 and 1:41). In Mark 6:34 they are described as "sheep without a shepherd." Shepherd was a metaphor for God (Isa 40:11; Ps 23:1) or for the Davidic king (1Sam 17:34) and in Num 27:17 God appoints Joshua (in Greek *Iēsous* – Jesus) to lead his people, in order that they may not be "like sheep without a shepherd". This was the position of Jesus according to Mark 6. His disciples interrupted him and made him aware of the lack of food. He told them to feed the large crowd of people themselves (cf. the story of Elisha feeding one hundred men in 2 Kings 4, especially verse 43). The people sat down in military formations: only the number of men, the potential soldiers, is indicated (cf. Ex 18:25; or the planned formation of the Qum-

302 For a commentary see especially K. P. Donfried, The Feeding Narratives and the Marcan Community, especially 100 ff.

ran people for the eschatological struggle 1QM 4:3 f.). Indirectly, we can deduce that historically the participants expected that Jesus would free them from the foreign dominion through his liberating power (see Jer. 23, where the Davidic Messiah will gather the scattered flock and cf. § 6.2 – *The Son of God*). Such an expectation is expressly included in John 6:15: "When …they were about … to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountains by himself".

The miraculous feeding of the crowds, whatever may have actually occurred according to our criteria of historical authenticity, was opened by Jesus' prayer of thanksgiving as was the case at every Jewish meal. In the early Christian texts the Eucharistic prayer was linked with the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:24; Mark 14:22–23parr.; cf. Luke 24:30). The motif of Jesus breaking the loaves reveals unambiguously that the reader/hearer has to think about the Lord's Supper (the Eucharist according to later religious terminology); as the manna had represented God's care for the Israelites, so the community expected Jesus as the Son of God to care for the Christians.

The miraculous feeding of the crowds culminates with a second climax: They collected twelve baskets full of broken pieces of bread and fish. Twelve was a number indicating fullness and also the number of the tribes of Israel.

In 7:24–30 we read about the faith of the Syrophoenician woman who because of her confession of Jesus as Lord had the privilege to eat the crumbs (*psichia*) from the children's table – an allusion to the common table of Christians of Jewish and pagan backgrounds, the problem that Paul described in Gal 2:11–14 (see § 6.2 below – the Pauline influence).

We cannot decide about the historicity of the second story about Jesus feeding a multitude in Mark 8:1–10. What we can say for certain is that this doublet was edited or re-told in terms of Markan theology:[303] the disciples did not understand anything and asked the same doubting question again. The difference lay in the participating crowd, which, according to Mark 7:31 must have been from the Decapolis on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, from a pagan milieu. This is, however, the result of Markan editing, since it can be deduced from Mark 8:3 that it was in the wilderness again. The difference in the conclusion is inter-

303 See R. M. Fowler. *Loaves and Fishes,* 91–96; J. R. Donahue – D. J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, ad. loc.; K. P. Donfried, The Feeding Narratives and the Marcan Community, 101.

esting: this time seven baskets of left-over pieces (*klasmata)* were collected.

Seven may be an allusion to the concept of seventy nations existing on earth (Gen 10; 1 Enoch 89:59 f.). Nonetheless it was also a number representing fullness, as was the number twelve.

So far as the Eucharist is concerned, these stories tell the reader that the Lord's Table has its origin in the life of Jesus (it is celebrated in his memory – *anamnēsis*; 1 Cor 11:25), that former pagans can also participate,[304] and that every celebration means receiving from the fullness of the bread blessed by Jesus – the portions from the twelve or seven baskets that were left over from his feeding of the multitude in Galilee.

This seems to be a sophisticated interpretation, but the story about the yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod in 8:14–21 confirms that Mark wrote using a sophisticated theological strategy and that some of his original readers/hearers were trained (catechetically educated) to understand it. After the second story of Jesus feeding the multitude, and after the disputation with the Pharisees about the sign from heaven that would legitimate Jesus as an agent of God, Jesus decided to cross the Sea of Galilee. "His disciples had forgotten to bring any bread; and they had only one loaf with them in the boat" (verse14). Seemingly out of context Jesus cautioned them: "Watch out – beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod" and the disciples, out of context, discuss the lack of bread. Deducing that the ignorance that is in them because of their "hardened hearts" prevents them from seeing and hearing – a quotation from Jer. 5:21 – which he had also cited in Mark 4:12 (see § 6.2 – the Messianic Secret) – Jesus defined the cause of this dispute and reminded his disciples of the feeding of the multitude. They had to admit the number of baskets full of pieces of bread that had been left over and to realise that Jesus is the true bread.[305] The story has an open ending with Jesus' question: "Do you not yet understand?"

From this pericope we can learn that Jesus is the true bread which, in this context, means life in its fullness, even transcending the barrier of death. The author of the Gospel of John developed this motif into the allegorical self-revelations of Jesus: "I am the bread of life. Whoever

304 According to R. M. Fowler, Loaves and Fishes, 182, "the gospel (of Mark) seems to be written almost as a writ of divorce between certain segments of Judaism and Christianity".

305 D. Juel, A Disquieting Silence, 226.

comes to me will never be hungry, and who believes in me will never be thirsty." (John 6:35)

This is the Easter Gospel, which, from now on, is being transformed. Its "beginning" in the life of Jesus of Nazareth becomes an inseparable part of it and its hermeneutical key. That is why within a few decades "the gospel" (*euangelion*) became a term logically denoting the content of the formulae of the gospel and the beginning of the gospel, Jesus' life.

And the formulae of the resurrection became a solemn confession of faith and confirmation of all that was remembered and attested about Jesus. The open ending of the Gospel according to Mark exhorts the reader to join the confessing community.

All the innovative interpretations of the sacraments are "earthed" by their close connection with the life of Jesus of Nazareth and his compassion for the multitudes.

6.5.3 By-products of the Markan concept of the Gospel

The dying hero who promised the kingdom of God may be a tragic figure, but the power of the Easter experience – the power of the source of life, as we interpreted it in § 2.2 (interpreting the resurrection IV) – was so persuasive that the whole story of Jesus (including Easter) became the "good news" and "revelation".

Mark reflects this in the simple, but literary style of Greek literature. We have already mentioned that the simple style[306] of that time is not the result of his lack of education. Mark's education was better than it appeared – note his theologically motivated narrative written in a sophisticated way. The simplicity of his style resulted rather from his intention to address ordinary people.[307] That means that he intentionally used the common Hellenistic Greek (*koinē*), inspired by the Septuagint, and thus he transmitted not only the Christian gospel and the Jesus traditions to the world of the Roman Empire, but also a substantial piece of the Hebrew heritage with its stress on discovering God through events in history.

306 From the literary point of view we call it *sermo humilis,* but this was not a rhetorical category of that time, see M. Reiser, *Sprache und literarische Formen des Neuen Testaments*, 30.

307 Th. Söding, Der Evangelist in seiner Zeit, 25, 45.

Erich Auerbach, the German historian of literature, compared the depiction of the ordinary lower class people from contemporary Latin literature (Petronius, Tacitus) and the Gospel of Mark in his book called "Mimesis" (1946). Whereas the lower class people are comic figures or even amoral rebels in the Latin texts, the figure of Peter in Mark is a figure of deep conflict: a follower of Jesus who follows him to the palace where he is being interrogated (only a wall divides them from each other), and who fails and denies his master when a servant-girl discovers his identity as a disciple of Jesus. This could be a comic scene, but Peter is "A tragic figure of such a background, such a hero of such a weakness… the nature of the scene of the conflict also falls entirely outside the domain of classical antiquity… A scene like Peter's denial fits into no antique genre. It is too serious for comedy, too contemporary and everyday for tragedy, politically too insignificant for history – and the form which is given to it is one of such immediacy that its like does not exist anywhere in antiquity."[308]

What Mark narrated supported the attitude towards life and traditions that – together with the Enlightenment and the modern social movement – inspired most of the renewal movements and reforms in Europe and America and became typical of the Western literary tradition.

308 Translated from E. Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 37 and 40 (German original).

7. The other canonical Gospels[309]

It would be interesting to analyse the theology and literary structure of the individual Gospels and other early Christian texts in order to find out how much they were influenced by the oral Easter gospel and how (or whether) they were influenced by the literary structure of Mark. This could be a legitimate theme for further exegesis. Both the longer Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John transformed the short Markan last paragraph (16:1–8), which indicated the resurrection in indirect ways (an empty tomb, the proclamation of the resurrection gospel, the promise of meeting Jesus as the Risen One), into narratives about encountering the Risen Lord. In this way the other three biographies of Jesus include: Jesus' life culminating in his death on the cross (= "the beginning of the gospel") + the proclamation of the resurrection (parallels to Mark 16:6–7 = the gospel) + narratives about his appearances in a new "divine" position. The integrative tendency of Mark developed into a new form: the Gospels according to Luke, Matthew and John were intentionally written as special literary shaped accounts including the life story of Jesus according to the Easter gospel as a whole, not only as its beginning (*archē*), as had been done and programmatically proclaimed by Mark.

Both the "longer" Synoptic Gospels, even if obviously intended for the whole of the Christian church, originated in different local communities where the Gospel of Mark was already used in the liturgy, so that the Markan integration of Pauline theology and the Jesus traditions had already became a part of their language world. "Mark" was surprisingly successful and different Christian groups took his theological orientation as a model and inspiration for Christian teaching and preaching. And these groups gradually came to form the mainstream ("catholic") Christianity, whereas the other Christian groups (Gnostic, Judaeo-Christian), which were theologically less persuasive, became marginal and were considered as heretical.

309 For Luke and Matthew see G. Strecker, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 355–361 and 384–438, for the Gospel of John ibidem 479–540.

The Easter Gospel in the form of 1 Cor 15:3b-5, as it was accepted by the federation of various groups of Jesus followers (1 Cor 15:5–8,9,11), spread after the fall of Jerusalem, when the Pauline heritage was rediscovered, and became the confession of the emerging main stream of Christianity. The designation "Gospel" for all the Christian biographies of Jesus was the result of a logical development: the expression for the news about Jesus' resurrection was extended to its pre-history or the beginning – to the life of Jesus. From the mid-second century onward the "gospel" in Mark 1:1 was considered to be also a term for a kind of book, not for the oral gospel only. This is a convincing illustration of the post-Markan impact of the Easter message as gospel (*euangelion*).

Nevertheless, a discussion of the literary structure and theology of the other Gospels that later became canonised could divert our attention, since the theologies of the canonical Gospels, all influenced by the structure of the Gospel of Mark and basing themselves on its theology, also integrated other theological elements which helped constitute their theology as well as their literary structure.

Firstly, Luke and Matthew, independently from each other, added the stories about Jesus' birth to the bulk of the Markan text. Thus they adapted the Markan model to bring it closer to to classical biography, but, at the same time, the scheme of their books, as inspired by the Easter gospel, became less apparent.

Secondly, they added a Jewish (Abraham at the beginning of Jesus' genealogy in Matt 1:2–17) or a universal human prehistory (Adam at the beginning in Luke 3:23–38) for Jesus – a history that was fulfilled in him. This is a prehistory that transcends the explicit content of the Easter gospel. In the Gospel of John 1:1–18 the pre-history goes back to the creation of the world, in order that the reader may be sure that Jesus represents the sole and eternal intention of God, the Creator. The descent – ascent scheme, which is already attested in Paul (especially Phil 2:6–10) helped to enrich the biographies of Jesus by a transcendent prehistory.

Thirdly, the integration of Q into both the "longer" Synoptic Gospels increased the proportion of sayings at the expense of the narratives, and helped to integrate several Judaeo-Christian groups into mainstream (catholic) Christianity.

Fourthly, the relationship of Jesus' story to the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms was developed. It was not simply an example of intertextuality, but it influenced the whole structure of the Gospels accord-

ing to Luke and Matthew. In Luke, the first chapter (80 verses!) represents the Jewish prehistory of the Christian Church – the time of messianic expectation. In Matthew, Jesus' story unfolds continually as a fulfilment of the recollected prophetic promises (Matt 1:22 f.; 2:15, 17 f., 23; 4:14–16; 8:17; 12:17–21; 13:35; 21:4 f. and 27:9; cf. 2:5; 3:3 and 13:14).

To sum up: The Gospels developed as a literary (sub)genre following the inner tendencies of the genre of biography and according to the needs of the Christian communities. The Easter gospel was preserved and emphasised, but the innovations did not follow the literary scheme of Mark. Instructions for the Christian life, wisdom, and a far-reaching reflection on Jesus' role in human salvation all made the formulae of the Easter faith less noticeable in the text as a whole.

As a consequence it was necessary to preserve the formulae as a separate part of the liturgy and develop them into the early Christian confessions or summaries of faith, as for example in Ignatius' letter to the church at *Tralles* 9:

> "Be deaf when anyone speaks to you apart from Jesus Christ.
> Who was of the stock of David,
> Who was from Mary,
> Who was truly born, ate and drank,
> was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate,
> was truly crucified and died
> in the sight of beings heavenly, earthly and under the earth.
> Who was also truly raised from death, His Father raised Him…"[310]

See also an expanded confession */regula fidei/* in Tertullian *De praescr.* 13, and, later, in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan or the Apostolic Creed.[311] They are all developed from the earliest formulae of the oral gospel (especially 1 Cor 15:3b-5 and Rom 1:3–4), except for the fact that the witnesses are not listed as they are in 1 Cor 15. This item was incorporated into the narratives dealing with the post-Easter appearances in the literary Gospels.

In spite of these observations, we can still sketch the developments of the other canonical Gospels from the point of view of the Easter gospel. They confirm that the Markan heritage was still alive, even though their Gospels did not follow the Markan structure.

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310 Translation quoted from J. B. Lightfoot, quoted by J. N. D. Kelly *Early Christian Creeds*, ch. III, 2.

311 J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, from ch. III on.

7.1 The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles[312]

As has been mentioned, Luke expanded the Markan pattern and included Jesus' prehistory and birth on the one hand (the beginning) and the appearances of the Risen Lord on the other (the end of the Gospel). And not only that, but he also wrote a second book, the Acts of the Apostles, dealing with the first and ideal answer (reaction) to the proclamation of the Christian message. This was experienced as Jesus' work through the Holy Spirit. Luke did not use the term *euangelion,* but only the verb *euangelizoma*, most probably because he intended to avoid political misunderstanding. At the same time, he stressed the continuity between Jesus and the Easter gospel by writing about the proclamation of the kingdom of God in the first Christian generation until the end of the Book of Acts in 28:31.

Attaching the Acts was an important step in the development of the Christian liturgical texts. The Easter gospel mentioned the resurrection (of Jesus) as an event of the past, which created a precondition for the development of a reflected theological view of history as a series of events between Jesus' resurrection and the Age to Come. This was a clear refusal of the dualistic, a-cosmic understanding of the Christian message as it was later developed by Gnosticism. At the end of the 19th century the German Franz Overbeck stressed the otherness of Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God and of the early Christian eschatology. According to him, the church adapted the gospel to the demands of the world. But his concept of the biblical teaching as the eternal truths (*Urwahrheiten*) was in fact close to the dualistic refusal of the world, so that Luke's decision to demonstrate the connection of the "Word" of Christian proclamation with history (Luke 1:1–3) and to add the Acts to the Gospel of Luke was for him "a scandal of world-historical dimensions" ("Taktlosigkeit von welthistorischen Dimensionen") which failed totally.[313] In fact he denied that the incarnation was an integral part of the Easter message and his position (in spite of some elements of authentic criticism) was quite close to the Gnostic one. For Jesus as well as for Paul, faith with its eschatological horizon was supposed to have an impact on history, to motivate decisions in the present.

312 See P. Pokorný, *Theologie der lukanischen Schriften*, especially chapters 3 and 4.
313 F. Overbeck, *Christentum und Kultur*, 78.

Luke documented in narrative form how after Easter the emphasis shifted from the future, from what is being expected, to the past, to what is being attested. Jesus, who was supposed to bring to an end, sooner or later, "this age" (human history) (Acts 3:21), moved to the centre of the two-volume *opus* of Luke: the Easter gospel concludes the Gospel of Luke and opens the Acts of the Apostles. Thus Jesus moved into the centre of history. The later chronology *post Christum* (A.D. introduced in the sixth century) and its analogical extension into the period *ante Christum* (B.C. introduced in the 18th century) was indirectly derived from this Lukan theological view of history. It was Hans Conzelmann from Göttingen (Germany) who described this theological shift in his monograph published originally in 1953 under the title *Die Mitte der Zeit* ("The Centre of Time," English translation *Theology of St. Luke*). It was one of the first studies of the "Redaction History" school that revealed the pioneering work of Luke.

The fact that the time of Jesus (from his birth until his death on the cross) is the key period of history was stressed by the consistent use of "today" or "this day" (*sēmeron*) in sayings related to the presence of Jesus on earth: it relates to a "today" that belonged to the past in the time of Luke, but it is the "today" of Jesus as the Risen Lord, the "today" that impacts the present day of every reader of the Gospel, the time segment that anticipates and includes the future: "I am bringing you good news (*euangelizomai*) .. .to you is born *today*…a Saviour" (Luke 2:10–11); "*Today* the scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (4:21); "*Today* salvation has come to this house" (19:9; cf. 19:5); "*today* you will be with me in Paradise" (23:43). The unique today of Jesus' presence impacts later history on special occasions that in Luke are marked by the word "daily" (*kath' hēmeran*): "*Daily*…they broke bread at home" (Act 2:46 – common meals, the Eucharist); "*Daily* the Lord added to their number those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47; 16:5 – mission); problems of *daily* (*kathēmerinos*) food (Acts 6:1 – service); "*daily* examined the scriptures" (Acts 17:11);"(Paul) argued in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons and also in the marketplace *daily* with those who happened to be there" (Acts 17:17 – the proclamation of the gospel); the followers of Jesus have to "take up their cross *daily* and follow him" (Luke 9:23 – self-denial); and "give us *daily* (*kath' hēmeran*) our daily (*epoiusios*) bread (Luke 11:3). In the Matthean version of the Lord's Prayer we read "today", but since the Lord's Prayer is prayed repeatedly even after Jesus' death, Luke pre-

ferred "daily" in order that "today" could be preserved for the time of Jesus' presence.

This is a small piece of evidence about Luke's literary and theological strategy, defining the specific role of Jesus' earthly story as the determining element of the Christian proclamation. It is a time that has to be remembered, and still it is *the* time, the period of time anticipating the future, which means the full presence of the kingdom of God, proclaimed and represented by Jesus, that impacts the everyday life of those who take this prospect seriously. As for Jewish history, theologically shaped in the Law and Prophets, it is, according to Luke, the pre-history of the time of Jesus – the centre of history.[314]

Since "daily" relates to the life of Jesus' people, i. e. the Church, we can see that it is effective in social life. Until now it has applied mostly to the ecclesiastical setting, but for Luke this is valid for the whole of society. In Acts 17:28 Paul says that all of us are the family of the one God "who will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed and raised from the dead" (verses 29–31). Here the resurrection confirms the global validity of Jesus' life, his behaviour and teaching, and becomes the key not only to individual hope but also to all the present age – human history in its social dimension.

Luke quotes the sayings about the sacrificial death of Jesus used in the liturgy. In the Lukan version of the institution of the Lord's Supper Jesus signals the sacrificial meaning of his death twice: "… (the bread) is my body which is given for you … This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:19–20); "… the church of God … he obtained with the blood of his own Son" (Acts 20:28). However, in most places Luke tried to interpret it: instead of the saying in Mark 10:45, where we read about the Son of Man who "came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" we read in Luke: "For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves" (Luke 22:27). The metaphor of sacrifice is interpreted as the extreme example of service. The saying "the Son of Man came", corresponding to Mark 10:45, has a different wording in Luke 19:10: "For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost." Death and resurrection are not doubted, but the soteriological function is concentrated in Jesus' life as a social pro-existence.

314 R. von Bendemann, *Zwischen ΔΟΞΑ und ΣΤΑΥΡΟΣ*, 409 ff.

The gospel of death and resurrection was interpreted by Paul in Rom 6 as the basis for a change in Jesus' followers: "dying with" Jesus Christ in baptism means "dying to sin" and living a new life. It is a life with the prospect of being united with him in a resurrection like his. Luke re-interpreted this version of the gospel in order that it might be understandable to his Greek readers, who were not familiar with the temple cult of Israel and suspected that the sacrificial images promoted bloody rituals. The well-known parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32) is a parable of Jesus that Luke extended and adapted in order that it might express his re-interpretation of the Pauline soteriology.

The younger son of a Jewish father, obviously a farmer, intends to leave home and go to a distant country. This was considered his fault, but, in the inner logic of the parable, it is still considered to be normal. The Father gives the son a share of his property and the son collected it (obviously in the form of money) and left the country. Since money is a transportable way of representing value, he was able to live from the gifts of his father even in a pagan and urban civilisation. Where he erred was in irresponsibly squandering the property. Instead of increasing the property (cf. Luke 19:11–27), he lost it because of his "dissolute living" (i. e. living contrary to a life according to wisdom – Prov 29:3b). This can be called the "alienation" of the son. The coming of a famine represents a time of crisis as in many other instances in the Bible (e. g. Gen 41:53–45:28; Acts 11:27–30). The prodigal son was humiliated, since the only work he had was to feed the pigs (unclean animals for a Jew) and the pigs were better off than he. An exaggerated story demonstrating that the son sank below human standards. Death was his only prospect: "I am dying of hunger" (15:17). He realised this at the moment when he remembered the different model of life in his father's house: even the least of the hired hands had enough bread there (an allusion to the Lord's Prayer). This was the moment when he overcame his alienation ("When he came to himself" – verse 17a) and decided to get up and go to his father. His intended confession "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you" connects the level of the parable as a story and a real situation: in the parable the father plays the role of the heavenly Father. As the son was on his way home, the situation changed. He was still "far off" (Gr. *makran*) which in Luke always refers to a pagan country, when the father came to meet him and, full of compassion, kissed him and accepted him as his son again. The forgiveness came before the confession of sins. How is it possible that the father ap-

peared "far off"? It is possible because the one who has compassion on his lost son is the heavenly Father, omniscient and omnipresent.

In the Gospel of Luke, the prodigal son, who in Jesus' parable was an alienated Jew, represents Christians who have a pagan origin and have forgotten that they are sons of the heavenly Father, for whom all human beings are his children (see Acts 17:28). By contrast, the older son, who became angry and refused to come home, represents a Jewish Christian who assumed that work in his father's fields is the necessary condition for belonging to the family. He did not realise what his younger brother had experienced ("I am dying of hunger"). Yet the father does not reject the older son; instead, he confirms the privileges he has as a son, and reminds him that it is proper to celebrate and rejoice, since his younger brother (his brother!) *was dead and has come to life*. This sentence is repeated twice in the story, in verses 24 and 32. This means that it plays an important role as the key to the whole parable. The saying in Luke 19:10 about the Son of Man (as the representative of God) who "came to seek out and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10) suggests that the story is reminding the reader about the gospel of eternal, eschatological salvation.

The Easter gospel about the (death and) resurrection of Jesus (first level) was interpreted by Paul as an opportunity for all human beings, who have death as their only prospect, to be raised in the power of God (second level). They have to die in baptism, preceded by a confession of faith. In this way their sinful body is crucified (destroyed) together with Christ so that they may also live with him, i. e. spend the rest of their earthly life in communion with him (third level). This is roughly the argument in Rom 6:1–11. And Luke decided to explain this complex event by expanding a parable of Jesus. The problem seems to be that in the Easter gospel it is Jesus who plays the decisive role, whereas here it is God himself. In fact God, who raised Jesus from the dead, plays the key role in the Easter gospel as well. And Jesus does not play a marginal role in the Lukan parable. He is the teller of the parable, the guarantor of the authenticity of the image of God that is presented. He gave his life for this image of God. And by his resurrection he was decisively vindicated by God the Father.

The Easter gospel was difficult to understand for the pagan readers of the Lukan work and this parable made it understandable. Although it was understandable, it was the Easter gospel – the proclamation of Jesus as the Living One – that made this parable credible.

However, Luke did not use the term *euangelion*. What he did by retelling the parable of the Prodigal Son was – strictly speaking – to present his understanding of the Christian teaching of salvation, which was still called the gospel by other authors. It is indeed a development of the Easter gospel, and the term *euangelion* or *euangelizomai* became a cumulative term integrating human hope. This was the case at the end of New Testament times (2 Tm 2:8–11 or 1 Peter 1:12, 23–25) and in the first part of the second century, before the early expressions of the Christian faith (step by step more clearly Trinitarian) spread in Christianity.

7.2 The Gospel of Matthew

The Gospel of Matthew most likely originated later than Luke. In Matthew's time the Pharisees also dominated the synagogues in the diaspora and the development towards the key role of the rabbinic office had already started. The Christians were not allowed to gather in the synagogues, but the memory of the common past was still fresh. They considered themselves to be the true heirs of Israel's piety, but the Jews considered them a sect (*mīnīm*). To legitimate their claim to be authentic (spiritual) descendants of Abraham, the Christians had to insist that the commandments of the Law were consistently fulfilled, in a way that was better than that of the Pharisees: "For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished" (Matt 5:18). The contradiction between the "woes" directed against the Pharisees in chapter 23 and the emphasis on the consistent fulfilling of the Law can be understood as a kind of rivalry between two concepts of a consistent obedience to the Law.[315] In Matt 22:34–40 we read about the Great Commandment, the Love Commandment of God and love of one's neighbour, as the very heart of the Law and the Prophets.[316] Instead of a casuistic expansion of the Law to meet the needs of the modern urban civilisation, as the Pharisees attempted, Jesus, according to the Gospel of Matthew, proposes radically reducing it to its very core in the Love Commandment. This was the true fulfilment of all the commandments.

315 For the situation of the Matthean community see U. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (Mt 1–7), 67–70.

316 G. Theissen, *Fortress Introduction to the New Testament*, 103 ff.

Matthew, like Luke, incorporated into his work about Jesus the source of sayings of Jesus known as Q. This is an important fact. From it we can draw the following conclusions. Firstly, Q and Mark were the most important literary texts used by early Christians, as evidenced by the fact that they were used in two different Christian communities, and the authors of both the Gospel of Luke and the Gospel of Matthew used them together with other specific local traditions, different in each case (SMt and SLk, maybe SLuke[1] and SLuke[2]). Secondly, both Luke and Matthew felt that these were documents which differed in their genre and theology, and that it would be good to integrate them into one literary body for the further development of the Church. Thirdly, both of them recognised that Mark had to serve as their framework.

The Matthean Jesus does not proclaim the *euangelion*. Where Mark wrote about the *euangelion* as synonymous with the proclamation of the kingdom of God, as in Mark 1:14–15, Matthew speaks only about Jesus' exhortation to repentance and his announcement that the kingdom of God is near (Matt 4:17). And where Mark wrote about Jesus "proclaiming" in the synagogues (Mark 1:39), Matthew speaks about him teaching in the synagogues, proclaiming "the gospel of the kingdom" and curing every disease and every sickness among the people (Matt 4:23). This is a summary, which also includes the sayings from the source Q in the content of the gospel as the teaching of Jesus. This is what the Gospel of Matthew is centred around. He understood all the sayings about the gospel (*euangelion, euangelizomai*) as being related to the proclamation of Jesus, as was the case in Q.

On the other hand, Peter's declaration about Jesus, which was considered ambiguous by Jesus as well as by Mark, turned into a full Christian confession in the Matthean parallel: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God" (Matt 16:17).[317] As in Luke, the time of Jesus is already the time of salvation. However, unlike in Luke, there is no major interruption between the "today" of Jesus' earthly presence and his activity through the Holy Spirit after the resurrection. Just before his birth Jesus is announced as Emmanuel – "God is with us" (Matt 1:23), and as a representative of God he is present among two or three who are gathered in his name (18:20), and after the resurrection, as the last sentence of the book, we read the words of the Risen Lord: "And surely I am with you always, to the end of the age" (28:20 NIV).

317 U. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus 8–17*, 454.

Matthew is firmly rooted in Greek-speaking Judaism. His analogy to the "Beginning" from Mark 1:1, alluding to Genesis 1:1, is the Greek title that the first book of the Bible received in the Greek milieu: *Biblos geneseōs* (The Record of Genealogy). The genealogy goes from Abraham to the end of this age and extends from Israel to the believing pagans and all of humankind. Matthew follows the scheme of the "history of salvation" (*"Heilsgeschichte"* in German), but the narrative strategy is more complex: the earthly Jesus commissioned his disciples to proclaim the kingdom of heaven in Israel (Matt 10:6). This is an old tradition about Jesus, who was expected to prepare Israel for the pilgrimage of nations to Zion (Isa 11:10; Mic 4:1; Zech 8:22 f.). However, in Matthew the disciples are commissioned to make disciples of all nations only after Jesus' resurrection. They have to baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything that Jesus had commanded them (Matt 28: 19–20a). From the beginning to the end, Jesus and his disciples proclaim the gospel of Jesus. All three instances where Matthew uses the term *euangelion* relate to the proclamation of Jesus. It is the same with the commissioning of the disciples right at the end of the book: they should teach Jesus' commandments, obviously the content of the five speeches by Jesus in chapters 5–7, 10, 13, 18 and 24–25.[318] The Easter gospel is not explicitly mentioned. It is represented by the last verse: "I am with you." Jesus as the Risen One, as he is portrayed in the Easter gospel, appears in Matthew as the guarantor of the gospel of his earthly history.

The last step in the history of salvation is sketched in Matt 25:31–46, in the parable about the judgment of the nations. All the nations (in fact the people of all the nations, see *autous* in verse 32, not *auta* as it would be if the nations as a whole were meant) will be judged. The judge will be the Son of Man (verse 31) who, however, is later called king (verses 24 and 40). The image relates to the kingdom of God, in Matthew the kingdom of heaven; it is an apocalyptic image. The Son of Man will sit on the (heavenly) throne of his glory with all the angels (verse 31) and will judge all the people according to the deeds of mercy that they performed to the least of his brothers (*adelfoi elachistoi* – verse 40; cf. verse 45): "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom … For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink…I was naked and you gave me cloth-

318 The sixth speech in chap. 23 is not concluded by a formal sentence about Jesus finishing his saying of these words.

ing…" (Matt 25:34–35). Matthew may have identified the "least" with the apostles and Christian missionaries, but it is still surprising that the salvation of all the people is not decided by their confession of (Christian) faith but by their deeds of mercy, i.e. caring for the hungry, the homeless, the sick or the imprisoned. These merciful ones will be like the sheep on the right hand, the others like the goats on the left hand.

This seems to be an ethical concept of soteriology, different from the Pauline understanding of faith. Nevertheless, the Easter gospel is present in a less apparent, but still in a very important way: Jesus, the Risen One, gives a special strength to those who confess him and are baptised (see Matt 28:20). The Law, which is rooted in God and according to which human lives are judged, is nevertheless the Law of love and social solidarity.

Matthew transposed the kingdom of God into heaven. But still the end and the aim of human history, the "content" of heaven, are the deeds, events and relations arising from the Great Commandment in this world, deeds of true humanity (Hellenistic *filanthrōpia*) directed against the opposing alienation.

This parable is an exhortative text. It does not aim to inform us about an eschatological division of all people into two groups. The two groups are two options, and the intention is to invite every reader and hearer of this text to live like those who are in the end on the right hand side.

The universal impact of this parable is apparent. Christian faith and baptism are, according to the Gospel of Matthew, the power to live humanly in the full sense of the word. The moral content is universally accessible. Faith makes Christians pioneers of this attitude toward history. Salvation means being confronted with the truth, which became a reality in Jesus' resurrection, as we interpreted it above (§2.2). And what is saved, what transcends any given time, is the network of relationships between humans and between humans and God – all of them defined by the double Love Commandment.

Matthean theology represents a rehabilitation and reinterpretation of the gospel of Jesus (4:23; 9:35). In a polemic against Pauline theology in its secondary, inferior shape, it develops the theology of source Q: "Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven" (Matt 7:21 /Luke 6:46/). When compared with Rom 10:9, the polemic character of Matt 7:21 is evident. In Romans we read: "…if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God

raised him from the dead, you will be saved." The assumed polemic function can be supported by the fact that a similar polemic is also characteristic for the Letter of James: "If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them 'Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,' and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead" (James 2:15–17). This is, as we mentioned, polemic against a secondary and inferior Paulinism or its misinterpretation. Paul was sure that "faith (is) working through love" (Gal 5:6). He would say that faith without deeds is not faith. But still, the impression of faith replacing deeds was the shadow accompanying the teaching of some followers of Paul. Pauline polemic against the false interpretation of his teaching about justification by the grace of God and by faith can be found in Rom 6:1 ff. By contrast, 15 ff. documents a reduced ability of his theology to resist such a misinterpretation.

Matthew tried to develop the gospel of Jesus, but the term *euangelion* that he adopted from Mark was not so crucial for him. The liturgical titles of Jesus and the narrative of his story culminating with his passion and resurrection and the continuing tradition of his teaching represent for Matthew the backbone of the Christian tradition, his Gospel. The death and resurrection of Jesus represent one chapter, even though a very important one, in the history of salvation culminating in eschatological fulfilment.

7.3 The Gospel of John

In terms of its general pattern, the Gospel of John depends on the Synoptic model. Its literary disposition in the pivotal elements of its structure is similar to the Gospel of Mark and is derived from it directly or indirectly (via another Synoptic Gospel):[319] *Archē* at the beginning – John the Baptist – calling the first disciples – analogies in structure between Mark 8:1–30 and John 6:5–70 (feeding of the crowd – Jesus on the boat – demand for a sign – discussion about the bread – Peter's confession) – Passion Story.[320] The theology of the Fourth Gospel is, how-

319 M. Lang, *Johannes und die Synoptiker,* 342–347.

320 The thesis, according to which the general framework of the Gospel according to John was derived from an older tradition, independent of Mark, was supported in commentaries on the Gospel of John by e.g. C. K. Barrett (ch. 3) and H. Thyen; cf. M. Hengel. *Johanneische Frage,* ch. IV, 5 and R. A. Burridge,

ever, quite similar to the spiritual and dualistic theology of those who did not share the gospel according to 1 Cor 15:3b-5 and with whom Paul took issue in 1 Cor 4:6–13. The connection between Jesus' death and resurrection and the future hope of believers does not seem to play a decisive role. We do not hear any explicit polemic against the gospel as expressed in 1 Cor 15:3b-5 as we do in the Gospel of Philip (NHC II/3; 56,15–20, see here § 4.2 – *The religious situation*), but still, the sequence of the inner structure of the Easter gospel is not consistently preserved: "Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life" (John 5:24). This is similar to the soteriology of the Gospel of Thomas (e.g. log. 1 and 3).[321]

The integration of the Gospel according to John into the Christian liturgical reading was supported by some explicit anti-docetic statements such as the sentence from the prologue (opening hymn) of the Gospel of John 1:14a: "And the Word became flesh and lived among us," and by a maxim quoted in 1 John 4:2 (and 2 John 7): "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God." Furthermore, the motif of remembrance that supposes incarnation in time and space is also present in the Gospel of John (John 16:14).

However, even this maxim could be interpreted in a dualistic way. According to Ernst Käsemann, the incarnation of the Son of God can also be understood in a Gnostic way, as a witness to the inability of the material world to prevent the divine power from penetrating the material world, reaching the divine parts of human beings and liberating them from imprisonment within matter.[322] The dualistic and spiritual theology of the Johannine writings is balanced by insistent exhortations to social solidarity (1 John 2:10; 4:20–21; John 13:34). The docetic impression fades as soon as we include the reader (hearer) into the literary strategy of the Fourth Gospel. However the docetic teaching is not accessible to those outside the Johannine group because it is concealed from them, but because they are lacking the faith. The experience of the anticipated Age to Come is, in fact, inspired by the faith (the verb *pis-*

What are the Gospels? 220 ff. An independent origin for the main structure of the Gospel of John is also assumed in the commentary by R. Brown (XLVIf., LXXXII).

321 P. Pokorný, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Thomas*, 31.

322 E. Käsemann, *Jesu letzter Wille*, 31–32, 37, 39–30.

teuō) in Jesus as the exalted Lord. In such a view Jesus' death is already a part of his exaltation, the first step on his way up to the heavenly Father: "When you have lifted the Son of Man, then you will realise that I am (he), and that I do nothing of my own, but I speak these things as the Father instructed me" (John 8:28; cf. 3:14; 12:32–34). Both versions of the gospel presented here are transformed and integrated, accessible in one single present view: the world as God's creation has become alienated from its destination – it did not know the Word through which it was created (John 1:10). The love of God for the world means that he saves believers for eternal life or, better expressed: the community of the children of God is the core of the new humankind. The prologue is a spiritual comment on the Gospel as a whole.[323]

Some of these interpretative comments on narratives and sayings had already been included in the Synoptic Gospels. For example, the self-revelation of Jesus as the Bread from Heaven (John 6:22–59) is a developed version of Mark 8:14–21 (the one bread and the Yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod), the view of Jesus as a revelation of God's glory has its basis in the pericope on the Transfiguration (Mark 9:2–8parr.), and his unique relation to the heavenly Father has its analogy in the Thanksgiving to the Father in Matt 11:25–27/ Luke 10:21:22 (Q). The level of spiritual commentary on Jesus' story becomes the principal dimension in the Johannine writings, and Jesus' earthly story is present only as its background. Instead of a human birth we read about the incarnation; instead of the death on the cross, we read about the first step up to heaven. And still, the reader hears about Jesus' birth from human parents (John 6:41–42) in Galilee (John 7:41–42). The Gospel writer does not disagree. Jesus' only reaction against those who only see his human birth (only!) is that such people are not touched by the Spirit of God (John 6:44). The reader also reads about the cross as an elevation of the Son of Man, of the one who revealed himself as the Son of God (John 20:31), and is identical with Jesus of Nazareth (John 18:5–6.7–8: "I told you that I am [Jesus of Nazareth]"). This is the hermeneutic key to all "I am" speeches of Jesus. The Messiah, the Shepherd, the Truth etc. is Jesus of Nazareth.

This means that "John" intended to offer a profound spiritual commentary on the other biographies of Jesus – the commentary was valid and had a canonical authority only in connection with them.

323 See J. Roskovec, *Prolog Janova evangelia*, 126 f., Engl. summary 140.

Historically the Gospel according to John is a document of the "other" verbalisation of the Easter experience later represented by the Gospel of Thomas. However, it is connected with the Markan *fabula*, theologically transformed and explicitly placed in the context of the other Gospels. In the canon it soon became framed by the two parts of the Lukan work in order that it may be protected against a dualistic interpretation. John obviously assumed his readers' knowledge of the Gospel of Mark.[324]

The noun *euangelion* and the verb *euangelizomai* do not appear in the Gospel of John and in its specific comments on the other biographies of Jesus the pattern of the Easter gospel is not recognisable. The narratives about Jesus are predominantly conceived of as an allegory of the eternal Word. Only when included in the series of other biographies of Jesus used liturgically (the Synoptics), could the Gospel according to John be recognised as a Gospel – a narrative form of the Easter gospel, including its beginning in the life of Jesus.

324 I. D. Mackay, *John's Relationship with Mark,* especially 296 ff.

8. Early Christian Literature and Canonization

8.1 The Gospel as a book

It was a Markan idea to use the Easter gospel interpreted by Paul to structure the narrative of Jesus – a narrative based on collected and selected Jesus traditions that, in the end, helped to create the basic texts for the Christian canon. In the Church the Gospels overshadowed the Pauline epistles and even the Law and the Prophets which, at the beginning, had served as texts for Christian preaching (see the Christian presentation of Jesus' sermon in Luke 4:16–30). *The Gospels supported the creation of the Christian canon, they became the basic part of that canon, and inspired the shape of the Christian liturgy. The Gospel, originally a living proclamation, became a fixed literary text that has to be applied to the present day by means of a meta-text: a paraphrase, a sermon, a commentary, a personal witness or a reflective interpretation. The basis and starting point of all interpretation was, however, the canonised text.*

In the canonical books of the New Testament the term *euangelion* never denotes a book, whereas in the mid-second century this meaning is gaining ground. A few decades later, a book about Jesus would be the first one that crossed people's minds when they heard the word *euangelion*. It follows that the extension of the term *euangelion* from the Easter gospel to a book about Jesus occurred in about three decades at the beginning of the second century. The main stimulus for this development was obviously the use of the term *euangelion* in Mark 1:1, and so the Pauline use of the Easter gospel was the godfather of the worldwide designation of the biographies of Jesus. It is a paradoxical fact: texts belonging to the narrative genre received their name from a message that concentrated only on Jesus' (death and) resurrection.

Where do we find the first traces of the extended use of the term *euangelion?*

8.2 The use of the term "euangelion" in the Apostolic Fathers

In the First Letter of Clement (90–100 A.D.) to the Corinthians (47:2) we read a reference to the "beginning of the gospel" (*archē tou euangeliou*), but it relates to 1 Cor 1:10–17 and is motivated by the Easter gospel. Paul addressed the Corinthians as their spiritual father who gave them birth through the gospel (1 Cor 4:15). The "beginning of the gospel" indicates, as in Phil 4:15, the time when Paul came and started to preach the gospel. When quoting the sayings of "the Lord" 1Clem 46 ff. (the word *euangelion* does not occur there), Clement does not mention whether they are from the Gospel of Mark or from the oral tradition.

In the Letter of Baranabas (130–132 C.E.) 8:3 the gospel is the proclamation of the 12 apostles allegorically portrayed through the twelve tribes of Israel.[325] The sacrifices on the Day of Atonement relate to Jesus' death (Barn 8:1–2).

In Ignatius' letter to the Philadelphians 5:1(Ignatius died as a martyr at the beginning of the 2nd century C.E.), we read about the gospel that is like the flesh of Jesus for the author. This obviously means that the Easter gospel (*euangelion*) represents the authority of the real (incarnate and crucified) Jesus. The gospel is mentioned in 5:2 twice as the gospel of salvation and the common hope that had already been proclaimed by the prophets. This may be the gospel of Jesus, but from the way it is used in Ignatius we understand that it is practically identical with the Easter gospel once more. The same applies to Philadelphians 8:2, where the gospel is the living (not dependent on Scripture [*archeia* – documents, records]) proclamation of Jesus' cross, his death and resurrection, and the faith that it evoked. Also in Philadelphians 9:2, where, in addition, the Lord's coming (*parousia*) is mentioned, Ignatius takes issue with those Christians who would like to have the gospel attested in the Scripture. *Euangelion* has the same meaning of the oral proclamation in Smyrn 5:1 and 7:2. For Ignatius the Easter gospel acquired a new function: it authorised the selected Jesus traditions, and as a living tradition it acquired a higher position than the Scripture. This means that the Easter experience and the Easter gospel overshadowed or at least framed the gospel about the kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus. Scenes from Jesus' life could be mentioned as *euangelion*. This use is similar to (and maybe inspired by) what we found in Mark, where the proclamation of Jesus is seen through the eyes of the Easter gospel (Mark 13:10)

325 F. R. Prostmeier, *Der Barnabasbrief*, 248 note 1.

and the Easter gospel is inseparably bound together with Jesus traditions (Mark 14:9).

In Didache 8:2, a collection of Christian instructions from the beginning of the second century (probably 120–130)[326], we find the Lord's Prayer in a version that is very similar to (but not identical with) the text in Matthew and it is introduced as what "Jesus commanded in his gospel." In Did 11:3 we read instructions for Jesus' disciples similar to those in Matt 10:40–42, but they are extended and applied to communication with the early Christian apostles and prophets. They are introduced as the "instruction of the gospel" (*dogma tou euangeliou*). And, finally, in Did 15:3 and 4 we find concrete ethical instructions probably inspired by Matt 5:22–26 and 18:15–35. In both cases the readers are exhorted to do "as you have /it/ in the gospel" (*kata to dogma tou euangeliou poiēsate).* The author of Didache did know the Gospel of Matthew or some of the traditions used by its author[327] and his use of the term *euangelion* revealed that for him the connection of Jesus traditions with the Easter gospel was already self-evident. The singular does not mean that he is quoting from an individual Gospel, but rather that he is quoting a tradition related to only one source which is Jesus, his life, his teaching, his death and resurrection, and that this tradition about Jesus may be conveyed to him by a Gospel or by oral tradition.

Some of the Apostolic Fathers knew and quoted the traditions included in the Gospels. Under the influence of the Gospel according to Mark (see "The beginning of the gospel" in Mark 1:1) all the traditions incorporated into the literary Gospels were subsumed under the term *euangelion*. The Easter gospel was extended to take in the whole life of Jesus. To put it another way, Christians started to use the term *euangelion* for Jesus traditions not because it was originally used for the proclamation of Jesus, but because Mark programmatically linked the sayings and narratives of the earthly Jesus with the Easter gospel as its presupposition and "beginning". *This means that the first pillar of the bridge between the Easter gospel and the Gospel as a book was built at the moment when Christians understood Mark's intention and they realised that in order*

326 K Niederwimmer, *Die Didache*, 79.

327 J. A. Kelhoffer, ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ as a Reference to 'Gospel' Materials, 17; for the use of apocalyptic Jesus traditions used independently by Matthew and by Didache see J. S. Kloppenborg, Didache 16:6–8 and Special Matthean Tradition, especially 67.

to understand the gospel about Jesus' resurrection we also need to know about Jesus of Nazareth and his story. It was not built at the moment when they misunderstood the opening verse of Mark and considered euangelion in Mark 1:1 to be the name of the book. This is a later, important, but secondary meaning of the term *euangelion*.

In the *2 Letter of Clement* (a pseudepigraphon probably from about 130–150 C.E.)[328], the term *euangelion* appears only once in 8:5 "The Lord says in the gospel" introducing a saying of Jesus – a saying similar to Luke 16:10 and other sentences that we know as an addition to the Parable of the Talents. The cumulative argument tells us that it obviously related to a book. Koester supposes that this may be a quotation from a collection of Jesus' sayings.[329] In the ten instances in *2 Clem* where the sayings of Jesus are quoted (2:4; 4:2, 5; 5:2, 4; 6:1, 2; 9:11; 12:2 and 13:4), the gospel is not mentioned and in every cases the authority of the sayings is derived from the Lord (*kyrios*). According to Karl Donfried, *euangelion* in *2 Clem* 8:5 is the oral gospel in a broader sense;[330] according to several other scholars, quoted by A. Lindemann,[331] *euangelion* is an apocryphal literary Gospel. However, we have no concrete information about a non-canonical Gospel circulating in wide areas before 150 C.E. and, therefore, it is most probable that it is the Gospel of Luke 16:10 that is meant. In *2 Clem* 2:4 we find a quotation of Mark 2:17parr. It is introduced as a word of the Scripture. The fact that material attested in more than one Gospel is mentioned here would seem to indicate the author's knowledge of two or more books containing the *euangelion*.

To sum up: in the Apostolic Fathers the gospel means not only the Easter gospel, but, in some cases, it relates to the proclamation of Jesus or a part of his life story narrated with regard to the Easter gospel according to one or more (later canonised) biographies of Jesus – our Gospels.

Justin Martyr, who composed his writings in about 150 to 160 C. E. confirmed that *euangelion* denoted some of the books written by Mark, Luke, Matthew, and John. He referred to the literary Gospels as to the "Remembrances of the Apostles" (*Apomnēmoeumata tōn apostolōn*). He was possibly inspired by the "Remembrances of Socrates" by Xeno-

328 The date is still being discussed.
329 H. Koester, From the Kerygma-Gospel to the Written Gospels, 372.
330 K. Donfried, *The Setting of the Second Clement*, 72.
331 A. Lindemann, *Die Clemensbriefe*, 224.

phon and the whole genre of memoirs. In fact, the Gospels should be called "Remembrances on Jesus", but because by the beginning of the second century there were four of them, it is understandable that they were called after their authors – apostles in the plural. According to Luise Abramowski, Justin may have called the Gospels "remembrances" or "memoirs" of the apostles in opposition to the Gnostics, who doubted the historicity, full humanity and suffering of Jesus. In *Dial* 100–107 (100:1, 4; 101:3, 6, 8; 102:5; 103:6, 8; 104:1; 106:1, 4; 107:1; cf. *Apol I:* 66:3; 67:3) Justin mentioned the Remembrances of the Apostles when commenting on Ps 22 (LXX 21), which describes the suffering of the Righteous One (verses 12–19). In the Passion Story of the Gospels – the Remembrances of the Apostles – this was applied to Jesus. In this way the Gospels provided arguments against the Christian Gnostics.[332] "Remembrances" means a conscious looking back to the past which is graspable through memory and testimony. Theologically it can serve as a point of orientation for the living Christian proclamation and the traditions about Jesus can serve as a framework for the literary shaping of these remembrances.

We have already mentioned that memory cannot replace a personal confession. However, it can be a means of checking on its authenticity and help provide orientation in social life and history. This was of vital importance for the early Church, since Jesus, his teaching, his deeds, his attitudes or simply his life and death were the only norms for evaluating what it meant that he was present in his Church (= what his resurrection meant). When we say that the memories of Jesus related to his earthly existence, it does not mean that they were shaped according to the rules of present-day historiography. The memories were recalled through the eyes of those who also experienced his new spiritual presence after Easter with all its concrete and visible consequences. We mentioned this in particular when discussing the influence of the Easter gospel on the Fourth Gospel. The intentional remembering of Jesus was motivated by the Easter experience and it helped Christians to overcome crises and misinterpretations. According to Justin's *1 Apology* 67:3, the "Remembrances of the Apostles" were read (in Christian services) together with the Prophets.

In our context, the most important fact is that Justin in Dial. 10:2; 100:1(quoting here Luke 10:22par /Q/ – Jesus' saying) writes that Jesus said it in the Gospel (*euangelion*). "Gospel" in the singular is related here

332 L. Abramowski, Die "Erinnerungen der Apostel" bei Justin, especially 344 ff.

to a narrative about Jesus including his saying(s). This means that all the biographies of Jesus narrate various aspects of the one gospel. Only in *1 Apol.* 66:3 does *euangelion* appear in the plural. There Justin explained (in connection with the Institution of the Lord's Supper) that the "Remembrances of the Apostles" were called the Gospels (*euangelia kaleitai*). Even though the biographies of Jesus culminating with the message or narrative about his resurrection relate in fact to one and the same gospel (the Gospel according to Mark, according to Matthew etc.), as books there was in fact more than one of them. (We do not know how many Gospels were known to Justin.) This is the most ancient explicit evidence about the Gospels as books. In the time of Justin, it was already a tradition going back several years if not decades ("are called"). The Gospels in the plural are always books. Justin never used the term *euangelion* for the oral Easter gospel of the apostles. This makes it very probable that in *2 Clem* and *Did*, too, some of the quotations were derived from individual Gospels as books.

However, the term *euangelion* was not commonly used to denote Jesus' biography before the last third of the second century. Although Melito of Sardis alluded several times to the Gospel of Matthew in his book *On Pascha (Peri Pascha)* 72. 78–79, dating from about 170 C.E., he did not mention the term *euangelion* at all.

8.3 Early evidence for texts about Jesus in canonised additions in the Gospels of John and Mark

Before we proceed to the problem of the unified titles of the individual Gospels, we have to mention two pieces of possible indirect evidence about the two or more Gospels as books that were used liturgically before the beginning of the 2nd century.

The first one is in John 21, the chapter that was added[333] after the original conclusion of the Gospel with 20:30–31. It obviously still

333 A Coptic manuscript in which chap 21 is missing (Copt. E 150 (P) Bodleian Library Oxford) has recently been described by Gesa Schenke, Die Erscheinung Jesu vor den Jüngern und der ungläubige Thomas. Joh 20,19–31, in: *Coptica – Gnostica – Manichaeica* (FS W. P. Funk) ed. by L. Painchaud/ P.-H. Poirier, (BCNH), Quebec – Louvain – Paris 2006, 893–904.

This may provide text-critical evidence for the widely accepted conclusion that chapter 21 was added later, which had been based on an analysis of the literary structure and theology of the Gospel of John.

had its origin in the Johannine school, which means not more than one generation after the Gospel according to John had been written. Since it used the story of the Miraculous Draught of Fish, included in all the Synoptics in its expanded form as we find it in Luke 5:1–11, it is very probable that the author – obviously one of the last teachers of the Johannine School – had the text of the Gospel of Luke at his disposal or at least in his memory. The differences may be due to a free quotation and the fact that a story from Jesus' earthly life was rewritten as a scene from the post-Easter appearances. Motifs and relations from other Gospels cannot be evidenced and the term Gospel does not appear there. On the other hand, it is not easy to explain the parallels with Luke 5 as having a common source.[334] The assumption of Theo Heckel, according to whom the author of John 21 introduced the unified titles of the Gospels "The Gospel according to XY"[335] is tempting, but it is practically impossible to substantiate it. Nonetheless, John 21 can be considered evidence for the Gospel of Luke being used together with the Gospel of John at the beginning of the second century.

The second text of this kind is the longer addition to the Gospel of Mark in 16:9–20. Its text is not attested in manuscripts before the 5th century. A quotation from it is attested in the Latin translation of Irenaeus' *Haer.* 3,10:6 (the end of the 2nd century). However, one phrase from Mark 16:20a "went out and proclaimed (the gospel, see verse 15) everywhere" is reproduced almost word for word in Justin, *1 Apol* 45:5. (Only the sequence of "everywhere" and "proclaimed" */pantachou ekēryxan/* is different.) The phrase was formulated in the language of the Christian mission and used in a different context, but an inspiration from Mark 16:20a cannot be excluded. Since Mark 16:9–20 is a composition of motifs from other canonical Gospels (cf. Luke 24:13–43, 50–51 and John 20:14–29), this quotation in Justin could reflect the liturgical use of three of the Gospels in one area where Christian communities were found (the province of Asia?) before the mid-second century.[336]

334 For a discussion of this problem see R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John,* 1090–1092.

335 Th. Heckel, *Von Evangelium des Markus zum viergestaltigen Evangelium,* 207 ff.

336 See Th. Heckel, *Von Evangelium des Markus zum viergestaltigen Evangelium,* 283 ff.; J. A. Kelhoffer, "ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ", 10.

8.4 Written Gospels

The first explicit notion of the Gospels as books (concretely Matthew and Mark) was preserved in a fragment from the book called "Exposition of the Sayings of the Lord" by bishop Papias from Hierapolis in Phrygia, written perhaps as early as 130–140 and quoted by Eusebius of Caesarea (ca. 260–339) in his Church History (*Hist. eccl.* 3, 39:15–16). He reported that Mark, a spokesman or interpreter (*hermeneutēs*) of Peter, wrote down what he remembered (of Peter's preaching), but without "recording in order (*taxei*) the things said or done by the Lord. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him.....he did not make any arrangement (*syntaxin*) ...Matthew compiled the sayings (*logia*) in the Hebrew dialect, but everybody interpreted (translated? – *hērmēneusen*) them as he was able" (*Hist. eccl.* 3, 39:15–16).[337] We do not know to what extent Papias did know the text of the Gospels, but he presented an insight which has been corroborated by contemporary biblical scholarship, according to which the structure of the Gospels was secondary (see §5). He was also aware of the fact that Jesus spoke Aramaic and he ascribed to Matthew the gathering of the sayings (*logia*) in his mother language. Unfortunately, he discussed only the intention of the authors (editors) and did not mention the term gospel as the title of the books of Mark and Matthew. Martin Hengel supposes that in the time of Papias the titles *euangelion* + the name of the editor must already have been common.[338] It is true that in Justin's *1st Apology* we read about the "Remembrances of the Apostles" that are called *euangelia* (plural). However, Justin's Apology originated later than when Papias wrote his book and even if the books of the individual authors/editors were called Gospels, there is no proof that their titles were already "The Gospel according to XY."

Papias' information had a more developed parallel later, in Irenaeus' book "Against Heresies" written about 180 C.E., in which all four canonical Gospels (but not the titles "The Gospel according to XY") were mentioned and all were denoted as Gospels (*Haer.* 3,1:1). According to Irenaeus, Matthew wrote his Gospel for the Jews in Hebrew (!), Mark wrote what Peter taught, Luke the disciple of Paul wrote the gospel that he (Paul) proclaimed, and later John, the disciple of the Lord himself,

337 Where the text is quoted directly, it is the translation by B. M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, 54–55.

338 M. Hengel, *Evangelienüberschriften*, 17.

wrote a Gospel. The information given here is a secondary popular tradition, even though the later origin of the Gospel of John as a whole is a reliable piece of information. The concept of the Gospels as including both Jesus traditions and the Easter Gospel (here under the common denominator of the "gospel of God") corresponds to what we have already deduced. We know this part of "Against Heresies" in the Greek original through a quotation by Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 5, 8:2–4).

Papias stressed the authority of the oral tradition and his comment seems to be contrary to the increasing popularity of the literary Gospels. We do not know whether he also knew the Gospels of Luke and John and whether he mentioned them in the lost part of his text. The portion quoted by Eusebius gives the impression that he intended to support the authority of Mark in relation to Matthew, who was identical with the apostle of the same name. It was the same with the Gospel according to John. The Gospels that proliferated under the names of the apostles originated (in the preserved form) after the death of the alleged authors. The names of the apostles served mostly as guarantees of their authority.[339] That is why Papias linked the Gospel according to Mark with the authority of Peter to support its apostolic legitimacy. The fact that the Gospels as Remembrances of the Apostles were not all written directly by the apostles was also mentioned by Justin in his *Dialog with Trypho* (103:8), where we read that the memoirs discussed there were "compiled by the apostles and those who were their immediate followers." C.-J. Thornton[340] demonstrated that "the followers of the apostles" were the authors of the Gospels of Mark and Luke. Whether the alleged relationship to the apostles had historical roots cannot be proved. The fragment from Papias confirms that the Gospels became widespread soon, within several decades, but their authority was still not fixed.

Shortly before 150 C.E., Marcion, an excommunicated Roman Christian who rejected the canon of the Jewish Bible (the Christian Old Testament) and founded a church of his own, presented his canon consisting of ten Pauline epistles and one Gospel (an adapted Gospel according to Luke). The text of Marcion's canon has been lost, but it can be partially reconstructed from quotations, especially in Tertullian. It is important for us that he called the one Gospel of his canon *euangelion* and did not ascribe it to any author (Tert. *adv.*

339 See e.g. Th. K. Heckel, *Von Evangelium des Markus zum viergestaltigen Evangelium*, 99.

340 C.-J. Thornton, Justin und das Markusevangelium passim.

Marc. 4:2:3).[341] According to Hengel, Marcion deleted the name Luke.[342] According to Koester, this was the first case of calling a biography of Jesus *euangelion* and a "revolutionary novelty" which influenced the later Christian terminology.[343] Indeed, we have not found any explicit evidence of the titles of the Gospels as we know them, namely "The Gospel according to Mark," "The Gospel according to Luke," etc., before the mid-second century. We know, however, that some authors refer to the apostolic narratives of Jesus as the gospel (*euangelion*). Justin Martyr also mentioned that there were several books of the gospel – the Gospels (*euangelia*). This could not have been a development of Marcion's canon, which was published at about the same time as Justin wrote his apologies, and the Dialogue with Trypho or 2 Clement were composed (and after Didache had been written).[344] We also know the traditional names of the authors of Jesus' biographies; two of them (Mark and Matthew) were discussed by Papias. – Nevertheless, we do not have any earlier direct evidence about the use of the titles "The Gospel according to XY." This is a problem to be discussed.

8.5 The titles of the Gospels[345]

In the preserved codices the Gospels are introduced almost without exception as "The Gospel according to (*kata*) + the name of the author (editor)". This was quite unusual, even though it was not unknown[346]. In 2 Macc 2:13 we read about a book (source) called "Memoirs according to Nehemiah" (*Hypomnēmatismoi kata ton Neemian*) – a lost text that evidently narrated the same events that are attested in the books of Kings. The reason for introducing this unusual title may be the fact that the lost book was written in Hebrew and this was a free translation: *kata* may be a paraphrase of *ašer l-* = *šel*. However, this Hebrew phrase

341 A. von Harnack, *Marcion*, 183*; B. M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, 92 f.

342 M. Hengel, *Evangelienüberschriften*, 16.

343 H. Koester, From the Kerygma-Gospel to Written Gospels, 379–381.

344 The so-called Antimarcionite Prologues to the Gospels cannot help us in reconstructing the intention of Marcion, since they are of much later origin (4th century), as J. Regul, *Die antimarcionitischen Evangelienprologe*, proved.

345 For further information see M. Hengel, *Die Evangelienüberschriften*, passim.

346 The evidence, mostly from the Middle Ages, was gathered by M. Hengel, *Evangelienüberschriften* 9, note 8.

mostly expresses the authorship (see Neh 6:17 or Cant 1:1). So far as the use of this term in the titles of the Gospels is concerned, we know almost for certain that it expressed the fact that the Gospel writers were not direct authors and that there was only one gospel: the Easter gospel together with its "beginning" – Jesus' story and sayings. Therefore the different Gospel writers are in fact not the authors, but rather the editors. According to Theodor Zahn, the unusual title cannot be interpreted as "The Gospel (as a book written) by XY" but only as "The (only one) gospel according to the presentation by XY."[347] The gospel (*euangelion*) is the norm to which the Gospel writer has to adhere.[348] That is why some of the Apostolic Fathers, when quoting the sayings of Jesus or alluding to his story, spoke only about the gospel (*euangelion* in the singular), even if they got the information from one or other of the Gospels as books.

"According to" (*kata*) does not affirm authorship, but rather stresses the common content and conformity to a literary type (subgenre) of the texts edited by the individual Gospel writers.[349] The uniformity of the titles supports the conclusion that they were added later and, at least for the two earliest of them, at the same time.[350] Something similar was attested later in some of the manuscripts of the Greek Bible. The Septuagint had the subtitle *hē palaia diathēkē kata tous hebdomēkonta*, as opposed to the later translations (radically reworked editions) according to (*kata*) Theodotion, Aquila or Symmachus.[351] The preposition *kata* was often used in this specific sense. The *kata* relates in this case to the various translations of the same text, not to the various literary witnesses about the same story as was the case with the Gospels. The claim to direct authorship was expressed by a genitive construction (*genitivus auctoris:* e. g. *Sofia Solōmōnos)* in the Septuagint or *Apokalypsis Iōannou* in the New Testament.

347 Th. Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Matthäus*, 6. His statement is supported by A. von Harnack, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*, 681 f. and M. Hengel, *Evangelienüberschriften*, 9.

348 Th. K. Heckel, *Von Evangelium des Markus zum viergestaltigen Evangelium*, 313, especially note 444.

349 Cf. R. Burridge, *What are the Gospels*, 192 f.

350 E. Lohse, Vom einen Evangelium zu den vier Evangelien, 71, note 50. Th. Heckel, *Vom Evangelium des Markus zum viergestaltigen Evangelium,* 208 f.; M. Hengel, *Evangelienüberschriften,* 47 ff., supposes that such titles were used from the very beginning.

351 See M. Hengel, *The Four Gospels,* 49.

What we have said about the identical structure of the titles of the four Gospels means that these titles must have originated when at least two of the Gospels had already not only been written, but had also spread in wide areas of early Christianity, and therefore it was necessary to differentiate them from each other, especially on the bookshelves of the Christian communities.[352] They must have originated according to a specific intention and in one place. The Gospels could earlier have been referred to by the opening sentence (*incipit*), which was sometimes intended as a title summarising the content: "The Beginning of the gospel" – Mark 1:1; or as a title derived from the opening sentence "In the Beginning was the Word" – John 1:1 or "The Book of Genesis of Jesus the Messiah" – Matt 1:1; or by using a name derived from it ("The First Book to Theophilus") in the case of the Gospel of Luke. But a short title was necessary for a quick orientation in the scrolls (or from the very beginning in the codices?) when the same community used more than one Gospel. It was similar with the books of the Jewish Scriptures. For example, the book of "The Vision of Isaiah Son of Amos" (Isa 1:1) was according to Luke 4:17 just called the scroll of the "Prophet Isaiah" or simply "Isaiah." As for the Gospels, they were mostly distinguished according to the traditional names of the authors. This is the way Papias referred to them (see § 8 above). Even when speaking about the Gospels as Remembrances of the Apostles (*hypomnēmata*), Eusebius of Caesarea (at the beginning of the 4th century) distinguished them from each other according to the authors' names (*Hist. eccl.* 3, 24:5–8). He used the terms Gospel and Remembrances interchangeably, but the names of the authors enabled the reader to understand which text was meant. When we read the fragment of Papias, we can see that the names were a sufficient marker.

The names of the authors were not included in the text of the Gospels but they were attested in the first third of the 2nd century (Papias), at least for Matthew and Mark. Mark and Luke are probably the real names of the authors (editors); their identification with the persons mentioned in the Pauline and the Deutero-Pauline letters was the result of a secondary tendency to legitimate them by connecting them with well-known apostolic figures. These identifications (Mark as identical with the Mark

352 The possibility that any of the Gospels were already referred to as "The Gospel according to…" from the time of their publication cannot be substantiated. One reason for this title is the quick identification of copies of various individual Gospels.

from Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37, 39; Phil 24; Col 4:10; 2Tim 4:11; 1Peter 5:13; Luke as identical with Luke from Phil 24; Col 4:14 or 1Tim 4:11) may be authentic, but they cannot be substantiated. We have already mentioned that the identification of the Gospel writers with the apostles was of later origin. The texts that brought ancient oral traditions into a theologically motivated structure were, at least in the preserved form, a product of the second Christian generation. At the same time, it was possible to legitimate such texts, especially the Gospels, by giving them the names of the apostles, whose authority increased after their martyrdom. Eusebius mentioned in *Hist. eccl.* 3, 24:7 that John decided to write down his testimony only after the other three Gospels had been written and used in public. This means that the Gospel of John took the Johannine tradition as it was understood in the in the second or third generation and integrated it into the Markan structure, which was based on the Easter gospel.

The first explicit evidence of the title "The Gospel according to XY" is in Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* 3:11:7–8,[353] i. e. around 180 C. E. We may suppose that the preserved documents were not the first occurrence of this special kind of title. It may have originated in the first part of the second century. On the other hand, the short title *kata Markon, kata Matthaion* (according to…) was attested in the parchment codices from the 4th and 5th centuries (*Sinaiticus* and *Vaticanus*) which included all the four Gospels in one volume, and so the short title is understandable. These are Martin Hengel's[354] arguments. Nevertheless, we know that Eusebius still occasionally spoke about the Gospels as the Remembrances. We also know from Papias that at least two of the four books about Jesus were liturgically used, and they were denoted by the names of Matthew and Mark, but without the term *euangelion* being mentioned. It is only Eusebius, introducing his quotation from Papias, who writes about Mark as a Gospel writer. The connection with the names of the four Gospel writers was, therefore, attested earlier than their explicit designation as *euangelion*. It is very probable that Justin, when speaking about the Gospels in the plural (*1Apol* 66:3) did know the names of some of the authors of the canonical Gospels. But the title "The Gospel according to XY" is not explicitly attested at that time. This led scholars writing before the discovery of the most ancient

353 Iren. *Adv. Haer.* 3:11:8 is also preserved in the Greek original (*kata Loukan*). In Latin the title is in all four cases *Evangelium secundum XY*.

354 *Evangelienüberschriften*, 50 f.

(around 200 C. E.) papyri 66 and 75 including the full title of the Gospel of John and Luke respectively (*euangelion kata iōannēn; euangelion kata loukan*)[355] to the conclusion that the full title "The Gospel according to XY" may have been introduced additionally.[356] This means that the thesis that the short title came before the longer one cannot be entirely excluded, but Hengel's conclusion[357] is still more convincing.

Nevertheless, it was not Marcion who introduced the title Gospel (*euangelion*) for Jesus' biographies used liturgically. His attempt at a canon of his own can be better understood as a reduction of the canon including the four Gospels in order that the Gospel tradition might be adapted according to his ideas.[358] The roots of the Christian canon go back as far as Mark (see § 6.2),[359] and some of the Apostolic Fathers offer the first very probable evidence for different Gospels as books.

It is not common in religious history for a religion to have several liturgical ("holy") books about the same person (the founder), or about the same teaching. However, in the Jewish Bible we have a similar case, with the two books of Samuel and the two books of Kings on the one hand, and the two books of Chronicles on the other, both narrating the same period of Israel's history. Underlying this biblical practice of retaining more than one testimony of the same event or set of events was the idea of independent testimonies as a guarantee of authenticity (see John 8:17; cf. Deut 17:6; 19:15). The survival of the four Gospels was not self-evident.[360] It did not follow from the theology of the Synoptics.[361] Luke explicitly (Luke 1:1–4) intended to replace the earlier Christian liturgical texts and Matthew intended to do the

355 Further evidence in M. Hengel, *Die Evangelienüberschriften*, 11.

356 This was already the opinion of Th. Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Matthäus,* 6 f.

357 M. Hengel considers the shorter version to be secondary: *Evangelienüberschriften,* 11–13.

358 See M. Hengel, *The Four Gospels,* 31, 108 ff., 118 f., and e. g. Kehlhoffer, ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ 5. 13, as against H. Koester's conclusion in his article "From the Kerygma-Gospel to written Gospels."

359 Cf. R. A. Burridge, *What are the Gospels?* 192–195.

360 See e. g. G. N. Stanton, *The Gospel and Jesus*, 125-135.

361 Th. K. Heckel, *Vom Evangelium des Markus zum viergestaltigen Evangelium,* 104. Each of the Gospel writers intended to produce a liturgical book for all Christians, even though they did not expect that their book would spread so quickly: M. M. Mitchell, "Patristic Counter-Evidence to the Claim that the Gospels Were Written for All Christians," 77.

same. He included the text of Mark without mentioning the source, i. e. he (obviously in good faith) intended to include all the traditions about Jesus in one book. As we mentioned in § 7, the Gospel of John was written (or edited) as a spiritual interpretation of one or more of the other biographies of Jesus. The last attempt to integrate the traditions of Jesus was made by Tatian's *Diatessaron* (most probably around 170–180), which succeeded in Syria only and was used for several centuries in some regions, but the new Syriac translation of the four Gospels (*Vetus Syra)* in the 3rd century started to gain ground over the *Diatessaron*, which was soon abolished even in Syria. Marcion also falls into this category. His interpretation of the gospel abolishing the Jewish spiritual heritage was rejected by the mainstream Church soon after his attempt to create his own canon.

This meant the definitive victory of the concept of a four-fold Gospel (*euangelion tetramorfon*). From the viewpoint of a historian, it was a compromise between the use of various Gospel books in different Christian regions (and a possible split in the Church) and the use of one integrated Gospel.[362] However, Irenaeus (*Haer.* 3,11:8) interpreted the existence of four canonical Gospels as God's providence. His argument was based on several analogies in the realm of God's creation like the four cardinal points or, in the biblical tradition, the four creatures on each side of the throne of God (Rev 4:6–8; cf. Ezek 1:5–14).[363]

Since the Enlightenment the comparative research of the Gospels has become the basis of critical Jesus research. As the basis of the New Testament canon, the four Gospels are a potential weapon against understanding faith as an ideology and are theologically important as a witness to the complexity of truth as revealed in history.

8.6 Non-canonical Gospels

In § 5.2 we have already discussed the *Papyrus Egerton* which may represent a non-Synoptic collection of several pieces of Jesus traditions.

It is a valuable document demonstrating that the Jesus tradition was not exclusively transmitted orally, as Form Criticism supposed. However, it is not a Gospel, even if the collector may have intended to create a liturgical text. Since the material originated from various Christian

362 A. v. Harnack, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur II,* 681.
363 See E. Lohse, Vom einen Evangelium zu den vier Evangelien, 75.

groupings, it might have been composed as inspiration for an inter-Christian dialogue. Mark did not include it in his book and most probably did not know it at all, but a similar collection may have inspired him to write an integrative text on a higher level – a theologically elaborated biography of Jesus.

An important part of the Passion Story of the *Gospel of Peter* was discovered at the end of the 19th century and several other fragments were published in 1972.[364] According to Jürgen Denker and others, the Gospel of Peter was independent of the Synoptic Gospels.[365] But their interpretation failed to establish itself. A critical historical stratification and literary analysis discovered elements (the secondary development of tradition, introducing un-prejudiced witnesses, picturesque miraculous elements) that are typical of the later stages of tradition.[366] This applies also to the Crucifixion Story, which has been considered the most ancient layer[367] of the preserved text.[368] The Gospel of Peter cannot be considered as an alternative type of Gospel, nor even as an independent witness to the passion narrative. This does not exclude the presence of a few individual motifs and small pieces of tradition taken from traditions that were not accessible to the Synoptics. The Gospel of Peter originated in the middle of the second century.

We know only a few fragments from the *Judaeo-Christian Gospels*. The Gospel according to the Hebrews, mentioned by Clement of Alexandria (*Strom*. 2, 45:5), originated in the mid-second century. It may have described the baptism of Jesus and his teaching up until his death and resurrection. Theologically it is influenced by the speculation on wisdom, and some of the sayings have a parallel in the Gospel of Thomas. It explicitly mentioned the Gospel of Luke (fragment III) and it obviously did not represent a model of a literary Gospel independent of Mark.

The Gospel of the Nazoreans and especially the Gospel of the Ebionites (both from the first part of the second century), quote or allude to the Synoptic Gospels and in our context we shall simply men-

364 For the editions see Bibliography.

365 J. Danker, *Die theologiegeschichtliche Stellung des Petrusevangeliums,* 58–77; H. Köster, Frühchristliche Evangelienliteratur, 1488.

366 R. E. Brown, The Gospel of Peter and Canonical Gospel Priority, 329 ff.

367 J. D. Crossan, The Historical Jesus, Appendix 7.

368 J. B. Green, The Gospel of Peter: Source for a Pre-Canonical Passion Narrative? especially 298 ff.

tion them as examples of secondary developments of the Synoptic type of the Gospel.

The other writings that called themselves Gospels, such as the Gospel according to Thomas (*NHC* II/2), the Gospel according to Philip (*NHC* II/3) and the Gospel according to Mary (*BG* II), have the title "The Gospel according to ...." in a postscript. However, they are not Gospels in the sense of biographies of Jesus, culminating in the Passion Story and Easter. They include only some motifs relating to the life of Jesus along with other traditions; they "usurped" the title "Gospel" in order to secure their authority among Christians. The title "The Gospel according to Thomas" that the editor used for this collection of sayings of Jesus (NHC II/2), cannot be interpreted as claiming inclusion in the canon with the three Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John, but rather as the basis of an alternative canon used by the Thomasine community.[369]

The title of the Gospel of Judas (Codex Tsachos) uses the genitive relation and not the preposition *kata* in the title at the end of the text. The Gospel of Truth (NHC I/3) – a tractate originating in the second half of the second century – uses the same genitive relation (in Coptic *peuangelion intmēe*)[370] in the opening sentence; "The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit" (NHC III/2 and IV/2) is called "The Gospel of the Egyptians" in the last paragraph (69,6 – perhaps added later); other texts, such as the Gospel of the Saviour (Papyrus Berolinensis 22220), are called Gospels only by modern scholars. All of them are documents of faith interpreted in isolation from history – in a rather a-cosmic sense.

They originated at the time when the biblical Gospels were already used in the Christian liturgy. These four canonical Gospels acquired their authority because they culminated in the Easter gospel on the one hand and accepted the traditions about the earthly Jesus as the determining element for Christian orientation in human life and history on the other. These qualities of the emerging Christian canon were not always displayed and the Jesus traditions were often almost forgotten or misinterpreted. However, it remained a possible source of new interpretations of the gospel, reforms and reformations, and new forms of direct or indirect impact on society as a whole.

369 See P. Pokorný, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Thomas*, 12 ff.

370 The texts from Nag Hammadi, Codex Tsachos and Papyrus Berolinensis 22220 are preserved in Coptic translation only; however, the Coptic took over the preposition *kata* from the Greek.

To sum up: most of the non-canonical Gospels have only a marginal significance for our investigation. And their analysis comes mainly under the history of Christian piety.

9. Conclusions

9.1 The gospel in Jesus and Paul

As the conclusion of the whole of our study, we would like to present an overview of the role of the term *euangelion*.

Jesus, inspired by Isa 61:1, most probably used the Hebrew verb *b-ś-r* (Gr. *euangelizomai*) for the main content of his proclamation of the kingdom of God.

The Apostle Paul used the term *euangelion* in another sense: – to denote the formulae proclaiming Jesus' resurrection. The teaching of Jesus and his earthly life, in particular, took a back seat because Paul did not build up his moral admonitions upon the model of Jesus' teaching and life, but predominantly upon his cosmic role as the incarnate Son of God who descended on earth to save humankind. In the Jewish apocalyptic literature "resurrection" was mainly an event linked with the Last Judgment and fulfilment of history. In the earliest Christian view Easter, seen as the individual resurrection of Jesus and his entering into the "glory" of God, anticipated the pivotal part of the apocalyptic fulfilment so that its impact represents the backbone of human history through to its consummation in the Last Judgment and the resurrection of the dead. Thereby Jewish eschatology (including the eschatological vision of the kingdom of God) split into two poles: the attested one and the expected one, the one that has been revealed in history and its eschatological fulfilment. *Euangelion* in the Pauline sense became a term expressing the attested revelation of God in Jesus Christ – his resurrection which guarantees the eschatological fulfilment. This was a major shift as compared with the traditions about Jesus. – Paul adopted the term *euangelion* with this new meaning from the early Christian Easter proclamation, but it was through him that it entered Christian literature and became the key term of Christian teaching and preaching.

9.2 Mark

"Mark" – the author of the earliest Gospel – was at least indirectly influenced by Pauline theology. However, at the same time he was aware of the dangerous gap between the proclamation of the Easter gospel and the Jesus traditions which survived partly as an oral tradition, expanded to some extent in a popular style, partly in collections of sayings (Q and several smaller clusters), and exceptionally in the liturgy (the Lord's Prayer, the Institution of the Lord's Table, portions of the Passion Story). In the first Christian generation, when most of the Jesus traditions were still accessible, the problem of the mutual relationship between these two tendencies within the Christian tradition was not yet so pressing. However, with the massive expansion of Christianity into non-Jewish regions, and with various new interpretations of the Jesus traditions, the problem of these two tendencies became more immediate. – In the Christian liturgy, too, problems appeared: the Law and the Prophets (plus the Psalms as hymns) were the Sacred Text, the Scripture, but the authority of the Jesus traditions was not clearly defined. The Easter proclamation was included and reflected in Pauline letters that circulated in a limited group of congregations and were read in church services as an admonition. Mark decided to write a book which from the Hellenistic point of view must have been understood as a special biography of Jesus and from the Jewish point of view it indirectly claimed the authority of a canonical text, beginning with *archē* (Hebr. *re'šît*) similarly to the book of Genesis (1:1). I say "indirectly", because the Gospel of Mark was obviously never introduced into the synagogue and the only form of canonization it underwent was its use as liturgical reading in Christian worship, and also because the idea of a New Testament canon originated much later. However, the Gospel of Mark helped inspire the emergence of a New Testament canon in the first part of the second century.

Mark decided to use the term *euangelion* in the sense of the Easter gospel as the key term on which the overarching structure of his book was based. The book describes the decisive part of Jesus' earthly life, but continually relates this to his attested new post-Easter function, in the way that *euangelion* is expressed in 1 Cor 15:3b-5. The readers (hearers) of the book are able to understand who this Jesus Christ was who was raised by God according to the orally proclaimed *euangelion*.

The opening verse (Mark 1:1) was intended as the title of the book. The story of Jesus is the necessary beginning (pre-history) of the Easter

gospel, which appears at the very end of the Gospel in Mark 16:6–7 as a proclamation. This means that the gospel of Jesus (Mark 1:14–15) also belongs to the Easter gospel as its "beginning". The gospel of Jesus and his behaviour represent WHAT belongs to the eschatological future before God's face, and the Easter gospel belongs to the gospel of Jesus as a validation of its fulfilment. It represents the guarantee THAT it belongs to the future. Most of the instances where *euangelion* appears in Mark are related to the Easter gospel as anticipated in a prophetic way by Jesus himself. In this way Mark integrated important texts from both streams of Christian tradition. They had co-existed in Christian communities before, but their interrelationship had not been defined theologically and was therefore fragile. Through his book Mark created a Christian text that was able to become a counterpart of the Law and Prophets.

This became necessary since (a) in the second part of the first century, when most of the Christians lived outside Palestine, and at least two generations after the time of Jesus, is was not commonly known who was the Jesus Christ proclaimed in the Christian mission. The proclamation had to be accompanied by teaching. Secondly, (b) the adherents of Jesus had been expelled from the synagogue, which did not accept him as the Messiah, and the emerging church had to establish its own liturgy. And since in Mark the gospel of Jesus is inseparably bound together with the Easter gospel, it is understandable that after a few decades the opening sentence of Mark's book came to be understood as its title and the book started to be called Gospel, and, together with the other canonical Gospels, it acquired (around the beginning of the second century) a new unified title "The Gospel according to…."

9.3 Other canonical Gospels and the beginnings of the Christian canon

The other Synoptic Gospels incorporated into the Markan material the source "Q" – the sayings of Jesus – and enlarged the Markan scheme by adding the birth narratives. From the literary point of view their structure became more similar to the genre of biography, but the addition of the narratives about the appearances of Jesus as the Risen Lord at the end changed the model theologically. Instead of the "Beginning of the gospel", the Gospels of Luke and Matthew are in fact the "Beginning of the gospel" + the narrated gospel itself.

This applies to the Gospel of John as well. However, John has re-narrated all the material in his own language and from his theological viewpoint. In his time the gap between the Pauline letters and the Jesus traditions (see above §4.2) had already been bridged by Mark and the other Synoptics, the term *euangelion* had started to include or at least suppose the tradition of Jesus as well, and in the Christian liturgy the Gospels were used together with the Pauline letters. The autor of the fourth Gospel intended to present a new spiritual interpretation of the gospel and, like Mark or Matthew, he intended to write a new book of Genesis – of the genesis of Christianity (see Mark 1:1; Matt 1:1; John 1:1 and cf. Luke 1:2).

Already before the mid-second century, the term *euangelion* was occasionally related also to the Jesus tradition, too, and, also from the same time, to the individual Gospels as well. At that time the idea of creating a Christian canon was shared by many Christian groups. Later they accepted the common titles "The Gospel according to…" for all the literary Gospels and thereby stressed the uniqueness of the *euangelion*. At the same time this meant rejecting all attempts to use only one book of the Gospel in the liturgy and to exclude the others – a tendency present in Matthew and Luke, who intended to replace Mark, and later in Tatian's Harmony and in the single Gospel of Marcion (a revised Luke).

Since that time *euangelion* has meant the oral proclamation of Jesus' resurrection as well as the books which also included the life and teaching of the Risen One. At that time the proclamation of the gospel and the teaching about Jesus ceased to be a sermon on texts from the Law and Prophets and the literary Gospels became the "text" of Christian sermons. And Christian sermons gradually became a topical interpretation of the literary Gospels. In the mid-second century the Christian canon became fixed at least in its basic structure of the canonical Gospels and the Pauline letters.

The theology of the Easter gospel and the literary structure of the Gospels profoundly influenced the European and American concept of history, ethics, eschatology, and also art, as has been demonstrated in the sections on *Interpretation* and § 6.5: By-products of the Markan concept of the Gospel.

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Abbreviations

Abbreviations for the books of the Bible (including the deuterocanonical ones) are those of the New Revised Standard Version, but for the canonical Gospels we have used the more understandable abbreviations: Matth., Mark, Luke, John. – The transcription of the Greek and Hebrew expressions and abbreviations of the texts from the Greek, Roman and Early Christian literature (mostly the common Latin ones) correspond mostly to the *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical and Early Christian Studies* ed. by P. H. Alexander, J. F. Kutsko, J. D. Ernst, S. Decker-Lucke and D. L. Petersen. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers 1999. Hebrew is transcribed in a simplified phonetic way.

AAWG	Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen
ANRW	Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium
BFChTh	Beiträge zur Forderung Christlicher Theologie
BG	Berolinensis gnosticus (codex)
BThSt	Biblisch-theologische Studien
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CB.NTS	Coniectanea biblica – New Testament series
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CCL	Californian Classical Liberary
CGTC	Cambridge Greek Testament
EHS.T	Europäische Hochschulschriften, Theologie
EF	Erträge der Forschung
EKK	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
ET	Expository Times

ET	as additional information: English translation
EThL	Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses
EvTh	Evangelische Theologie
FRLANT	Forschungen für Religion und Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
FS	Festschrift (volume in honour of…)
FZB	Forschungen zur Bibel
Gos. Thom.	The Gospel of Thomas
HbNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HBS	Herders biblische Studien
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HThK	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
HTR	Harvard Theological Revue
HUTh	Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zu Theologie
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JCT	Jewish and Christian Texts in Contexts and Related Strudies
JSNT	Journal fort he Study of the New Testament
JSNTS	Journal for the Study of the New Testament – Supplement series
JThS	Journal of Theological Studies
KAV	Kommentar zu den apostolische Vätern
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
KlT	Kleine Texte
KTB	Kohlhammer Taschenbücher
LCL	The Loeb Classical Library
log.	Logion, saying
MT	Masoretic text
NHC	Nag Hammadi Codex (followed by the number of the codex/number of tractate / number of the column and of the line
NHS	Nag Hammadi Studies
NIGTC	New Internationa Greek Testament Commentary

NIV	New International Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	Novum Testamentum
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et orbis antiquus
NTS	New Testament Studies
NT.S	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
Q a)	The source of Jesus' Sayings (included in Matthew and Luke
b)	Texts of Qumran (Dead Sea Scrolls): Number of the cave – Q – Abbreviation or number of the title
RGG	Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart
RIP	Roehampton Institute Papers
RThPh	Revue de théologie et de philosohie
RV	Religionsgeschichtliche Volksbücher
SACh	Studies in Antiquity and Christianity
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SHAW	Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften
StUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
TEH	Theologische Existenz heute
ThLZ	Theologische Literaturzeitung
ThHkNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
ThV	Theologische Versuche
TRE	Theologische Realenzyklopädie
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen
UTB	Uni-Taschenbücher
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZNW	Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft

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