

FRANCESCO FILANNINO

The Theological Programme of Mark

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

551

Mohr Siebeck

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Francesco Filannino

The Theological Programme of Mark

Exegesis and Function of Mark 1:1,2–15

Mohr Siebeck

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To the victims of Covid-19

To the medical staff, the health workers, the priests and all those of good will who have alleviated the wounds of body and spirit in this time of suffering and whose lives have been a continuation of the Gospel.

Preface

“A renewal of preaching can offer believers, as well as the lukewarm and the non-practising, new joy in the faith and fruitfulness in the work of evangelization. The heart of its message will always be the same: the God who revealed his immense love in the crucified and risen Christ. [...] Christ is the ‘eternal Gospel’ (Rev 14:6); he ‘is the same yesterday and today and forever’ (Heb 13:8), yet his riches and beauty are inexhaustible. He is for ever young and a constant source of newness”¹.

I reread these lines in recent months at the beginning of the pandemic caused by the Covid-19 virus which has turned our world upside down and shattered so many human lives. As I did so, I found myself asking how the Gospel’s announcement of good news could sound in a time that is so marked by suffering. In fact, the heroism of the doctors, nurses, simple workers, priests and so many men and women who have continued to devote their lives generously on behalf of the sick, their families and the entire civil community, paying even with the sacrifice of their lives, has inspired in me the certainty that, even in these critical and tragic circumstances, the Gospel, which began with the event of Jesus Christ, has continued to be lived and witnessed in the experience of these brothers and sisters.

These thoughts led me to reflect on the title of Mark’s Gospel: “Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Son of God” (Mark 1:1), which I have happened to discuss several times during these recent years of research devoted to the Second Gospel. More generally, both in my doctoral dissertation and in other articles published in recent years, the text of the introduction to the Marcan narrative has been the object of my interest on several occasions. From there came the idea of writing a monograph which would be devoted entirely to the first fifteen verses of Mark’s Gospel and which could provide an organic and complete arrangement of the results of the personal research which I had previously achieved in a fragmentary way. Weighing up the different pericopes and sections of the Second Gospel, I increasingly came to the conclusion that the *incipit* of Mark 1:1 and the introduction of Mark 1:2–15 assume a function that is important for the theology of the Second Gospel by anticipating its fundamental content in a programmatic manner. The present

¹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*. Apostolic Exhortation to the bishops, clergy, consecrated persons and the lay faithful on the proclamation of the Gospel in today’s world, 11.

study intends to be the end of the journey of these recent years of research into the Second Gospel: I leave the reader with the task of verifying whether or not I have attained my goal.

I am dedicating this study of mine to the men and women who have been, for me, the daily witnesses to the Gospel during these months of the pandemic: they have shown me that, even in this time of suffering, the joyful news about Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, has not suspended its millennial journey. My gratitude is also due to my family and to so many friends who, in this time of “enforced isolation” and physical distancing, have not failed to make me feel their closeness and have encouraged me to write this study. Sincere thanks must also go to the Pontifical Lateran University: even in this time of distance learning, the daily contact with colleagues and students has kept alive the passion and desire to plumb the depths of the riches of the word of God even more.

My wish for the readers of these lines is that, in every circumstance of life, joyful or sad, they can continue to announce the Gospel begun by Christ and entrusted to his Church. May the generous example of so many brothers and sisters who have been involved in the front line in the war against Covid-19 spur us on in our witness, simple and joyful, to the good news of the crucified and risen Lord.

Francesco Filannino

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List of abbreviations

1. Journals and series

For the abbreviations of journals (in italics) and series, see IATG³ = Siegfried M. Schwertner, *Internationales Abkürzungsverzeichnis für Theologie und Grenzgebiete: Zeitschriften, Serien, Lexika, Quellenwerke mit bibliographischen Angaben* (Berlin: De Gruyter, ³2014) and Stanislaw Bazylinski, *A Guide to Biblical Research*, SubBi 36 (Roma: G&BPress ³2016).

AB	Anchor Bible
ABE	Asociación Bíblica Española
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
<i>Ang.</i>	<i>Angelicum</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römische Welt</i>
<i>Anton.</i>	<i>Antonianum</i>
<i>ARW</i>	<i>Archiv für Religionswissenschaft</i>
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
BBB	Bonner Biblische Beiträge
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BET	Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
<i>Bib.</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BiBh</i>	<i>Bible Bhashyam</i>
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
<i>BibLeb</i>	<i>Bibel und Leben</i>
BiInS	Biblical Interpretation Series
<i>BiRe</i>	<i>Bible Review</i>
BiSe	Biblical Seminar
<i>BiTod</i>	<i>The Bible Today</i>
<i>BiTr</i>	<i>Bible Translator</i>
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
<i>BN</i>	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BThSt	Biblisch-Theologische Studien
BU	Biblische Untersuchungen

BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBi(B)	Collana Biblica. Bologna
CGTC	Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CNT	Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
<i>CTQ</i>	<i>Concordia Theological Quarterly</i>
EHS.T	Europäische Hochschulschriften - Reihe 23, Theologie
EKK	Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>EstBib</i>	<i>Estudios Bíblicos</i>
<i>EstEcl</i>	<i>Estudios Eclesiásticos</i>
<i>ET</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
EtB	Études bibliques
EtB.NS	Études bibliques. Nouvelle Série
<i>ETL</i>	<i>Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses</i>
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
FB	Forschung zur Bibel
<i>FNT</i>	<i>Filologia Neotestamentaria</i>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
FTS	Frankfurter Theologische Studien
<i>Gr.</i>	<i>Gregorianum</i>
HBS	Herders Biblische Studien
<i>HeyJ</i>	<i>Heythrop Journal</i>
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
<i>Hok.</i>	<i>Hokhma</i>
HThKNT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUTH	Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie
<i>IBSt</i>	<i>Irish Biblical Studies</i>
<i>ITQ</i>	<i>Irish Theological Quarterly</i>
<i>ITS</i>	<i>Indian Theological Studies</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>JR</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
<i>JSHJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTS	Journal for the Study of the New Testament - Supplement Series
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KEK	Kritisch-Exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
<i>KuI</i>	<i>Kirche und Israel</i>
<i>LASBF</i>	<i>Liber Annuus. Studium Biblicum Franciscanum</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LD	Lectio Divina
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
MoBi(G)	Le Monde de la Bible. Genève
MSSNTS	Monograph Series. Society for New Testament Studies

<i>MThZ</i>	<i>Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
NCBiC	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
NHMS	Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NRT</i>	<i>Nouvelle Revue Théologique</i>
<i>NT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NT.S	Novum Testamentum. Supplements
NTA	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen
NTLi	New Testament Library
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
NTTS	New Testament Tools and Studies
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
PFTNE	Publicaciones de la Facultad de Teología del Norte de España
PilNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentaries
<i>Protest.</i>	<i>Protestantesimo</i>
<i>PSV</i>	<i>Parola Spirito e Vita</i>
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien
<i>PZB</i>	<i>Protokolle zur Bibel</i>
<i>RAfT</i>	<i>Revue Africaine de Théologie</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>RdT</i>	<i>Rassegna di Teologia</i>
<i>RevSR</i>	<i>Revue des sciences religieuses</i>
<i>RivBib</i>	<i>Rivista biblica</i>
RNT	Regensburger Neues Testament
<i>RStB</i>	<i>Ricerche storico-bibliche</i>
<i>RTE</i>	<i>Rivista di Teologia dell' Evangelizzazione</i>
<i>RTR</i>	<i>Reformed Theological Review</i>
SANT	Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
SaPaSe	Sacra Pagina Series
SBB	Stuttgarter Biblische Beiträge
SBFA	Studii Biblici Franciscani Analecta
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature - Dissertation Series
<i>SBLSP</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature - Seminar Papers</i>
SBM	Stuttgarter Biblische Monographien
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SC	Sources chrétiennes
<i>ScEs</i>	<i>Science et esprit</i>
SNTA	Studiorum Novi Testamenti Auxilia
<i>SNTU.A</i>	<i>Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt. Serie A</i>
<i>SNTU.B</i>	<i>Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt. Serie B</i>
<i>SR</i>	<i>Studies in Religion</i>
SRivBib	Supplementi alla Rivista Biblica
STAC	Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum
StBi	Studi Biblici
<i>StEv</i>	<i>Studia Evangelica</i>
<i>StMiss</i>	<i>Studia Missionalia</i>
StudNeo.St	Studia Neotestamentica – Studia

SubBi	Subsidia Biblica
TG.T	Tesi Gregoriana - Serie Teologia
ThHK	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
ThViat	<i>Theologia Viatorum</i>
ThZ	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
TLZ	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
TThzZ	<i>Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
TynB	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

2. Biblical and Jewish sources

N-A²⁸ has been used for the manuscripts of the biblical texts. For the intertestamental literature, the works of Josephus and the rabbinic sources, the abbreviations used are those employed in Stanislaw Bazyliński, *A Guide to Biblical Research*, SubBi 36 (Roma: G&BPress³2016), which are recalled in the following in order to facilitate the reading. For the Qumran texts, the sigla are those contained in Florentino García Martínez (ed.), *Textos de Qumrán* (Madrid: Trotta,⁴1992).

AM	<i>Assumption of Moses</i>
ApAb	<i>Apocalypse of Abraham</i>
2 Bar	<i>Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch</i>
1 En	<i>First Book of Enoch</i>
4 Ezra	<i>Apocalypse of Ezra</i>
JA	<i>Joseph and Aseneth</i>
Jub	<i>Book of Jubilees</i>
LAE	<i>Life of Adam and Eve</i>
3 Macc	<i>Third Book of the Maccabees</i>
PS	<i>Psalms of Solomon</i>
Test12Pat	<i>Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs</i>
TAsh	<i>Testament of Asher</i>
TBenj	<i>Testament of Benjamin</i>
TDan	<i>Testament of Dan</i>
TGad	<i>Testament of Gad</i>
TIss	<i>Testament of Issachar</i>
TJud	<i>Testament of Judah</i>
TLevi	<i>Testament of Levi</i>
TNaph	<i>Testament of Naphtali</i>
TReu	<i>Testament of Reuben</i>
Ant.	<i>Jewish Antiquities</i>
Bell.	<i>Jewish War</i>
bBer	Tractate <i>Berakhot</i> (Babylonian Talmud)
bHag	Tractate <i>Hagiga</i> (Babylonian Talmud)
bKet	Tractate <i>Ketubbot</i> (Babylonian Talmud)

<i>bSan</i>	Tractate <i>Sanhedrin</i> (Babylonian Talmud)
<i>bShab</i>	Tractate <i>Shabbat</i> (Babylonian Talmud)
<i>bYev</i>	Tractate <i>Yevamot</i> (Babylonian Talmud)
<i>DevR</i>	<i>Devarim Rabba</i>
<i>MekhY</i>	<i>Mekhilta of Rabbi Yishma'el</i>
<i>mHul</i>	Tractate <i>Hullin</i> (Mishnah)
<i>mTaan</i>	Tractate <i>Ta'anit</i> (Mishnah)
<i>ShemR</i>	<i>Shemot Rabba</i>
<i>ShirR</i>	<i>Shir HaShirim Rabba</i>

CD	Damascus Document
1QM	War Scroll
1QS	Rule of the Community
1QSa	Rule of the Congregation
1Qsb	Rule of Benedictions
4QFlor	Florilegium
4QM ^g	4Qwar Scroll
4QpGen ^a	<i>Peshet</i> Genesis ^a
4QpIs ^a	<i>Peshet</i> Isaiah ^a
4PrEnosh	Prayer of Enosh
4QpsDan ^d	Aramaic Apocalypse
4QTest	Testimonies
4Q393	Liturgical works 2
4Q521	Messianic Apocalypse
4Q558	Vision
11QMelch	Melchizedek

3. Other abbreviations

§	section
B.C./A.D.	before Christ/after Christ
<i>BAGD</i>	Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, Felix Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick William Danker, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Chicago – London: The University of Chicago Press, ³ 2000)
BDR	Friedrich Blass, Albert Debrunner and Friedrich Rehkopf, <i>Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch</i> (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, ¹⁴ 1976)
cent.	century
cf.	compare
<i>DDD</i>	Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking and Pieter Willem van der Horst (ed.), <i>Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible</i> (Leiden: Brill, ² 1999)
ed.	editor/s
<i>EWNT</i>	Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider, <i>Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i> , 3 vols. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, ² 1980-1983)
<i>FGH</i>	Felix Jacoby (ed.), <i>Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker</i> , 3 vols. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1923-1950)
LXX	Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible

Id.	<i>Idem</i>
MT	Masoretic Text
N-A ²⁸	Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, Barbara and Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo Maria Martini and Bruce M. Metzger (ed.), <i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, ²⁸ 2012)
NT	New Testament
OGIS	Wilhelm Dittenberger (ed.), <i>Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae</i> (Lipsiae: Hirzel, 1903-1905)
OT	Old Testament
P. Lond.	Frederic George Kenyon and H. Idris Bell (ed.), <i>Greek Papyri in the British Museum</i> (London: British Museum, 1910)
P. Oxy	Bernard Pyne Grenfell and Arthur SurrIDGE Hunt (ed.), <i>The Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i> (London: Egypt Explorations Society, 1898)
SB	Hermann Leberecht Strack and Paul Billerbeck, <i>Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash</i> , 4 vols. (München: C. H. Beck, ² 1956-1961)
SP	Arthur SurrIDGE Hunt and Campbell Cowan Edgar (ed.), <i>Select Papyri</i> , 3 vols. (London: Heinemann, 1932-1950)
TWAT	Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren and Heinz-Josef Fabry (ed.), <i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> , 10 vols. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1970-2016).
TWNT	Gerhard Kittel (ed.), <i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i> , 10 vols. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1933-1979)
v./vv.	verse/verses
Vol./vols.	Volume/s

Introduction

1. History of research

“The one who begins well has already done half the work!”: so runs a proverb well-known in the realm of popular wisdom, one which recalls the importance of the preliminaries and the initial stages for the realisation of all kinds of human activity. This also applies to literary works: their first paragraphs or chapters have to fulfil at least two fundamental functions. First of all, they have to introduce the reader to the themes and principal matters which are going to be tackled in the rest of the text: it is no accident that, in the composition of literary works but also of scientific papers and texts, the author leaves the writing of the introduction to the last of his tasks, to be composed in the light of the development of the rest of the text. The other main function of the opening part of a text is to win over the reader, capturing his attention and arousing the interest and expectation which can motivate him to carry on reading. Thus, it is clear that the initial section of a written text is invested with great importance: in drafting it, the writer has absolutely no room for error. What is at stake is the success of his work.

This is no less true for the gospel narratives. Each of the redactors of the four canonical gospels begins his narrative in a way that is original and different from the others. Luke, for example, reveals the intention of following literary models that were very precise and widespread in the New Testament period: his preface (Luke 1:1–4) reflects the particular conventions of the historiographical works of his time. Matthew, on the other hand, launches his narrative without a particular introductory preamble, as if *in medias res*: with the genealogy of Jesus (Matt 1:1–17), he introduces directly the first section of his gospel which is reserved for stories about the infancy of Jesus (Matt 1:1–2:23). Clearly marked out, again, is the prologue to the Fourth Gospel (John 1:1–18) in which John offers a profound reflection on the event of the incarnate Logos who has come to reveal the Father: neatly separated from the narrative proper, the prologue prepares the reader to understand the narrative of this revelation which God has performed in Jesus. However, if we skim through the first lines of Mark’s Gospel, we do not seem to find an introductory section that is clearly distinct from the rest of the narrative. The beginning of Mark’s account does not provide any clear breaks like that between

the infancy of Jesus and the beginning of the activity of John the Baptist (that is, between Matt 2:23 and Matt 3:1 and between Luke 2:52 and Luke 3:1). It does not record a particular reflection of the evangelist on the rest of his account (as in the Fourth Gospel). Nor does it contain a paragraph in which Mark reveals the sources and the aims of his work (as in Luke). Mark's narrative seems to flow from beginning to end, characterised, certainly, by some turning points in the narrative but without neat breaks as in the other gospels.

Despite this situation, scholars of the Second Gospel have not abstained from identifying an introductory section for Mark's narrative too. They debate its extent and its function, but all the studies and the commentaries on Mark's narrative agree on the presence of a narrative unit which they describe as introduction or prologue.¹ Even if the contributions on the individual pericopes which make up the initial section of the Second Gospel are more numerous, there is no lack of articles or monographs focusing on this narrative unit as a whole. Since this is also the perspective of the present study, it is appropriate to offer a brief summary of the results obtained by interpreters so far. This rapid survey will allow contextualising the enquiry within the history of research into Mark's introduction, on the one hand; on the other, it will allow indicating the novelty and originality of my perspective. In the following summary, no claim to being exhaustive is made: I shall limit myself here to those contributions which I think have been most significant for the history of the interpretation of this text.

1.1 *Historical-critical exegesis*

Two monographs entirely devoted to the Marcan introduction appeared at the beginning of the 1970s and share a dominant recourse to historical exegesis.

In chronological order, the first contribution is that of the Spaniard R. Trevijano Etcheverria published, in Spanish, in 1971.² Regarding the textual unit of Mark 1:1–15 as the prologue to the Second Gospel, Trevijano offers an analysis of each of the brief pericopes which make up this section. The aim of the study, which the author himself lays out at the beginning of his treatment, is that of identifying the historical implications and the theological significance of Mark 1:1–15.³ The exegetical enquiry carried out on each of the pericopes is very attentive to the historical background of the events recounted in them. For example, in the chapter on the penitential preaching of the Baptist, Trevijano devotes a section to the information on John contained in Josephus and to the sectarian movements active in the Judaism of the first

¹ I shall adopt the first of these two descriptions (introduction). The reasons for this choice will be explained in the first chapter.

² Ramon Trevijano Etcheverria, *Comienzo del Evangelio: Estudio sobre el prologo de san Marcos*, PFTNE 26 (Burgos: Ediciones Aldecoa, 1971).

³ Trevijano Etcheverria, *Comienzo*, xxiii.

century A.D. Great care is also reserved for the textual criticism and the history of the tradition of each individual text. Here, Trevijano seeks to distinguish traditional material already available to the evangelist and the redactional interventions of the latter. However, the greatest space is probably devoted to the reinterpretation of the Marcan text in the subsequent tradition of early Christianity: for each pericope of Mark 1:1–15, Trevijano recalls the way in which the other gospels (not only the Synoptics but also the Fourth Gospel) and other Christian texts developed the Marcan account, rereading it in the light of their own theology and in accordance with their own aims. By concentrating on the historical aspects of the text, Trevijano's contribution is unsatisfactory in many ways, just like every pioneering study on a new subject. In my opinion, the treatment of the Spanish exegete is too fragmented: the pericopes are studied in too great isolation without sufficient notice being paid to the unitary nature of the section Mark 1:1–15. Moreover, the relationship between this "prologue" and the subsequent Marcan narrative does not receive particular attention. In fact, at the end of his study, Trevijano does not arrive at any overall understanding of Mark 1:1–15, nor does he focus on the function of this section in the economy of the Marcan narrative. In my view, these limitations in Trevijano's contribution are explained by his initial perspective, his original intention being that of writing a short commentary on Mark's Gospel as a whole, as he declares in the introduction to his study.⁴ Despite these unsatisfactory aspects, Trevijano's contribution remains of considerable importance, especially for the study of the individual pericopes which make up Mark 1:1–15 and the history of their tradition.

A few years later (1974), W. Feneberg's study was published in Germany, devoted to the Marcan prologue too.⁵ Feneberg's contribution is radically different from the previous one. Far from proposing a complete exegesis of the prologue (which he identifies, unusually and without any justification, as Mark 1:1–11), the German scholar shows himself more interested in the history of the formation of this text. After a discussion of the positions of the most important exegetes of *Form-* and *Redaktionsgeschichte* (O. Cullmann, R. Bultmann, W. Marxsen, G. Schille), Feneberg sets out his own reconstruction of the history of the tradition of Mark 1:1–11, distinguishing traditional material and redactional additions but not reserving any space for a careful commentary on these verses. With regard to this latter aspect, attention is devoted exclusively to some concepts found in Mark 1:1–11 which Feneberg claims to be particularly important: Gospel,⁶ conversion, the Christological

⁴ Cf. Trevijano Etcheverria, *Comienzo*, xxii–xxiii.

⁵ Wolfgang Feneberg, *Der Markusprolog: Studien zur Formbestimmung des Evangeliums*, SANT 36 (München: Kösel-Verlag, 1974).

⁶ I shall use the term *Gospel* (capital letter) to indicate the good news, the Christian message, distinguishing it from the *gospel* (minuscule) which, from the beginning of the

titles (Son of God, Christ, Lord), baptism, Holy Spirit. Like Trevijano, Feneberg too shows no interest in the function performed by the prologue in the economy of the Marcan narrative.

In sum, it can be said that the historical-critical studies offer valuable information on the history of the formation of the text of the Marcan introduction and on the history of its subsequent interpretation in the Christian tradition. The description of the specific contribution of the evangelist in the redaction of the text of Mark 1:1–15 and the comparison with the parallels from the other evangelists and the traditions of other Christian authors help to grasp the particular theological emphases of Mark in the introduction to his narrative. However, the principal limitation of this kind of contribution is the lack of any identification of the function performed by the initial section of the Second Gospel.⁷

1.2 Synchronic methods

Decidedly different in tone are the studies of the introductory section of the Second Gospel which were being published especially beginning from the last decade of the twentieth century when there was a fashion for the various synchronic methods in the area of biblical exegesis. Uninterested in the diachronic development of the text, these methodologies are concerned with the text of the Marcan introduction in its final version as available today. Furthermore, much more attentive to the dynamics of the Marcan narrative, these contributions attempt to determine the function of the initial section of the Second Gospel.

In fact, the article by L. E. Keck, published some decades earlier (1966), had already examined the introduction of Mark 1:1–15 in a synchronic way, focusing, above all, on its extension as far as v. 15 in such a way as to embrace Jesus' programmatic announcement about the kingdom of God: this delimitation would be consistent with Mark's wish to present the beginning of the Gospel with his account. However, the question about the narrative function of Mark 1:1–15 received little space.⁸ It had to wait to receive a first answer in the contribution of F. J. Matera (1988): after devoting a section to the age-old question of the extent of the prologue (Mark 1:1–13) and having

study I have employed to indicate the writings of the NT so-called unless in titles (Second Gospel, Mark's Gospel). In the exegetical analysis of Mark 1:1, I shall make clear that, in Mark, the term *εὐαγγέλιον* does not refer to the literary genre of the Marcan writing but to the content of the Christian preaching.

⁷ Belonging to this group is also Rudolf Pesch, "Anfang des Evangeliums Jesu Christi. Eine Studie zur Prolog des Markusevangeliums", in *Die Zeit Jesu: Festschrift für H. Schlier* (ed. Günther Bornkamm and Karl Rahner; Freiburg: Herder, 1970) 108–44, which also devotes much space to the tradition and redaction of Mark 1:1–15.

⁸ Leander E. Keck, "The Introduction to Mark's Gospel", *NTS* 12 (1966) 352–70.

provided a brief analysis of this text, he went on to observe how this section prepares for the subsequent Marcan account.⁹ Matera assumes an interpretation which could be described as Christological: in his opinion, the prologue would serve to furnish information on the identity of Jesus which was then to be developed and clarified in the course of the rest of the narrative. In particular, the divine sonship of Jesus, referred to in the prologue, was to help the reader to interpret the numerous questions and statements about the person of Jesus in the first macro-section of the gospel (Mark 1:14–8:30). The successive sections of the Marcan narrative (Mark 8:31–10:52; 11:1–13:37; 14:1–16:8), on the other hand, were meant to examine in depth the nature of Jesus' divine sonship which was to be understood in the horizon of the cross where it was finally recognised. In his brief consideration of each of the sections of Mark's Gospel, Matera is careful to indicate the references to the information contained in the prologue of Mark 1:1–13. In my view, Matera's article has two basic merits. Firstly, he seeks to give a specific description of the way in which the initial section of the Second Gospel prepares for the continuation of the narrative. Secondly, he grasps the importance of the Christological theme, not only in the prologue but in the Marcan narrative as a whole. He shows how it is prepared in the prologue and then passes through the entire Marcan account like a *leitmotif*. Matera's contribution undoubtedly represented a good basis for the successive developments in research even if it limited the programmatic content of the prologue to information about the identity of Jesus.

More extensive and much more complete is the study of M. E. Boring which has become a milestone in the study of the Marcan introduction which he identifies as Mark 1:1–15 after an extensive analysis of the various relevant proposals.¹⁰ Starting out from the structure of the section, Boring distinguishes between the title of the narrative of Mark as a whole (Mark 1:1) and the introduction proper (Mark 1:2–15) which he subdivides into two parts, reserved to John (Mark 1:2–8) and Jesus (Mark 1:9–15) respectively. The American scholar pays careful attention to the fourfold narrative function of Mark 1:1–15:

1) it introduces the principal character, Jesus, presenting him as agent of God;

2) it introduces the principal themes of the narrative. Boring lists five: the power of Christ understood as manifestation of the divine power; the story of Christ as expression of the action of God; the weakness of Christ as representation of the true power of God; the messianic secret as a theological means

⁹ Frank J. Matera, "The Prologue as the Interpretative Key to Mark's Gospel", *JSNT* 34 (1988) 3–20.

¹⁰ M. Eugene Boring, "Mark 1:1–15 and the Beginning of the Gospel", *Semeia* 52 (1990) 43–81.

of affirming the possibility of the recognition of Jesus as Messiah only in his crucifixion and resurrection; and the disciples of Christ as messianic people of God. In listing these five themes in Mark's introduction, Boring demonstrates the theological richness of Mark 1:1–15 in a much more detailed way than Matera, even if (apart from the last theme identified by him, concerning the role of disciple) the focus remains limited principally to Christology;

3) it prepares the setting of the subsequent narrative by introducing some characters and by providing the space-time coordinates which locate the account of Jesus' deeds within the perspective of the history of salvation;

4) it establishes a relationship between the time of the Gospel and that of his readers. For example, the way of the Lord will have to be followed by whoever reads Mark's work and wishes to become a disciple of Jesus. That is, Jesus' announcement about the kingdom of God involves every one of Mark's readers and demands his response of conversion and faith.¹¹

As can be seen, Boring's contribution opens up multiple perspectives and constitutes a careful and extensive reflection on the narrative function of the Marcan introduction. Various of his conclusions will be taken up in the study.

H.-J. Klauck's monograph on the Marcan prologue is more varied methodologically.¹² The German scholar shows an interest in different aspects of the text of Mark 1:1–15. On the historical side, he takes care to define the literary genre of these verses (prologue), as well as to try to describe Mark's development of the tradition at his disposal. Klauck also devotes a chapter to the intertextual references to the Old Testament found in the Marcan prologue: the conflated quotation in Mark 1:2–3, the divine declaration in Mark 1:11, and the allusions to Old Testament backgrounds in Mark 1:6,13. On the theological level, Klauck concentrates chiefly on the theological information contained in the prologue, paying particular attention to the pericope on the baptism and to the Christological question. Finally, he does not neglect the thematic relations between the initial section of Mark 1:1–15 and the subsequent Marcan narrative, concluding his study with the claim that the Marcan prologue represents an initiation for the reader who is being prepared for reading the Marcan narrative. For the versatility of his study, Klauck's monograph is an important contribution to research on the Marcan introduction. My study will be in constant dialogue with it while, at the same time, seeking to extend its conclusions in order to demonstrate the programmatic character of the opening section of Mark's Gospel.

¹¹ Interested in the role of the reader and developed according to *reader-response criticism* is the contribution on the Marcan introduction of P. J. Sankey, "Promise and Fulfillment: Reader-Response to Mark 1.1-15", *JSNT* 58 (1995) 3–18.

¹² Hans-Josef Klauck, *Vorspiel im Himmel? Erzähltechnik und Theologie im Markusprolog*, BThSt 32 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1997).

The two contributions of C. Focant and Y. Bourquin, which appeared among the proceedings of the international conference of the narrative analysis of the Bible, held at Lausanne in 2002, are of an exclusively narrative nature.¹³ Focant's paper concentrates mainly on the problem of the delimitation of the Marcan prologue (which he ends with v. 13) and on the function of the conflated quotation of Mark 1:2–3, which is to be linked with the content of v. 1 and not to the following account of the mission of the Baptist (vv. 4–8). More promising is the treatment of Bourquin, which I am considering in the more complete version of his contribution which, more recently, has been developed into a monograph.¹⁴ The Swiss scholar tackles various problems connected with the introductory section of the Second Gospel: title, delimitation and (his particular element) the polysemy which characterises the text of Mark 1:1–15 on the syntactic, lexical and referential levels and which makes its interpretation complex. With regard to the narrative function of this section, he identifies a threefold function performed by the prologue in relation to the Marcan narrative: 1) function of interaction. It provides the reader with a knowledge superior to that of the characters who will appear on the scene of the account to enable the understanding and the correct valuation of the events and claims which will appear in what follows; 2) intertextual function. The constant reference to the biblical story through numerous quotations and allusions to the Old Testament in Mark 1:1–15 permit the prologue to insert the Jesus' event which the narrator is about to retell within the context of the history of salvation; 3) intratextual function. The prologue introduces the main character, the basic themes and the narrative universe of the following account by performing a propaedeutic function in its regard.¹⁵ Bourquin's analysis also makes a decisive contribution to the understanding of the Marcan introduction. I agree fully with the three functions he proposes. My contribution aims at giving a better clarification to the third of these functions, showing in more detail how the principal theological content of the Second Gospel has been anticipated in a programmatic way in its initial section.

A final contribution which is worth highlighting is the monograph of C. Rose much of which is devoted to the introduction of Mark 1:1–15.¹⁶ With regard to methodology, the German scholar combines his narrative analysis

¹³ Camille Focant, "Fonction intertextuelle et limites du prologue de Marc", in *La Bible en récits: L'exégèse biblique à l'heure du lecteur* (ed. D. Marguerat; MoBi[G] 48; Genève: Labor et Fides, 2003) 304–15; Yvan Bourquin, "Polyvalence marcienne et fonction du prologue", in *Bible en récits*, 316–25.

¹⁴ Yvan Bourquin, *Marc: Une théologie de la fragilité* (Genève: Labor et Fides, 2005) 195–270.

¹⁵ For this threefold function of the prologue, cf. Bourquin, *Marc*, 204–12.

¹⁶ Christian Rose, *Theologie als Erzählung im Markusevangelium: Eine narratologisch-rezeptionsästhetische Untersuchung zu Mk 1,1–15*, WUNT 2/236 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007).

with great attention to the perspective which values the cooperation of the reader in the interpretation of a text. Rose's aim is to trace a "theology" of the Second Gospel where the term *theology* is to be understood in its narrowest significance, that is, as reflection on God just as Mark presents him in the Second Gospel. Rose is aware that Mark's work is not a theological treatise but a narrative. He, therefore, indicates a "narrative theology" as the scope of his work. Moreover, since Mark's narrative does not concern God in the first instance but Jesus Christ, Rose proposes to arrive at the description of a theology starting from the events of the mission of Jesus and emphasising particularly the close link between Christology and theology proper. In Mark's perspective and, more generally, in that of the New Testament as a whole, God can be known in a full manner only through Jesus Christ. Precisely to this end, Rose focuses on the introduction of Mark 1:1–15, whose programmatic value he acknowledges, providing it with an extensive and careful exegesis. Clearly, given the aim of his study, he extends his treatment to other pericopes of the Marcan narrative which appear to serve to trace this "narrative theology" (Mark 1:21–28; 2:1–12; 9:2–13; 15:33–41). If, on the one hand, Rose's contribution provides a detailed exegesis of Mark 1:1–15, with which I shall often engage, and pays great attention to the theology of this initial section of the Second Gospel, nevertheless, the perspective of his study remains rather restricted to two theological poles: Christology, as a means of getting back to theology proper. From this point of view, the present enquiry, concentrating exclusively on the Marcan introduction, will furnish a much broader picture.

2. Aim and original nature of the research

The brief history of research which has been traced and has examined the principal contributions devoted to the initial section of the Second Gospel allows presenting the particular perspective and the aim of this contribution with greater clarity.

With the aid of rigorous exegesis, this enquiry aims at indicating the extraordinary theological density of the section which comprises the *incipit* (Mark 1:1) and the introduction (Mark 1:2–15) of Mark's Gospel. In harmony with most of the contributions which have been recalled and the commentaries on the Second Gospel, this study will show the programmatic character of the initial title of Mark's work (Mark 1:1), of the presentation of the activity of John the Baptist (Mark 1:2–8) and of the account of the beginnings of the mission of Jesus (Mark 1:9–15), all of which prepare the reader to understand the rest of the narrative. The programmatic nature of the narrative unit of Mark 1:1,2–15 will focus chiefly on the theological perspective. In practice, the contribution is meant to show that the principal theological contents of the

Second Gospel are anticipated in a programmatic way in the initial section of the Marcan narrative. I shall attempt to demonstrate that this thesis is valid for all the main theological poles of Mark's Gospel: Christology, eschatology, soteriology and discipleship. It is clear that it would have been impossible, even for such an able narrator as Mark, to concentrate all the extraordinary theological richness of his gospel in such a short section: the continuation of the narrative will add new content which will contribute to completing the Second Gospel's theological panorama. However, it is my view that, *in nuce*, the principal points are contained in the initial section of Mark 1:1,2–15.

This perspective on the *incipit* and introduction of the Marcan narrative represents the original feature of the present contribution. If, as it has been seen, there is no lack of studies on this narrative section, I am not aware of contributions which focus specifically on this textual unit as theological programme for the entire gospel. Thus, the title of this study is an appropriate one. Through the exegesis of Mark 1:1,2–15, it intends to show the function of the initial section of the Marcan narrative understood as a theological programme which provides the reader with the principal coordinates for understanding Mark's narrative.

3. A mixed methodology

The type of analysis chosen for the exegesis of the various pericopes which make up the section of Mark 1:1,2–15 will attempt to combine various methodologies. With the aid of the historical-critical method, the problems of textual criticism of the individual texts will be examined. Resolution of these is often decisive for the interpretation of the passage. Furthermore, for each pericope which will be analysed, I shall propose a reconstruction of the formation of the text, distinguishing, above all, between the elements which the evangelist borrowed from the tradition available to him and his own redactional additions. This distinction between traditional material and redaction will allow pointing out some peculiar features of Mark's narrative style and some theological emphases proper to his gospel. Finally, particular consideration will be reserved also for the historical environment of the facts narrated to the degree in which this contributes decisively to the interpretation of the Marcan text.

This consideration of the diachronic development of the various pericopes in Mark 1:1,2–15 will be followed by a synchronic examination which will focus on the text in its final version, as it comes to us today. Since the scope of this study is to highlight the theological-programmatic nature of the initial section of the Second Gospel, an intratextual reading of that gospel will be very important in which the events narrated in these first verses can be read in

the light of the subsequent development of the Marcan account. In fact, in the light of the results obtained in recent decades by applying narratology to the study of the Second Gospel, the Marcan narrative is not a chance series of episodes arranged in a way that is unimportant for their interpretation.¹⁷ Rather, Mark's narrative has to be understood as a coherent and organised unity according to the evangelist's precise narrative plan: it organises its material in such a way as to be able to communicate effectively the contents which it intends to convey.

I shall reserve considerable space for the intertextual background lying behind the text. As one will be able to show, the section of Mark 1:1,2–15 is full of references, explicit or implicit, to the Old Testament and Jewish tradition and cannot be understood without them. Putting his account into writing, the Marcan narrator presupposes readers familiar with the Scriptures of Israel, ones who know the significance of the texts recalled by the quotations from or allusions to the Old Testament and their original contexts.

The combination of these methodologies aims to offer a complete interpretation of the initial section of the Second Gospel. After all, this convergence of readings is the necessary condition for highlighting the extraordinary richness of meaning contained in every biblical text. On the other hand, little space will be devoted to the synoptic comparison of the pericopes of Mark 1:1,2–15 with their Synoptic parallels. According to the Two Source theory, which today is regarded as the most probable hypothesis to explain the so-called Synoptic Problem, the writing of the Second Gospel preceded that of the other two: therefore, comparison with the accounts of Matthew and Luke do not appear as decisive for the understanding of the Marcan text as the latter is for the interpretation of the other two Synoptics.

4. Path of the study

This study is arranged in four chapters. In the first, some preliminary questions of fundamental importance for the interpretation of the text of Mark 1:1,2–15 are dealt with. First, I tackle the problem of the delimitation of the initial section of the Second Gospel which is the object of lively scholarly discussion: far from being an idle or secondary question, it is decisive for establishing the theological content and the function of the text of Mark 1:1,2–15. Having fixed the borders of the narrative unit, I focus on the liter-

¹⁷ Classic contributions to the narratology of the Second Gospel are those of Stephen H. Smith, *A Lion with Wings: A Narrative-Critical Approach to Mark's Gospel*, BiSe 38 (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1996); David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, ³2012).

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