

HALLUR MORTENSEN

The Baptismal Episode as Trinitarian Narrative

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Hallur Mortensen

The Baptismal Episode as Trinitarian Narrative

Proto-Trinitarian Structures in Mark's
Conception of God

Mohr Siebeck

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For Shino

Deo Patri sit gloria
eiusque soli Filio
sancto simul cum Spiritu
nunc et per omne saeculum. Amen

Ambrosian chant

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July 2020

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List of Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols.
ACCS	Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture
AJT	<i>American Journal of Theology</i>
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ArBib	The Aramaic Bible
AsTJ	<i>Asbury Theological Journal</i>
AV	Authorized Version
BBR	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BCOTWP	Baker Commentary on the Old Testament. Wisdom and Psalms
BDB	Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament. Oxford, 1907
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BibInt	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> . Edited by K. Elliger and W. Rudolph.
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BNTS	British New Testament Society
BR	<i>Biblical Research</i>
BZ	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBR	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
CC	Concordia Commentary
DCH	Dictionary of Classical Hebrew. Edited by D. J. A. Clines. Sheffield, 1993–2011.
DSD	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
EC	<i>Early Christianity</i>
ECC	Eerdmans Critical Commentary
EFN	Estudios de filología neotestamentaria.
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
ESV	English Standard Version
ExAud	<i>Ex auditu</i>
ExpTim	<i>Expository Times</i>
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FAT II	Forschungen zum Alten Testament. 2. Reihe
FoiVie	<i>Foi et vie</i>

FOTL	Forms of Old Testament Literature
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten [drei] Jahrhunderte
HALOT	The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament. Koehler, L., W. Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm, Translated and edited under the supervision of M. E. J. Richardson. 4 vols. Leiden, 1994–1999
<i>HBT</i>	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HTKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>IBS</i>	<i>Irish Biblical Studies</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>IJST</i>	<i>International Journal of Systematic Theology</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JGRChJ</i>	<i>Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism</i>
<i>JOTT</i>	<i>Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics</i>
<i>JPT</i>	<i>Journal of Pentecostal Theology</i>
<i>JR</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
<i>JTI</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Interpretation</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KNT	Kommentar till Nya Testamentet
<i>KTR</i>	<i>King's Theological Review</i>
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
LXX	Septuagint
MNTC	Moffatt New Testament Commentary
MT	Masoretic Text
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NA28	<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , Nestle-Aland, 28th ed.
NCB	New Century Bible
<i>Neot</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
NHC	Nag Hammadi Codices
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIDNTTE	New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	New International Version
NIVAC	New International Version Application Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum Supplements
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
<i>NRTh</i>	<i>La nouvelle revue théologique</i>
NTAbh	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen
NTL	New Testament Library
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTS	<i>Old Testament Studies</i>

PNTC	Pelican New Testament Commentaries
<i>ProEccl</i>	<i>Pro ecclesia</i>
<i>PSB</i>	<i>Princeton Seminary Bulletin</i>
PVTG	Pseudepigrapha Veteris Testamenti Graece
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>RSR</i>	<i>Recherches de science religieuse</i>
<i>RTR</i>	<i>Reformed Theological Review</i>
SANT	Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testaments
SBAB	Stuttgarter biblische Aufsatzbände
SBB	Stuttgarter biblische Beiträge
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>Semeia</i>	<i>Semeia</i>
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SNTU	Studien zum Neuen Testament und Seiner Umwelt
SP	Sacra Pagina
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols.
<i>ThTo</i>	<i>Theology Today</i>
<i>TOBITH</i>	Topoi Biblischer Theologie / Topics of Biblical Theology
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
WUNT II	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament. 2. Reihe
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

Introduction

Mark's God in the History of Recent Research

Here then we have the Trinity presented in a clear way: the Father in the voice, the Son in the man, the Holy Spirit in the dove. This only needs to be barely mentioned, for it is so obvious for anyone to see. Here the recognition of the Trinity is conveyed to us so plainly that it hardly leaves any room for doubt or hesitation.¹

When in Jordan thou wast baptized, O Lord, the worship of the Trinity was made manifest. For the voice of the Father bare witness unto thee, calling thee his beloved Son, and the Spirit, in the form of a dove, confirmed the steadfastness of that word. O Christ our God, who didst manifest thyself, and dost enlighten the world, glory to thee.²

In 1975 Nils A. Dahl issued his now-famous plea that both direct reference to and detailed examination of statements regarding God had been neglected in New Testament research.³ While his article has had a great impact, and studies on 'God' in various New Testament books⁴ have appeared, this is still a minority concern in NT scholarship.⁵ In Markan studies, the focus has traditionally been on Christology, ethics, and eschatology, while 'God' is hardly discussed at all. But isolating Jesus from God would be making a move that is not made by Mark, who so closely associated the two that one cannot be separated from the other. This is true on even the basic level that God sends Jesus and Jesus reveals God. But the argument in this book goes beyond this minimalistic view and focuses on the relationship between the one who calls Jesus his Son and the one who calls God *abba*. As the subsequent survey and argument will demonstrate, there is a particular concentration of God-language and God-

¹ St. Augustine. Simonetti, Manlio, *Matthew 1–13*. ACCS (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001), 54.

² From The Syrian Orthodox liturgy for Epiphany, Antiphon III, Tone 1. Cited in Letham, Robert. *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2004), 51.

³ Dahl, Nils A., "The Neglected Factor in New Testament Theology" in *Jesus the Christ: The Historical Origins of Christological Doctrine*. Ed. Donald H. Juel (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991a), 154. Originally published in Dahl, Nils A., "The Neglected Factor in New Testament Theology" *Reflections* 75 (1975).

⁴ Hereafter NT for New Testament and OT for Old Testament.

⁵ See Hurtado's review of the situation, which was also a stimulus for this project. Hurtado, Larry W., *God in New Testament Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010).

activity in the prologue. Only twice in Mark does God enter the story directly, albeit in a voice from heaven, which is at the baptism (Mark 1:11) and the transfiguration (9:7), and these thus become key entry points for discussing Mark's understanding of who God is. But Jesus and God, who are identified in relational terms as 'son' and thus by implication 'father', are not the only characters involved in the baptism event. Prior to the Father's utterance, someone or something called the 'Spirit' descends from heaven and comes to Jesus. While a multiplicity of questions remain to be answered, the argument of this book is that this amounts to a proto-trinitarian and narrative trinitarian understanding of God's identity.⁶

I. Nils A. Dahl's Plea and the Earliest Responses

a. Nils A. Dahl (1975)

While Dahl noted the dearth of treatments on 'God' in New Testament studies, he also noted that textbooks on New Testament theology that did discuss God followed the outline of systematic theology and focused on God's "essence and attributes".⁷ However, his own article proceeded in the same manner with sections on "God as one", "the Creator is the giver of life", "God is the sovereign ruler", "God is the righteous judge", and "God is merciful".⁸ However, Dahl made an important contribution, first because his appeal served as an impetus to renewed interest in the subject and second, though his article was limited in its constructive work, he pointed to the necessary way forward. On the second point, Dahl referred to Oscar Cullmann's statement that "early Christian theology is in reality almost exclusively Christology",⁹ but Dahl rather suggested that it could just as well be the "other way around".¹⁰

⁶ While the words 'trinity' and 'trinitarian' are used here and elsewhere, it should be stressed that nuances of later doctrinal debates should not be imported here. However, an alternative word such as 'triadic' does not suffice, for it does not capture Mark's simultaneous insistence on monotheism, Jesus' identity as Lord, and the distinction of the Spirit. Using the word 'trinity' in a qualified sense, as well as the more precise terms 'proto-trinitarian' and 'narrative-trinitarian', without implying the later highly specific definitions of the term, is desirable because the term emerged in the context of serious engagement with Scripture.

⁷ Dahl 1991a, 155.

⁸ Dahl 1991a, 159–160.

⁹ Cullmann, Oscar, *The Christology of the New Testament*. Translated by Shirley C. Guthrie and Charles A.M. Hall (London: SCM, 1959), 2–3.

¹⁰ Dahl 1991a, 154.

b. Robert C. Tannehill (1979)

Although Tannehill's *Semeia* article is not strictly about Mark's view of God, it is important in this context for two reasons. It was the first major 'narrative Christology' on Mark's Gospel (and also introduces the term) and was influential in this regard. Secondly, he stated that in Mark's Gospel, God and his purposes are "lying behind the central events of the story".¹¹ Tannehill continued to argue that Jesus and the narrative about him concerns how Jesus accomplishes his purpose and mission. While Tannehill did not explore Mark's view of God in depth and in the end argued for a functional Christology, these comments were influential for subsequent examination of the Markan God.

c. John R. Donahue (1982, 1984)

John R. Donahue responded directly to Dahl's appeal and wrote on 'God' in Mark's Gospel. He contends that in order to focus on 'God', it is necessary from the outset to "bracket out" the "question of the relationship of Jesus to God".¹² He argues that in Mark the transcendence of God is emphasised,¹³ and that Mark is almost unique in the NT of being characterised by a lack of anthropomorphisms and ascriptions which suggests "reserved speech" concerning God.¹⁴ In this sense Mark diverges from Jewish writings, being influenced by Hellenistic philosophy.¹⁵

Donahue focuses on the three passages in 12:13–34 – on taxes, on the resurrection, and on the greatest commandment – and suggests that this section is "more directly theological".¹⁶ Since the demands and nature of God are expressed and the sovereignty of God is affirmed¹⁷ he called this passage a "little treatise *De Deo Uno*".¹⁸ God is the God of the living¹⁹ and "[t]he question of the resurrection provides the centerpiece of Mark's theistic creed."²⁰ For the Markan Jesus the one God is known through the OT, and the one who

¹¹ Tannehill, Robert C., "The Gospel of Mark as Narrative Christology" *Semeia* 16 (1979), 62.

¹² Donahue, John R., "A Neglected Factor in the Theology of Mark" *JBL* 101/4 (1982), 564–565.

¹³ Donahue 1982, 569.

¹⁴ Donahue 1982, 566–567, 569.

¹⁵ Donahue, John R., "The Revelation of God in the Gospel of Mark" in *Modern Biblical Scholarship: Its Impact on Theology and Proclamation*. Ed. Francis A. Eigo (Villanova: The Villanova University Press, 1984), 158–160.

¹⁶ Donahue 1982, 571.

¹⁷ Donahue 1982, 573.

¹⁸ Donahue 1982, 570; Donahue 1984, 160. Emphasis original.

¹⁹ Donahue 1982, 575–578.

²⁰ Donahue 1982, 575; Donahue 1984, 164.

confesses this is not far from the kingdom. But this passage also concerns Jesus' relationship to God, and here Jesus is conceived of as the one who renders the things of God unto God (Mark 12:17).²¹ Donahue argues that while Jesus speaks authoritatively for God, his nearness to God cannot undermine God's sovereignty.²²

In a little-noted 1984 chapter, Donahue also argued that Mark – especially in 1:9–11 and 9:2–8, but also in the miracles and the forgiving of sins – sees “in Jesus a unique revelation or disclosure of God.”²³ He argues that this revelation is not in a simple one-to-one correspondence, but carries a deeper level of meaning: as the ‘Revelatory Symbol’ or ‘Parable of God’.²⁴ In yet another essay expanding on the same theme, he writes: “Ultimately then the christological titles in Mark are not simply descriptions of Jesus but are metaphors of what God has done in Jesus.”²⁵

While Donahue suggested there may be “nothing distinctively new or Christian” in Mark's view of God,²⁶ this book will argue that the disclosure of God encompasses Jesus himself who shares in God's divine identity. For while Donahue rightly highlights Mark 12 which contains paramount statements of Jesus regarding God, his three contributions do not do justice to Mark's opening citation, the baptism narrative, and Jesus' message of the gospel of the kingdom. In this framework, God's Spirit and the nature of divine sonship are also neglected. The question remains unanswered: What is the meaning of the relationship between God and Jesus his Son; and what does this mean for God?

II. Early German Contributions

a. Joachim Gnilka (1992)

Another early yet often overlooked contribution is Gnilka's section on the notion of God in Mark's Gospel in his article on ‘God’ in the Jesus tradition. Gnilka first discusses the vocabulary used for God: θεός, κύριος, πατήρ, as well as divine passives and the genitive constructions such as the ‘kingdom of God’ or ‘Son of God’.

Gnilka stresses that Mark's God is the God of the OT, identified as the creator, the one who unites man and wife in matrimony, forgives sins, spoke to

²¹ Donahue 1982, 574.

²² Donahue 1982, 582.

²³ Donahue 1984, 169–170.

²⁴ Donahue 1984, 170–175; also Donahue, John R., “Jesus as the Parable of God in the Gospel of Mark” *Int* 32 (1978).

²⁵ Donahue 1978, 379.

²⁶ Donahue 1982, 566.

Moses, and is the God of the patriarchs. In short, “[d]er Gott des Evangeliums ist der Gott der Bibel, der Gott Israels.”²⁷ The oneness of God is confirmed in Mark 2:7; 10:18; 12:29ff., and Gnilka writes, “[d]as monotheistische Glaubensbekenntnis ist im Markusevangelium fest verankert.” Gnilka suggests that Mark may have been written in a situation where the Markan community, i.e. in Rome, was accused of ditheism by the synagogue because of its views on Jesus. But Mark and his community hold fast to both biblical monotheism and to Jesus as the Christ, Son of God, and the Son of Man who will come to judge the world.²⁸ Meaning ‘theological’ in the narrow sense, Gnilka concludes that “[w]ir stehen an den Anfängen eines christologisch-theologischen Reflexionsprozesses.” Reflection on God in Mark cannot be done without incorporating Jesus who reveals God and through whom God establishes his kingdom.²⁹ While Gnilka’s section is too short for treating the question of God thoroughly, he rightly acknowledges that Jesus cannot be ‘bracketed out’ and that this necessarily will lead to a renewed understanding of God.

b. François Vouga (1995)

Vouga’s chapter on this topic has two central arguments. First, he argues that while Jesus proclaims the kingdom of God, the kingdom is not tied to Jesus as a person³⁰ and writes, “mit seiner Person ist aber die βασιλεία keineswegs verbunden.”³¹ The second and correlative argument is that to believe in the gospel is to believe in God, not Jesus.³² He says concerning 1:14 “Jesus ist hier eindeutig der Verkünder und nicht der Inhalt des ‘Evangeliums’.”³³ Faith should, therefore, be directed towards God and not to Jesus as a person, for he is merely a proclaimer of the kingdom and a witness to faith as an existential posture.³⁴ Vouga thus argues that there is no theological connection between the kingdom, the gospel, and Christology.³⁵ But this book will argue in depth that

²⁷ Gnilka, Joachim, “Zum Gottesgedanken in der Jesusüberlieferung” in *Monotheismus und Christologie: Zur Gottesfrage im hellenistischen Judentum und im Urchristentum*. Ed. Hans-Josef Klauck (Freiburg: Herder, 1992), 150–151.

²⁸ Gnilka 1992, 152.

²⁹ Gnilka 1992, 151–154.

³⁰ Vouga, François, “‘Habt Glauben an Gott’. Der Theozentrismus der Verkündigung des Evangeliums und des christlichen Glaubens im Markusevangelium” in *Texts and Contexts: Biblical Texts in Their Textual and Situational Contexts: Essays in Honor of Lars Hartman*. Eds. Tord Fornberg and David Hellholm (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1995), 93–94, 97, 106.

³¹ Vouga 1995, 93; also 94, 106.

³² Vouga 1995, 94–97, 100, 104.

³³ Vouga 1995, 99; also 100.

³⁴ Vouga 1995, 103; also 96–98.

³⁵ Vouga 1995, 94.

there is an intimate connection precisely between the gospel, the kingdom, and Jesus as the Son of God and that it is precisely this which is critical for understanding the Markan God.

c. Klaus Scholtissek (1996)

After providing an overview of both direct and indirect words used for God in Mark³⁶ Klaus Scholtissek surveys especially the use of θεός, noting its connection to other words, including 'son', 'kingdom', 'gospel', 'power', 'authority', and 'Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob', as well as God as the object of faith.³⁷ He examines one parable for its depiction of God, the parable of the vineyard, and states that here God is the one who planted the vineyard (meaning that he both created and chose Israel), holds the workers responsible, expects obedience and is judge.³⁸ His article concludes with four basic points, three of which are relevant for our concerns.

Firstly, the God of Mark's Gospel is the God of Israel, the God of creation, and the one God of the patriarchs, who spoke in the law and through the prophets, who has promised that he himself will come and rule and who is now working an eschatological work of salvation.³⁹ Secondly, the depiction of God in Mark is in light of the fact that the two leitmotifs in Mark – the Kingdom of God and Son of God – belong together.⁴⁰ God sends his own Son who proclaims the arrival of the kingdom.⁴¹ His third point is the theocentricity of Jesus, who prays to God and does his will proclaiming, teaching, and acting with divine authority.⁴²

Naturally, not all can be covered in a short chapter, but Scholtissek's work is helpful, stressing the key points of the continuity between Mark's God and God in the OT, and the link between the Son of God and the kingdom. However, he does not explore the intimate relationship between the Father and the Son, and what this does for the meaning of God's identity. Likewise, the Spirit of God is not included in his discussion.

³⁶ Scholtissek, Klaus, "'Er ist nicht ein Gott der Toten, sondern der Lebenden' (Mk. 12,27) Grundzüge der markinischen Theologie" in *Der Lebendige Gott: Festschrift für Wilhelm Thüsing zum 75. Geburtstag*. Ed. Thomas Söding (Münster: Aschendorf, 1996), 77–78.

³⁷ Scholtissek 1996, 81–86.

³⁸ Scholtissek 1996, 87–91.

³⁹ Scholtissek 1996, 96; also 78.

⁴⁰ Scholtissek 1996, 79–80.

⁴¹ Scholtissek 1996, 97, 80–81.

⁴² Scholtissek 1996, 97–98.

III. Recent Contributions

a. Paul L. Danove (2001, 2005)

Paul Danove's two contributions to this topic both focus on characterisation and rhetorical analysis for understanding Mark's presentation of God. In his 2001 article Danove first notes that only rarely is $\acute{\omicron}$ θεός explicitly used and that the agency of God is often indicated by more "oblique designations".⁴³ Danove categorises 199 references to God in six domains: as agent, experiencer, source, goal, benefactive, and patient.⁴⁴ God is 'agent' e.g. in sending Jesus (9:37). God is 'experiencer' when he is pleased (1:11), wills (14:36), and knows (13:32). God is also the 'source' of the Sabbath (2:27) and of eternal life (9:43, 45). God is the 'goal' when people pray (1:35) or give thanks (8:6). God is 'benefactive' in that he has angels (8:38), a kingdom (1:15), a will (3:35), and a word (7:13). Finally, God is 'patient' when he is the object of direct transitive verbs, for instance 'love' (12:30), 'glorify' (2:12) and 'honour' (7:6) or object of predication, such as 'good' (10:18) or 'who is in heaven' (11:25).⁴⁵

Secondly, Danove examines the use of repetition in the characterisation of God. This means that when the same particular verbs are used of both God and Jesus they are aligned and their relationship is reinforced.⁴⁶ For example, Danove argues that with the word ἀποστέλλω there is a "positive alignment" of Jesus with God when the disciples are sent and produce the same kind of work Jesus did when he was sent from God.⁴⁷ Another instance is the 'forgiving' in 2:1–12 and 5:19–20 which aligns Jesus positively with God.⁴⁸ On the other hand, characters who are negatively aligned to Jesus are also negatively aligned to God, which in turn positively aligns Jesus with God.⁴⁹

Thirdly, Danove focuses on references to God in the development of the narrative. His narrative analysis shows the greatest concentration of references to God in 1:1–15,⁵⁰ and states that these verses "stress Jesus' positive and intimate relationship with God that approaches identification with God at

⁴³ Danove, Paul L., "The Narrative Function of Mark's Characterization of God" *NovT* XLIII/1 (2001), 12, 14–18.

⁴⁴ Danove, Paul L., *The Rhetoric of Characterization of God, Jesus, and Jesus' Disciples in the Gospel of Mark*. JSNT Sup. 290 (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 30. See also Danove 2005, 35ff.

⁴⁵ Danove 2001, 16–18. See also Danove 2005, 40ff.

⁴⁶ Danove 2001, 18.

⁴⁷ Danove 2001, 19.

⁴⁸ Danove 2001, 19.

⁴⁹ Danove 2001, 23–24.

⁵⁰ Danove 2001, 25–26.

certain points.”⁵¹ That Jesus is indirectly or directly associated with every part of God's characterisation in the prologue indicates a bond between Jesus and God that “precludes any understanding of either character without immediate reference to the other.”⁵² He notes that when references to God and God's agency are decreased after the prologue, the person of Jesus takes centre-stage⁵³ and argues that the close alignment and relationship between God and Jesus invites the reader to find “a profound identification of Jesus with God that extends beyond the aspects of identification within the assertions of 1:1–15.”⁵⁴

Four years later Danove published a larger second study on the characterisation of God, Jesus, and the disciples in Mark. The chapter on the characterisation of God builds on the former article and adds a section on “repeated contexts” which associates 1:1–15; 12:1–12; 13:32–37; and 1:1–15; 8:31–9:1; 13:3–13 with each other respectively. The former are linked by ‘son’, ‘lord’, ‘come’, and ‘time’ and the latter are linked by ‘gospel’, ‘come’, and ‘reign’. Danove concludes that such repeated contexts link the actions of Jesus and God and reinforce their relationship.⁵⁵ Mark's characterisation of Jesus and God emphasises their intimate relation and even “Jesus' identification with God”.⁵⁶

Danove's works helpfully provide a good analysis of the textual data and demonstrate the ‘positive alinement’ of Jesus to God. However, he falls short in examining what this ‘positive alinement’ means⁵⁷ and especially what it means for God in light of Mark's affirmation of monotheism. Likewise, Mark's key themes of divine sonship, and the role of the Spirit are left undeveloped.

b. Jack Dean Kingsbury (2002)

Jack Dean Kingsbury also uses narrative criticism in his essay on this subject. He argues against the position that Mark's ‘suffering son of man Christology’ is a corrective against a ‘Hellenistic divine man Christology’, for who can correct God's statement in 1:11 regarding Jesus' divine sonship? Rather the reader is to adopt God's ‘point of view’ concerning Jesus' identity.⁵⁸ God also enters the

⁵¹ Danove 2001, 25–26.

⁵² Danove 2001, 26.

⁵³ Danove 2005, 52.

⁵⁴ Danove 2001, 27; Danove 2005, 52.

⁵⁵ Danove 2005, 43–48.

⁵⁶ Danove 2005, 149.

⁵⁷ It is not synonymous with identification, for John is also aligned positively with God. Danove 2001, 22.

⁵⁸ Kingsbury, Jack D., “‘God’ within the Narrative World of Mark” in *Forgotten God: Perspectives in Biblical Theology: Essays in Honor of Paul J. Achtemeier on the Occasion of his Seventy-Fifth Birthday*. Eds. A. Andrew Das and Frank J. Matera (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2002), 76–78.

narrative at the transfiguration to declare Jesus' divine sonship, which also involves suffering.⁵⁹ Kingsbury states that the Gospel presents a narrative unveiling of Jesus' identity as the Son of God which in Mark constitutes "the deepest mystery of Jesus' person, namely, the mystery of his relationship to God."⁶⁰ Though he also stresses God's superiority over Jesus (10:18; 10:40; 13:32).⁶¹

There are only two possible views concerning Jesus. God's point of view, and the human/satanic point of view.⁶² Because of Jesus' obedience, his point of view becomes identified with God's point of view,⁶³ and God's point of view is also reflected by the reliable narrator,⁶⁴ as well as the demons, the disciples, the Syrophenician woman, and especially the centurion.⁶⁵

This short essay, as well as Kingsbury's book on Markan Christology,⁶⁶ with his emphasis on God's point of view, makes a significant contribution to the understanding of Mark's Gospel. However, while focussing on what God thinks of Jesus, Kingsbury omits to ask what God says about himself while calling Jesus his Son. While Kingsbury is right in saying that the author is not concerned with Jesus' 'nature', this does not necessarily mean that Mark's Christology is entirely 'functional'.⁶⁷ The interpreter must also factor in Mark's opening citation, the kingdom, as well as the coming of God's Spirit in order to appreciate Mark's presentation of God.

c. Gudrun Guttenberger (2004)

The first, and still only major, book-length publication on 'God' in Mark's Gospel, is Gudrun Guttenberger's *Die Gottesvorstellung im Markusevangelium* from 2004. Her approach is thematic and she discusses five themes in succession: 1. God as Lord of history 2. God as law-giver 3. The power and omnipotence of God 4. God and evil 5. Monotheism and Christology.

After preliminaries, Guttenberger first discusses God as the Lord of history. The 'Grundtenor' in Mark is, according to Guttenberger, the transcendence of God.⁶⁸ She stresses the continuation of the history presented in Mark with the

⁵⁹ Kingsbury 2002, 81.

⁶⁰ Kingsbury 2002, 78; also 80.

⁶¹ Kingsbury 2002, 81.

⁶² Kingsbury 2002, 79.

⁶³ Kingsbury 2002, 82–83.

⁶⁴ Kingsbury 2002, 84.

⁶⁵ Kingsbury 2002, 85–87.

⁶⁶ Kingsbury, Jack D., *The Christology of Mark's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

⁶⁷ Kingsbury 1983, 63.

⁶⁸ Guttenberger, Gudrun, *Die Gottesvorstellung im Markusevangelium*. BZNW. 123 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 115.

history of Israel.⁶⁹ Mark's God is the God of the Scriptures, because of the eighteen occurrences of *theos* in Mark eleven are in scriptural citations.⁷⁰ God is presented as in control of both the beginning and the end of history, as represented by Mark 1:1–15 and 13:3–37.⁷¹ Since God is the Lord of history he is ultimately responsible for Jesus' death and suffering (14:21, 27). God, however, does not act directly, but allows it to happen: "Gott handelt nicht, er lässt geschehen."⁷²

Secondly, Guttenberger discusses the Markan God as the law-giver. While history follows God's plan, which is linked to Scripture, he does not act directly in history but as law-giver. The parable of the vineyard in Mark 12:1–12 points to a God who is distant, but whose will is made known and accomplished through his messengers and his Son.⁷³ In discussing God as law-giver, she examines the themes of purity, Sabbath, marriage and divorce, the highest commandment, and the temple action. She argues that in Mark there is a '*Christologische Zuspitzung*',⁷⁴ for God's will on these matters is now known through Jesus who has the authority to make declarations concerning the Torah and discern the real will of God.⁷⁵

The third theme Guttenberger examines is the power and omnipotence of God. In Mark, 'dynamis' is the domain of God, (12:24; 14:62) and is the only attribute of God mentioned in Mark. The power of God includes the power to give and create life, and as the God of the living, (12:27) is the originator of life.⁷⁶ The crisis in 14:32–42 is not that God is judging Jesus, but that God who is omnipotent does not intervene to do so. Guttenberger notes that Jesus is not wrong to declare God's absence (15:34), but yet God is present. She writes, "Gott ist als Abwesender präsent und als Verborgener epiphän. Jesus ist als der Sterbende und Verlassene Gottes Sohn."⁷⁷ The death of Jesus becomes an epiphany.⁷⁸ Although God is almighty he is not the origin of evil, his withdrawal, however, gives space for evil (Unheil) through which he accomplishes salvation (Heil).⁷⁹

The final chapter explores the oneness of God and its relation to Christology. In this context, Guttenberger discusses the blasphemy charges in 2:1–12 and

⁶⁹ Guttenberger 2004, 49.

⁷⁰ Guttenberger 2004, 54–55.

⁷¹ Guttenberger 2004, 65, 74.

⁷² Guttenberger 2004, 94; also 108, 196, 198.

⁷³ Guttenberger 2004, 118.

⁷⁴ Guttenberger 2004, 162. Emphasis original.

⁷⁵ Guttenberger 2004, 147.

⁷⁶ Guttenberger 2004, 217.

⁷⁷ Guttenberger 2004, 208.

⁷⁸ Guttenberger 2004, 200.

⁷⁹ Guttenberger 2004, 217.

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