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The Composition of Tripolar Announcement Stories in the Gospel of Mark

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The composition of tripolar pronouncement stories in the Gospel of Mark

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THE COMPOSITION OF TRIPOLAR PRONOUNCEMENT
STORIES IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Hans-Otto Reling
November 1994
ABSTRACT

THE COMPOSITION OF TRIPOLAR PRONOUNCEMENT
STORIES IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK

by

Hans-Otto Reling

Adviser: Robert M. Johnston
In the Gospel of Mark one finds narratives with three main characters. These stories, which belong to the category of pronouncement stories, I call tripolar pronouncement stories. These narratives have not been recognized, nor has their significance been examined.

I utilize in my study the principles of narrative criticism. Subsequently, I analyze the eight tripolar pronouncement stories of the Gospel of Mark according to the plot, characters, setting, and rhetoric of the story.

The tripolar pronouncement stories that can be identified in the Gospel of Mark are: (1) Mark 2:1-12 (The
Healing of the Paralytic), (2) Mark 2:15-17 (Jesus’ Company with Sinners), (3) Mark 2:23-28 (Plucking of Grain on a Sabbath), (4) Mark 3:1-6 (The Healing of the Crippled Hand), (5) Mark 7:1-13 (Clean and Unclean), (6) Mark 10:13-16 (Jesus Blesses the Children), (7) Mark 10:35-45 (Zebedee’s Sons), and (8) Mark 14:3-9 (Jesus’ Anointment). Elements that these narratives have in common are that they portray three main characters and unfold in a threefold progression of the plot with description, reaction, and reply.

The significance of tripolar pronouncement stories can be recognized (1) in comparing them with pronouncement stories that have two main characters (dipolar narratives), (2) in their contribution to the Gospel as a whole, and (3) in their impact upon the reader.

Dipolar pronouncement stories present only one party who approaches Jesus with a question or criticism. In tripolar pronouncement stories, two parties are set in dramatic juxtaposition to each other, creating a lively and complex situation, to which Jesus then responds with a pronouncement. Dipolar narratives present Jesus as a corrector, commender, responder, winner, and teacher, whereas tripolar pronouncement stories portray him also as a judge, vindicator, ally, protector, mediator, and authoritative example. Because of their detailed description of relationships, I have called these stories case studies in social interaction.
THE COMPOSITION OF TRIPOLAR NARRATIVES
IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK

A dissertation
presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Hans-Otto Reling

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"Two can accomplish more than twice as much as one, for the results can be much better. If one falls, the other pulls him up; but if a man falls when he is alone, he's in trouble" (Eccl 4:9, 10; The Living Bible).

I wish to acknowledge the numerous individuals who have supported me along the way. I especially wish to mention the following:

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Tripolar pronouncement stories¹ are an integral part of the composition of the Gospel of Mark. The eight tripolar pronouncement stories in Mark's Gospel² have in common three main characters interacting with each other and a threefold progression which concludes with a pronouncement of Jesus. The concluding saying of Jesus identifies these narratives as pronouncement stories. These pronouncement stories, with three main characters appearing in the same scene, deviate from the principle of "stage duality" which is a well-established feature of the Gospel parables³ and is also followed by most other pronouncement stories.

¹The term tripolar is used to express the central feature of these narratives. According to the dictionary tripolar is defined as "having three poles" (Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged, 1986 ed., s.v. "tripolar"). These three poles are represented in tripolar narratives by the characters which appear on the same stage. See pp. 13-16.

²For a listing of all tripolar stories in Mark, see pp. 20-21.

stories. The principle of stage duality describes a much simpler way of relating a story.

The questions that guide this investigation are:
What effect has Mark's diversion from the principle of stage duality in the case of tripolar pronouncement stories? What is the particular dynamic that is created by the presence of three main characters? How do tripolar pronouncement stories contribute to the overall design of the book as a whole? This study seeks to answer these questions by an analysis of the composition and function of the tripolar pronouncement stories within the Gospel of Mark with the tools of narrative criticism.

This introduction explains my method for investigating those unique stories, namely, through narrative criticism. It also explains the purpose of this dissertation, specifies the scope and limitation of this study, and gives an overview of its content.

**Narrative Criticism in Gospel Research**

"How does the text mean?" This question encapsulates the new approach to the Bible which narrative criticism and, in fact, all forms of literary criticism take.¹ It provides a new focus in biblical study by departing from the formerly asked question: "What does the

text mean?"1 This change of the interrogative pronoun requires us to explore the inner dynamics of a text.2 It also moves us away from the preoccupation with finding meaning only in referential, external matters.3 "The critic determines to look at the text, not through it."4 Having


2Ryken puts it in the following way: "Not merely what is said, but the how of a piece of writing is always important in literature" (Leland Ryken, How to Read the Bible as Literature [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984], 23, original emphasis).

3However, the new question does not completely take away any concern for meaning. In fact, I agree with Longman that the literary approach to the Bible represents only one facet of many possible methods since the Bible is "multifaceted" itself. He asserts: "The danger of reducing the Bible to one or two functions is that it radically distorts the message as it comes from the ultimate sender (God) to us as its present receivers." Concerning his own explication of the literary method, he writes: "Overall, then, my presentation is a partial analysis that must be supplemented by other forms of study" (Tremper Longman III, Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987], 71).

Ryken asserts that the literary approach which he is describing and more traditional methods of biblical interpretation in fact supplement each other. For him the literary approach is a "logical extension of what is commonly known as the grammatico-historical method of biblical interpretation" (Ryken, Bible as Literature, 12).

interacted with the "how" of a biblical text by means of the methods of narrative criticism, we are in a better position to understand "what" it says.¹

But what exactly is narrative criticism? How does it relate to literary criticism in general? What are the origins of narrative criticism? What are its elements, and how can it illumine the form and function of tripolar stories? These questions are addressed in the present section of the introduction.

Narrative criticism as a discipline participates in the basic parameters of literary criticism.² These are:

1. focus on the finished form of the text,
2. emphasis on the unity of the text,
3. the understanding of the text as the goal of the interpretation,
4. the text as a


communication event.¹ These principles all center around the fact that the present text is the object of the interpretation. The text is placed at the center of the literary approaches because it presents us with the "story world." And the story world can only be understood from within the author's work as a unique universe of meaning.² This universe of meaning has to be derived from the work as a unified whole.³

Literary criticism represents a synchronic approach centering on the text as it is. This aspect of literary criticism stands in contrast to the diachronic approach as previously employed in biblical scholarship with its historical emphasis.⁴ The tradition behind the text is thus not a concern of literary criticism. This change of

¹The list of four principles is taken from Powell, Narrative Criticism, 8-9.


³"The primary understanding of any work of literature has to be based on an assumption of unity. . . . Further, every effort should be directed towards understanding the whole of what we read." (Frye, "Literary Criticism," 75).

⁴Güttgemanns challenges the appropriateness of the diachronic aspect of form and redaction criticism. He asserts: "The acceptance of specifically linguistic methods and insights within form criticism is in my opinion unavoidable." "Insofar as theology is not an idetic presentation, but an act of thought . . . we should seek to conceive the language as a 'gestalt' of a christological understanding (Erhardt Güttgemanns, Candid Questions Concerning Gospel Form Criticism, trans. William G. Doty [Pittsburgh, PA: Pickwick Press, 1979], 292, 383).
perspective has been described by Malbon as a "paradigm shift" changing the "basic way of understanding things."\(^1\) This does not mean that literary criticism and historical considerations exclude each other. In fact, Sternberg rightly points out that a proper literary approach to the Bible must not be confused with an ahistorical subjectivity that is fueled only by the perceptions of the present reader.\(^2\) However, as a whole, considerations concerning the emergence of the text clearly move into the background.\(^3\) Powell well summarizes the literary approach to Scripture when he says: "The objective of literary-critical analysis

\(^1\)Malbon, "Narrative Criticism," 24.


\(^3\)An example for a literary (rhetorical) study with a concern for the tradition of the text can be seen in Joanna Dewey's dissertation on Mark 2:1-3:6. She concludes at one point: "Thus, rhetorical criticism would seem to be a useful, indeed a necessary, tool for the redaction and form critic" (Joanna Dewey, Markan Public Debate: Literary Technique, Concentric Structure, and Theology in Mark 2:1-3:6, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, no. 48 [Ann Arbor, MI: Edwards Brothers, 1980], 107).

is not to discover the process through which a text has come into being but to study the text that now exists."¹

The basic parameters of the different types of literary criticism can only give us a very general picture of this discipline. They express only the common denominator for a very diverse field of study.² A look at the origins of narrative criticism will help us to define more clearly what particular kind of literary approach it represents.

Narrative criticism is a "distinctly different enterprise from anything found in the field of nonbiblical literary study."³ It "developed within the field of biblical studies without exact counterpart in the secular world."⁴ On the other hand, narrative criticism does not

¹Powell, Narrative Criticism, 7.

²For a better understanding of these new methodologies and theories it is helpful to see them in connection with other disciplines like philosophy, sociology, anthropology, linguistics, and structuralism. For a summary of the relationship between these fields of study and literary theories see Powell, Modern Literary Criticism, 4-5.

³On the other hand, Sternberg’s criticism is well taken that literary criticism has become a "hodgepodge of vulgarized truism and plain nonsense" (Sternberg, 4). Another criticism of many literary approaches concerns "their lack of definition regarding what constitutes a literary approach" (Leland Ryken and Tremper Longman III, eds., "Preface" in A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993], 10).


⁴Powell, Narrative Criticism, 19.
share the theological concerns of form, redaction, and even composition criticism. Narrative criticism focusses on the "unity of story," not on "the unity of theology." As such, narrative criticism has been called an "alien" within biblical methodologies. With this observation naturally the next question to ask is: How did the alien invade the realm of biblical scholarship and where did it come from?

The term "narrative criticism" was first used in a consistent way in David Rhoads’s article "Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark." He describes it as "that branch of literary criticism which looks at the formal features of narrative." The features that narrative criticism analyzes are the "aspects of the story-world" and the "rhetorical techniques employed to tell the story." The story world encompasses the events, the character, and the settings, while the rhetoric describes how it is told in

---

1Moore asserts: "Whereas composition criticism extends the tradition of redaction criticism by reason of an overriding interest in the evangelists’ theologies, narrative criticism represents a break with that tradition in the sense that the focus is no longer primarily on theology" (Moore, Literary Criticism, 6).

2See Robert C. Tannehill, "Reading It Whole: The Functions of Mark 8:34-35 in Mark's Story," Quarterly Review 2 (1982): 67. However, the focus on the unity of story does not exclude concerns for gospel theology.

3Moore, Literary Criticism, 55.


5Rhoads, "Narrative Criticism," 411.
order to achieve a certain effect upon the audience. These two features of narrative criticism can be correlated with points three and four of Abrams's fourfold typology, namely the one centering upon the text, the other upon the reader. These two aspects also correspond to Chatman's distinction between story and discourse. "The story is where the characters interact; the discourse is where the implied author and implied reader interact." Chatman, who himself adapted the structuralist and formalist models, provided the framework for narrative critics. The importance of Chatman's work for New Testament literary criticism was that


2Abrams's four basic types of literary criticism are: (1) Mimetic, analyzing the work as an imitation and representation of the outer world, (2) Expressive, centering upon the author; (3) Objective, centering upon the text itself, and (4) Pragmatic, centering upon the reader (M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition [New York: Oxford University Press, 1953], 3-29; summarized in M. H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms [New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981], 36-37; see also Powell, Literary Criticism, 5-6).

For the correlation of narrative criticism with points three and four of Abrams's typology, see Rhoads, "Narrative Criticism," 426, and Rhoads and Michie, 143.

3Seymour Chatman, Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978). Chapters 2 and 3 of Chatman's book deal with the aspect of story, while chapters 4 and 5 address the discourse, which corresponds to the aspect of rhetoric.

4Malbon, "Narrative Criticism," 27.

5Rhoads and Michie, 145; Moore, Literary Criticism, 43-45.
it enabled the individual facts of gospel narrative to be interrelated and integrated more successfully than before, an obvious boon for a narrative criticism intent on displaying the unity of the gospel text.\(^1\)

However, even though Rhoads and Michie utilize the insights of Chatman and other narratologists\(^2\) they also transform their concepts: "Narratology is about theory, narrative criticism is about exegesis."\(^3\)

Within the field of exegesis, narrative criticism borders on, but is distinct from, form-criticism with its literary focus,\(^4\) redaction- and composition-criticism with its view for the whole work,\(^5\) rhetorical criticism with its interest in the rhetorical patterns,\(^6\) and reader-response criticism with its consideration of the reader.\(^7\)

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\(^1\)Moore, *Narrative Criticism*, 44.

\(^2\)Abrams defines the aim of narratology in the following way: "A basic interest of narratology is in the way that narrative 'discourse' fashions a 'story' (a simple sequence of events in time) into the organized form of a 'plot'" (Glossary, 61).

\(^3\)Moore, *Literary Criticism*, 51.


\(^5\)Moore, *Literary Criticism*, 4-13.


The concept of narrative criticism was applied to the gospel of Mark in Rhoads and Michie's *Mark as Story*. Moore asserts that "*Mark as Story* presents us for the first time with a descriptive poetics of a Gospel."¹ Another important narrative investigation of a Gospel was Culpepper's study of the Gospel of John.² In order to establish the "parameters" of narrative criticism, Moore suggests utilizing Culpepper's and Rhoads and Michie's work.³ According to their works, narrative criticism seeks to uncover the means and strategies employed by the biblical

¹Moore, Literary Criticism, 41.
³"*Mark as Story* and Anatomy, building on Chatman, establish something like a normative field of inquiry for narrative criticism and suggest the possible parameters of such a field. The largely disparate threats of inquiry that constituted the nonstructuralist narrative analysis of the Gospels of the late 1970s come together in these two books ... in the form of a set of closely related issues to be addressed—an agenda, if you will" (Moore, Literary Criticism, 51).


writers to convey their story: how is the plot developed, how are the characters presented, how is the setting of the story described,what is its rhetoric? In summary: "How do various literary patterns enable the text to communicate meaning to its hearers and readers?"

As to the rhetoric of a text, one can differentiate between two aspects: the first deals with the relationship between the writer and his audience as can be established within the text. The writer or narrator is not only interested in relating facts but has certain expectations as to the reception of his accounts. This establishes a communication event between the reader and the writer, or, since it is based on the text, the implied reader and the

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1 Culpepper, 7. For further remarks on the plot, the characters, and the setting, see below, pp. 55-57.

2 Gros Louis describes the task of literary interpretation as an analysis of "internal dynamics, ironies and paradoxes, interaction among characters and among scenes, narrational intrusion, settings, development of thematic and imagistic patterns, transformations of character, formal structures" (Gros Louis, 1:13).

Bar-Efrat's agenda to uncover the "narrative art" of the Hebrew Bible is: the narrator, the characters, the plot, time and space, and style (Shimon Bar-Efrat, Narrative Art in the Bible, Bible and Literature Series, 17 [Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989]).


4 "Literary critics distinguish between the real author and reader and their counterparts within the text. . . . The 'implied author' is defined by the sum of the choices reflected in the writing of the narrative, choices of the settings, irony, characterization, the handling of time, suspense, distance, and all the problematics and potential of narrative writing which must be dealt with in one way or another" (Culpepper, 6-7).
implied author.¹ This aspect of the rhetoric of a text concerns the narrator's point of view, with the implicit and explicit guidance of the narrator, through his commentaries or the arrangement of the material. The second aspect deals with the rhetorical devices, or "narrative patterns." Rhoads and Michie list repetition, two-step progression, questions, framing, episodes in concentric patterns, episodes in a series of three.² One may add chiasms, ring compositions, interpositions, foreshadowing, symbolism, and irony.³

Narrative criticism provides the agenda with which I approach the tripolar pronouncement stories in the Gospel of Mark. I apply this agenda in a twofold way. On the one hand, I look at tripolar pronouncement stories in the context of the whole Gospel of Mark. How do they contribute to the development of the plot of Mark? How do they add to the portrayal of the characters within the whole book? How do they provide a setting for the whole story? What is their significance as a rhetorical, stylistic device?⁴ On

¹Rhoads and Michie, 35-44; Culpepper, 6; Malbon, "Narrative Criticism," 27. See below, pp. 214-22.

²Rhoads and Michie, 45-54.


⁴Regarding pronouncement stories, Bailey and Vander Broek state: "Recent scholarship suggests that there are two interrelated tasks involved in interpreting a pronouncement story in the Gospels: (1) an analysis of the interplay in the brief narrative between the particular
the other hand, I analyze the tripolar stories as short stories with a plot, characters, and a setting. How does their plot develop? How do they present the characters? How do they describe the setting? These two parts of this investigation are interrelated. By understanding the composition of tripolar pronouncement stories themselves, one is in a better position to recognize their function within the whole Gospel of Mark, and by understanding the ground-plan of the gospel it is possible to recognize more clearly the significance of tripolar pronouncement stories.

Purpose of the Study

It is the purpose of this study to demonstrate the significance of tripolar pronouncement stories from the perspective of narrative criticism. This task involves an explanation of what tripolar pronouncement stories are and situation described; and (2) an overall assessment of the rhetorical strategy and effect of the entire story, not just of the final pronouncement of Jesus" (James L. Bailey and Lyle D. Vander Broek, Literary Forms in the New Testament: A Handbook [Louisville, KY: Westminster Press, 1992], 116).

1Ryken classifies the stories of the gospels as "subgenres: "All of the Gospels share a reliance on certain subtypes or subgenres. Each of these has its governing ingredients and traits" (Leland Ryken, Words of Life: A Literary Introduction to the New Testament [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987], 35).

2"If narrative provides a literary framework for a Gospel as a whole, it is an equally good device for dealing with individual narrative units within the Gospels" (Ryken, The Bible as Literature, 135).
what their uniqueness is, as well as a demonstration of their significance as far as their contribution to the whole Gospel of Mark.

The starting point of this study lies in the observation that the Gospel of Mark contains short, self-contained stories with three characters. These stories conclude with a pronouncement of Jesus and belong therefore to the category of pronouncement stories. However, not all pronouncement stories include three characters.

The three characters of tripolar pronouncement stories are actively involved in the same scene. They are

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1 I have chosen the term character rather than actant because the latter is a technical term of structuralism (see Algirdas J. Greimas and J. Courtes, Semiotics and Language: An Analytical Dictionary, trans. Larry Christ et al. [Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982], 5). The advantage of the term "character" is that it includes any described existent, even if he/she does not perform an act. This definition reflects my focus on the interaction as portrayed in these short stories.

A character may also describe a group of persons when their participants represent the same role and the same interest. "We should not limit our conception of characters to individuals, since it is possible for a group to function as a single character" (Powell, Narrative Criticism, 51). As an example: In the case of 12 disciples in Mark 10:34-50 we actually encounter only two "characters": The 10 disciples protesting against the two sons of Zebedee.

2 In using the term "pronouncement stories," I follow V. Taylor. It refers to the same class of stories as Alberz’s conflict stories, Bultmann’s apophthegms and Dibelius’s paradigms. For the advantage of Taylor’s terminology also in respect to the other classifications, see Robert H. Stein, The Synoptic Problem: An Introduction (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987), 168-70.
essential to the progression of the plot and represent the	hree poles of the narrative. The interaction of these	hree characters follows a specific pattern and unfolds in a	hreefold progression: description—reaction—reply. The
story of Jesus and the children (Mark 10:13-16) may serve as
an illustration of a tripolar narrative.

1 Scholes and Kellogg define plot as "the dynamic
sequential element in narrative literature. Insofar as
character, or any other element in narrative becomes
dynamic, it is a part of the plot." They also refer to the
plot as "an outline of events" and "the articulation of the
skeleton of narrative" (Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg,
The Nature of Narrative [London: Oxford University Press,
1966], 207, 12). See also Culpepper, 79-88, and Rhoads and
Michie, 73-74.

2 Some narratives include additional existents.
However, they cannot be counted as main characters, since
they do not participate in the progression of the plot.
Main characters take or are affected by "plot-significant
action" (Chatman, 140). In tripolar narratives we find that
the crowds may serve as additional existents. Shepherd
comments: "Often the crowd in Mark is part of the setting,
a prop in whose presence Jesus acts" (Tom Shepherd, "The
Definition and Function of Markan Intercalation as
Illustrated in a Narrative Analysis of Six Passages" [Ph.D.

3 Mack uses the terms "setting, question, response"
(Burton L. Mack and Vernon K. Robbins, Patterns of
Persuasion in the Gospels [Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press,
1989], 93).
1. Description:
   first character (= women & children)
   -> approach Jesus (third character)

2. Reaction to what is stated in # 1:
   second character (= disciples)
   -> rebuke the children/mothers (first character)

3. Reply to reaction in # 2:
   third character (= Jesus)
   -> lets the children come and blesses them.

Tripolar pronouncement stories may vary as to their length. However, one is always able to identify three characters and a plot that develops in a threefold progression.

The fact that the plot in these stories unfolds with the participation of three characters is a compositional feature. It represents the way the story is told, and it concerns the question: "How does the story mean?" When we describe the way a story is narrated, there is a clear difference between a simple statement, a dialogue, or an interaction between three characters, even though the subject matter may be the same. The perspective of narrative criticism allows us to clearly recognize these stories as a unique group.

The significance of tripolar pronouncement stories has to be seen in the impact of these stories. How do they function? Do they fulfill a specific role? How do they
portray the different characters? How do they function within the overall design of the gospel? What difference does it make for the reader?

The unique contribution of tripolar pronouncement stories is best appreciated in comparison with dipolar pronouncement stories. Pronouncement stories with two characters are restrictive in that they can only portray Jesus in relationship with one character. In tripolar pronouncement stories, the two parties that are present in addition to Jesus also relate to him in varying ways. However, in addition to those interactions with Jesus, the author is also able to present the relationships between those parties. Tripolar pronouncement stories are therefore better capable of expressing social consequences of the different attitudes towards Jesus and his teaching.

Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope and limitation of my study is delineated by the methodology, the area of the investigation, and my definition of tripolar pronouncement stories.

As already indicated, my research is performed on the basis of literary criticism. This means the study is synchronic and text-based. The history of the text is not dealt with in this thesis. Similarly, I do not incorporate considerations on the basis of a synoptic comparison. More specifically, I employ the concepts of narrative criticism. As to the agenda of narrative criticism, I am following
Moore's suggestion in taking Rhoads and Michie's as well as Culpepper's works as points of reference.

1 This study is limited to the Gospel of Mark. This precludes concerns for the whole of the Bible as a literary unit. I am dealing with the Gospel of Mark as a cohesive and independent narrative with its own story world. I do this, however, distinctly from the perspective of tripolar pronouncement stories. I am therefore asking how tripolar pronouncement stories function in the context of the whole gospel story. In so doing I am illumining one aspect of the story of the Gospel of Mark; however, I am not establishing all features of the story.

My definition of tripolar pronouncement stories identifies them as belonging to the group of pronouncement stories. This means my analysis of tripolar pronouncement stories does not concern each and every story with three characters, but pronouncement stories with three characters. In so doing, I am establishing tripolar pronouncement stories as a sub-group of pronouncement stories with a unique role in the overall composition of the Gospel of Mark.

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1 As the textual basis for the Gospel of Mark, I take Eberhard Nestle et al., eds., Novum Testamentum Graece, 26th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1979). This excludes the verses following Mark 16:8 because of insufficient textual attestation.

This investigation of the elements of pronouncement stories, particularly in the review of literature, also refers to literature that lies outside the field of narrative criticism, but is connected to it through similar concerns. In this way, I am able to establish what has been said about pronouncement stories and possibly tripolar pronouncement stories in the past, before narrative criticism was utilized. It also enables me to interact with the conclusions of NT scholars dealing with similar issues from a different methodological point of view.

Overview of the Dissertation

This introduction is followed by the review of literature which surveys the research of pronouncement stories. The three parts of this chapter deal with the form-critical contribution to my understanding of pronouncement stories, with the connection between pronouncement stories and Hellenistic *chreiai*,¹ and with the question of classifying pronouncement stories and *chreiai*.

The third chapter deals with the tripolar pronouncement stories that occur in the Gospel of Mark: (1)

¹*A chreia is defined as a saying or action which is related within the context of a specific situation. See my discussion on pp. 34-52.*

I use the transliteration of the Greek term instead of its translation because the *chreia* was a very specific literary convention in Hellenistic literature. This distinctiveness would not be realized in the translated terms "anecdote" or "useful story" (see Ronald F. Hock and Edward N. O'Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, vol. 1, *The Progymnasmata* [Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1986], 48).
Mark 2:1-12 (The Healing of the Paralytic), (2) Mark 2:15-17 (Jesus’ Company with Sinners), (3) Mark 2:23-28 (Plucking of Grain on a Sabbath), (4) Mark 3:1-6 (The Healing of the Crippled Hand), (5) Mark 7:1-13 (Clean and Unclean), (6) Mark 10:13-16 (Jesus Blesses the Children), (7) Mark 10:35-45 (Zebedee’s Sons), (8) Mark 14:3-9 (Jesus’ Anointment).

Each of these passages are analyzed individually as to their setting, their main characters, and their progression of the plot.

The fourth chapter demonstrates the significance of tripolar pronouncement stories. The significance is based on the features of tripolar pronouncement stories which distinguish them from other pronouncement stories or Hellenistic chreiai. The significance of the tripolar pronouncement stories is seen in their contribution to the overall design of the Gospel of Mark. Finally the chapter analyzes the unique impact of tripolar pronouncement stories upon the reader of gospel.

The fifth chapter summarizes the findings and draws conclusions.

The first appendix gives a schematic representation of tripolar pronouncement stories. In the second appendix I have included a table which shows the different classifications of pronouncement stories. This table includes tripolar pronouncement stories as explored in this study.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This present chapter deals primarily with pronouncement stories since tripolar pronouncement stories are a subgroup of former category. In this survey of the scholarly debate one finds general insights into the nature of pronouncement stories which can later be applied to tripolar stories. I also want to explore if there has been any recognition of tripolar narratives or their distinctive features in the past. This review of literature revolves around three areas: (1) the early form-critical investigations, (2) the connection which has been established between pronouncement stories and the Hellenistic *chreiai*, and (3) suggestions for the classification of NT pronouncement stories and *chreiai*.

**Early Form-Critical Views on Pronouncement Stories**

The pronouncement story as a specific category was discovered by form-critics.¹ The most important

contributions come from Martin Albertz, Rudolf Bultmann, and Martin Dibelius. Their publications all date around the same time and are to a considerable degree independent of each other. As a general feature, form-critics share the conviction that the Gospels need to be understood on the level of the individual units and not from the perspective


For a concise discussion of their individual contributions, see Joachim Rohde, Die Redaktionsgeschichtliche Methode: Einführung und Sichtung des Forschungsstandes (Hamburg: Furche Verlag, 1966), 10-13.

Albertz's work appeared only in 1921. However, I place his findings first, since he was probably the first to start on his project. The publication of the book was delayed by periods of revolution and war. Even though references to Bultmann and Dibelius are made in his preface, the work as a whole does not enter into a scholarly dialogue with either. As to the publication of several books on the subject of form-criticism he remarks: "Die Ideen zur urchristlichen Formengeschichte liegen eben in der Luft" (Martin Albertz, Die synoptischen Streitgespräche: Ein Beitrag zur Formengeschichte des Urchristentums [Berlin: Trowitzsch, 1921], 4).

Dibelius' Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums first appeared in 1919, while Bultmann's Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition was published two years later. Again, I do not find an actual interchange of ideas. In later editions, both authors make references to each other's works. However, their overall approach to the subject did not change.
of the whole work. The focus on the individual parts of text led to a neglect of the overall composition and theological work of the author. This segmentation of the text has been much debated and criticized,¹ in particular by redaction criticism and more recently by literary approaches, including narrative analysis.² However, the recognition of particular literary patterns through form-critics remains a valuable contribution for NT scholarship and provides a starting point for this investigation of tripolar pronouncement stories.

Martin Albertz analyzes the structure of the synoptic pronouncement stories which he calls controversy stories (Streitgespräche). He points to the fact that these stories unfold in a similar pattern and distinguishes between different parts. The Exposition contains the introductory material as a preparation for the upcoming

¹"For form-critics sometimes seem to be showing, or trying to show, that the evangelist is stitching together and only slightly modifying set pieces of traditional oral recitation. And if this is so, the evangelist's own inspiration, his own conception and unitary grasp of the story he is telling, is reduced to small proportions, and any interpretation of the Gospel as a living and self-unfolding movement of free inspiration is barred from the outset" (Austin Farrer, A Study in St. Mark [London: Dacre Press, 1951], 22).

²Iber summarizes his discussion on form criticism in the following way: "Die Leistung des Evangelisten erschöpft sich nicht in der Sammlung der in der Gemeinde umlaufenden Erzählungen und Jesusworte; sie ist erheblicher und gewichtiger, nämlich überlegte und erstaunlich konsequente schriftstellerische Komposition und theologische Konzeption" (Iber, 338).
issue. The issue is addressed in the form of a question in
the following part, the Gespräch. Finally this conversation
culminates in a dominical saying (of Jesus). This
pronouncement of Jesus was what really mattered to the
evangelist.¹ In some cases, Albertz finds a closing third
part, a Schlußbemerkung. For Albertz, these stories
recorded basically the controversy dialogues between Jesus
and his opponents.² Albertz asserts further that, following
the style of folk stories, only two parties are presented as
active participants in these narratives. The original event
may have involved more people. However, the focus on just
two parties in the story makes it easier for the readers to
follow the progression of thought.³

¹Albertz, 83.
²See also Arland J. Hultgren, Jesus and His
Adversaries: The Form and Function of the Conflict Stories
in the Synoptic Tradition (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg
position of a pre-Markan origin of Mark 2:1-3:6, see Dewey,
Markan Debate, 43-52.
³"Die mündliche Überlieferung dagegen hat nie mehr
als eine Partei dem Herrn im Streitgespräch
gegenübergestellt. Dem Erzähler kommt es also nicht darauf
an, daß er von der bunten Mannigfaltigkeit der gegnerischen
Anschauungen ein getreues Bild gibt. Der heroische Grundzug
des Meisters, der das Entweder - Oder herausarbeitet und zur
Entscheidung ruft, mag die Einschränkung der Überlieferung
auf das Gegenspiel von nur zwei Parteien Vorschub geleistet
haben. Vor allem aber wird uns an diesem Punkte die Art
volkstümlicher Erzählung deutlich: zwei Parteien sind
leichter auseinanderzuhalten als drei oder vier. Besonders
da es dem Erzähler im letzten Grunde nur auf das Jesuswort
ankommt, wirkt die Einführung einer anderen Anschauung
besser im Kontrast als die mehrerer, die dann auch unter
sich unterschieden werden müßten. So wiederholt sich hier
eine Eigentümlichkeit der volkstümlichen Erzählkunst, die
Criticism against Albertz’s findings as a form-critical study came from Bultmann. He contends that Albertz did not consider the early church’s impact on the formation of these stories. However, this disapproval only concerns the historical aspect of the text. Albertz’s findings as to the patterns of the controversy stories remain valid. Even though patterns of these stories are described differently in recent literature, Albertz’s recognition of a recurring structure still stands¹ and is applicable to tripolar pronouncement stories. A major point of contention from my perspective lies in his assertion that only two parties participate in each story and that what really mattered to the evangelist were the words of Jesus. I agree that the culmination of these stories has to be seen in the pronouncement of Jesus, but from a narrative-critical perspective, the whole story matters. The fact that some of these stories have three active participants is similarly a significant factor.

Martin Dibelius employs the word paradigm (Paradigma) for the pronouncement story.² In later editions

¹Bailey and Vander Broek, 114-22.


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he takes issue with Bultmann’s term apophthegm and his proposed sub-categories. Paradigms according to Dibelius are brief, well-rounded religious narratives that make a specific point. They were originally used within a sermon and find their setting within the church. This category, which brings together narrative and teaching, is to be differentiated from tales and legends, which are almost exclusively narrative, and from parenetical sayings, which represent specific instructions of Jesus without an attached event. Paradigms usually culminate in a saying of Jesus, which forms the focus of the story and is of particular relevance for the church. Dibelius distinguishes between a pure (ungetrübt) and further developed (minder rein) type.¹ According to Dibelius, the paradigms in their pure form have an oral character, since they were used in the preaching of the early church. They became more developed in the process of writing them down. According to Dibelius, form-criticism has two objectives. It seeks to illumine the emergence of the tradition about Jesus until it was written down in the gospels; and second it seeks to explain "with what objective the first churches recounted the stories about Jesus."² It is to be noted that Dibelius already pointed to the

¹Ibid. 40.
Hellenistic form of the *chreia* as a background to the paradigms and recognized the Gospel writers had a definite objective in writing down the stories about Jesus.¹

Dibelius' emphasis on the church as the originator of the paradigm has rightly been questioned. Berger points out that other influences, including the pre-easter circle of disciples, need to be taken into consideration.² In general, even though Dibelius seeks to establish the "form" of the paradigm, his discussion is more concerned with the emergence of the text than its present compositional features. This diachronic emphasis on the development of the individual units brought with it a segmentation of the text of the Gospel. The gospel story as a whole work of the evangelist lost its significance. With respect to this study it should be noted that the question of the number of characters is not addressed by him.

¹"Angesichts der Verbreitung chrienartiger Stoffe mußte es auch den Christen, wenn sie in einem gewissen Grade Schriftsteller geworden waren, nahe liegen, Worte Jesu in die Chrienform einzukleiden. Sie wurden dadurch 'schlagender' und einprägsamer; volkstümlich überlieferte Züge bekamen ein literarisches Gewand, mehrdeutige Worte wurden erklärt." (Dibelius, *Formgeschichte*, 160)

"Sie haben es [das Erzählen] nicht unterlassen, denn sie haben eine Absicht gehabt; es war dieselbe Absicht, die der Predigt überhaupt zugrunde lag, Menschen zu gewinnen und Gewonnene immer besser zu überzeugen und zu festigen" (ibid., 35).

Rudolf Bultmann uses the term apophthegm (Apophthegmata) to describe pronouncement stories.¹ In contrast to the isolated dominical sayings (Herrenworte), apophthegms represent sayings of Jesus that are placed in a brief context. They can be divided between conflict, didactic, and biographical apophthegms. Bultmann further divides conflict sayings into three additional categories: stories (1) in connection with miracles, (2) in reaction to Jesus’ behavior or that of his disciples, and (3) as a reply to an opponents’ question. A fourth category, which puts the story in connection with an inquiry of a disciple or another person, belongs to the group of the didactic sayings. According to Bultmann, these stories follow the pattern of Rabbinic discussion.² He regards the apologetic and polemic teaching of the church, as well as scribal activity and the sermon, as the Sitz im Leben of these stories.³ In fact, the church created the apophthegms by adding a story to an already existing dominical saying.⁴


²"Die Art zu disputieren ist die typisch rabbinische; der 'Sitz im Leben' ist für die Streitgespäche also in den Diskussionen der Gemeinde über Gesetzesfragen zu suchen, die mit Gegnern, aber gewiß auch in der eigenen Mitte geführt wurden" (ibid., 42). At this point Bultmann rejects Dibelius’s claim that these stories originated within the context of early Christian sermons.

³Ibid., 64.

⁴Ibid., 20, 49, 65.
The intention (Interesse) of these stories has to be sought exclusively in the concluding pronouncement of Jesus.\(^1\)

The tripolar stories of this study correspond particularly to the conflict and didactic sayings. As a whole, however, Bultmann has little concern for compositional details: his different categories are based on aspects of content rather than form.\(^2\) His assertion, that these stories follow the pattern of Rabbinical literature, has not been verified by recent investigations of intertestamental literature.\(^3\) Moreover, Bultmann's emphasis on the Sitz im Leben reflects the strong diachronic interest of his form-critical investigations, which emphasize the historical emergence of the text in terms of its individual units. It leads him to underestimate the value of the gospel as a unitary text. He further concludes that the intention of these stories is to be found exclusively in the

\(^1\)"Das Interesse liegt beim Apophthegma ganz auf dem Ausspruch Jesu" (ibid., 66).

\(^2\)See also Berger's remark on Bultmann's division of biographical apophthegms: "R. Bultmann unterschied in den 'Apophthegmata' neben den Streit- und Schulgesprächen die 'biographischen Apophthegmata'. Die Kriterien dafür sind höchst ungenau, und das ist mit der Sache gegeben; denn jede Chrie ist durch die Verankerung in der Situation bereits in hohem Maße biographisch." (Berger, Formgeschichte, 85).

sayings of Jesus.¹ Both conclusions need to be challenged from the perspective of narrative analysis. According to Bultmann's emphasis, the feature of three characters in tripolar pronouncement stories would be insignificant.

Vincent Taylor uses the term pronouncement stories. In addition to rejecting Bultmann's and Dibelius's terminology, he also departs from their skepticism concerning the origin of these stories.² His term reflects the focus on the text of the Gospels itself, in which he finds stories which end in a pronouncement.³ It is interesting to note that Taylor's terminology, which is closely oriented towards the text, has been chosen by the working group within the Society of Biblical Literature,

¹The development of the apophthegm out of an isolated saying has rightly been questioned by Berger: "Für unbeweisbar halte ich die Ausgangsthese R. Bultmanns, am Anfang der Entwicklung der neutestamentlichen Chrien habe das isolierte Wort gestanden, welches die Situation bzw. die Szene erzeugt habe (GST 20.49), und schließlich seien die Apoftegmen selber durch Hinzufügung freier Logien noch gewachsen, so daß man von der 'zeugenden Kraft dieser Form' sprechen könne" (Berger, Formgeschichte, 84).

²Vincent Taylor, The Formation of the Gospel Tradition: Eight Lectures (London: MacMillan & Co, 1960), 30, 41, 87. As the title suggests, Taylor also envisions a development of the tradition. However, he allows much more for the impact of Jesus and the eyewitnesses on the formation of this tradition than others, in particular Bultmann.

³"The advantages of the name are that it leaves the possibilities of origin open; it easily covers the various types; and it emphasizes the main element—a pronouncement, or word of Jesus, bearing on some aspect of life, belief, or conduct" (ibid., 30).
which was formed in 1975 under the leadership of Robert C. Tannehill.¹

Taylor's term pronouncement-stories is most descriptive in comparison to the other suggestions. It accurately describes the fact that these stories characteristically culminate in a pronouncement. This mark of distinction can be verified and serves very well, both as a description of these stories and as a classification. Tripolar pronouncement stories belong to this category. They share with other stories the characteristic of an identifiable statement of Jesus at the end in reaction to the event.

C. H. Dodd criticizes the general form-critical approach on two counts. He first asserts that the form of controversial dialogues as described by Albertz can also be applied to didactic stories.² Second, he shows that these stories "bear something which we associate with the dialogue proper: there is a genuine development of a theme through the conversational interchange between the interlocutors."³

His observations are very valuable. Since the


³ Ibid., 57.
controversial dialogues share the same form as didactic stories, the distinction between them is based on content and function, rather than on compositional features. The same features may be used for different "categories" of stories. Tripolar pronouncement stories are defined by the compositional fact of three characters and their specific interaction. It should not be surprising to find this form in different "categories." Dodd's remarks on the interaction between the participants of the story are also helpful. The "conversational interchange" is an essential part of the composition of a story. My description of tripolar stories places an emphasis on this compositional aspect.

I conclude that we are indebted to the form-critical school for its recognition of the particular pattern of pronouncement stories. Helpful and also applicable to tripolar pronouncement stories is Albertz's recognition of a recurring structure in the pronouncement stories. However, the limitation of the form-critical approach lies in its segmentation of the whole text, in the diachronic perspective and in classifications, which are largely dependent upon content and function, rather than form and structure. As such, the role of the individual pericopes for the overall composition of the book, but also the exact compositional features of the individual units, have not been sufficiently appreciated. It is true that
pronouncement stories culminate in the final saying. However, it needs to be questioned, particularly from the perspective of narrative analysis, that the pronouncement at the end must be regarded as sole key to the story, while the rest of the story can be regarded as inferior. Within the form-critical investigations, tripolar pronouncement stories have not been recognized, and in fact Albertz's (wrong) assertion that these stories regularly present only two characters has not been challenged.

**Pronouncement Stories and Hellenistic Chreiai**

Recent research has shed more light on the connection between NT pronouncement stories and the category of the Hellenistic chreiai. R. O. P. Taylor introduced an article, published in 1944, with the sentence:¹

> It seems strange that, in all the discussions about the Form-criticism of the Gospels, no appeal or reference has been made to the careful studies of literary form, which were made by writers of the first centuries of our era.

In contrast to this statement, Mack and Robbins declare in their book as published in 1989:²

> New Testament scholars now recognize the marked similarity between the pronouncement stories of the synoptic tradition and the Greek form of the anecdote

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²Mack and Robbins, 31. Mack and Robbins also discuss the reasons for the limited influence of Dibelius's observation on the connection between "paradigms" and chreiai (ibid., 13).
that teachers of literature and rhetoric called a chreia.

However, it is not only possible to see the similarities, but also the differences between chreiai and NT pronunciation stories. This section of the study discusses the nature of the chreia and its connection to the NT pronunciation story.

Characteristic of a chreia is a decisive statement or action in the setting of a specific situation. This statement or action appears at the end of a terse, realistic anecdote serving as the "punch-line." The classic definition of a chreia was given by the ancient rhetorician Aelius Theon. "A chreia is a concise statement or action which is attributed with aptness to some specified character or to something analogous to a character." According to

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"The author is clearly a classicist and Atticist who most often takes Demosthenes as his model, but also admires Lysias, Aeschines, Herodotus, Thucydides, Homer, Plato, and other earlier writers" (George Kennedy, The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972], 616).

"There is no hard evidence for an early dating of Theon. However, on the basis of "soft arguments," many scholars date Theon around "the mid or late first century A.D. rather than the fourth or fifth century, as previous scholars taught" (Hock and O'Neil, 64). "The author is clearly a classicist and Atticist who most often takes Demosthenes as his model, but also admires Lysias, Aeschines, Herodotus, Thucydides, Homer, Plato, and other earlier writers" (George Kennedy, The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972], 616).

Hock and O'Neil, 83. I am referring to Hock and O'Neil as the source for Theon’s Progymnasmata. Their work not only represents the first modern translation of the text, it also includes the most recent edition of the Greek
Theon, **chreiai** are to be differentiated from two related forms: the maxim and the reminiscence.¹ The maxim represents a saying without action or attribution to a character, while the reminiscence "is distinguishable from the chreia primarily in being longer."² Characteristic of the **chreia** therefore are conciseness, general significance, and connectedness to a specific situation and person. They are brief, yet profound saying-stories.

**Chreiai** can be traced as far back as Xenophon, and the earliest **chreiai** collections date to the fourth century B.C.E. They were very popular in cynic circles.³ The **chreiai** were a well-established and frequently used literary convention at the time of the writing of the NT. It had a

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¹ For Theon's explication, see Hock and O'Neil, 83.

² Ibid. 26.

³ Previous views that the chreiai originated with the cynics have been abandoned (ibid.).
prominent place in literature until the Byzantine Age."
Buchanan summarizes that the study of the chreia is important as it was "used as a literary form before, during, and after NT times." It should be noted, however, that the chreia is not an OT or Jewish phenomenon, but a Hellenistic one. Only at a later time did Rabbis make use of this form. In fact, it can be shown that the chreia with its Greco-Roman value system had to be adjusted to fit the Judaic culture.

The chreia was a very "forceful" way to express an idea or a virtue. It became "an ideal vehicle for the teaching of non-conformist ideas" and as such had the effect of a social critique. The chreia, which were attributed to Stoics, "often express moral judgment."

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1 Fischel, 373.


3 "Im 1. Jh. n. Chr. ist die Gattung zwar bei sehr gut hellenistisch gebildeten Juden bekannt und in Gebrauch, aber sie ist noch nicht mit der religiösen Überlieferung des Judentums verschmolzen" (Berger, Formgeschichte, 83).

4 Fischel explains that in this adaptation the chreia becomes "naturalized," "halakhized," "transcendentalized;" it goes through the process of "humanization," and becomes "a-political" (Fischel, 407-411).

5 Ibid., 373.

6 See Mack, A Myth, 185.

7 Ibid., 181.

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while those attributed to the Cynics generally consist of a response to potentially embarrassing situations. With the response, the philosopher-sage successfully fights back by turning the "the conventional logic implicit in the situation" upside down.¹

Cynic chreiai manifest metis at the level of rejoinder, a skillful use of words to escape entrapment by briefly confounding the superior sophia embedded in the dominant culture and assumed by the Cynic's antagonist.²

Chreiai "celebrated and 'idolized' Founder Sages."³

Their primary function is "to add to the characterization of a well-known figure and to explore the application of their philosophical position to some situation in life."⁴ The sage becomes the representative of the ideals and values that the writer wanted to convey. This focus on the individual is also apparent in the use of the chreiai for the biography.⁵ Examples of biographical literature which

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¹Ibid., 182.


³Fischel, 374.

⁴Mack, Anecdotes, 4.

⁵"Als Chrie bezeichnet man veranlaßte, doch die Situation transzendierende Rede oder Handlung im Leben einer bedeutenden Person. Veranlassung und Reaktion gehören immer zusammen. Und da die Veranlassung und Situation sich aus der Biographie der Person ergeben, besteht eine natürliche Eignung der Chrie zum Einbau in die Gattung Biographie" (Berger, Formgeschichte, 82).
utilize chreiai are works such as The Lives of Eminent Philosophers by Diogenes Laertius and the Lives by Plutarch. Plutarch illumines the usefulness of the anecdote by explaining his reason for writing "lives" and not "histories":

In the most illustrious deeds there is not always a manifestation of virtue or vice, nay, a slight thing like a phrase or a jest often makes a greater revelation of character than battles where thousands fall, or the greatest armaments, or sieges of cities.

Since they could be easily remembered, the chreiai became "the oral tradition of Greek school philosophy." Buchanan thinks that Diogenes actually taught his students as a memorizing technique on "how to reduce a situation to one-half sentence and the teaching to the second half, thereby forming a chreia." Buchanan further conjectures that in their training with Jesus "the apostles had also learned the short-cut methods of memorization taught by Diogenes." Through the process of practicing and using them

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3Plutarch Plutarch's Lives (7:225).

4Mack, A Myth, 180.

5Buchanan, 502.
in their missionary endeavors, these literary units were preserved.

Chreiai represented also an important part of the rhetorical education.¹ Exercises in chreiai are described in the progymnasmata,² the "beginner’s textbooks on composition."³ They were designed to introduce the students to the realm of rhetoric before they were ready to move on to more complicated exercises and complete rhetorical speeches.⁴ One of the rhetorical exercises is the manipulation of simple chreiai. Aelius Theon lists eight different exercises in which this could be accomplished.⁵ One of these exercises consists of the expansion of the chreia. "We expand the chreia whenever we enlarge upon the questions and responses in it, and upon whatever act or

¹"By his middle teens a boy was ready for the rhetorician. Under his direction the student completed the course in the progymnasmata and undertook a study of rhetorical theory based on some handbook" (George Kennedy, The Art of Persuasion in Greece [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963], 270-71).

²"The earliest treatise on progymnasmata is apparently that by Aelius Theon of Alexandria" (Kennedy, The Art of Rhetoric, 616).

³Hock and O’Neil, 3.

⁴"Analysis of the Progymnasmata as a whole reveals a clear educational design. The design took the student from more familiar and simpler material to the more difficult" (Mack, Anecdotes, 10).

⁵The eight exercises with a chreia were recitation, inflection, comment, objection, expansion, condensation, refutation, and confirmation (Hock and O’Neil, 36).
experience is in it." The chreia, which by definition is a brief saying, is expanded by adding narrative details. The result is a narrative which goes far beyond what usually is considered to be a chreia. However, it is this kind of expanded chreia that comes closest to the characteristics of the pronouncement stories of the New Testament.

Another form of elaboration is suggested by Hermogenes. Instead of Theon’s individual exercises, he presents a single exercise with different parts to support and elaborate on a certain chreia. In this way, Hermogenes teaches how to develop a complete and unified argument with regard to a chreia. The parts of the argument were: (1)

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1Ibid., 101.

2A pertinent example of this is given by Theon himself. He expands the chreia "Epameinondas, as he was dying childless, said to his friends: ‘I have two daughters—the victory at Leuctra and the one at Mantineia’" (ibid., 101-102).

3Hermogenes states: "A chreia differs from a reminiscence mainly in its length, for reminiscences may occur also in greater lengths, but the chreia must be concise" (ibid., 177). The translation of Hermogenes’ text in Hock and O’Neil’s edition is based on Rabe’s edition (Hugo Rabe, Rhetores Graeci, vol. 6, Hermogenis Opera [Leipzig: Teubner, 1913], 1-17).

4Hermogenes was born in 161 C.E. at Tarsus. Among his audience for his lectures was also the Emperor Marcus Aurelius (Hock and O’Neil, 155).

5"A shift in emphasis occurs when one turns from Theon to Hermogenes. In Hermogenes’ chapter on the chreia there is no longer any mention of eight separate exercises as Theon gives them. Instead, following a very brief discussion of the chreia as a speech form, Hermogenes presents a single exercise to be performed" (Mack, Anecdotes, 15).
praise, (2) the *chreia*, (3) the rationale, (4) an argument from the opposite, (5) an analogy, (6) an example, (7) a judgment, and (8) a concluding exhortation. Mack and Robbins point out that these elements, although less structured and transparent, can be recognized in literary works of the Greco-Roman culture, as well as in the Gospels. The explications of Theon and Hermogenes indicate that the *chreiai* could be elaborated in both of their characteristic parts. The description of the situation could be expanded and the decisive statement could be developed into a rhetorical argument.

When we compare NT pronouncement stories with Hellenistic *chreiai*, we find that they correspond to the twofold nature of the *chreiai*. That means they are also saying-stories. However, since these NT saying-stories are generally not concise, we need to consider them as elaborated *chreiai*. It is possible to recognize the

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¹Hock and O'Neil, 177, for the complete text of Hermogenes.

²"They are, of course, classroom exercises. One would not expect to find in literary works blocks of material that followed the pattern so simply and transparently. And yet, alerted to the pattern in its form as a classroom exercise, it is possible to see it at work in an amazingly rich variety of literatures of the time" (Mack and Robbins, 64).

³"Noting its own essential narrativity on the one hand, and its own internal rhetoricity on the other, the possibilities for the expansion and elaboration of a chreia in a larger narrative frame are multiple and complex" (ibid.).

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elaborated character of both parts of the NT pronouncement stories, the situational description and the concluding saying of Jesus.

There is some disagreement whether these expanded saying-stories should still be called *chreiai*. R. O. P. Taylor stated that the definition of *chreiai* "exactly fits the detachable little stories, of which so much of Mark consists"¹ Berger, however, is reluctant to include the pronouncement stories under the category of the *chreiai* because they are too elaborate. He still keeps this designation because pronunciation stories seem to have developed out of the *chreiai*.² Buchanan is more emphatic in asserting that *chreiai* "are easily distinguished from extensive reminiscences such as those of Xenophon and should never be confused with them, as Dibelius and Fischel have done."³ However, a look at the literary conventions of the Greco-Roman world indicates that the distinction between reminiscence as the extended form of a saying-story and

¹Taylor, "Form-Criticism," 218.


Berger also discusses the theological difference between the other-worldliness of the NT pronouncement stories over against the this-worldliness of the Hellenistic *chreiai*. He finds that this distinction cannot be taken as a reason to justify two different genres as Dibelius had suggested (Klaus Berger, "Hellenistische Gattungen im Neuen Testament," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2.25.2. ed. Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Hasse [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1984], 1096-1106).

³Buchanan, 502.
chreiai was often not observed. And as has been shown above, it was always possible to "expand" the chreia. I agree with Robbins's statement:

When interpreters emphasize the 'unconditioned brevity' of the chreia, they regularly overlook chreiai which exist in expanded form, chreiai which have comments or objections appended, and chreiai which are part of an argumentative refutation or confirmation.

Having established the relatedness of the NT pronouncement stories with the Hellenistic chreiai, I also need to point out differences between those two forms and their significance. On the one hand, the "expanded" nature of the NT pronouncement stories calls for a special consideration of their narrative details. It is not adequate to simply reduce the pronouncement story to a concise chreia and interpret it from this perspective. On the other hand, one needs to recognize that the context in which the NT pronouncements occur is unique. They are a

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1Athenaeus knows of one of Machon's works as Chreiai and refers to individual chreiai in it as reminiscences. Moreover, Zeno's Chreiai seems also to have gone under the title Reminiscences. And what we know about the Reminiscences of Callisthenes and Lynceus suggests that they were collections of chreiai" (Hock and O'Neil, 26f).

constituent part of the Gospels and as such are not part of the genre of the *lives,*¹ much less of that of the *progymnasmata.*² For a proper interpretation one needs to recognize the narrative composition of the pronouncement stories and place them within the overall text in which they occur. This is particularly important with respect to tripolar pronouncement stories.

¹Aune, who asserts that the evangelists "chose to adapt Greco-Roman biographical conventions to tell the story of Jesus," writes on the use of anecdotes: "While anecdotes were used for the purpose of conveying the virtues of the subject in Greco-Roman biographies, it is clear that they have an entirely different purpose in the Gospels. In the Gospels most of the shorter literary forms contribute to identifying Jesus in terms of the stereotypical role associated with the titles Messiah and Son of God" (David E. Aune, "Greco-Roman Biography," chap. in *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament* [Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988], 124). Tolbert is more emphatic in questioning the connection between the Gospel of Mark and Greek biographies, as well as aretalogies and memorabilias. She asserts that the latter "exhibit far superior linguistic and technical skill and far more sophisticated literary and philosophical acumen than anything found in the Gospel of Mark" (Mary Ann Tolbert, "The Gospel in Greco-Roman Culture," in *The Book and the Text: The Bible and Literary Theory*, ed. Regina M. Schwartz [Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1990], 261).

²Mack recognizes the unique character of the pronouncement stories when he points out that in the Gospels "everything is attributed to Jesus." He provides not only the *chreia,* but also the supporting arguments and the rationale (Mack, *A Myth,* 199). However, he regards this as a development within the early church which transformed the sayings of Jesus, who originally conformed to a Cynic-like sage. For a critique of this aspect of Mack’s position, see Andrew Overman, review of *The Myth of Innocence,* by Burton L. Mack, in *Interpretation* 44 (1990): 193-95.
I now consider the nature of the chreiai and the NT pronouncement stories from the perspective of their classification.

Classification of Chreiai and Pronouncement Stories

This section reviews the suggested classifications for chreiai and NT pronouncement stories as recently advanced by Buchanan, Tannehill, and Berger. I am interested here in whether these studies consider various narrative details, like the number of characters, the story as a whole, and possibly a recognition of tripolar pronouncement stories. To introduce this section, I present the categories which were used by Theon in his rhetorical textbook.

According to Theon, the chreiai could be divided into three main categories: saying, action, and mixed. The

1 As to the terminology in this section one needs to remember that Buchanan has a narrow definition of chreiai, but still asserts that at least twenty-eight of them can be found in the Gospels. However, he does not discuss their connection to the pronouncement stories (Buchanan, 504). Berger deals with pronouncement stories under the heading of chreiai (Berger, Formgeschichte, 85; idem, "Hellenistische Gattungen," 1106). Tannehill on the other hand only discusses pronouncement stories (Robert C. Tannehill, "Introduction: The Pronouncement Story and Its Types," Semeia 20 [1981]:1-13).

Since it has been established above that NT pronouncement stories and Hellenistic chreiai are certainly related to each other, I discuss the suggestions of Buchanan, Berger, and Tannehill together. In the summary of this section, however, I refer to these forms as pronouncement stories/chreiai.

2 Hock and O'Neil, 61-112.
mixed *chreia* includes both the saying and the action.\(^1\)

Pronouncement stories by definition include a saying. They correspond therefore either to the saying or the mixed *chreia*.\(^2\)

Theon further subdivides the group of saying *chreiai* into two types of statement, four types of responsive *chreiai*, and the type of "double" *chreia*. Statement *chreiai* are sayings of a person who is not being addressed, while responsive *chreiai* answer to a question or situation which demanded a response. In a double *chreia* one *chreia* is refuted by another.\(^3\)

Pronouncement stories and, in particular, tripolar pronouncement stories mainly correspond to responsive *chreiai*.

Buchanan identifies only three kinds of *chreiai*, distinguished by the situation that prompted the significant saying.

1. An assertive *chreia* may simply render the name of the person and his saying. An example of this kind is:

   "Isocrates, the sophist, used to say his best mannered students were children of gods."

2. Another form of assertive *chreiai* are those sayings that include the situation under which a certain

\(^1\)Ibid., 85.


\(^3\)Hock and O’Neil, 31, 84, 85.

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saying was uttered. For example: "Diogenes, having seen an undisciplined youth, chided the instructor, saying, 'Why are you teaching such things?'"

3. In contrast to the assertive chreiai, the third form represents the responsive chreiai. In this case, the sayings react to questions or propositions, like: "Plato, having been asked where the muses dwell, said, 'In the souls of those who have been educated.'"\footnote{Spengel, 2:102, 1-3; 2:23, 11-13; 3:461, 23-25 as cited by Buchanan, 501. The emphasis follows Buchanan’s text.}

Buchanan’s classification focusses rightly on the whole scene that is related in the chreia. In this way he is able to describe very distinctly the different kinds of chreiai. The disadvantage of his proposal is, however, that his classes are very broad. On closer examination we find that Buchanan is basically following the classification of Theon, with the difference that Buchanan is less detailed. His two classes of assertive chreiai agree with Theon’s two forms of statement chreiai, while his class of responsive chreiai summarizes Theon’s four forms of responsive chreiai. Double chreiai are not taken as a separate category by Buchanan. As has already been pointed out with respect to Theon, the proposed category of tripolar pronouncement stories corresponds clearly to the third group, the responsive chreiai.
Tannehill has proposed the following categories for pronouncement stories: correction stories, commendation stories, objection stories, quest stories, inquiry stories, and description stories. With this he is no longer following Theon's basic outline. However, one can find similarities with Bultmann's subdivisions of the apophthegm. Tannehill's and Bultmann's approaches are similar in that they differentiate according to the nature of the interaction that is described in these stories. The most obvious difference between the two is that Tannehill has doubled the categories and has reached a greater amount of clarity.

The limitation of this approach lies in the fact that it is difficult to categorize the NT stories along Tannehill's lines. Tannehill himself remarks about the second group, the commendation stories: "Most synoptic commendation stories are hybrid." And the category of the description stories is hardly applicable to the synoptic

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2The typology of Tannehill is helpful for a recognition of the possible themes in pronouncement stories. As such, the presence of "hybrid-stories" would be no problem. However, as a means of classification the typology of Tannehill is less useful.

3Tannehill, "Varieties," 105.
Gospels. Similar to Bultmann’s category, Tannehill’s divides the stories according to content and function, rather than their composition and structure.

In the same article Tannehill makes an interesting remark that directly pertains to tripolar pronouncement stories. He states that some "commendation stories" operate with three characters. He includes here the blessing of the children and the anointing of Jesus:

Both of these stories contain three characters (individuals or groups), one of whom is judged by the other two. The story begins with a negative judgment, which is corrected by Jesus’ positive judgment. However, Tannehill does not further explore the obvious narrative fact of three characters in his study.

Klaus Berger has raised his criticism against the subjective character of Tannehill’s categories. He rightly demands definite criteria against which the different categories can be verified. Berger suggests twenty-five

\[1\text{Ibid., 116.}
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\[2\text{Ibid, 105. Tannehill correctly observes that the negative judgment is corrected by Jesus’ positive judgment. However, it is misleading to state that the negative judgment "begins" the stories. Instead, the narratives open with an approach towards Jesus by the children and the woman respectively. While the approach of the children is interrupted by the disciples, the anointment is only criticized after its completion. In any case, the "negative judgment" represents a reaction to a previous action. It is therefore not the beginning of the story.}
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\[3\text{Werden hingegen überhaupt keine Kriterien genannt, so setzt eine Klassifizierung in Gattungen bereits totales Einverständnis über die Exegese der betreffenden Stelle voraus: dadurch rückt die Konsensbildung innerhalb der}
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categories, of which eleven deal with the occasion of the chreia, and fourteen with the structure of the answer. The categories that distinguish the chreia on the basis of the occasion do so by focusing on the beginning (e.g., a certain kind of question). The categories that distinguish the chreia, on the grounds of the answer, focus on its conclusion.

Berger is to be commended for his attempt to establish verifiable criteria for the sub-categories. However, his system introduces two different criteria at the same time, namely: (1) the occasion of the chreia as rendered in the first part, and (2) the structure of the answer as given in the second part of the chreia. This means that one and the same chreia may belong to two different categories. He attempts to resolve this dilemma by stating that in most of the cases the occasion is decisive for the category of the chreia, and not the answer. He argues that the beginning of a chreia very often determines its whole structure. Even though I think this

Zuteilung einer Stelle zu Gattungen jedoch in ferne Zukunft" (Klaus Berger, "Hellenistische Gattungen," 1108).


2 "Durch die Frage oder den Einwand zu Beginn der Chrie wird nicht weniger als durch die Situationsangabe der typische Rahmen der Chrie sehr häufig bereits abgesteckt, dazu auch der 'Sitz im Leben', bzw. die typische Verwendung. Das entspricht überhaupt der rahmengebenden und festlegenden.
is not a very satisfactory solution to the whole problem, his argumentation is significant for this study. It marks a departure from the overall emphasis on the concluding saying and points to the beginning part of the chreia as a determining factor. In this way he draws the attention the narrative parts of the chreia which have previously been neglected or regarded less significant.

Tannehill’s, Berger’s, and Buchanan’s suggestions have shown that the classification of pronouncement stories/chreia is a difficult task, especially when the criteria for the different categories are to be verifiable and distinctive. Their work helps us to appreciate the extent of variation in which pronouncement stories/chreiai were used. With respect to this study of tripolar pronouncement stories, Tannehill’s recognition of stories with three characters is significant. Berger’s remark as to the determining quality of the occasion of chreia shows that the beginning of chreiai is also very important, and not just their concluding part. This study enlarges on these findings.

Summary

The review of the research has taken us from the discovery of the pronouncement stories of the early form-critics (Albertz, Dibelius, Bultmann, Taylor) to the

Eigenart von Anfangsphasen in einem Text" (ibid., 1103).
research which has confirmed that pronouncement stories do belong to the Hellenistic form of chreiai and finally to the recent suggestions for sub-categories for the pronouncement stories/chreiai (Buchanan, Tannehill, Berger). We saw that the early form-critical approach, which was very much occupied with textual development, stressed the importance of the concluding pronouncement. Bultmann even goes so far as to suggest that the story was invented on the basis of an isolated dominical saying. This led to a neglect of the other features in these stories. The other parts of pronouncement stories have not been sufficiently studied. Albertz’s recognition of the recurring structure of pronouncement stories is directly relevant to this study, although his remark that these stories present only two characters to ensure better comprehension for the listener is not acceptable. In contrast to Albertz, this study demonstrates that some pronouncement stories involve three participants.

The comparison with Hellenistic chreiai has shown that pronouncement stories can be regarded as expanded chreiai. The typical chreia is very brief, while the NT pronouncement story includes many narrative details. These details are not unnecessary embellishments, and in fact need to be taken into consideration in the analysis of NT pronouncement stories.
Recent suggestions for the classification of pronouncement stories/chreiai have been diverse and have not produced a consensus. The difficulty is in finding verifiable and distinctive categories without overlap.

Berger's assertion that chreiai are often determined by their beginning, not by their conclusion, deserves consideration. He challenges the often-held position that emphasizes only the concluding statement. I agree that the chreiai have to be analyzed as a whole.

Tannehill recognized the existence of pronouncement stories with three characters. These are the kind of pronouncement stories that form the focus of this study.

It is evident that the analysis of pronouncement stories must not be limited to the concluding statement. The development of the whole narrative needs to be examined. The tools of narrative analysis are very appropriate for this examination, since it analyzes and evaluates the narrative features of all parts of the story, be that the beginning or the concluding pronouncement. Is the story developed around a monologue, a dialogue, or three interacting characters? How do the characters interact? How does the plot progress?

On the basis of the features, which are addressed in the above questions, I am able to show that there is a distinct group of pronouncement stories with three characters who form the three poles of the narrative. I
also show that Albertz's assertion that all of these stories involve only two characters is incorrect. But beyond demonstrating the mere existence of these tripolar narratives, I also establish their unique character and function within the framework of the gospel. In the following chapter, the eight tripolar pronouncement stories that occur in the Gospel of Mark are examined.
CHAPTER 3

TRIPOLAR PRONOUNCEMENT STORIES IN
THE GOSPEL OF MARK

In this chapter I analyze the tripolar pronouncement stories that can be found in the Gospel of Mark. Each of these narratives are examined individually to find out how they are composed in order to recognize "how" these stories mean. In so doing, I apply the perspective of narrative criticism. ¹ This analysis deals with the setting, the main characters, and the development of the plot as presented in each of the seven tripolar pronouncement stories.

The setting of the narrative provides the background and the borders for a story to occur.²

The setting ‘sets the character off’ in the usual figurative sense of the expression: it is the place and collection of objects ‘against which’ his actions and passions appropriately emerge.³

¹See my discussion of the synchronic perspective of narrative criticism on pp. 2-7.

²Shepherd, 64. Shepherd illustrates the function of the setting as a backdrop by Leonardo de Vinci’s painting Mona Lisa.

³Chatman, 138-39.
This analysis deals with the temporal and the local aspects of the setting which the evangelist relates to his audience.¹

In discussing the main characters² of tripolar stories, I differentiate between the direct attribution of traits and motives, and the indirect description of the characters through their actions and words through the author.³ This distinction has been referred to as "showing and telling".⁴

The narrator 'tells' the reader directly what characters are like. Or the narrator 'shows' the characters by having them speak and act and by having others talk about them and react to them.⁵

In explaining the progression of the plot, the interaction of the main characters is used as the point of reference. How the characters act and interact with each

¹Rhoads and Michie, 63-64. Others have included the social, moral, and spiritual story world under the aspect of setting (see Shepherd, 64).

²As pointed out above, p. 16, the main characters of tripolar narratives are those who are actively involved in the same scene and essential to the progression of the plot.

³"One of the most interesting elements of any story is the cast of characters which populate it. Characters are defined and shaped for the reader by what they do (action) and what they say (dialogue) as well as what is said about them by the narrator or by other characters" (Culpepper, 7).

Bar-Efrat distinguishes between the "direct shaping of the characters" referring to their appearance and inner personality, and the "indirect shaping of the characters" through their speech and actions (Bar-Efrat, 47-92).


⁵Rhoads and Michie, 101.
other is analyzed at each of the three stages of the plot, namely "description—reaction—reply." The third stage, the reply, always represents a pronouncement of Jesus. In this analysis, we are interested in the question of how this pronouncement ties in with the rest of the plot.

I deal with these narratives sequentially as they appear in the Gospel text. The place of each tripolar narrative within the Gospel of Mark is briefly addressed as part of the introductory remarks to each section. The introductory comments also summarize the different classifications that NT scholars have given to each of those pericopes. The scholars quoted here are those whose general views have been discussed in the review of literature.

This chapter lays the foundation for the fourth chapter, where the different features of the Markan tripolar stories are compared with each other in order to establish the similarities and differences between those stories and to bring out their significance.

The Healing of the Paralytic (Mark 2:1-12)

The healing of the paralytic represents the first pronouncement story with three main characters in the Gospel of Mark. It occurs at a place where the ministry of Jesus

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1 See above, pp. 16-17.

2 It has been recognized that Mark 2:1-3:6 is characterized by an "obvious topical unity." Different scholars have advanced the opinion that this material of five conflict stories represents a pre-Markan collection.
is already in full progress. The reader learns that after the baptism and temptation of Jesus, and the imprisonment of John (Mark 1:9-14a), the ministry of Jesus begins. Jesus soon comes to popularity throughout Galilee (Mark 1:28). The "summary report" in Mark 1:39 identifies the elements of Jesus' ministry: he travels, preaches "in their synagogues," and drives out demons. Preceding the healing of the paralytic, the author narrates Jesus' call of his first disciples (Mark 1:14-20), his exorcism of an evil spirit (Mark 1:21-27), his healing of Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1:29-31), his prayer in solitude (Mark 1:35-39), and his healing of a leper (Mark 1:40-45).

It has been pointed out that the narrative of the healing of the paralytic uniquely combines the features of a pronouncement story and a healing miracle. The pericope has been designated as a controversy dialogue by Albertz.


2"As to form, this pericope defies any neat classification along the lines of healing or controversy narratives" (Guelich, 81). For a discussion of the various views concerning the literary unity of the pericope, see Ingrid Maisch, Die Heilung des Gelähmten: Eine exegetisch-traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Mk 2,1-12 (Stuttgart: KBW Verlag, 1971), 21-48.

3Albertz, 13.
and by Bultmann, as a paradigm of the "pure type" by Dibelius, as a pronouncement story by Taylor, and as a "non-unitary" conflict story by Hultgren. Tannehill classifies it as a hybrid form, combining the types of a quest and an objection story.

The Setting of the Narrative

The time setting of the narrative about the healing of the paralytic is established by two details at the beginning of the story: Jesus entered Capernaum "again, after some days" (Mark 2:1). The "again" indicates to the reader that this is not the first time Jesus is present in this city. It establishes a connection to Mark 1:21-28.

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1 Bultmann treats this pericope also under the heading miracle stories (Bultmann, Geschichte, 12-14, 227).

2 Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel, 43.

3 Taylor asserts that the narrative "has peculiar features of its own. . . . The incident is related in much greater detail than is usual, or necessary, in a Pronouncement-Story." He suggests that we are dealing with a pronouncement story from which the proper beginning and ending were "cut away and replaced by the fuller details of the Miracle-Story" (Taylor, Formation, 66, 68).

4 Hultgren, 106-109.

5 Tannehill, "Varieties," 107. Klaus Berger does not include this particular pericope in his list enumerating chreiai and apophthegms (Berger, Formgeschichte, 80-82).

The "after some days" links the narrative with the preceding incident, the cleansing of the leper (Mark 1:40-45), and puts it in a time sequence.

The local setting of the healing story is described in brief but essential sketches: it moves from the general to the specific. As the story progresses additional changes in place contribute to the overall movement of the narrative.

The first information identifies Capernaum as the town where the incident took place. The description then narrows in on a house in which the people suspected Jesus to be (Mark 2:1). The author gives us no information as to which specific house he is referring to, whether this is the place of Jesus' relatives, of one of his disciples, or if it

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2With regard to Mark's duplicate expressions, Neirynck observes that, in both local and temporal statements, we also find a progression from the general to the more specific (Frans Neirynck, Duality in Mark: Contributions to the Markan Redaction, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium, vol. 31 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1988), 45-53.

3For the house as an "architectural space" in opposition to the official holy places of synagogue and temple, see Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, Narrative Space and Mythic Meaning in Mark (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), 104-40. See also below, pp. 84-85.
was some other place altogether. Arguing from the larger context, Lane states that "it is natural to think of the home belonging to Peter and Andrew."¹ However, this detail is of little importance for an understanding of the story. What is important, however, is that this house was soon overcrowded. At this point the description becomes very detailed: "There was no more room, not even at the door" (Mark 2:2). The specific mention of the blocked door conveys that Jesus was at a place where he could no longer be reached. This crowd, blocking the entrance, is an essential part of the setting, since it obstructs any further access to Jesus. It represents "what occupies the space and hinders free movement."² Up to this point the description of the local setting has moved from the general, the town of Capernaum, to the specific, the crowded house with the blocked entrance. At this seemingly hopeless moment, the narrative proceeds by introducing a new location, the roof of the house. By digging a hole into this roof the helpers of the paralytic create a new access to Jesus. As the paralytic is lowered through this hole


into the house, the description of the local setting of the narrative is almost complete. It focusses now on the immediate presence of Jesus who is in the middle of an over-crowded house somewhere in Capernaum. At this moment the interaction between the main characters begins.

A final reference to place is given at the end of the narrative, when the healed paralytic went "outside" "in front of" all the people (Mark 2:12). This leads to the conclusion of the narrative.

The Characters of the Narrative

Besides the three main characters, the paralytic with his four friends, the scribes, and Jesus, the narrative mentions the "many" in the introduction and the conclusion. They are not part of the interaction. They do not represent a "pole" in the narrative. Instead they are part of the backcloth of the narrative. They become an essential part of the description of the setting. At the end of the narrative the "many" appear again as the "chorus." They do not alter the plot of the narrative.

1I am treating the paralytic and his helpers as one character because both are working on the same goal. The narrative itself does not differentiate between them in terms of their motives or actions. Technically the helpers of the paralytic disappear from the scene after Mark 2:5: "When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic . . . ." But even this sentence supports the commonness of the paralytic and his helpers. For my definition of character, see pp. 14-15.

2See above, pp. 16-17.
However, they intensify the magnitude of the happening and the prominence of the miracle worker.¹

The three main characters are described sketchily: Jesus is preaching, the paralytic is lying on his mat as he is lowered through the roof, and the scribes are sitting there. Except for Jesus, the characters appear on the scene of Mark's Gospel for the first time.² The evangelist gives the reader some insight into the motives and thoughts of the characters. However, these characters come to life in particular through their actions and interaction. In this way the author reveals their inner disposition.

The paralytic and his four friends, who appear only here in the Gospel of Mark, dominate the scene with their actions as soon as they are introduced into the story. They carry the paralytic, dig through the roof, and lower him into the room.³ The fact that the obstacle of the overcrowded house does not deter them from accomplishing

¹"Der Chorschluss unterstreicht nicht nur ein letztes Mal die Realität der Heilung, sondern auch die Größe des Wunders, bzw. des Wundertäters, der vollbracht hat, was "noch nie" geschehen ist. Der Chorschluss rückt die wunderbare Heilung und den Wundertäter ins rechte Licht" (Maisch, 55).

²See Augustine Stock, The Method and Message of Mark (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989), 95. Even though the scribes are mentioned in Mark 1:22, they are not present at that moment.

³For a reconstruction of this action in the context of Palestinian building conventions, see Walter Grundmann, Das Evangelium nach Markus, Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1977), 74-75.
their goal reveals their determination. The author specifies that their action is an expression of their faith. The additional characterization of the paralytic and his friends is given indirectly in the statement: "As Jesus saw their faith . . ." (Mark 2:5). This comment uncovers the noble attitude of the paralytic and his friends to the reader.

The paralytic is indirectly identified as a sinner through Jesus' pronouncement of forgiveness. This introduces a theme that is taken up in a later pericope in which Jesus pronounces that he has come to call the sinners (Mark 2:17). However, the story does not enlarge on this

1The statement is indirect in a twofold sense: the author does not explicitly speak of their faith, nor does Jesus pronounce their faith openly. It is in revealing the perception of Jesus that the evangelist explains the motives of the paralytic and his friends to the readers of the narrative.

2This seems to include also the paralytic (see Joachim Gnilka, Das Evangelium nach Markus, Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament [Zürich: Benzinger Verlag, 1978], 1:99).

3Petersen asserts that at this point the narrator aligns the point of view of Jesus and the point of view of the narrator with that of the reader. The narrator "whispers into the reader's ear things that only he and Jesus know" (Norman R. Petersen, "'Point of View' in Mark's Narrative," Semeia 12 [1978]: 102).

4See Guelich, 86.
aspect, and it is not clear if the forgiveness addressed a particular sin or the general sinfulness of the paralytic.¹

Towards the end of the story, the paralytic again comes into view. Here the inner disposition of the paralytic is indicated through the outward act of obedience toward Jesus' command to rise up. "The man believed that the One who ordered him to get up, take up his pallet and go home would also enable him to obey the order."² The genuine

¹Klauck points out that the narrative does not assume the notion that the disease is a punishment for sin. Instead he asserts that the connecting link between healing and forgiveness has to be seen in the nearness of the kingdom of God (Hans-Josef Klauck, "Die Frage der Sündenvergebung in der Perikope von der Heilung des Gelähmten [Mk 2,1-12 parr]." Biblische Zeitschrift 25 [1981]: 241). However, Jesus' utterance makes clear that the paralytic had sins which needed to be removed. This may reflect the Rabbinic notion as stated by Rabbi Hiyya b. Abba: "A sick man does not recover from his sickness until all his sins are forgiven" (Nedarim 41a; all translations from the Babylonian Talmud are taken from Isidore Epstein, ed., Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud [London: Soncino Press, 1985]). With reference to numerous OT passages, Lane concludes: "Every healing is a driving back of death and an invasion of the province of sin" (Lane, Mark, 94). In my opinion, Grundmann comes to a well-balanced conclusion when he asserts: "In der Erkenntnis, daß es zwischen Schuld und Krankheit Zusammenhänge gibt, widerstreitet Jesus der rabbinischen Theologie nicht, aber trennt sich von ihr, wo aus diesem Zusammenhang ein rechnendes und berechnendes Verfahren wird, das in jedem Krankheitsfall auf die Ursache der Krankheit in konkreten Sünden schließt, so daß aus dem Kranken ein um seiner Schuld willen Gestrafter Gottes wird" (Grundmann, 78).

nature of his obedience and faith is substantiated by the fact that he is indeed healed.

Even though the narrative does not record any words of the paralytic (or of his friends), it paints a vivid picture of his inner disposition of genuine faith and obedience toward Jesus that leaves the reader without a doubt.

The "nameless" scribes, in contrast to the active paralytic and his friends, are presented as just sitting and thinking (Mark 2:6). Parlier points out that their lack of movement puts the scribes in contrast to all other persons present in this narrative. Their thoughts are antagonistic to Jesus' words to the paralytic and become the center of the controversy as the story progresses. As in the case of the paralytic and his friends, we never actually hear the

he obeys the command instantly." The immediate healing of the paralytic is of course also a confirmation of Jesus' authority (see Pesch, Markus, 1:161).

"Außer der Standesbezeichnung wird 'zur Person' nichts Näheres gesagt; wichtig ist allein ihre Rolle als typische Gegner Jesu" (Josef Ernst, Das Evangelium nach Markus: Übersetzt und erklärt, Regensburger Neues Testament [Regensburg: F. Pustet, 1981], 87).

Parlier also asserts that from the point of movement the scribes occupy the center piece of a chiastic structure in this pericope. Before they are introduced, people enter the scene, after they are introduced people leave the scene, however, they neither enter, leave, or even change their position, "mais sont là, statique, au centre du récit. Leur place centrale comme leur absence totale de mouvement les font apparaître en opposition aux autre personnages" (Isabelle Parlier, "L'autorité qui révèle la foi et l'incrédulité: Marc 2/1-12," Etudes Théologiques et Religieuses 67 [1992]: 244).
scribes talk. They neither express their opinion, nor
defend their position; they neither argue with Jesus, nor
openly react to Jesus' healing miracle.

The thoughts of the scribes identify them as
defenders of the tradition, and even of God.¹ This, of
course, was part of their perceived role.

Sociologically, the rabbis were the successors of the
prophets, i.e., men who knew the divine will, and
proclaimed it in instruction, judgment, and preaching.
It was they who decided what was required, in all
details of conduct, in order to give practical effect to
the law—as interpreted by themselves.²

The evangelist does not explain or evaluate the
motives behind the thoughts of the scribes. However, Jesus'
activity has been contrasted with that of the scribes
earlier (Mark 1:21-28). At that incident in a synagogue in
Capernaum,³ the author explains that Jesus astonished the
people because he taught with authority, and "not like the
scribes" (Mark 1:22). This identifies the scribes for the
reader of the Gospel as those who, being without authority,
question the one with authority. This introduces the
contrast between Jesus and the scribes and sheds doubt on

¹"Die Einzigkeit Gottes steht für sie auf dem Spiel" (Gnilka, 1: 100).


³Notice the connection between the two pericopes through the term "again" (Mark 2:1).
the motives of the scribes in this present narrative. However, the question they have raised is not defeated by a revelation of their motives, but by Jesus' exploration of the issue of forgiveness together with the healing miracle.

The dominant character of this story is Jesus. He has been identified previously in Mark's Gospel as the "Christ," the anointed one, who is announced by John the Baptist, whose proclamation in turn represents a fulfillment of OT prophecy (Mark 1:1-3). At his baptism, Jesus is confirmed by the heavenly voice as God's beloved son (Mark 1:11). He then successfully repels Satan's temptations (Mark 1:13). He begins a successful ministry in Galilee, which includes preaching God's gospel, calling disciples, healing, and teaching with authority (Mark 1:14-45). This means that prior to this narrative the evangelist has already established firmly the legitimacy of Jesus' ministry, the validity of his claims, the genuineness of his character, and the popular approval of his mission.

The story of the healing focuses on Jesus from the very start. His return to Capernaum (Mark 2:1) introduces

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'This term is used by Rhoads and Michie, 101. The paralytic with his friends, the scribes, and Jesus are all main characters in the sense that they all contribute to the development of the plot. However, Jesus is also the dominant character as the chief purpose of narrative and, in fact, the whole Gospel of Mark centers around him. "Jesus is the central figure in the Gospel of Mark, and the author is centrally concerned to present (or re-present) Jesus to his readers so that his significance for their lives becomes clear" (Robert C. Tannehill, "The Gospel of Mark as Narrative Christology," Semeia 16 [1979]: 57).
the whole story and makes possible what is about to take place. The actions of the paralytic as well as the thoughts of the scribes center on him. Jesus is the only one who is uttering direct speech. And most importantly, he is the one who with action and pronouncement settles all questions at the end.

An indication of the popularity and fame of Jesus is given in the description of the many people who soon overcrowd the house where Jesus is suspected to be staying. As already mentioned earlier in the Gospel, Jesus' teaching is regarded by his audience as being with authority, and the reports of his successful healing miracles quickly spread throughout Galilee. At this stage of his ministry people are seeking out Jesus.

The first activity that Mark describes of Jesus in this pericope is his preaching of "the word" to them (Mark 2:2). This introduces Jesus, who will perform a miracle and enter the controversy with the scribes later in the story, as the proclaimer of the word. However, after the paralytic appears, Jesus' attention shifts immediately to him. It appears that Jesus stopped preaching in order to attend to the paralytic. This indicates how much his ministry centered around people.

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1"L'expression utilisée ici, en ouverture de la péricope, 'et il parlait la parole' indique la manière dont Marc comprend l'activité de Jésus et place l'ensemble miracle-controverse dans le cadre enseignement-proclamation de la Parole" (Parlier, 243).
In this narrative, Jesus is also presented as being very perceptive. He recognizes the faith underneath the outward actions of the paralytic and the paralytic’s friends. Similarly, his pronouncement of forgiveness indicates his knowledge of the presence of sin. Besides perceiving the faith of the paralytic and his friends and the paralytic’s need for forgiveness, Jesus also "knew in his spirit" (Mark 2:8) the thoughts of the teachers of the law. Much of the movement of this narrative is based on the fact that Jesus has this ability to perceive the motives and thoughts of the people he encounters.

The fact of the healing miracle not only brings the narrative to a conclusion, it also underlines the credibility of Jesus and his claims.1 Jesus himself makes

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1The term "son of man" is used in Mark only by Jesus. Others never address him with this title. I cannot enter into a lengthy discussion on this expression. I accept the position that in using this term Jesus was referring to himself. Or expressed differently: "For Mark, Jesus alone is the Son of Man" (Christopher Tuckett, "The Present Son of Man," Journal for the Study of the New Testament 14 [1982]: 59).

Besides having authority to forgive sins, the son of man, according to Jesus in Mark, is Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28), has come to serve (Mark 10:45), will suffer, will be delivered, betrayed and killed, will rise from the dead (Mark 8:31; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33; 14:21, 41), and will return in glory (Mark 8:38; 13:26; 14:62). These son of man sayings reflect the three phases of Jesus’ unique ministry, his present activity, his crucifixion and resurrection, and his parousia.

Kingsbury discusses this term in an excursus from the perspective of narrative criticism. He suggests translating it with "this man" or "this human being" in order to make clear that "it is unquestionably clear that 'the Son of man' always refers to Jesus." At the same time he asserts that this term is not a title and "does not set
the point explicit that by healing the paralytic he shows that "the son of man has the authority on earth to forgive sins" (Mark 2:10). In this way the narrative demonstrates and validates Jesus' authority.

The Progression of the Plot

The narrative is framed with an introductory setting of the stage (Mark 2:1-2) and the concluding "choir" response of the witnesses to the miracle (Mark 2:12b). The "many" play a role in both parts of the frame. The first two verses establish a connection to the preceding pericope; at the same time, they mark a distinctive "new narrative beginning."¹

The actual story is found in Mark 2:3-12a.² The progression of the plot can be described and structured in terms of the interaction of the three characters. This leads to the following three-part division:³ (1) the

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¹Dewey, *Markan Debate*, 67. As to the connection between Mark 1:45 and 2:1-2, Dewey points to the chiasm that inverts the order of the hook words in both parts.

²"Mit der Begegnung bzw. dem Auftreten des Hilfsbedürftigen setzt das Corpus der Wundergeschichte ein" (Pesch, *Markus*, 1:154).

³Pesch asserts: "Wir folgen bei der Auslegung den einzelnen Stufen der Erzählung." He divides the text into Mark 2:1-5; 2:6-10, and 2:11-12. His discussion is based on
The first part describes the incident which will later give rise to a reaction. It relates the action of four men who bring their paralytic friend to Jesus by lowering him through a hole in the roof. Jesus interacts with the paralytic by pronouncing: "Son, forgiven are your sins" (Mark 2:5).

From the very outset the author leaves no doubt that the four helpers have come to bring the paralytic to Jesus (Mark 2:3). The evangelist does not record any words, either of the paralytic, or of his friends. Their participation in the plot happens through their actions. These actions make clear they want to get close to Jesus with the request for healing.1

This symbolic request is answered by Jesus' words of forgiveness, which are given in direct speech: "Son,


Wright comes to a similar conclusion in his treatment of this passage. He regards this narrative as an intercalation (George Al Wright, Jr., "Markan Intercalations: A Study in the Plot of the Gospel" [Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1985], 17, 74-81).

1"Die fehlende Heilungsbitte ist durch den außergewöhnlichen Transport des Kranken durch das Dach des Hauses, in dem sich Jesus befindet, mehr als ersetzt" (Gnilka, 1:95-96).
forgiven are your sins" (Mark 2:5). These words come as a surprise,¹ since up to this moment the reader did not know that the sins of the paralytic even were an issue.² The situation calls for some resolution, since so far the indirect request for healing by the paralytic is only answered with a word of forgiveness by Jesus. "Instead of bestowing the object that is lacking, he substitutes for it an object not desired."³

Up to this moment no indication has been given that this scene would be disrupted by a controversial element. What is missing to bring the story to a resolution and successful conclusion is the healing of the paralytic, which has been the symbolic request of the paralytic with his friends, and which could have been inaugurated with the declaration of forgiveness by Jesus.

The second part, however, suddenly disrupts the flow of the story. With just the adversative de⁴ the "scribes" are introduced. "Without warning, they suddenly emerge in

¹Walter Wink, "Mark 2:1-12," Interpretation 36 (1982): 60. Wink asserts: "This is so shocking, even cruel, that it was an event which could not be forgotten."

²"If one understands the laborious arrival of the paralytic as a request for healing (and this seems to be the correct understanding), one cannot but be surprised at Jesus' response. At the very least it does not fit the request. Consequently it is unexpected and perceived by certain readers as deceptive" (Calloud, 142).

³Ibid.

this scene to raise the question about his statement of forgiveness."¹ They react to the first part of the story.

The reaction of the scribes is related in terms of their thoughts, which are given in direct speech. These thoughts are introduced by the phrase "and they were pondering in their hearts" (Mark 2:6). This phrase clearly expresses the private² and personal nature of the process.³ But similar to the request for healing on the side of the paralytic, their questions remain unspoken.⁴

The phrase "pondering in their hearts" alone does not necessarily express antagonism or conflict. It does not express an emotional state of hostility. It can refer to an honest search to find an answer to a puzzling question.⁵

¹Guelich, 87.


⁴Guelich, 87.

⁵In Luke 3:15 the crowd wonders if John may be the Christ.
Scholars disagree if the scribes are expressing a purely theological concern,¹ criticism,² or an "angry question."³

In Mark 2:8 the phrase is repeated in a question at the beginning of Jesus’ reply to the scribes: "Why do you ponder these things in your hearts?" Mark 2:6 and 2:8 thus constitute a "frame"⁴ which brings the attention to vs. 7, the questioning thoughts of the scribes. These thoughts reveal the nature of their intentions.

The thoughts of the scribes contain three parts. The first and the third part represent a question, while the second part articulates a statement.⁵ The first question is derogatory,⁶ referring to Jesus "contemptuously as this fellow."⁷ It establishes the fact that the scribes are dealing here with Jesus’ words as spoken previously to the

¹Walter Schmithals, Das Evangelium nach Markus. Ökumenischer Taschenbuchkommentar zum Neuen Testament (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1979), 1:160.

²Hooker, 86.


⁴Stock, 95.

⁵"Der Widerspruch ist von Mk in zwei rahmenden Fragen und in einer Feststellung artikuliert" (Ernst, 87).


⁷Hooker, 86. The Greek is outos; see also Ernst, 88: "Hinter dem abwertenden ‘dieser da’ steht massive Kritik."
paralytic. They ask for the reason or justification for his words. The second part categorically states that "he blasphemes." This statement is no longer tentative, it does not seek to pursue an uninvolved, objective theological conversation. With this statement, the scribes directly accuse Jesus with a charge that demands the death penalty according to the Mosaic law. Within the whole gospel story of Mark this accusation is of significance, because "it becomes the basis of a formal accusation and condemnation before the Sanhedrin at the close of the ministry (Ch. 14:61-64)." The third part of the scribes' thoughts again is put in a question. Here the rationale for their accusation is given: "Who is able to forgive sins except the One, God?" This seemingly self-evident question serves as the "irrefutable proof for their indictment." It sets Jesus' action in opposition to the center of Jewish faith as formulated in Deut 6:4.

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1For the interrogative pronoun ti, see Bauer, 1632-33.
2"Ihr fragendes Erstaunen wird sofort zum fertigen Urteil" (Grundmann, 76). I disagree with Mann's position at this point holding that this statement "is tentative" (Mann, 224).
3Against Schmithals, 1:160.
4Lev 24:15; see Stock, 95.
5Lane, Mark, 95.
6Lenski, 102.
7Gnilka, 1:100.
In relating the thoughts of the scribes the author introduces an element into the narrative which demands resolution. On the one hand, Jesus stands accused as a blasphemer,\(^1\) on the other, the singleness of God, the pillar of Jewish faith is at stake.\(^2\) At this point the narrative cannot just proceed with the healing of the paralytic by Jesus. In fact, with the thoughts of the scribes, all the efforts of the paralytic and his friends are also put in question.

It is interesting to note that the element of suspense introduced into the narrative only exists for the reader, who now knows the thoughts of the scribes. Since, as the narrative is told, these thoughts remained unspoken, the people present in the house do not know what is going on. But the readers are well aware of the antagonistic situation created by the thoughts of the scribes.

The continuation of the narrative in the third part is dependant upon Jesus' knowledge of the thoughts of the scribes.\(^3\) Since the thoughts of the scribes are hidden to immediate witnesses of the scene, the reply of Jesus makes sense only when he knows what goes on in their minds. The

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\(^1\)Guelich, 87. Guelich asserts that this is the "most serious" charge of all accusations within the section of Mark 2:1-3:6.

\(^2\)Grundmann, 77.

\(^3\)Jesus "possesses the same mind-reading powers as the narrator!" (Petersen, 100).
author makes sure that the reader understands that Jesus is indeed able to perceive their questions "in his spirit" (Mark 2:8).

Having established this connection the evangelist now relates the reply of Jesus. This is "the first of eleven places in Mark where Jesus responds to reductionist attacks on him or on the behavior of his followers."¹ The reply in this narrative consists of direct speech and the healing miracle.² The speech counters the question in such a way that the healing miracle becomes part of the answer establishing Jesus' authority to forgive sins. It needs also to be noted that the paralytic does nothing to defend his request or the behavior of Jesus. In this way the narrative focusses solely on Jesus' reply and final pronouncement.

The reply of Jesus is in four parts. The first three address the scribes, the last the paralytic. Jesus' answer to the scribes begins with the question: "Why do you ponder these things in your hearts?" (Mark 2:8). This counterquestion "corresponded in form"³ to the question of


²In terms of the Hellenistic chreiai this would put this narrative into the category of the "mixed" chreia, which according to Theon includes both a saying and an action (see above, p. 45).

the scribes: "Why does this fellow speak thus?" (Mark 2:7). At the same time, this counterquestion reveals to the scribes that Jesus knows their hearts,¹ a fact which the author has just explicitly disclosed to the reader. In this way Jesus introduces his reply.

In the second part of his reply Jesus directly addresses the issue with a question that has been compared to the Rabbinic a maio re ad minus form of argumentation.² "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic: Your sins are forgiven, or to say: Rise and take your mat and go?" (Mark 2:9). With this riddle, as presented before the scribes, the theme of healing is taken up again. So far Jesus’ response to the paralytic’s symbolic request for healing only dealt with the forgiveness of his sins. Here now both themes³ (i.e. healing and forgiveness) are addressed in the same sentence, held together by the question of which is easier. This "prepares for the word of healing which demonstrates that forgiveness has actually been realized in the experience of the afflicted man."⁴

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¹Gnilka, 1:100.
²Pesch, Markus, 1:160.
³Belo comments that Jesus deals here in fact with the "pollution system" as well as with the "debt system" (Fernando Belo, A Materialist Reading of the Gospel of Mark, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981], 108).
⁴Lane, Mark, 96.
With the statement in the third part of his answer, Jesus moves from the theological issue of forgiveness and healing and brings his own person into focus. He explains that the impending healing is a demonstration of the authority of the son of man to forgive sins on earth (Mark 2:10). The *hina*-clause expresses purpose: "In order that you may know. . . ." Maisch points out that Jesus provides here the answer to the question as to who can forgive sins, except for God—it is the son of man. The demonstration of his authority is directed toward the skeptical scribes.

In the fourth part of his reply Jesus finally addresses the paralytic. He introduces his address with the emphatic "to you I say." It indicates that Jesus' full attention is now on the paralytic and no longer on the scribes. He commands: "Rise, take your mat and go" (Mark 2:11). This command echoes the riddle which Jesus had

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1Yeager, 4:616; see Blass, Debrunner, and Funk, 186; Bauer, 764-67.

2"Der Einschub wird also durch zwei Höhepunkte gegliedert, die einander wie Frage und Antwort zugeordnet sind. Die erste Hälfte des Einschubs (V. 5-7) wird abgeschlossen durch die Frage: Wer kann Sünde vergeben außer Gott? Die zweite Hälfte wird abgeschlossen durch die entsprechende Antwort: der Menschensohn!" (Maisch, 80; see also the graph on p. 81).

3Doughty points out that the son of man saying transcends the initial issue by affirming the lordship of Jesus (Darrell J. Doughty, "The Authority of the Son of Man [Mk 2:1-3:6]," Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 74 [1983]: 173).

4Ernst, 89.
addressed to the scribes just before (Mark 2:9), when he asked what is easier, to forgive sins or to say these words. This command is immediately observed by the paralytic, an indication of his healing. Now for the third time the author repeats the word as he relates that the paralytic arose, immediately took his mat, and went out (Mark 2:12).

In Jesus’ reply the narrative comes to its climax. It skillfully ties together all the loose ends of the story. Not only are the scribes refuted, but also the faith of the paralytic rewarded. Above all, Jesus’ legitimacy to forgive sins is established as well as his power to work miracles. After Jesus’ pronouncement, the discussion is closed. The narrative concludes in Mark 2:12b by relating the reaction of the crowd to this incident.

Summary

The tripolar narrative of the healing of the paralytic brings together three main characters: Jesus, the paralytic with his friends, and the scribes. The narrative first establishes a healing relationship between Jesus and the paralytic. It introduces a third pole with the appearance of the scribes who question the validity of Jesus’ behavior. In this way the significance of the healing miracle is widened. It now not only represents Jesus’ healing authority, but gives an opportunity to present the legitimacy of his claims. The narrative thus moves from a healing relationship to an interaction of
criticism by a different party and ends in the pronouncement of Jesus. This brings the healing to a conclusion and answers the criticism of the scribes. It also reveals and substantiates an important aspect of Jesus’ authority.

Both the paralytic and the scribes are interacting with Jesus, while no direct relationship between the paralytic and the scribes is mentioned. The connection between the latter two characters is only indirect. Their presence on the same “stage” at the same time makes it possible to compare their motives and thoughts.

**Jesus’ Company With Sinners (Mark 2:15-17)**

The narrative about Jesus’ company with sinners almost immediately follows after the first tripolar narrative discussed above. It is separated from the story of the healing of the paralytic only by the two verses in Mark 2:13-14. These verses speak about Jesus’ teaching ministry and the calling of Levi. Even though the ensuing narrative is connected thematically to these verses, Mark 2:15 clearly marks the beginning of a self-contained plot.¹

¹Dewey advances some important arguments for the inclusion of vss. 13 and 14 into the rhetorical unity of the narrative (Dewey, *Markan Debate*, 84).

However, vs. 15 with the phrase kai ginetai marks a new narrative beginning. Guelich asserts: "kai ginetai often introduces a traditional narrative" (Guelich, 101). Similarly also Rudolf Pesch, "Das Zöllnergastmahl (Mk 2,15-17)," in *Mélanges Bibliques en hommage au R. P. Béda Regaux*, ed. Albert Descamps and R. P. André de Halleux (Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1970), 71.

As to the unity of the narrative, starting in vs. 15, Schmithals asserts: "15-17 setzen neu ein; Levi wird
The story has been categorized as a controversy dialogue by Albertz and Bultmann,¹ as a pronouncement story by Taylor,² as a "non-unitarian" conflict story by Hultgren,³ and as a conflict story by Tannehill.⁴ Dibelius, who regards the story about Jesus' company with the sinners and the call of Levi as one pericope, calls it a paradigm of the "less pure type."⁵ Berger includes the narrative in his discussion under the heading "Chrie und Apoftegmata."⁶

The Setting of the Narrative

This narrative does not provide an explicit temporal setting. Neither does it indicate a time sequence in relationship to the previous pericopes. The fact that it is related after the call of Levi (Mark 2:13-14) suggests a time after Levi's decision to follow Jesus. Otherwise the

¹Bultmann, Geschichte, 16. Bultmann asserts that the scene was created around the pronouncement saying.

²Taylor, Formation, 64.

³Hultgren, 109-11.


⁵Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel, 43.

⁶Berger, Formgeschichte, 80.
temporal setting is linked with Jesus' presence in "his" house: "As he was reclining."  

As to the local setting the author informs his readers that the incident takes place in "his house." The pronoun is ambiguous, because it can refer equally to Jesus or Levi. The Lukan version of this pericope explicitly states that Levi held a banquet "in his house" for Jesus (Luke 5:29). The previous verse (Mark 2:14) may also be taken as an indication that the house could belong to Levi. May has recently argued that this is Levi's house from the perspective of the social-cultural background. From this perspective, the fellowship meal is a reciprocal gesture indicating a positive response to Jesus' initiative (his


2Guelich, 101.

3Lane refers to Luke at this place as the "earliest commentary" on Mark (Lane, *Mark*, 103).


5Pesch, through a literary-critical reconstruction, arrives at the conclusion that the house belongs to Levi. He thinks that Mark moved the specific name "Levi, son of Alphaeus" from vs. 15, where it designated the house, to vs. 14 (Pesch, "Zöllnergastmahl," 71-73).

calling of Levi).¹ Even though it is not possible to arrive at a definite conclusion,² I agree with Guelich, who asserts that "the drift of the pericope seems to point to Levi as the host."³

It is not specified where this house is found. Mark 2:13 informs us that Jesus was walking "beside the lake," and passing on, arrived at the "tax collector's booth." This house may have been close by or somewhere else in Galilee; no definite information is given. What is important for the author, however, is that this house is the place for table fellowship. In fact, the first detail the narrative relates is Jesus reclining in this house. Because of this the "architectural space" of the house⁴ is more than a purely physical place. It becomes a place of intimate relationship.⁵ Here the narrative unfolds.

²Schmithals comments: "Die Frage kann unentschieden bleiben: sie hat kein sachliches Gewicht" (Schmithals, 1:166).
³Guelich, 101.
⁴Malbon, "Mark 2.15," 285. Malbon asserts that "as an architectural space in the Markan narrative, 'house' is distinguished especially from 'synagogue' but also from 'temple.'"
⁵The previous tripolar narrative also took place in a house. However, there the house became the obstacle that hindered the friends from bringing the paralytic to Jesus. It had to be dug open. In this respect, the two houses are very different as to their significance.
The Characters of the Narrative

The three characters in this narrative are the sinners and tax collectors, Jesus with his disciples, and the scribes of the Pharisees. The description of all three characters is scant: most of the emphasis is on their action and interaction.

The table companions of Jesus are specified as numerous "tax collectors and sinners." These two terms appear together in the narrative three times (Mark 2:15, 2x Mark 2:16); at the second mention, their order is reversed. The text does not give any information about this group except that they are many and that they are with Jesus in the house (Mark 2:15). However, the repetitiveness of the terminology in comparison to the rather concise pericope places a strong emphasis on these words. The "tax collectors and sinners" are the issue of the narrative!

It has been recognized that the combination of tax collectors and sinners is strange, since the first term refers to a profession, while the second is a religious-ethical category.\(^1\) However, according to Granville Sharp's rule, the fact that only one article is used for both nouns

\(^{1}\)E.g., Pesch, *Markus*, 1:165; Schmithals, 1:168. Jeremias lists different examples in which tax collectors are mentioned together with other groups of people. They include thieves, robbers, Gentiles, harlots, adulterers, etc. (Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 311).
in vs. 16 establishes that not two, but one group is envisioned.

The significance of these two terms is that they describe social and religious "outcasts," "Gentiles and/or Jews who clearly and publicly live contrary to Mosaic law," and the Pharisaic interpretation of the law. By using this label Mark already gives a powerful characterization: this is not a neutral group of people. They are people who are recognized as living outside of the social and religious norms of Judaism. By referring to those people as tax collectors and sinners, the author is in fact using the same "dismissive and condemnatory epithet" as the Pharisees (Mark 2:16).

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2See Stock, 104.


4Guelich, 102.


The phrase "for there were many who were following him" (Mark 2:15) may give us some further information about the tax collectors and sinners. However, it can also be regarded as a parenthetical phrase, which, according to Pesch, would refer to an enlarged circle of disciples.\(^1\) A strong argument for the inclusion of this phrase in the description of the tax collectors and sinners is the repetition of the term "many." Hendriksen holds that the "many" of this phrase is "probably resumptive."\(^2\) He paraphrases the text in order to explain the meaning of this reading:

> It may seem strange that many tax-collectors and sinners, despised people, would be reclining at table with Jesus; nevertheless, it is the truth: they were reclining with him because they had begun to see in him a Friend (cf. Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:34), One whom they were beginning to follow.\(^3\)

Even if the above-discussed phrase is not included in the description of the tax collectors and sinners, the text without a doubt makes clear that they, the outcasts, are associating with Jesus in the house.

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\(^1\) "Der Evangelist nimmt die Gelegenheit, den Kreis der Jünger über die fünf bisher Berufenen (Mk 1,16-20; 2,13f) hinaus zu erweitern" (Pesch, "Zöllnergastmahl," 72).

\(^2\) Guelich distinguishes the two possible interpretations on the basis of the technical or non-technical use of the term "to follow" (Guelich, 102).

\(^3\) Hendriksen, 96.
The "scribes of the Pharisees," a construction appearing only at this place in Mark.¹ The phrase here simply identifies scribes who belong to the Pharisee party.² They are the questioning party in this narrative. Their question is based on their observation of Jesus' behavior.

Characteristic for the Pharisees,³ and certainly background to the conflict, was their separation from the am haarez.⁴ It was the challenge for Pharisees to remain within the society as a whole, but at the same time not to become defiled.

Members of the sect were engaged in workaday pursuits like everyone else. This fact made the actual purity rules and food restrictions all the more important, for keeping the law alone set the Pharisees apart from the people among whom they lived.⁵

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²Mann, 231.


⁵Neusner, From Politics to Piety, 91.
As they saw themselves as "righteous," the people who did not follow their lifestyle would be the sinners. The behavior of Jesus would go contrary to their own value system.¹

Jesus is the first character to be introduced in the narrative. The incident occurs as he is reclining in "his" house.² This introductory remark puts the focus of the story on him from the very start. It opens the scene with Jesus' presence in this house. He is participating in the fellowship meal with the "tax collectors and sinners." At this point we do not get any knowledge as to his thoughts or the purpose behind his action; he simply was there with these people.

Closely connected with Jesus are his disciples. They represent one group with Jesus.³ It is possible that the parenthetical sentence, "for there were many and they followed him" (Mark 2:15), may also be applied to the disciples; however, as I have stated above,⁴ it is more

¹"Jesus in eating with such 'sinners' would be seen by the Pharisees to show the same disregard for these laws" (Dunn, "Mark 2.1-3.6," 401-402).

²Probably a reference to Levi's house; see above, p. 85.

³In relation to the verb "recline with" Jesus as well as his disciples appear in the instrumental of association (see Yeager, 4:634). This places the tax collectors and sinners on one side, while Jesus and his disciples are on the other.

⁴See p. 89.
likely that it has to be applied to the "tax collectors and sinners."

The function of the disciples in this tripolar narrative is that they are the recipients of the Pharisees' criticism. However, they do not react to it in any way. In fact, even though they are mentioned as participating in the fellowship with the tax collectors and sinners before, they are not included in the criticism. The Pharisees' disapproval is directed towards Jesus. And it is Jesus who reacts to these words because he overheard the conversation. Thus the disciples remain passive, they have no independent role here, they belong to Jesus and cannot be regarded as a pole of the narrative. They serve as an aid to make the criticism of the Pharisees less direct.

The Progression of the Plot

The introduction of the narrative, "and it happened as he reclined in his house" (Mark 2:15), sets the stage in a concise manner. It follows a story which shows a threefold progression from the point of view of the action and interaction of the characters. The three parts are (1) the Description in Mark 2:15, (2) the Reaction in Mark 2:16, and (3) the Reply in Mark 2:17.¹

¹For the Gospel story of Mark as a whole, it is of significance that the disciples are mentioned here for the first time with their official title (Ernst, 95).

The description relates the table fellowship between the tax collectors and sinners with Jesus and his disciples. This relationship is clearly reciprocal. It is to be noted how their presence at the table is introduced. They appear on the scene after it has already been established that Jesus is reclining in Levi’s house. Obviously, Jesus does not come to them, but they come to Jesus. At this point the author says that they are reclining "with" Jesus (and his disciples). The grammatical construction of this sentence puts the tax collectors and sinners in the position of the subject, while Jesus and the disciples are mentioned in the case of the instrumental of association. This again seems to indicate some initiative on the side of the tax collectors and sinners. The term "reclining with" puts the emphasis more on the fellowship aspect than on the meal.

The reaction of the scribes of the Pharisees is put in a question, given in direct speech. The question is introduced by the neutral term elecon (Mark 2:16). Its

\[\text{May argues from the perspective of social scientific criticism that the fellowship meal is Levi’s response to Jesus’ initiation of a "dyadic colleague contract." This thesis would support the notion that the fellowship meal takes place in the context of a reciprocal relationship. May further points out that the establishment of this affiliation would be scandalous to the Pharisees, because it would result in a long-term relationship (May, 149).}\]

\[\text{Yeager, 4:634.}\]

\[\text{Bauer, 1572.}\]

\[\text{Ibid., 951-54.}\]
adversative nature has to be recognized from its content. The question is spoken to the disciples, but directed towards Jesus. That the adversary group begins to talk in this narrative may be taken as an indication of the "increasing aggressiveness on the part of Jesus' opponents." However, the conflict has not as yet completely erupted, since Jesus is still addressed only indirectly.

The reader is prepared for the question by the previous uses of the terms "tax collectors and sinners." In so doing it is already clear to the reader that Jesus is associating with people that are labeled in this way. This means he is defiling himself according to the code of the Pharisees. However, the question brings the issue to a point that disrupts the narrative flow and demands a resolution. The story can no longer ignore the issue.

The question challenges the previously related interaction. The accusation is directed towards Jesus. From the whole company of people he is singled out. In fact, he is specifically mentioned twice. First they observe that he eats with the tax collectors and sinners. And then they ask the disciples in direct speech: "Why does

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1Guelich, 103.
2Mack, Myth, 183.
3"Vorwurf," (Pesch, Markus, 1:165).
he eat . . . ?" (Mark 2:16). ¹ Some commentators understand this utterance as a statement; however, the ἥτις at the beginning of the sentence has probably been employed in an interrogative sense.² In any case, the issue here is the behavior of Jesus.³

The thread of the narrative is continued because Jesus overhears the accusing question. In this way he is able to respond. The narrative concludes with Jesus’ reply, which is given in direct speech without any action. It is directed only to the Pharisees. However, the content shows that the reply transcends the situation and is of general significance. After the pronouncement no further comment, action, or interaction is recorded, either by the tax collectors or the Pharisees.

The pronouncement is a parallel saying. The first part is a Bildwort, the second a Botenspruch.⁴ The metaphorical saying about the physician has parallels in Hellenistic literature, and may also reflect Exod 15:26;⁵ it

¹ At this point the disciples have just the function of the voiceless recipients of the message, which is given in direct speech. See above, p. 88.

² Hooker, 96.

³ "Die Worte der Schriftgelehrten können als Frage oder als herausfordernde Feststellung verstanden werden: 'Er ist mit Zöllnern und Sündern!' In jedem Fall geht es um das Recht zu solchem Verhalten (Grundmann, 83).

⁴ Ernst, 95.

⁵ Ibid., 96.
is of a general nature. It "counters an assumption that underlies the objection." Jesus rejects the implicit charge of defilement by pointing to the physician-patient relationship. "The sick also are unclean, but physicians regularly attend them." In the Botenspruch, Jesus expresses his self-understanding and his mission explicitly. Here Jesus emphasizes that his mission is directed towards those people who have been labeled as "sinners."

The pronouncement of Jesus serves a threefold function: (1) it is a reply addressed to the Pharisees, (2) it justifies Jesus' behavior and in fact explains his mission, and (3) it explains how the "sinners" are viewed by Jesus and justifies their fellowship with him.

Summary

In the story of Jesus' company with the sinners we have a concise form of a tripolar narrative. The three poles of the narrative are represented by the so-called tax collectors and sinners, by the scribes of the Pharisees, and by Jesus (with his disciples). The first part describes a reciprocal fellowship meal between Jesus and the tax collectors and sinners. In the second part, the scribes of the Pharisees implicitly challenge the lawfulness of this interaction. Their reaction is directed toward Jesus.

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1Mack, Myth, 183.
2Ibid.
pronouncement of Jesus counters this charge. He, at the same time, refutes the position of the Pharisees, takes sides with the "sinners," and explains his own self-understanding and mission. In this tripolar narrative the tax collectors and sinners are interacting with Jesus in the fellowship meal. The Pharisees are addressing Jesus (indirectly by way of telling his disciples), and Jesus answers the Pharisees. However, there is no direct contact or interaction between the Pharisees and the sinners.

Plucking of Grain on a Sabbath (Mark 2:23-28)

The narrative about the "Plucking of Grain on a Sabbath" closely follows the tripolar story about "Jesus' Company with Sinners." It is separated through the question about fasting with the subsequent parables of the new cloth and the new wine (Mark 2:18-22).

This story has been designated as a conflict dialogue by Albertz\(^1\) and Bultmann.\(^2\) Hultgren regards it as a "non-unitary" conflict story,\(^3\) while Dibelius calls it a paradigm of the "pure type."\(^4\) Berger includes it in his

\(^1\)Albertz, 110.

\(^2\)Bultmann, Geschicht, 14-15. Bultmann points out that this narrative belongs to those stories that have their origin in a behavior of Jesus or the disciples.

\(^3\)Hultgren, 111-15.

\(^4\)Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel, 43.
treatment of "Chrie und Apoftegma." Tannehill classifies this narrative as an "objection story."

The Setting of the Narrative

The narrative has a distinct temporal and local setting, both of which are essential to its understanding. Both settings are described in the very first words of the narrative.

The narrative informs the reader that the described incident happened "on the Sabbath" (Mark 2:23). This information does not connect the pericope sequentially to the preceding ones. It does not tell us how much time has elapsed in the meantime. This Sabbath is not specified any further by the author. However, as the narrative unfolds we find that this single piece of information builds the necessary background through which the story becomes meaningful.

Through the introductory formula (Mark 2:23) the time of this narrative is connected to Jesus' walking through the fields. The fact that the grain was ripe may give us another temporal indication, namely the time of

1 Berger, Formgeschichte, 80.
3 See Beyer, 29-52.
harvest, which could have been sometime between the Passover and Pentecost.¹

The narrative is set locally in grainfields through which Jesus is walking with his disciples (Mark 2:23). This vivid detail gives the story an immediacy, since the plucking of the grain is about to become the point of contention. We receive no further information to pinpoint the location of these fields any more than we are able to determine which specific Sabbath the author was referring to.² However, the succinct information,³ which is provided here, sets the stage for the story and makes it intelligible.

The Characters of the Narrative

The characters of this narrative—Jesus, the disciples, and the Pharisees—are described entirely in terms of their actions. In addition to these actions, the author gives no insights into their hidden thoughts, motives, or feelings.

¹See Grundmann, 89.

²"There is no definite statement when and where all of this happened" (Schweizer, 70).

³"Mit äußerst knappen Strichen wird die Ausgangssituation gezeichnet. Sie setzt das Wissen um das Gebot der Sabbatruhe voraus. Dieses ist im Dekalog verankert (Ex 20,8-11; Dtn 5,12-15), wurde aber von verschiedenen jüdischen Richtungen mit unterschiedlicher Strenge ausgelegt" (Gnilka, 1:121).
In the story of the plucking of the grain, Jesus is only referred to through the personal pronoun autos.\(^1\) Still, he is the central figure in this story, since he is the character who is introduced at the very beginning of the narrative (Mark 2:23), and the one who utters the final pronouncement (Mark 2:25-28). In the introductory phrase Jesus is described as walking through\(^2\) the fields on a Sabbath. In the pronouncement saying he refers to himself as the "son of man" (Mark 2:28).\(^3\)

Jesus is presented as the leader of his disciples in this narrative. He is the person who leads "his" disciples along the way, he is approached by the Pharisees on account of their behavior, and he defends them with the authoritative pronouncement. Indirectly he compares himself to David, who, according to the OT took action for those who were "with him" (Mark 2:25, 26).\(^4\)

The representation of Jesus as the leader also characterizes the party of disciples. They are "his" (Mark

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\(^2\)Bauer, 1256.

\(^3\)As to the identity between Jesus and the son of man see above, p. 68.

The fact that Jesus answers on their behalf reflects the master-disciple relationship. The author describes the action of the disciples with the sentence: As they began to make way they plucked the heads of the wheat (Mark 2:23). This sentence has some grammatical difficulties, so that it is uncertain what part of the disciples’ activity is disputed: What kind of way did they make, how wide was it? How great was the loss in terms of the grain, or did they in fact walk along the fields? Did they disregard the rule about the Sabbath day’s journey or did they disregard the rules concerning harvest and food preparation on the Sabbath? Casey argues that the Palestinian audience would have understood that the disciples were taking peah, and that the issue was whether this was an activity which should be allowed on a Sabbath.

1As to the responsibilities to the outside world for those inside the master-disciple relationship, see ibid., 1-15.

2In comparison to Mark 2, Matthew (12:1) and Luke (6:1) seemed to have smoothed out the construction "began to make way" (cf. Guelich, 119).

3Schmithals, 184; Ernst, 102.


Bacchiocchi observes: "If the disciples had actually dared to clear a pathway through a cornfield, they would have been charged not solely with Sabbath breaking, but also with trespassing, destroying and stealing private property" (Samuele Bacchiocchi, From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity [Rome: Pontificial Gregorian University, 1977], 49).
Certainly, from the perspective of the narrative as it is, the plucking of the ears of wheat is the action which becomes the point of contention.\(^1\)

The Markan account does not explain the motivation behind the disciples' action. Matthew is different in this respect, for he says that the disciples were hungry (Matt 12:1). However, this fact cannot be deduced from the text of the Gospel of Mark. It simply states the action without any additional information.

The antagonistic party in this narrative is "the Pharisees." They suddenly appear on the scene without an explanation. In contrast to previous narrative the Pharisees now bring their criticism directly to Jesus. They are also very explicit in their denunciation of the disciples' behavior as being "not lawful" (Mark 2:24). This may imply an intensification of the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees.\(^2\)

\(^1\)"Die anstößige Handlung der Jünger, ihre Ährenraufen, wird umständlich—im nebengeordneten Partizip, jedoch betont in Schlußstellung—geschildert" (Pesch, Markus, 1:180). For the explanation of the offensive behavior according to Rabbinic concepts, see Bacchiocchi, 49.

\(^2\)"The adversaries of Jesus have progressed from 'the scribes' (2:6) to 'the scribes of the Pharisees' (2:16) to a general 'they' with reference to 'the disciples of the Pharisees' (2:18) and now to 'the Pharisees' themselves" (Heil, 71).
The Progression of the Plot

The narrative is introduced by relating the local and temporal stage. It follows a threefold progression of the plot: (1) the Description in Mark 2:23b, (2) the Reaction in Mark 2:24, and (3) the Reply in Mark 2:25-28.¹

After the stage has been set, the disciples come into focus with their plucking of some heads of grain. This narrative is different from the ones previously discussed because the first part describes a simple action, not an interaction between two parties. It is different also inasmuch as it is the behavior of the disciples, and not of Jesus himself which is taken issue with.

In the second part the Pharisees abruptly enter the picture. They react to the disciples' behavior with their question about the lawfulness of their behavior. Their reaction does not allow for any tentativeness. The narrative presents the Pharisees as speaking with the conviction that the disciples have violated well-established standards. This means, as Dunn argues from a historical perspective, that "the Pharisees had already elaborated the basic prohibition against working on the Sabbath to cover such transgression."² The text indicates that the Pharisees

¹See Pesch, Markus, 179; Daube, New Testament, 170.
²Dunn, "Mark 2.1-3.6," 402; Dunn goes on to explain: "The degree of concern and development of halakah reflected here is just what we might expect for the less rigorous Pharisees at a stage roughly halfway between Jubilees and the Mishnah" (ibid.; see also Guelich, 121; Daniel J.
regarded their standard in this case to be applicable to the disciples.

The Pharisees direct their charge against Jesus. They do not interact with the disciples. The rationale may have been that Jesus was the master and thereby responsible for the behavior of his disciples. From the narrative point of view the focus has now shifted upon Jesus, who is about to give his reply.

The reply of Jesus concludes the story. No other character enters the scene after this. Jesus' answer can be divided into two parts. The first part begins with a counter-question and then argues on the basis of the Scriptural incident of David's eating of the consecrated bread. The second part contains two pronouncements of Jesus: the first is a chiastic gnomic saying, the other a Christological statement.

Jesus introduces his reply with the counter-question, reminding the Pharisees of a certain incident in


'Daube, "Responsibilities," 1-15; "Die Pharisäer . . . wenden sich nicht an die Jünger, sondern an den für ihr Tun verantwortlichen Lehrer" (Ernst, 102).

'Grundmann, 89.

'Schmithals, 186.

'Guelich, 119.
the Scriptures: "Have you never read what David did?" (Mark 2:24). "The formulation 'Have you not read . . . ,' followed by a counter-question reflects the language of debate, and is appropriate for the context."¹

The incident which is then quoted by Jesus is based on 1 Sam 21:1-6. Different answers are possible as to the significance of this reference in the present context.²

Lane asserts that the emphasis falls on "the association of David and his men, because it is this detail that provides the parallel to Jesus and his company of men."³ In this sense then, Jesus justifies the behavior of his disciples by his own leadership role.⁴ The theological connection

¹Lane, Mark, 115.

²Cohn-Sherbok asserts that Jesus' argumentation is "not valid from a rabbinic point of view." It is based on a false analogy," since the disciples were not starving at that point (D. M. Cohn-Sherbok, "An Analysis of Jesus' Arguments Concerning the Plucking of Grain on the Sabbath," Journal for the Study of the New Testament 2 [1979]: 41).

According to 1 Samuel, the presiding priest was not Abiathar (Mark 2:26), but Ahimelech (1 Sam 21:1). The reference to the priest does not occur in the Matthean or Lukan parallel accounts (see Schmithals, 183).

³Lane, Mark, 116. Lane holds that the issue of David's giving consecrated bread to his men does not address the Sabbath question. Similarly Dewey: "It is not clear how David's disobedience in eating justifies the breaking of the sabbath (Dewey, Markan Debate, 95). However, I assert that the OT example points out that the breaking of the law in the context of holiness is legitimate (1 Sam 21:4-6). It is this legitimization which Jesus claims for himself. On the basis of 1 Chr 9:32 is is even possible to reconstruct that this incident must have taken place on a Sabbath (cf. 1 Sam 22:6).

⁴See Daube, "Responsibilities," 5-7.
between the incident involving Jesus' disciples and the example of David is encapsulated in the term *exestin*.¹ Since the Pharisees charge the disciples with unlawful behavior (Mark 2:24), Jesus points to the fact that David similarly acted unlawfully (Mark 2:26).²

The argumentation on the basis of the David incident is followed by two sayings which are introduced by the *Reihungsformel*,³ "And he said to them" (Mark 2:27). This indicates that the "sayings provide a new turn in the story."⁴ The first saying addresses the issue of the Sabbath in an even more fundamental and radical manner than the David incident. For Jesus "the law is a gift to man, not only in exceptional cases, but as a general principle."⁵


²Pesch suggests that Jesus argues in the *a minori ad maius* fashion (Pesch, *Markus*, 1:182). In this way the answer of Jesus receives Christological significance (see Gnilka, 1:122). Lane emphasizes that Jesus' argumentation does not conform to the conventions of a formal Rabbinical debate (Lane, *Mark*, 117).


⁴Mack and Robbins, 125.

⁵Schweizer, 72.
By pointing to the creation order,¹ Jesus asserts that the Sabbath was designed to be a blessing for all humankind.

The son-of-man saying is linked² to the previous saying by the conjunction "so that," (Mark 2:28). However, it is difficult to see how the first saying can result in the second. The first emphasizes the existence of the Sabbath for humankind while the second asserts the lordship of the son of man over the Sabbath.³ The first indicates that the "intent" for the Sabbath is to serve humankind; the second asserts the "jurisdiction" of Jesus over the interpretation of the law.⁴ Because of the difficulty to connect these two sayings with the resultant "so that," this conjunction should be applied to the whole incident, as Lane convincingly argues:

The function of the introductory particle is not to link verse 28 narrowly to verse 27, as if the pronouncement that the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath is somehow being deduced from the more general principle that God instituted the Sabbath for the sake of man. Its

¹"Mit egeneto ist auf die Entstehung (=Schöpfung) von Mensch und Sabbat angespielt: der Sabbat is um des Menschen willen gemacht (der Mensch ist nach Gen 1 als Vollendung der Schöpfung vor dem Sabbat gemacht). Der Sabbat ist dem Menschen gegeben . . ." (Pesch, Markus, 1:184).

²For other thematical and stylistical links between these two sayings, see Dewey, Markan Debate, 98.


⁴"The Pharisees are out of their domain when they attempt to make a judgment in the arena where the Son of man is in charge" (Mack and Robbins, 129).
function is rather to introduce a declaration which follows from the incident as a whole.\textsuperscript{1}

Therefore Jesus' reply makes a definite Christological statement\textsuperscript{2} about his own person and his right to explain the intent of the Sabbath. He answers to the criticism of the Pharisees and challenges their Sabbath theology.\textsuperscript{3} At the same time he defends the action of his disciples as their master.

Summary

The tripolar narrative of the plucking of the grain brings together three characters: the disciples, the Pharisees, and Jesus. The first part does not relate an interaction as in the previous two tripolar pronouncement stories. Instead the disciples are described in their action of the plucking of the grain. Their behavior becomes the issue and the reason for their objection which directly addresses Jesus. Jesus' pronouncement is addressed to the

\textsuperscript{1}Lane, \textit{Mark}, 120.

\textsuperscript{2}As in the case of the forgiveness of the paralytic Doughty asserts: "In its Markan form, the controversy in vv. 23-28 no longer has to do merely with the weighing of human need against the ordinances of the sabbath, but with the lordship of Jesus" (Doughty, 173).

\textsuperscript{3}In so doing Jesus did not replace the Sabbath, instead he gave his own interpretation of it (see Bacchicocchi, 59). This agrees with the fact that Jesus, as Neyrey has shown, did not abandon the purity rules of his culture. Instead he reformed them on the basis of "core law," the ten commandments and the concern for internal, rather than external observation (Jerome H. Neyrey, "The Idea of Purity in Mark’s Gospel," \textit{Semeia} 35 [1986]: 116-20).
Pharisees. It replies to the Pharisees, makes a definite Christological claim, and defends the disciples. Even though the behavior of the disciples becomes the issue in this narrative, they do not interact with any of the other two characters, neither with the Pharisees, nor Jesus or vice versa.

The Healing of the Crippled Hand (Mark 3:1-6)

The narrative about the healing of the man with the crippled hand follows immediately after the above discussed tripolar narrative of the plucking of the grain. It continues the theme of the Sabbath observance of the previous narrative.1 The introductory particle "again" may point to a previous incident, or possibly to Mark 1:21.2

Albertz3 and Bultmann4 classify this narrative as a

1Pesch argues that the two narratives had already been merged before Mark incorporated them in his corpus. Even if one does not agree with his reconstruction of the origins of the text he is right in pointing out the strong links between the two stories (Pesch, Markus, 1:187-88).

2Ibid. In contrast to Pesch, Mann translates palin by "on another occasion as being better than attempting to make some artificial connection with the preceding narrative" (Mann, 241). Grundmann says that this term describes Jesus' custom to go into the synagogue (Grundmann, 95). Without giving specific references Stock asserts that "the use of 'again' (palin) at the beginning of v. 1 seems to indicate that Mark is connecting this healing with other healings on the sabbath" (Stock, 117). On this point see also J. Smit Sibinga, "Text and Literary Art in Mark 3:1-6," in Studies in New Testament Language and Text, ed. J. K. Elliot (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 360.

3Albertz's view that this narrative is the conclusion of the controversy collection (Mark 2:1-3:6) is held by several scholars (Albertz, 5-6; see Dewey, Markan
conflict story. Dibelius regards it as a paradigm of the pure type, while Hultgren holds to his view on the original unity of the narrative by classifying it as a "unitary" conflict story (with the exclusion of vs. 6). Taylor explains that this pronouncement story is distinguished from a Miracle-Story by the fact that the healing is not related for itself, but almost incidentally and for its bearing on the principle point of interest, the question of the observance of the Sabbath.

It is not included in Berger's list dealing with "Chrie und Apoftegma." Tannehill classifies it as an "objection story."

The Setting of the Narrative

The narrative gives some general information as to the local and temporal setting. The local setting is the synagogue (Mark 3:1). If the introductory "again" is meant as a reference to Mark 1:21, this would have been a synagogue in Capernaum.

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1 Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel, 43.
2 Hultgren, 82.
3 Taylor, 65.
4 Tannehill, "Varieties," 106.
5 Heil, 74.
The temporal setting is the Sabbath. This is not mentioned in the introduction; it could, however, be inferred from the fact that Jesus went to the synagogue. Later in the narrative the Sabbath is mentioned explicitly (Mark 3:2), and in fact becomes the issue.

The local and temporal settings do not allow us to pinpoint this incident to a specific place or time; however, all information necessary for understanding of the progression of the plot is given.

The Characters of the Narrative

The narrative of the healing of the man with the crippled hand is told with three characters: the man with the crippled hand, Jesus, and the Pharisees.

The characterization of the man with the crippled hand is very sketchy. The most important information the reader gets concerns his physical condition, which is mentioned twice in almost identical wording (Mark 3:1, 3). This description does not give a medical diagnosis, instead it expresses in popular language¹ that the man had a paralyzed hand or arm. It is a condition that is not life threatening.²

The man is addressed by Jesus twice (Mark 3:3, 5). As to the first request of Jesus, "Come here," it seems to

¹Hooker, 108.
²Ernst, 106.
be implied that the man responded positively.¹ In response to the second request, "Stretch out your hand," it is said specifically that the man "stretched it out, and his hand was healed" (Mark 3:5). Particularly the second response can be seen as an indication of the inner disposition of the man, since "the man's use of an immobile limb is itself (as in the case of the paralytic) an act of faith."² However, this is not made explicit within the narrative and can only be inferred.

The Pharisees appear on the scene unnamed as "they." Only in vs. 6 are we informed that these people were the Pharisees. However, through their adversarial behavior toward Jesus it is already obvious that the Pharisees are indicated here. The narrative characterizes them by two kinds of action. First, they are introduced as watching Jesus (Mark 3:2). Second, the narrative relates that the Pharisees were silent as a reaction to Jesus' probing question (Mark 3:4).

The author lets the reader know why the Pharisees watched Jesus. They wanted to see if he would heal on a Sabbath, so that (hina) they might accuse him (Mark 3:2). "This was not a run-of-the mill observation but an official

²Hooker, 108.
surveillance of a suspect. . . . It is a clear test whether Jesus will observe the rabbinic ruling or not."¹

Their silence is interpreted to the reader through Jesus’ reaction. Jesus grieved, "because of their hardness of heart" (Mark 3:5). "Jesus perceives their silence as culpable."² This phrase "hardness of heart" adds to the characterization of the Pharisees. It describes their spiritual condition with a term that is "reminiscent of Israel’s response to the prophets’ message."³

Mark 3:6 clearly reveals their hostile intentions. They left the synagogue with the intention to destroy Jesus with the help of the Herodians.

Their joint conspiracy ‘to destroy him’ intensifies the attack against Jesus and marks the climax not only of this particular controversy, but of the entire opposition that has been building against Jesus throughout the narrative (2:1-3:6).⁴

The description of Jesus stands in direct contrast to that of the Pharisees. Sibinga states:

It is hardly necessary to point out that vivid contrast is a key-note of this episode. Jesus is speaking freely and openly, the opponents remain silent. Jesus is present doing good and curing a disabled man; the Pharisees are secretly plotting evil.⁵

¹Stock, 117.
²Guelich, 137.
³Ibid., 137. See here also for OT references.
⁴Heil, 76.
⁵Sibinga, 361.
Jesus is never mentioned by name; however, the overall context of the Gospel leaves the reader in no doubt that he is the healer. Since the Pharisees are not mentioned by name either until vs. 6, we find that the narrative merely refers to "he" and "they" to identify these two characters.

In the introduction Jesus is presented as going into the synagogue. Here Mark depicts Jesus once again "as one who—in spite of the charges brought against him—faithfully adhered to Jewish religious practices."\(^1\) In the synagogue Jesus approaches the man with the crippled hand and heals him, an indication of Jesus' miracle-working powers and his command over diseases.

Since the intentions of the observing Pharisees are already stated at the beginning of the narrative, Jesus' actions indicate his determination. He is not swayed by the threat of their accusations. "Rather than withdrawing from the conflict, he provokes it by taking the initiative and calling the man into the middle of the synagogue."\(^2\) At the same time Jesus faces the Pharisees directly and challenges their notions. Since the man did not have a life-threatening condition, Jesus purposefully acted against the Pharisaic regulations.\(^3\) Upon their refusal to respond to his challenge, he reacts with intense emotions: "He looked

\(^1\) Hooker, 107.

\(^2\) Heil, 75.

\(^3\) Dunn, "Mark 2.1-3.6," 402-403.
around at them with anger," and "grieving" because of their hardened hearts (Mark 3:5). This kind of an insight into the emotions of Jesus is given to the readers on only a very few occasions.¹

The Progression of the Plot

The progression of the plot in this narrative is unique because it has "a kind of zigzag movement."² As the story progresses, the focus moves back and forth between the man and the opponents. It is possible, though, to apply the threefold development³ also to this narrative, even though the sequence of events is not as neat as in the other cases. I suggest the following division: (1) the Description (Mark 3:1), (2) the Reaction (Mark 3:2), and (3) the Reply (Mark 3:3-5), with Mark 3:6 as the conclusion.

The difference with the other tripolar pronouncement stories lies in the fact that the description and the reaction parts in this story are referring to the anticipated action of Jesus. The tripolar narrative that is closest in form to this present one is the healing of the

¹Grundmann comments as to the significance of the passage: "Nur an ganz wenigen Stellen wird in den Evangelien von Gemütsbewegungen Jesu gesprochen (Grundmann, 96).

²Sibinga, 362.

³Wright, who regards this narrative as an intercalation, divides the pericope between Mark 3:1-3, 3:4-5a, and 3:5b-6 (Wright, 17, 82-92).
paralytic. These two narratives are the only tri-polar pronouncement stories that include a healing miracle. The zigzag movement may be due to the fact that both healing and controversy elements are interwoven in these stories.\(^1\)

The description introduces both Jesus and the man with the crippled hand in the same synagogue. The introduction of the man in the narrative raises the expectation of a healing miracle for the reader.\(^2\) However, in comparison to the healing of the paralytic, this man does not engage in any action at this stage.\(^3\)

\(^1\) Dewey asserts that the most striking similarity is to be seen in the rhetorical pattern: "the miracle is begun, then interrupted for Jesus' address to the opponents, and only after that completed" (Dewey, Markan Debate, 101).

\(^2\) Regarding the differences between the two healing-pronouncement stories Pesch comments: "Im Unterschied zu 2,1-12 gehören in 3,1-6 Heilungs und Streitfrage bzw. Wort Jesu eng, organischi zusammen; der Erzähler benutzt Züge des Streitgesprächs und der Wundergeschichte und schafft eine Mischgattung, die sich nicht abstrakter Problemstellung, sondern konkreter Überlieferung verdankt" (Pesch, Markus, 1:189).

\(^3\) Heil, 74. Dewey points to the fact that the readers "have been well prepared for the presuppositions by the narrative of the gospel thus far" (Dewey, Markan Debate, 101). Jesus' healing power, but also his challenge of the Pharisaic interpretation of the law, has been well established up to this point.

\(^4\) See Guelich who asserts that the man here "plays more of a supporting role in the conflict between Jesus and his opponents" (Guelich, 133).

There is an interesting addition in the Gospel of the Nazareans. Here the "man who had the withered hand is described as a mason who pleaded for help in the following words: I was a mason and earned [my] livelihood with [my] hands; I beseech thee, Jesus, to restore to me my health that I may not with ignominy have to beg for my bread" (Edgar Hennecke, New Testament Apocrypha, vol. 1, Gospels

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How much the notion of the healing is taken for granted is indicated by the way the Pharisees are introduced at this point. The narrative relates their reaction in view of the anticipated healing miracle. They wanted to see if Jesus would in fact heal in order to have a reason to accuse him. This reaction of the Pharisees is explained by the author to the reader at this point. They do not express their thoughts in direct speech. But the implied criticism of the Pharisees typically disrupts the flow of the narrative at this point for the reader. The healing cannot take place as if nothing had happened. The Pharisees' reaction has turned the healing of the crippled hand into an issue.

Jesus' reply deals with both: he brings the expected healing to a successful conclusion and deals with the implied criticism of the Pharisees. His reply has three parts: the first and third address the disabled man, the second the Pharisees. In the first part Jesus asks the man

and Related Writings, trans. R. McL. Wilson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 148). With this addition the narrative would closely resemble the outline of the other tripolar narratives. This may indicate how Mark 3:1 can be regarded as the descriptive part of the narrative, even though those details are left unmentioned.

¹Haenchen observes that the opponents of Jesus in fact are waiting for Jesus to perform a miracle and seem to believe that he is able to do so. "Sie setzen also voraus, daß er die Macht hat, den Kranken zu heilen, ja sie wünschen sogar diese Heilung, um Jesus wegen Sabbatbruches verklagen zu können (Ernst Haenchen, Der Weg Jesu: Eine Erklärung des Markus-Evangeliums und der kanonischen Parallelen, Sammlung Töpelmann [Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1966], 123).
with the crippled hand in direct speech to "get up into the middle" (Mark 3:3). Even though the reaction of the man is not recorded, it can be implied. He now moves into the center of the scene.\(^1\) This increases the suspense even more,\(^2\) since it is clear to the reader that Jesus is in fact prepared to do what the Pharisees were looking for in order to accuse him.

The second part is based on the fact that "Jesus comprehends the unspoken thoughts of his critics."\(^3\) Addressing the Pharisees in direct speech, Jesus raises the issue of lawful\(^4\) behavior on the Sabbath (Mark 3:4). He uses two "antithetical parallelisms"\(^5\) to bring the issue to the point giving as alternatives either to do good and save life,\(^6\) or to do evil and take life. "It is a matter of either-or."\(^7\)

It needs to be noticed that the situation did not call for an immediate intervention in order to prevent the man from dying. Instead, Jesus performed a miracle that

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\(^2\)Heil, 75.

\(^3\)Hooker, 107.

\(^4\)Jesus uses legal terminology of scribal discussion. See Gnilka, 134; Pesch, *Markus*, 1:191; Schweizer, 75.

\(^5\)Guelich, 134.

\(^6\)For the use of the term "life" in the Gospel of Mark see Mann, 242.

\(^7\)Schweizer, 75.
could have been performed a day later. However, by defining doing good and saving life in terms of the healing of the disabled man, Jesus breaks through the legalistic framework of the Pharisees.¹

In the third part of his reply to the situation, Jesus heals the hand of the man with the command given in direct speech: "Stretch out your hand" (Mark 3:5). Immediately following this command the healing is attested.

Before the second and third part of Jesus' reply, a silent exchange between Jesus and the Pharisees is related: the question with which Jesus brought the issue to the point remains unanswered by the Pharisees. In response Jesus looks at them with anger over their hardening of hearts. This silent interchange "intensifies the element of conflict between the opponents and Jesus."² The reader knows the plans and thoughts of the Pharisees, and he knows the feelings and thoughts of Jesus. The miracle Jesus is about to perform is accompanied with a high degree of suspense for the reader.

The conclusion of the narrative heightens the readers' awareness of the escalated conflict even more by

¹Dunn, "Mark 2.1-3.6," 408.
²Dewey, Markan Debate, 103.
relating that the Pharisees approached the Herodians with the purpose of destroying Jesus.¹

Summary

The three characters appearing in this narrative are Jesus, the man, and the Pharisees. The healing relationship as described in the first part of the narrative is only implied and the healing of the man is to be expected. The Pharisees here appear with the direct intention of witnessing this miracle in order to accuse Jesus. Jesus’ reply addresses the man with the crippled hand twice, concluding in the healing pronouncement. Sandwiched between the two addresses Jesus speaks with the Pharisees, challenging their Sabbath theology. The author relates Jesus’ anger at the hardness of the Pharisees hearts. Jesus’ words do not make specific Christological claims.

In the healing interaction all the initiative rests upon Jesus. The sick man does not make any requests either verbally or symbolically. This condition is left to speak for itself. Similarly the interaction of the Pharisees with Jesus remains unspoken. The author reveals their thoughts and relates their silence to the reader. But the only person to speak openly is Jesus. Absolutely no interaction is recorded between the Pharisees and the sick man.

¹Dewey asserts that Mark 3:6 "serves not only as a conclusion to the story of the withered hand, but also to the entire controversy section" (Dewey, "Literary Structure," 400).
Clean and Unclean (Mark 7:1-13)

The next tripolar narrative is found at a much later place in the Gospel of Mark. The plot of the gospel has advanced with some decisive events like the appointing of the twelve apostles (Mark 3:13-19), the teaching about the parables (Mark 4), and the beheading of John the Baptist (Mark 6:14-29). Preceding the current story that deals with the issue of clean and unclean, we read about the feeding of the five thousand (Mark 6:30-44) and Jesus' walking on the water (Mark 6:45-56). In the present story, the questioning Pharisees appear again on the scene.

This story is classified as a controversy dialogue by Albertz¹ and by Bultmann.² Dibelius does not include this pericope in his discussion of the paradigms, instead he regards it as a "conversation scene," which was created by the evangelist by synthesizing different materials.³ Hultgren asserts that this is a "non-unitary" conflict story.⁴ Taylor classifies the section Mark 7:1-8 as a pronouncement story, while he regards Mark 7:9-13 as well as Mark 7:14-23 as "isolated sayings."⁵ According to

¹Albertz, 36-39.
²Bultmann, Geschichte, 15-16.
³Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel, 218-22.
⁴Hultgren, 116.
⁵Taylor, Formation, 334, 339, 342.
Tannehill, Mark 7:1-15 qualifies as an objection story.¹ Berger includes the passage Mark 7:1-13(23) in his form-critical discussion under the heading "Chrie und Apoftegma."²

I have drawn the limits of the passage at Mark 7:13, even though the treatment of the issue of clean and unclean continues until vs. 23. The reason for ending the passage at vs. 13 is supported by the text itself on two accounts. First, vs 14 begins a new scene with a new set of characters. "And having called again the crowd he said to them" indicates that Jesus addresses an audience that had not witnessed the preceding encounter. The term "again" refers us back to incidents before the encounter between Jesus and the Pharisees, when Jesus had been with the crowd.³ Second, in vs. 17, the disciples, now alone with Jesus again, ask for further clarification of Jesus' saying. At this point Jesus does not go back to the arguments advanced in the section preceding vs. 14. He only explains the parabolic saying which is recorded in vs. 15. This

¹Tannehill, "Varieties," 107. According to Tannehill, Mark 7:17-23 belongs to the category of the "dependent inquiry scenes" (ibid., 114).

²Berger, Formgeschichte, 81.

indicates that the passage in Mark 7:1-23 can be separated into two units: Mark 7:1-13 and Mark 7:14-23.¹

The Setting of the Narrative

This narrative provides no details as to the time or place of this scene. The current narrative simply happened at some point in time when the Pharisees gathered around Jesus (Mark 7:1).

This narrative provides no explicit link to the preceding pericope. The preceding chapter ends with a description of Jesus' ministry in Genesareth and a summary statement stating that Jesus' healing ministry extended throughout the villages, towns, and the countryside (Mark 6:53-65). This passage makes no attempt to establish any connections to these verses in order to provide a local or temporal setting.

The story does relate that the scribes had come from Jerusalem to see Jesus. This fact together with the description of Jesus' ministry in Genesareth in the preceding verses makes it likely that the general local

¹In support of the separation of the passage in a "controversy narrative" (Mark 7:1-13) and a "teaching narrative" (Mark 7:14-23), see Guelich's brief discussion and his references to further literature (Guelich, 361); see also Pesch, Markus, 1:377; Ernst, 200-201; Hooker, 173-74. For a recent article arguing for the unity of the passage see Michael FitzPatrick, "From Ritual Observance to Ethics: The Argument of Mark 7,1-23," Australian Biblical Review 35 (1987): 27.
setting for this narrative is Galilee. Of some significance could also be the fact that the pericopes following the discussion on clean and unclean are located in Gentile territory.

The Characters of the Narrative

The characters are Jesus, the disciples, and the Pharisees together with the scribes that have come from Jerusalem. They are exclusively presented in terms of their actions. We receive no direct information as to their motives, their characters, their appearance, or their thoughts and emotions.

The disciples are described as "some of his disciples" (Mark 7:2). This group of disciples is not further specified, which suggests that all of Jesus' disciples are not present, or, as Stock points out, that others of the disciples "do indeed follow the Pharisaic halakah." The reader, looking through the observing eyes of the Pharisees and scribes, is made aware that they eat

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1Grundmann, 190. Schmithals sees Bethsaida as the place indicated by the context (Schmithals, 1:346).

2"By confronting the purity laws that set 'the Jews' apart (illustrated by 7:2-4 and 7:19b) as focussing on externals rather than what is from within, Jesus can move freely into the gentile area and among Gentiles" (Guelich, 362).

3Stock, 201.
bread with defiled hands.¹ These defiled hands of the disciples become the point of contention as the narrative progresses. Following the observation of the defiled hands of the disciples, the author gives an explanation of the customs of the Pharisees and the Jews who keep the traditions of the elders (Mark 7:3 & 4). The act of the disciples has thereby been identified as being in opposition to the current custom of the observing Jews.²

The antagonistic party is introduced as "the Pharisees and some of the scribes having come from Jerusalem" (Mark 7:1).³ This party, consisting of two groups, is to be seen as one character, since they play the same role in this narrative: they are gathering around Jesus, they see the disciples' violation of the tradition, they pose the question, and they receive Jesus' answer. Much of the movement of this narrative is generated by their initiative.

The characterization of the Pharisees continues in the explanatory remarks that describe the customs of the

¹The adjective κοινὸς describes ritual uncleanness in this context (see Wilfried Paschen, Rein und Unrein: Untersuchung zur biblischen Wortgeschichte, Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament [Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1970], 165-68).


³See Jeremias, Jerusalem, 246-67.
Pharisees (Mark 7:3 & 4). They do not eat before they have washed their hands, they abide by the traditions of the elders, they have washings after they come from the market place, and they have special cleansing ceremonies for vessels and beds. This explanatory remark presents the Pharisees as people who faithfully observe the purity laws according to the tradition of the elders.

The reader is given further insight into the character of the Pharisees through the reply of Jesus (Mark 7:6-13). Here Jesus addresses their hypocrisy and inconsistencies as to their teaching and lifestyle.

Jesus is referred to in this narrative only by the personal pronoun. It is related at the very beginning of the narrative that he is the one, around whom the Pharisees and scribes gather (Mark 7:1). Jesus is not seen as

1Booth concludes his detailed study of the Jewish and Pharisaic purity laws: "We conclude that the Pharisaic question is credible in the time of Jesus on the basis that the Pharisees concerned were haverim who did handwashing before hullin, and were urging Jesus and his disciples to adopt the supererogatory handwashing which they themselves practiced, i.e. to become haberim. It was an exhortation to undertake a higher standard of piety, addressed to Jesus as a religious leader" (Booth, Laws of Purity, 202). Neusner explains concerning the purity laws that they "were the center of sectarian controversy. The Pharisees were Jews who believed one must keep the purity laws outside of the Temple" (Neusner, From Politics to Piety, 83).

2It is not clear if these washings refer to personal baths or washing of objects (see Ernst, 202).

3Neusner, From Politics to Piety, 80.

4Ernst, 201.
engaging in any kind of activity until the end, when he
gives his reply to the Pharisees and scribes. In this reply
Jesus' ability to recognize inconsistencies and to
understand the motifs of the heart are assumed. His reply
further reveals his determinism and fearlessness in meeting
the objections of the Pharisees.¹

The Progression of the Plot

The threefold progression of this story can be
outlined in the following way: (1) the Description in Mark
7:1-4, (2) the Reaction in Mark 7:5, and (3) the Reply in
Mark 7:6-13.²

The first part alerts the reader that the Pharisees
and some scribes from Jerusalem have come to Jesus. The
text then goes on to describe the action of some of the
disciples,³ focussing on the fact that they were eating
bread with defiled hands (Mark 7:2). The author adds a
rather extensive explanation why this behavior violated
ceremonial precepts (Mark 7:3-4).⁴

¹See Heil, 154.
³In presenting an action and not an interaction or
attempted interaction this narrative is similar to that of
the plucking of the grain.
⁴The explanation seems to reflect the Gentile
audience of Mark's Gospel which was not familiar with the
purification customs of the Pharisees. It may also serve
the purpose of broadening the issue (see Robert Banks, Jesus
and the Law in the Synoptic Traditions [Cambridge: Cambridge
The presence of the adversary party at the beginning of the narrative is a feature which we have not yet encountered in the other tripolar pronouncement stories. In fact, the description of the disciples' actions is given to the reader through the eyes of this group. The text relates that they saw the disciples do these things. In this way the reader is well prepared for the ensuing conflict.

The reaction of the Pharisees, as related in the second part, is put in the form of an accusing question in direct speech (Mark 7:5). It is directed toward Jesus, but it deals with the behavior of the disciples.¹ We have encountered this pattern already in the narrative dealing with Sabbath observance (Mark 2:24). The accusing question consists of two parts, moving from the general to the specific.² The first part takes issue with the disciples' general disregard for the traditions of the elders, the second with the specific charge regarding their eating with unwashed hands.³

The reply of Jesus in the third part is rather lengthy and directly confronts the Pharisees. This is

¹In this respect the narrative is similar to Mark 2:23-28; however, in comparison to Mark 2:13-17 the persons are reversed (see Elian Cuvillier, "Tradition et rédaction en Marc 7:1-23," Novum Testamentum 34 [1992]: 175).

²See Neirynck, Duality in Mark, 125-26.

³FitzPatrick, 23.
different from the tripolar pronouncement stories which we have encountered so far, because Jesus' reply does not state general principles of his teaching. Neither the behavior of the disciples nor aspects of his own mission are directly addressed.¹ The Christological element is "more subdued than in previous encounters."² His answer seeks to establish instead the inconsistencies of the questioning party.

The reply of Jesus consists of two parts, the application of the Isaiah quotation and the Corban argument.³ In both sections the first word of Jesus' reply is kalós.⁴ And both sections contain a scriptural quotation, one from Isaiah, the other from the Pentateuch.³ The quotation from Isaiah seems to be oriented towards the

¹The behavior of the disciples or the mission of Jesus are also not addressed in the subsequent verses, which enlarge on the topic of defilement (Mark 7:14-23).

²Banks, 146.

³The second part is set off from the first part by the repetition of "and he said to them" (Mark 7:9). See FitzPatrick, 2:24.

⁴Lambrecht, 48-49.

⁵Cuvillier points out that the term kalós is used differently in both cases. "Au v. il a un sens positif et fonde le choix de la citation du prophète Esaïe qui a bien prophétisé; au v. 9 il est au contraire négatif et polémique: vous avez bien laissé le commandement de Dieu" (Cuvillier, 179-80).
Septuagint version of the OT. It is directly applied to the Pharisees, who are labeled as "hypocrites" (Mark 7:6). The text so used argues against the discrepancy between their words and the heart, and then moves onto the point that they teach commandments of men. This latter point is augmented in the conclusion after the quotation: "Leaving the commandment of God you hold fast to the traditions of men" (Mark 7:8).

With the second part of his response Jesus proves the validity of the conclusion in Mark 7:8 with a specific example. So far the argument responding to the accusing question, why the disciples did not wash their hands before they eat, has moved from the charge that they, the Pharisees, are hypocrites, to the supporting quotation from Isaiah, to the conclusion that they are following human commandments and leaving the divine. As to the washing of hands, it has not yet been made clear why this human command would result in a violation of the divine. The second part of Jesus' reply now cites the example of the Corban practice.

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1For a detailed discussion of the differences between the Markan quotation and the Septuagint, see Lambrecht, 50-51. He concludes that Mark has reworked "the Septuagintal text in function of his own verses 1-5!"

2Guelich, 367.

3Lambrecht, 51.

to illumine the contrast between the Pharisaic traditions and the law of God.\(^2\)

The argument\(^3\) in the second part begins with the repetition of the charge, namely the rejection of God's commandment (Mark 7:9). The following quotation from the decalogue is then set against the Corban practice\(^4\) of the Pharisees. Finally the conclusion is reached: "Thus annulling the word of God by means of your tradition" (Mark 7:13a). This conclusion together with vs. 9 forms a "frame" for this part.\(^5\) The following generalization "and many similar things you do" (Mark 7:13b) indicates that this example can be applied to other aspects as well; it ends the second part of Jesus' argument.\(^6\) "And so Jesus has impressively defeated his opponents' accusation with his own

\(^{1}\)The argument has moved from the "human" to the "Pharisaic" traditions (Berger, Gesetzesauslegung, 487).

\(^{2}\)See Berger, Gesetzesauslegung, 487; Lambrecht, 57-58.

\(^{3}\)See FitzPatrick, 24.

\(^{4}\)For the background of the Corban practices see Berger, Gesetzesauslegung, 490-92; also: Hooker, 177; Stock, 205; Pesch, Markus, 1:375. Schmithals explains concisely: "Wird etwas zu 'Korban' erklärt, war es dem Nießbrauch anderer entzogen, und zwar nach rabbinischer Auffassung auch dann, wenn es nur wie eine Opfergabe angesehen und dem Tempel keineswegs auch tatsächlich zur Verfügung gestellt wurde" (Schmithals, 1:347).

\(^{5}\)Lambrecht, 54.

\(^{6}\)Berger, Gesetzesauslegung, 493.
charge and superior argumentation, to which they can not respond." ¹

Summary

In the narrative dealing with the issue of clean and unclean, we find a tripolar narrative in which a simple action of one party becomes the point of contention of another. Jesus' pronouncement at the end of the narrative does little to justify the disciples or to explain his own mission. Instead, Jesus counters the attacks by pointing out the inconsistencies of the questioning party. The narrative does not show any interaction between the disciples and the Pharisees.

Jesus Blesses the Children (Mark 10:13-16)

The pericope of Jesus' blessing of the children appears in what many scholars see as the second part of the Gospel of Mark, the dividing line being Mark 8:26/27. ² The second half of the Gospel is characterized by Jesus' moving out of Galilee into the more hostile Judean territory. This more hostile environment also brings the plot in the story

¹Heil, 157-58.

²"Mit 8,27 beginnt die zweite Hälfte des Evangeliums. Von jetzt an bietet die vormarkinische Passionsgeschichte ( . . . ) den Faden der Darstellung" (Pesch, Markus, 1:36).
of Mark to its conclusion in the confrontation between Jesus and the authorities, which leads to his crucifixion.¹

The narrative is the first in this discussion of tripolar pronouncement stories that is generally not regarded as a conflict story.² Consequently it is not included in Albertz’s, Bultmann’s, and Hultgren’s treatment of conflict stories.³ Dibelius treats it as a paradigm of the pure type,⁴ and Taylor regards it as a pronouncement story.⁵ It is included in Berger’s list of “Chrie und Apoftegma,”⁶ and Tannehill regards it as a hybrid story combining “correction and commendation.”⁷

The Setting of the Narrative

The story about Jesus’ blessing of the children begins "abruptly"²⁸ without giving any specific local or

¹Some scholars divide this second part into two sections: the way to Jerusalem in Mark 8:27-10:52, and Jerusalem and the passion in Mark 11:1-15:47 (see Stock, 23-31; Ernst, 17-19).

²It is interesting to note that Marcus suggests that Mark 10:15 "was part of Jesus’ controversy with the Pharisees" (Joel Marcus, "Entering into the Kingly Power of God," Journal of Biblical Literature 107 [1988]: 672).

³Bultmann classifies the narrative as a "biographical apophthegm" (Bultmann, Geschichte, 59).

⁴Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel, 43.

⁵Taylor, Formation, 72-73.

⁶Berger, Formgeschichte, 81.

⁷Tannehill, "Varieties," 105.

⁸Hooker, 238.
temporal details\textsuperscript{1} with the words: "And people were bringing little children to Jesus" (Mark 10:13). Ernst calls the scene "blaß und farblos."\textsuperscript{2}

The preceding pericope,\textsuperscript{3} in which Jesus answers the question of the Pharisees concerning the lawfulness of divorce, is located in the "region of Judea and across the Jordan" (Mark 10:1). Jesus continues his instruction on the issue after he is asked by his disciples in a house. However, it is not clear that this place is intended to be assumed in the present narrative.\textsuperscript{4} It seems rather that the place and time are of little significance to the meaning and life of the story.

The Characters of the Narrative

In the story of Jesus’ blessing the children we can distinguish between three characters: the people with the children, the disciples, and Jesus himself.

The people are described in terms of their action. They bring their children with the purpose that Jesus may

\textsuperscript{1}Lane, Mark, 359.

\textsuperscript{2}Ernst, 292.

\textsuperscript{3}Pesch points out that the two pericopes link thematically: "An das Thema 'Ehe' (10,2-12) reiht sich natürlicherweise, wie entsprechende paränetische Traditionen des Judentums belegen, das Thema 'Kinder' an" (Pesch, Markus, 2:130).

\textsuperscript{4}Haenchen assumes that Jesus is still in the house, to which then the people come with their children (Haenchen, 344).
touch them. As in the case of the paralytic and his friends, I regard the people and the children as one character. The reader does not hear about their origin, their character traits, their gender, or their names. Lane comments:

Although it is natural to think that the children were brought by their mothers, the masculine gender of the pronoun in the statement that the disciples rebuked them points rather in the direction of their fathers, or even to children themselves, the older ones bringing the younger ones to Jesus. This later idea tends to be confirmed by verse 14, where the prohibition ‘Do not forbid them’ has clear reference to the children.1

These are some valid inferences; however, the text is not explicit in specifying who these people are.

The action of the people implies a certain belief in Jesus’ special position. They approached him because they desired the children to be touched; they realized the divine blessing2 that was conferred by his touch. They perceived it as worth the effort and possible embarrassment to contact him.

Children did not occupy a prominent social status, they did not have special privileges.3 Instead they were often regarded as socially inferior, helpless, and foolish.4

1Lane, Mark, 359.
2"Die göttliche Segenskraft" (Haenchen, 344).
3See Gnilka, 2:80.
These people had no basis on which to claim the privilege of being touched by Jesus. This may indicate their conviction of the high esteem they place in Jesus' touch on the one hand, but also their boldness on the other. These thoughts about the inner disposition of these people, however, can only be inferred. The text itself does not explain their motives. It simply states that they brought the children with the purpose that they may be touched by Jesus (Mark 10:13).¹

Similarly we do not hear about the motives behind the disciples' reaction.² The disciples create the obstacle which hinders the people from accomplishing their intended goal of reaching Jesus. With his pronouncement Jesus objects to their behavior. The disciples do not represent Jesus' attitude. This is an important detail as to the general characterization of the disciples in the Gospel of Mark. They do not represent unequivocal support for Jesus. They make serious blunders, and even though the Gospel reports them often in a positive light, their negative sides

¹Patte states that the people are "characterized by the will" to bring the children to Jesus (Daniel Patte, "Entering the Kingdom Like Children: A Structural Exegesis," Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers 21 [1982]: 375).

²See Pesch, Markus, 2:132; Haenchen, 344.
are not hidden.\textsuperscript{1} The characterization in this narrative reveals one of their negative sides. They lack the proper perception\textsuperscript{2} of the situation and act inappropriately.

This tripolar narrative paints a vivid picture of Jesus. Not only is he the only person uttering direct speech in this story, but the author also reveals to the reader the emotional response of Jesus upon seeing what has happened. He is indignant (Mark 10:14), a strong expression, signifying "real anger and grief."\textsuperscript{3} The term is associated with Jesus only here in the entire Gospel, and it does not appear in the synoptic parallels.\textsuperscript{4} The text becomes explicit in the next sentence as to the object of Jesus' indignation.\textsuperscript{5}

\begin{itemize}
\item Kingbury, Mark, 102. Kingsbury points out that in the second half of the Gospel the negative characterization of the disciples predominates.
\item Stock, 268.
\item Ibid., 268.
\item Gnilka, 2:80.
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{1}The text is phrased in such a way that it moves from the general to the specific. Mark 10:14 first relates that Jesus was indignant; however, only his words make clear which part of the scene he disapproves of. Neirynck treats this verse under the section "direct discourse preceded by qualifying verb" (Neirynck, 234).

Some less reliable textual variants add the verb "to rebuke." "The addition of \textit{epitimesas} in several witnesses (chiefly Caesarean) was probably due to the influence of \textit{epetimesan} in the previous sentence" (Bruce M. Metzger, \textit{A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament} [New York: United Bible Societies, 1971], 105). This could establish a certain relatedness between the reaction of the disciples and that of Jesus. However, even the less attested reading does not take away the ambiguity either, since up to this

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Jesus disapproves of the disciples' attitude. He explains why their actions are wrong, basing his arguments on the special nature of the kingdom of God. This characterizes Jesus as the teacher, who corrects his disciples and instructs them as to the proper behavior.

Also the conclusion of the narrative describes Jesus with much attention to detail. The text does not simply state that Jesus blesses the children, but that he does so after having placed his arms around them, and by laying his hands upon them (Mark 10:16). These details leave the reader in no doubt as to the attitude of Jesus towards the children. Derrett asserts that Jesus' embrace is in fact an indication that it is not clear if Jesus agrees with his disciples or if he disagrees.

1 Patte, 375-76.


3 The meaning of this blessing and its connection to the blessing of Jacob are addressed by J. Duncan M. Derrett, "Why Jesus Blesses the Children (Mk 10:13-16 par)," Novum Testamentum 25 (1983): 1-18.


However, the text itself does not indicate any connection to the healing touch. Instead the blessing by laying on of hands is the focus of this narrative. "Mit dem Berühren ist nicht der aus Heilungsgeschichten bekannte Gestus gemeint, sondern den auf Handauflegung gespendeten Segen angespielt. Die Berührung soll die Segenskraft auf die Kinder überströmen lassen (Gnilka, 2:80)."
"acted metaphor" which indicates that he has accepted the children as "his relations and co-heirs."¹

The Progression of the Plot

We are referring to the blessing of the children in the introduction because of its clear threefold structure on the basis of the interaction of the characters.² The three parts are: (1) the Description in Mark 10:13a, (2) the Reaction in Mark 10:13b, and (3) the Reply in Mark 14-16.

The narrative begins without an introduction by immediately describing the action of the people. They bring the children to Jesus with the intention that he may touch them. Assuming that the desired "touch" is a blessing, one finds, at this point of the narrative, people who are trying to initiate a relationship with Jesus in order to receive a blessing for the children.

Their purpose is frustrated by the intervening disciples, who hinder the interaction between Jesus and the people with the children. Their rebuke implies disapproval and rejection. It creates tension, since at this point the

¹Derrett, 10.

²See above, pp. 16-17. Robbins also recognizes a three-step progression. However, he differentiates the speech and action of Jesus as two parts, whereas the bringing of the children to Jesus and the rejection of the disciples form one part. When compared with my outline of the events, it can clearly be seen that this division is not based on the action/interaction of the characters (see Vernon K. Robbins, "Pronouncement Stories and Jesus' Blessing of Children," Society of Biblical Literature: Seminar Papers 21 [1982]: 416).
intention of the people and the disapproval of the disciples call for a resolution. Both the description of the people and the reaction of the disciples do not contain direct speech.

This resolution comes with the reply of Jesus. The declaration of Jesus is addressed to his disciples, demanding of them to let the children come to him and not to hinder them. It clearly approves of the action of the people with the children and disapproves of the reaction of the disciples. Introduced by the phrase "Amen, I say to you" (Mark 10:15a), Jesus' answer continues to move beyond the immediate situation. He comes to the general statement that the children are in fact the model for receiving the kingdom of God (Mark 10:15b). Jesus' explanation has prepared the reader to grasp the deeper significance of Jesus' blessing of the children. We find that the reply of Jesus has a threefold significance: it approves of the actions of the people, disapproves of the behavior of the

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1". . . eine wirkungsvolle asyndetische Reihung von Imperativ und Prohibitiv . . . " (Pesch, Markus, 2:132).

2The saying connects an amen introduction with a negative condition (Klaus Berger, Die Amen-Worte Jesu, Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1970], 41).

3On the phrase "receiving the kingdom" see Marcus, 663-75.
disciples,¹ and conveys an essential insight into Jesus' message of the kingdom.

Jesus' blessing of the children solves the tension that had developed within the narrative. In the first part the request of the people was expressed, but it was frustrated by the intervention of the disciples.² By Jesus' blessing of the children, the narrative comes to a satisfactory conclusion.³ After Jesus' blessing of the children the narrative breaks off abruptly.

Summary

The tripolar narrative of Jesus' blessing of the children is not commonly classified as a controversy story. However, it has the form of a tripolar narrative with three characters and a threefold progression. The three characters are the people with their children, the disciples, and Jesus. The first part describes the people with the children, who try to approach Jesus to receive his blessing upon the children. The interaction cannot take place because the disciples hinder their coming to Jesus. Jesus' reply first addresses the disciples, rebuking them

¹ Patte rightly observes that "Jesus interprets a twofold situation" (Patte, 375).

² See Pesch, Markus, 2:131.

³ The blessing is described in a "threefold statement: (a) and taking them in his arms (b) he blessed them, (c) putting his hands on them" (Robbins, "Pronouncement Stories and Jesus' Blessing of Children," 416).
for their behavior. At the same time the reply justifies the behavior of the people ("hinder them not" [Mark 10:14]) and responds to their wish positively by blessing the children. Finally, the reply of Jesus expresses his own message about the kingdom and how it is to be received.

Zebedee's Sons (Mark 10:35-45)

The narrative concerning the sons of Zebedee, their request, and the reaction of the other disciples is separated from the story of Jesus' blessing of the children only by the narrative about the rich young man (Mark 10:17-31) and a passion prediction (Mark 10:32-43). The present narrative is rather elaborate, particularly in respect to the verbal interactions.

The narrative, like the pericope of Jesus' blessing the children, is not generally classified as a controversy story. Albertz does not include it in his treatment of controversy dialogues. The classification of Bultmann is based on his conviction that vss. 41-45 are to be seen as an

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1Hoyer rightly observes that "it is essential that this pericope be placed in the larger context which begins in 8:27 with Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi and merges in chapter 11 with the story of the last days in Jerusalem" (George W. Hoyer, "Mark 10:35-45," Interpretation 33 [1979]: 288). See also Ernest Best, "Discipleship in Mark: Mark 8.22-10.52," Scottish Journal of Theology 23 (1970): 323-37; Robbins regards the section Mark 8:27-10:45 as the third stage of the intermediate phase in the teacher/disciple cycle. It "portrays full-scale interaction between Jesus and his disciple-companions over central dimensions of the system of thought and action manifested by Jesus and required for discipleship" (Robbins, Jesus as Teacher, 125).
appendix. He regards the narrative as a scholastic dialogue with an inquiry by disciples.\(^1\) Taylor, who like Bultmann regards vss. 41-45 as attached sayings, classifies the story as a pronouncement story.\(^2\) Since Hultgren only deals with "Jesus and his Adversaries" he does not include this passage in his discussion.\(^3\) Dibelius regards it as a paradigm of the "less pure type."\(^4\) Berger includes Mark 10:35-40 under the heading "Chrie und Apoftegma."\(^5\) Tannehill classifies the whole passage as a correction story.\(^6\)

The question which scholars have raised as to the original unity of the narrative\(^7\) does not need to concern us here since the passage is dealt with from the perspective of narrative criticism. This means that I analyze the text synchronically in its present forms as a single narrative.

The Setting of the Narrative

The narrative regarding the request of the sons of Zebedee contains no direct information as to its local or

\(^1\)Bultmann, *Geschichte*, 23, 56.
\(^2\)Taylor, *Formation*, 64, 66.
\(^3\)He only mentions the pericope once in passing in a footnote regarding the context of Mark 10:2-9 (Hultgren, 143).
\(^4\)Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, 43.
\(^5\)Berger, *Formgeschichte*, 81.
\(^6\)Tannehill, "Varieties," 102.
\(^7\)See also Mann, 411; Pesch, *Markus*, 2:154.
temporal setting. However, it is placed between two pericopes that provide clear information about their location and the time in Jesus' ministry.

The passion prediction that precedes this passage is introduced with the sentence: "But they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them" (Mark 10:32). The pericope following the narrative of the Sons of Zebedee begins with the words: "And they came to Jericho" (Mark 10:46). This present passage is connected to the preceding pericope by the word kai. This establishes a connection; however, the nature of this connection is not specified.\(^1\) If the author intended these three pericopes to be read as a unit, we may assume that the request of the sons of Zebedee took place on the way up to Jerusalem after Jesus had uttered a passion prediction and before they reached Jericho.\(^2\)

The Characters of the Narrative

This narrative clearly identifies all participants in the story: James and John, the ten, and Jesus.

James and John are specifically called "the sons of Zebedee" (Mark 10:35). They are included in the list of the twelve apostles as given in Mark 3:13-19. In that list they

\(^1\)Schmithals comments: "Im übrigen gehört die anschauliche Szene zusammen mit -> 32a der GS an (. . . ). Dem vorauseilenden Jesus gesellen sich die Söhne des Zebedäus bei . . . ." (Schmithals, 463-64).

\(^2\)See Lane, *Mark*, 378.
are also called "sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17). They had been privileged before when they, together with Peter, witnessed the transfiguration of Jesus (Mark 9:2-13). That means at the beginning of the parable the reader has already a good understanding of who James and John are.  

The narrative does not give any direct information as to the motivation or inner disposition of James and John. However, their request is made after Jesus' announcement about his going to Jerusalem. Lane observes:

The enthusiasm reflected in the sweeping terms of verse 35, and the form of the petition in verse 37, in the context of approaching the royal city, show that the brothers regarded Jesus as the eschatological Lord who goes to Jerusalem to restore the glory of the fallen throne of David.  

The expectancy of the soon establishment of Jesus' reign along the lines of Jewish apocalypticism certainly must be regarded as a strong background to their request.  

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1 Of course from the perspective of the original readers these disciples were well known. "It should be remembered that in the church of 65-79 A.D. in which the Gospel of Mark was first circulated, Peter, James and John were the most revered apostles of the early church, companions of Jesus and saints of God who had set the seal to their faith by their martyrdom" (Hoyer, 289). As to the influence of the knowledge of their martyrdom Légarasé concludes his study of the pericope: "cette connaissance, si' hypothèse proposée est juste, n'aura pas influé sur sa composition (S. Légarasé, "Approche de l'épisode préévangélique des fils de Zébédée (Marc x.35-40 par.)," New Testament Studies 20 [1973/73]: 177).

2 Lane, Mark, 378.

3 Grundmann, 291.

4 See Hoyer, 289-90; on the seats left and right of Jesus see Pesch, Markus, 2:157-58..
Their request toward Jesus clearly reveals their ambitions and the "inflated understanding of their own position." In order to reach their goal they first try to secure a blank endorsement of their request by Jesus. Then they assure Jesus that they are ready to suffer with him all possible hardship. However, Jesus has to make clear to them that they obviously do not understand what they are asking and that their request even goes beyond his own competencies.

As in the case of James and John, the narrative does not explain the motivation, thoughts, or emotions of Jesus. It is through the interaction alone that the author presents Jesus as an able communication partner, who, on the one hand, is patiently responding to the ambiguous request, but who, on the other, is not manipulated into giving in to the

Stock, 280. Hoyer, putting the request in the context of eschatological expectation, concludes that the two brothers expressed their willingness to share in the dangers and responsibilities of leadership (Hoyer, 290). However, it would be difficult to conceive why the other disciples were so disturbed about this request, if they did not perceive some degree of ambition or even presumptuousness on the part of James and John.

Lane, Mark, 378.

The responses of Jesus become part of the characterization of the two brothers, since they help the reader to evaluate their behavior.

As to the presentation of the disciples in the other synoptics Schweizer comments: "Matthew is offended by this very uncomplicated description of the two disciples, therefore, he has their mother make the request, but he neglected to correct vss. 22, 23, and 24. Luke omits the story completely" (Schweizer, 218-19).
wishes of James and John. At the same time, he stays clear of the indignation of the other disciples. Instead he opens an alternative for action altogether. Jesus is also presented as the one who is able to predict the future suffering of James and John (Mark 10:39).

Jesus is addressed by the two disciples as "teacher." This term describes Jesus in terms of his predominant activity, but also in terms of his superiority over his disciples. His patient answer to both groups of disciples and his willingness to carefully explain the essence of true discipleship indicate that this title is indeed a fitting description for Jesus.

In this narrative Jesus continues to reveal the fact of his own impending passion, as he had done in his previous

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1 Gnilka, 2:307-308.

2 "Yet, through repetition, the distinctive quality of Jesus' activity is teaching (1:21-22; 2:12; 4:1-2; 6:2, 6, 34; 8:31; 9:31; 10:1; 11:17; 12:14, 35; 14:49). His activity brings forth the title 'Teacher' on the lips of people who either address Jesus (4:38; 9:17, 38; 10:17, 20, 35; 12:14, 19, 32; 13:1) or speak about him (5:35). Once Jesus even refers to himself as with the title 'Teacher' (14:14). Through repetitive form, Jesus' distinctive role in the narrative is teaching. This role establishes competition with the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees (1:21; 7:7) and provides a distinctive quality for the activity of those whom he sends out as apostles (6:30). . . .

The special goal of Jesus' teaching manifests itself in Jesus' gathering of disciple-companions, calling them to follow him (1:20; 2:17), and subsequently summoning the disciples and other people to adopt his system of thought and action (3:13, 23; 6:7; 7:14; 8:1, 34; 9:35; 10:42; 12:43)" (Robbins, Jesus as Teacher, 198-99).

3 See Best, "Discipleship," 332.
passion predictions (Mark 8:31-9:1; 9:30-32; 10:32-34). The passion is addressed both in his answer to the request of James and John and in his reply to the other ten disciples. In the answer to James and John, he speaks about the cup he will drink, and the baptism he will undergo.\(^1\) The reply reveals in a son of man saying the meaning and purpose of his own mission, namely "to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45b).

The other ten disciples occupy only one brief verse in this tripolar narrative. The story specifically relates the fact that they overheard the interaction between the two brothers and Jesus, and that they "began to be indignant" about the two (Mark 10:41). The term "indignant" is the same as we encountered in the story of Jesus' blessing of the children (Mark 10:14). In contrast to that story, where the indignation of Jesus is followed by words and action, the present passage simply reports the emotional state, this time, of the disciples. It may point to their jealousy and fear that the two brothers could "secure an advantage over them."\(^2\) It can be assumed by the reader that these emotions were also expressed; however, the text is not explicit about this.\(^3\)

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\(^1\) See Stock, 281-82.  
\(^2\) Ibid., 282.  
\(^3\) Gnilka asserts that the term implies action. "Die Reaktion wird mit einem griechischen Wort umschrieben, das den Ärger, der sich durch Wort und Tat zu erkennen gibt,
The Progression of the Plot

The narrative contains two main sections of direct speech: the first part, relating the interaction between the sons of Zebedee and Jesus, and the third part, containing Jesus' reply to all of the disciples. These two sections are connected by the second part: the reaction of the ten disciples. Accordingly the narrative can be divided into the following parts: (1) the Description in Mark 10:35-40, (2) the Reaction in Mark 10:41, and (3) the Reply in Mark 10:42-45.

The first part of the narrative reports the discussion between Zebedee's sons and Jesus. It is related in direct speech and is described in an elaborate and rather lively dialogue form. The initial petition: "We want you to do for us whatever you ask" (Mark 10:35), introduces the reader to the fact that the pericope deals with a certain request. The request expresses that the two brothers expect something from Jesus. However, the reader is left in suspense: What do the two brothers really want? How will Jesus react? Will the disciples get what they want? The answers to these questions slowly emerge as the dialogue is reported. However, it is only at the end of this first part bezeichnet" (Gnilka, 2:103).

1Ibid., 2:100.

2"Der Erzähler lenkt die Aufmerksamkeit auf das nicht alltägliche Anliegen" (Ernst, 306).
that the reader is informed that Jesus does not grant their wish (Mark 10:40).

The interaction between Jesus and the two brothers contains six parts. This interaction moves from the question of the brothers to a counterquestion of Jesus. Then the brothers relate their actual request, which is followed by another question of Jesus. Finally, after the brothers have given their reply, Jesus explains that it is not in his authority to grant the request. These six parts are closely interrelated and connected by repetitions and parallelisms.

During the first part the other disciples have not appeared on the scene. At this stage the reader is entirely unaware that they are about to intervene. As a matter of fact, the first part comes to a satisfactory resolution before the reaction of the ten disciples is related. The story could end here. However, the narrative does continue with the appearance of the other disciples, who are indignant because of James and John's request, which they had overheard. Their appearance now creates a tension which

\footnote{Schmithals observes that the narrative seems to move towards Jesus granting the request. The rejection of the request comes surprisingly and is sobering. He comments: "Um so überraschender und zugleich ernüchternder wirkt V 40: selbst das 'Sterben mit Christus' begründet keine Ansprüche" (Schmithals, 2:467).}

\footnote{"Im ersten Teil sind es die Korrespondenz von Bitte und Gegenfrage in 35f, die Wiederholung von Trinken und Getauftwerden in 38f, vom Sitzen zur Rechten und Linken in 37 und 40" (Gnilka, 2:100).}
calls for resolution and is addressed in the third part. It needs to be pointed out that the reaction of the ten disciples does not suspend the final answer or action of Jesus in the first part of the narrative. Only after the issue in the first part has come to a conclusion does the narrative introduce the disruptive element. In this respect, this tripolar narrative is different than the ones previously discussed.

The reported reaction of the ten disciples focusses on their indignation. No actions or speech, direct or indirect, are recorded. It is said specifically that the indignation is directed against "James and John" (Mark 10:41).\(^1\)

Jesus, in the third part of the narrative, calls "them" to himself. It is not specified if this personal pronoun refers to the ten or to all twelve disciples, including James and John. Given the general nature of Jesus' pronouncement, I tend to the position that all twelve disciples are included in his address.\(^2\)

The third part of the narrative is interrelated with the first part.

In der Verbindung der beiden Teile wird das 'wir wollen' der Bitte in 35 durch das zweifache 'Wer sein bzw. werden will' in der Belehrung von 43f wieder

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\(^1\)The "preposition peri 'about' indicates the object of the indignation -'to be angry at' (Bratcher and Nida, 334).

\(^2\)Hooker, 247.
aufgegriffen und somit zur eigentlichen Antwort. Auch besteht eine Korrespondenz zwischen dem 'ihr wißt nicht' von 38 und dem 'ihr wißt' in 42.¹

This means that, even though the third part does not complete an interrupted action of the first part, it does continue its theme.

The text assumes that the disciples obeyed the call of Jesus, and are now gathered around him to hear his instruction, which is given in the form of a monologue.² Jesus' monologue contains two synonymous parallelisms.³ The first parallelism describes the rule of the Gentiles as a negative example (Mark 10:42), while the second parallelism defines the true nature of greatness (Mark 10:42b-44). It explains that greatness means being a servant, and being first means becoming a slave.⁴ The monologue concludes with a son-of-man saying in which Jesus applies the image of the servant to himself.

Jesus uses the situation to address the immediate problem as well as his own self-understanding. It is to be noted that Jesus' reply neither justifies the ambitions of the sons of Zebedee or the indignation of ten. Instead of

¹Gnilka, 2:100.
²Ibid.
³Ernst, 309.
⁴On the paradoxical force of the contrast between greatness and being servant/slave, also in view of the larger context, see Tannehill, Sword of His Mouth, 102-107. Ernst observes that the phrase "among you" is repeated three times in Mark 10:43 (Ernst, 309).
endorsing either position, he presents a higher ideal of servanthood. In addition to setting a new standard for servanthood, Jesus’ reply also represents a declaration of his own mission: "For even the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).¹

Summary

The three characters in the tripolar narrative of the sons of Zebedee are represented by the brothers James and John, Jesus, and the ten disciples. The first interaction elaborately describes the dialogue between the two brothers and Jesus. The second part relates that the rest of the disciples were indignant. Even though no actions or interactions are reported here, it is made clear that this indignation is directed against James and John. Jesus’ reply addresses the situation by justifying neither side, but by explaining the true nature of servanthood. Besides addressing the concerns of the two parties, Jesus goes beyond the immediate situation and explains his own mission in the context of servanthood. The two brothers do not justify themselves over against the other disciples. Jesus’ words have settled the issue.

Jesus’ Anointing (Mark 14:3-9)

The story of the anointing of Jesus is the last of the eight tripolar pronouncement stories found in the Gospel of Mark. It also brings us close to the climax of the story of Jesus as told by Mark. It is placed after the eschatological sermon in Mark 13 and just before account of the Lord’s Supper (Mark 14:12-26). It is framed by the description of the priests who are contemplating ways to arrest Jesus and the actual betrayal of Jesus to the priests by Judas as the way to hand him over (Mark 14:1,10). However, not only its place connects it to the final events.

1 Barton points out that the narrative of Jesus’ anointment and the Lord’s Supper both depict table fellowship scenes. These scenes "correspond and contrast." An example of their correspondence is the theme of Jesus’ death and his body. They contrast in that one depicts a loyal woman and criticizing disciples, the other a disloyal disciple and self-criticizing disciples (Stephen C. Barton, "Mark as Narrative: The Story of the Anointing Woman [Mk 14:3-9]," Expository Times 102 [1991]: 232).

Shepherd deals with the passage in connection with his discussion on intercalations. He differentiates between inner and outer story, the former describing with the anointment, the latter dealing with the opposition from the side of the Jewish authorities. He asserts that "in this intercalation a dramatized irony is set up between the unnamed woman in the inner story and Judas Iscariot in the outer story" (Shepherd, 248, cf. Wright, 17, 163-76). While intercalations connect for the reader characters, who appear at different scenes, tripolar pronouncement stories juxtaposition characters most directly by placing them on the same stage.

2 As to the effect of the framing Barton asserts that it poses "a striking contrast" between the evil intentions of the Jewish authorities and the self-giving love of the women (Barton, 231).
of Christ's ministry, but also the story itself incorporates the theme of Christ's death (Mark 14:8).¹

The elaborate² pericope of Jesus' anointing is, like the previous two, again not generally regarded as a conflict story. It is not included in Albertz', Bultmann's, and Hultgren's treatment of conflict dialogues.³ Dibelius sees the narrative as a paradigm of the pure type.⁴ Taylor clearly regards it as a proclamation story.⁵ It is included in Berger's list under the heading "Christ und Apoftegma."⁶ For Tannehill, this narrative has to be

¹"Die gattungskritische Analyse bestätigt, daß unsere Erzählung in den Horizont der Passionsgeschichte gehört, der sie literarkritisch nicht abzusprechen ist" (Pesch, Markus, 2:328).

²"There are a number of narrative features which seem to be recalled primarily for dramatic effect--sitting at table, breaking the jar, the price of the nard, etc., some of which Matthew has removed" (Richard A. Spencer, "A Study of the Form and Function of Bibliographical Apophthegms in the Synoptic Tradition in Light of their Hellenistic Background" [Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1976], 370).

³Bultmann treats this narrative as a "biographical apopthegm" (Bultmann, Geschichte, 37). Hultgren asserts that Luke 7:36-50 is based on the material of Mark. However, it has undergone a drastic change so that the Lukan version now fits the characteristics of a conflict story (Hultgren, 84-87, see also Bultmann, Geschichte, 19-20).

⁴Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel, 43.

⁵Taylor, Formation, 74.

⁶Berger, Formgeschichte, 82.
regarded as a hybrid combining elements of correction and commendation stories.¹

The Setting of the Narrative

The narrative of the anointing of Jesus does not provide an explicit temporal setting; however, the local setting is described very specifically. The introduction sets the stage with two genitive absolutes.²

The introductory genitive absolutes indicate a general temporal setting dependant upon the local setting, and the dominant character, Jesus: "As he was in Bethany . . . , as he was reclining . . ." (Mark 14:3). A definite temporal setting is not provided by the narrative itself. It can only be determined from the "framing verses." However, since these framing verses and the narrative can be regarded as an intercalation,³ a strong connection between them and the narrative has to be assumed. Accordingly the narrative is placed during the time of the last events of Jesus' ministry. Mark 14:1 indicates that the Passover is to take place in two days.

The place of the narrative is the town of Bethany. More specifically the author relates that the events take place in the house of Simon, who is further described as

¹Tannehill, "Varieties," 103, 105.
²Spencer, 369.
³Shepherd, 241-66; Wright, 163-76.
"the leper" (Mark 14:3). Simon is only a secondary character, and he is not an active participant, but contributes to the setting of the narrative.\(^1\) The fact that Jesus was reclining implies that the scene takes place at the dinner table during a fellowship meal.

The Characters of the Narrative

While Simon the leper is introduced at the beginning of the narrative as the owner of the house, he does not appear in the rest of the story; he "plays no active role."\(^2\) Besides Jesus and the anointing woman, whose name is not given, we find a group of people who are simply described as "some present" (Mark 14:4). These three characters represent the three poles of the narrative.

The description of the anointing woman does not contain any details. She suddenly appears as "a woman"; the reader gets neither to know her name\(^3\) nor her status. This

\(^1\) Barton points out that the significance of this spatial setting lies in the contrast to the holy city, Jerusalem. The story indicates that for Jesus "sacred space" is no longer confined to the ritually clean place of the temple, but can be experienced in the house of a leper (Barton, 232).

\(^2\) Ibid., 233.

\(^3\) This places her alongside other unnamed characters in the Gospel and "together with the anonymity of her accusers (14:4a), constitutes an invitation to the reader to identify with one or other of the two parties" (ibid., 233).

Fander points out that the unnamed woman stands in stark contrast to prominent prophets who would be expected to perform the anointment ceremony of the Messiah-king. Her deed becomes a highly polemical sign: "Dem politischen Messias entspräche das Auftreten eines bekannten Propheten,
anonymous reference does nothing to make up for the low social status generally ascribed to women at that time.¹ Her anonymity puts her on a similar level as the poor widow in Mark 12:41-44.²

The woman is simply "depicted in a quiet act of devotion to Jesus."³ It is not explained how she knew about Jesus or which previous encounters with him she might have had. She never utters a word. She is only characterized by her actions: She comes with a jar, breaks this jar, and pours the perfume on Jesus. As her actions are described, we do not hear anything about her motivation, her thoughts, or emotions (Mark 14:3).⁴ However, the fact that the perfume is described as being expensive and pure (Mark 14:5) brings out that this action was highly significant and motivated by deep and positive feelings. Graham fittingly describes that this woman, like many others

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² Heil, 278.

³ Shepherd, 248.

in the Gospel of Mark, deeply relates to Jesus in silent presence and service:

She is in touch with him, present to him in a way no one else is, in one act both preparing his body for death and acknowledging him as the anointed one, the Messiah. And then she disappears; even her name is forgotten.¹

Her actions are interpreted in Jesus' reply as a "beautiful deed" (Mark 14:6).² He also explains "she did what she could" (Mark 14:8).³ The interpretation of her actions as an "anointing," however, only seems to explain the significance, not the motivation for this deed. Nevertheless, the characterization of this woman indicates her spiritual maturity:

In the anointing of Jesus as king in his death, she shows that she is the first person, apart from Jesus, to perceive the crucial importance of the Passion. Her action shows, too, the faith and vigilance of a true follower (cf. 13:33), able to distinguish chronos (ordinary time: 'For you always have poor with you') from kairos (special time: 'but you will not always have me').⁴


²Daube regards this as a technical term: "It meant almsgiving, putting up strangers, visiting the sick, burying the dead or the like" (Daube, The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism, 315). Mack asserts that "in rhetorical tradition, kalon was a technical term for one of the standard 'objectives' in a deliberative argumentation" (Mack, Myth, 201).

³Note again the parallel to the poor widow, who gave what she had (Mark 12:44).

⁴Barton, 233.
Even though the people reacting to the deed of the woman are not specified, their emotions, motivation, and response are described in some detail. The emotional state of these people is one of indignation. The reason for this indignation is then given in the form of direct speech: they considered the action a waste, especially when considering the poor. After this explanation, the narrative relates that these people confronted the woman (Mark 14:5b). The term used here indicates again an explicit expression of intense feelings. "The Vulgate fremebant in eam—'they lashed out at her'—implies violent and noisy disapproval by word and gesture." Jesus' reply to these people indicates that they were causing the woman "trouble" with their rebuke (Mark 14:6).

1"Mark, generally concerned to identify critics of Jesus, does not identify this group of hostile onlookers . . . since the same phrase in Greek (ἔσαν δὲ τινες) is used at 2:6 to indicate the scribes, perhaps we are still in the general area of Jesus' critics" (Mann, 556, 557). Matthew relates at this point that those people were actually Jesus' disciples (Matt 26:8).

2For the lack of a verb in the construction, see Mann, 557.

3Concern for the poor was an important aspect of Jewish piety. It is contrasted here with their indignation towards the woman (Mann, 557). At this point we can see a similarity between this section and other tripolar narratives as discussed above. The concern for the law is contrasted with genuine piety (see Hooker, 329).

4See Bauer, 514.

5Mann, 557.
Jesus is introduced at the very beginning of the narrative with the personal pronoun (Mark 14:3). He is mentioned by name in the middle of the pericope as his reply is introduced. That the narrative is centered around him can be seen by the way he is introduced at the beginning of the narrative. The story requires Jesus' presence; it happened as he was there in the house of Simon.

His presence in the house of Simon, the leper, in itself is an important detail for the characterization of Jesus. Even though it may be assumed that he was healed, "the words probably shocked Mark's original hearers, reminding them once more that Jesus deliberately associated with outsiders."2

He becomes the object of the woman's actions as she pours the expensive perfume on his head. After she is being criticized Jesus defends the woman's deed, showing that he approves of her actions. He accepts the expression of her devotion. This acceptance is significant as an indication of Jesus' self-understanding, and for his positive attitude toward women in general.

Jesus' reply, addressing the issue of the poor, indicates that his views are on a different level than the Jewish traditions. His reply is not to be understood as a

1Pesch comments that the reader knows immediately who is meant (Pesch, "Salbung," 276).

2Hooker, 328.
rejection of social responsibilities, but points to a deeper level of commitment and religious understanding.

Jesus' reply indicates that he was well aware of his impending death. As such, he explains the ultimate significance of the woman's action in terms of his dying. His concluding prediction about the woman's future prominence also brings out his prophetic gifts. In this sense "the Jesus of this story is a suffering Messiah, a prophetic figure."  

The Progression of the Plot

The threefold progression of the narrative begins after a brief introduction in Mark 14:3a. It can be outlined in the following way: (1) the Description in Mark 14:3b, (2) the Reaction in Mark 14:4-5, and (3) the Reply in Mark 14:6-9.  

Berger regards Jesus' role here as an apocalyptic visionary (Berger, Amen-Worte, 51).  

Spencer, 371.

There is a pattern of threefold actions for each of the participants" (Shepherd, 250). Shepherd's observation as to the pattern of this narrative agrees with the principles upon which I base my analysis of the progress of the plot, namely the characters. The text itself gives a clear indication in support of my division by the term de at the beginning of the second and third part (Pesch, "Salbung," 272). The same outline is proposed by Spencer, 369. Mack and Robbins call the different parts Narratio (Setting), Quaestio (Objection), and Argumentatio (Response) (Mack and Robbins, 93; Mack, Myth, 201).  

Pesch comments as to the relationship to other conflict stories: "Die dreiteilige Struktur mit Exposition, Konflikt und Lösung durch erklärende, rechtfertigende Rede
After the stage has been set with the introductory remarks, "a woman" appears on the scene. The narrative describes how she anoints Jesus with the perfume that is explicitly mentioned to be pure and expensive. The woman is the active party in this scene, and the focus is on her. Up to this point, Jesus, even though he is the one who is anointed, remains in the background. He does not play any active role so far. And it is not expressed if he approves of this action or not.

The focus on the woman is continued in the second part, where the reaction of certain people to her actions is recorded. The second part relates the hostility of the people toward the woman. The content of their thoughts, given in direct speech, is framed by comments as to their emotional state (indignation) and a description of their action (scolding her).

In the third part Jesus’ reply is recorded.\(^1\) It hat ihre Analoga in den Streitgesprächen; unsere Erzählung unterscheidet sich von ihnen jedoch durch ihren ’biographischen’ Charakter, durch das Fehlen von ‘Gegnern’ Jesu (oder von Gegnern seiner Jünger) und den prophetischen, das Geschick Jesu voraussagenden Horizont” (Pesch, Markus, 329-30). It is to be noted that the argument that differentiates this narrative from the conflict stories is based on content rather than on form!

\(^1\) Mack and Robbins follow a similar outline in their discussion of Jesus’ reply. They compare it with the patterns of elaboration as suggested by Hermogenes and recognize the following elements: Response (to redirect the question), Rationale (as thesis), Contrary (as contrast), Analogy (implied), Example, and Judgment (as encomiastic period). They conclude that "Mark’s story has the form of a slightly expanded chreia. It is brief, graphic
contains several elements. First of all it is directed against the antagonistic party. In direct command he demands: "Leave her alone" (Mark 14:6a). Second, Jesus justifies the woman. Her action is evaluated by him as a "beautiful deed" (Mark 14:6b). He goes on to address the issue of the poor in continuation of his address of the objecting party. The criticism against her apparent wastefulness is countered with the words: "For you will always have the poor with you" (Mark 14:7b). He goes on to explain the deeper significance of her deed. In an "Amen I say to you" saying he finally predicts that the deed of this woman will be remembered wherever the gospel is proclaimed (Mark 14:9).¹ Beside these two aspects, one in relation to the antagonistic people, the other in relation to the woman, Jesus' reply also contains an element of self-revelation. By explaining the significance of the deed of the woman, namely his anointment for burial, he points to the fact of his impending death.

¹Berger explains the significance of this verse: "Durch ihr Tun am Menschensohn in Niedrigkeit ist die Frau in dessen Gemeinschaft eingetreten. Ihr Tun begründet ihr Gerecht- und Auserwähltein, und dieses besteht in der Schicksalsgemeinschaft mit dem Menschensohn. Des Amen-Wort ist die Zusage Jesu an die Frau, daß sie nunmehr gerecht sei und auch an seiner Doxa teilhabe" (Berger, Amen-Worte, 54).
Summary

The tripolar narrative of the anointing of Jesus has as its main characters the unnamed woman, an opposing party, which is also not specified any further, and Jesus. The first part of the narrative portrays the woman as the active party. She anoints Jesus, who in this part remains passive and silent. The description of the woman’s action seems to be completed and is not continued at a later place in the narrative. The second part, therefore, does not interrupt the action of the woman, instead, it expresses disapproval of her behavior. This disapproval is forcefully expressed towards the woman. This creates tension that needs to be resolved. On the one hand, the situation calls for an evaluation of her deed and of the criticism: Was the anointment appropriate or inappropriate? On the other hand Jesus is directly involved, since he has received the anointment. In the third part Jesus addresses the situation, rejecting the criticism of the people. In so doing he at the same time justifies the woman. He even augments the action of the woman by explaining its deeper significance and giving a prophecy about the continuing memory of this deed. With his reply, Jesus also communicates important information as to his own person and mission.
Summary of the Analysis

I have analyzed the eight individual tripolar pronouncement stories in the Gospel of Mark. These narratives all belong to the category of Jesus’ pronouncement stories. However, they address a variety of issues and cannot simply be equated with "controversy stories."

The tripolar pronouncement stories show a great variety in the description of the setting, both temporal and local. One cannot find a common theme as to the place or time in which these scenes play. The narratives also vary as to the extent that the setting is described. Some provide many vivid details; others give hardly any background information at all. We find that the description of the setting is very much dependant upon the narrative as such. The extent the author explains the setting seems to be determined to a large degree by the need to make the story understandable for the reader.

The three main characters were identified in each of these tripolar pronouncement stories. We have seen how they represent the three poles of the narrative. Their characterization and the extent of their description varies between the different tripolar pronouncement stories. However, all tripolar pronouncement stories contain a character that disrupts the flow of the narrative.
The threefold structure (description—reaction—reply) to these narratives was recognized on the basis of the actions/interactions of the characters. While one finds that the descriptive parts vary to a large extent, the second part of all tripolar pronouncement stories introduces an element of tension. This tension is then resolved in the reply and pronouncement of Jesus in the third part. The reply of Jesus generally deals with several issues and addresses all parties involved. Jesus' reply explicitly or implicitly deals also with his own person and mission, and transcends the immediate situation.

Despite the variation and versatility of tripolar pronouncement stories, the common and distinctive elements are to be seen in the presence of three characters, who serve as poles of the story, and the threefold progression. Chapter four identifies the significance of tripolar pronouncement stories on the basis of these features.
CHAPTER 4

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TRIPOLAR
PRONOUNCEMENT STORIES

As seen in the previous chapter, tripolar
pronouncement stories allow for considerable variation as to
the setting, the issues, and the atmosphere of the
situation. Even though there is a concentration of tripolar
pronouncement stories at the beginning of the Gospel, they
are in no way confined to the controversy-stories section in
Mark 2:1-3:6. They recount events of Jesus’ ministry as
early as his Galilean ministry and as late as the passion
events. The temporal setting of some is stated explicitly;
for others the time can only be inferred from the larger
context, if at all. Some tripolar pronouncement stories
have very extensive descriptions of local settings, others
have almost none. Frequently these narratives take place in
a house or synagogue; however, they also take place outside,
in the cornfields or on the way.

Tripolar pronouncement stories deal frequently with
questions of the law and its interpretation, in particular
purity laws. However, they are not confined to this theme.
Tripolar pronouncement stories also address the role of children and issues concerning discipleship.

In some of the tripolar pronouncement stories, in particular those in which the Pharisees appear, the tone is clearly antagonistic. Others are more educational and corrective.\(^1\) Therefore, tripolar pronouncement stories have to be seen as a versatile form that can be used by the author to narrate a variety of settings, characters, and situations. The common element in tripolar pronouncement stories is their form, not their setting, theme, or situation.\(^2\)

The questions to be answered in the present chapter are: What makes tripolar pronouncement stories special when compared to other pronouncement stories? In which way do they fulfill a function within the Gospel of Mark as a whole that is not accomplished by other narratives? What is the significance of tripolar pronouncement stories for the reader? The answers to these questions have to be based on the factors which all tripolar pronouncement stories have in common. These are the development of the plot in a threefold progression and the presence of three characters.

\(^1\)When compared with Tannehill’s classification, one finds that tripolar narratives belong to several of his categories (see Tannehill, "Varieties," 102-16).

\(^2\)This has been my main criticism against Tannehill’s classification of pronouncement stories. See above, p. 53.
The first part of the present chapter seeks to show how tripolar pronouncement stories compare to other pronouncement stories. In order to do so, we return to the findings concerning NT pronouncement stories and Hellenistic *chreiai* as presented in the review of literature. How do pronouncement stories unfold? What is their dynamic? How many poles do they generally have? We then look at the tripolar pronouncement stories and ask: How do tripolar pronouncement stories unfold in their threefold progression? In which respect are they different than other NT pronouncement stories and Hellenistic *chreiai*?

The second part consideres the significance of tripolar pronouncement stories upon the Gospel of Mark as a whole. How do tripolar pronouncement stories contribute to the character portrait of the individuals that appear in the gospel? What do they say in particular about the dominant character, Jesus? How do the interactions of the characters contribute to the overall development of the plot of Mark’s story? How does the threefold progression of tripolar narratives fit in with the formal structure of rest of the book?

The third section seeks to answer the question: How do tripolar pronouncement stories affect the reader? What difference does it make if the story is told with three rather than two main characters? What advantage do tripolar
pronouncement stories provide to the author in conveying his message?

**Dipolar and Tripolar Pronouncement Stories**

In order to recognize the unique features of tripolar pronouncement stories, one needs to compare them to the features of NT pronouncement stories and Hellenistic *chreiai* in general. This section looks at the dipolar characteristics of most of the pronouncement stories and compares them with the features of tripolar pronouncement stories.

**The Structure of NT Pronouncement Stories and Hellenistic *Chreiai***

As my previous discussion of NT pronouncement stories and Hellenistic *chreiai* has shown, this group of narratives shows a definite form. Characteristic of this form is that it combines a situational description with a concluding pronouncement saying.¹ The situational description either incorporates a question or accusation,

¹The twofold separation agrees with the characteristics of the Hellenistic *chreiai* as well as the NT pronouncement story (see above, pp. 30-34). Albertz' differentiation between "Exposition" and "Gespräch" is less helpful. It separates the description of the setting from rest of the "conflict story" while the question and the response are taken as one part (see above, p. 22-23). The twofold division is at the basis of Berger's classification of this Gattung (see above, pp. 50-51).
dealing with a concern, criticism, or inquiry, or describes an incident or action.¹

Most pronouncement stories involve two characters, who serve as poles of the narrative. In this respect they are dipolar. A good example of a dipolar narrative with reference to an incident or action can be found in Mark 1:16-17.

And passing along by the Sea of Galilee he saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them: "Follow me and I will make you to become fishers of men."

"In this instance, Jesus saw people engaged in a specific activity, and his statement arises out of this situation."²

A dipolar pronouncement story with reference to a question³ is found in Mark 10:2-12 where Jesus is asked by the

¹Of the eleven classes of chreiai and pronouncement stories which Berger identifies, ten deal with a question, one deals with a situation: "Ein Vorfall wird gehört/gesehen und kommentiert" (Berger, "Hellenistische Gattungen," 1099). In Tannehill’s categorization, objection, quest, and inquiry stories deal with questions and/or accusations, while the correction, commendation, and description stories deal with situations. However, the latter group might also include questions (Tannehill, "Varieties," 102-16).

²Bultmann differentiates between conflict stories and scholastic dialogues with reference to the action as recorded in the narrative part. The former usually include some sort of action, while for the latter "it is not necessary to have some particular action as the starting-point but for the most part the Master is simply questioned by someone seeking knowledge" (Bultmann, History, 54).

³Robbins, "Chreia," 5.

³Mark 10:2b indicates the controversial character of the dialogue (see Schmithals, 2:438).
Pharisees: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" (Mark 10:2). Jesus responds at first with another question. Upon their answer Jesus then deals with the issue. Even though this pronouncement story is more complex, one still can see that it contains only two poles: the Pharisees and Jesus.

The pronouncement at the end of a dipolar pronouncement story simply addresses the situation, takes it as the stimulus, answers the question or refutes the accusation. There is a *singular reference point* by which the pronouncement is connected to the situational description.

The singular reference point is also well recognizable in Hellenistic *chreiai*.¹ In particular the Cynic *chreiai* illustrate this fact well. Here the sage is presented with an issue that seems unsolvable. However, the sage does find the appropriate response. He achieves this by turning "the conventional logic implicit in the situation" upside down.² This indicates his superior wisdom. The sage becomes the hero, because he finds a way to get out of the trap, to solve the riddle. It is this perplexing situation that his response singularly refers to.

NT pronouncement stories and Hellenistic *chreiai* can be represented graphically in the following way:

¹See above, pp. 34-45.

The graph shows that there is a single direct correlation, just one reference point between the situational description and the pronouncement of Jesus. The dipolar pronouncement story brings out one issue, one theme to which Jesus replies.

The Structure of Tripolar Pronouncement Stories

As has been pointed out, tripolar pronouncement stories belong to the group of NT pronouncement stories. They share in their basic make-up: they have the characteristic pronouncement of Jesus at the end which replies to a specific situation. However, the narrative is told in such a way that three characters take active part.¹ That means that the situational part is expanded. It is comprised of two distinct parts: the first I have called "description," and the second I have named "reaction." With this expanded situational part a much more complex picture emerges.

¹See above, p. 15.
Tripolar pronouncement stories, with their distinctive mark of three characters, show a different dynamic than dipolar pronouncement stories. A good and concise example of a tripolar narrative is the story of Jesus' blessing of the children in Mark 10:13-16:

And they were bringing children to him so that he may touch them; but the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it he was indignant, and said to them: Let the children come to me, stop hindering them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, in no way shall he enter into it. And having taken them in his arms, he blessed them by laying his hands on them.

When this tripolar narrative is compared with a dipolar narrative, one recognizes immediately its twofold situational description (i.e., the description and the reply).¹ The description relates the coming of the children to Jesus, while the reaction presents the rebuke of the disciples.

The pronouncements of Jesus in dipolar narratives have only one reference point: a specific situation, an inquiry, a criticism. Now Jesus' reply has to deal with two behaviors: the coming of the children and the rebuke of the disciples. The pronunciation of Jesus has two reference points.

¹See my detailed treatment of the narrative above, pp. 132-42.
The two reference points of Jesus' pronouncement are characteristic of tripolar narratives. The first reference point appears in the "description," the second in the "reaction." These two parts present two opposing views and behaviors. The description portrays the action of one party or the interaction between one party and Jesus. This is followed by the reaction which takes issue with this action/interaction. This creates a situation in which two behaviors that are mutually exclusive are coupled together.

The reaction is directly or indirectly addressed to Jesus, who always replies to it. But, since reaction and description are interrelated, Jesus' reply to the reacting party will automatically also affect the other party that was portrayed in the description. As the story is told, Jesus cannot just ignore the disciples and bless the children anyway. Neither can Jesus ignore the children and process the issue with the disciples. The pronouncement of Jesus has to deal with both behaviors. It cannot just deal with one. In fact both are so interrelated that the vindication of one means the judgment of the other.

This interaction may be represented graphically in the following way:
Fig. 2. Tripolar Pronouncement Stories

When compared to the previous graph, depicting dipolar pronouncement stories, one clearly recognizes the increase in complexity in tripolar pronouncement stories. Instead of one point of reference for Jesus' reply, this graph shows two (Reply A and B). Similarly, the reaction of the second party has an impact, not only upon Jesus, but also upon the first party (Reaction A and B).

The differentiation between Reaction A and B as well as Reply A and B on this graph does not mean that each reaction and reply need to have two distinct parts. However, it does express that the reaction and the reply always affects two characters. With reference to the above example, this means: the rebuke of the disciples was directed against the children, but it also hindered Jesus in blessing them. And Jesus' reply dealt with both parties, the disciples and the children.
One might want to argue that the description part of tripolar pronouncement stories simply functions as an introduction, while the reaction part and the reply of Jesus represent a dipolar relationship not significantly different from that of other pronouncement stories. It is certainly correct that tripolar narratives as a form of pronouncement story take part in the interplay between situation and Jesus’ reply. However, this does not sufficiently describe all of the dynamics of tripolar pronouncement stories. It is certainly not valid to regard the description simply as an introduction. The description portrays actions and transactions that constitute an integral part of the whole narrative. All three parts—description, reaction, reply—establish intricate relationships that contribute to the totality of the story. Thus, beside sharing in the features of dipolar pronouncement stories and Hellenistic chreiai, tripolar pronouncement stories are characterized by an opposing relationship between the parties of the description and reaction, by a reaction in which the reacting party not only addresses Jesus, but also affects the other party, and by a reply of Jesus that directly or indirectly affects both of the other parties.

Distinctive Features in the Markan Tripolar Pronouncement Stories

The study now presents the individual Markan tripolar pronouncement stories to see how the distinctive
features of tripolar pronouncement stories apply to each of them. As I have shown above, the distinctive features are: (1) an opposing relationship between the parties of the description and those of the reaction part, (2) a reaction part that affects Jesus and the character portrayed in part one, and (3) a reply of Jesus that affects the other two parties. As I discuss the Markan tripolar pronouncement stories I group some of the stories together and review them accordingly.

In the case of the disciples’ plucking of the grain (Mark 2:23-28) and the disciples’ eating with unwashed hands (Mark 7:1-13), the author describes a behavior which is in contrast to the Pharisaic tradition. Consequently the Pharisees take issue with this behavior in their reaction.

The reaction of the Pharisees is clearly addressed to two parties. On the one hand, they bring their criticism to Jesus. On the other, it is the behavior of the disciples that they are concerned about (Mark 2:24; 7:5). We have seen above that the reply of Jesus in behalf of his disciples reflects to some degree the master-disciple relationship.¹ However, this does not mean that all of the disciples’ behaviors are automatically sanctioned. Besides, from the point of the narrative aspect of the story, the disciples are a distinct group with a separate identity: they, not Jesus, were behaving in a certain way.

¹See above, p. 100.
Jesus' reply vindicates the disciples' behavior and rejects the arguments of the Pharisees. In the story of the disciples' plucking of the grain, Jesus establishes himself as the head of the group of disciples by comparing himself to David, who led his companions to eat in the temple (Mark 2:26). In the case of the disciples' eating with unwashed hands, the vindication of the disciples' actions is implied, but not explicitly stated.1 In both narratives the Pharisaic accusations are rebuffed by a fundamental rejection of their position.

In the case of the blessing of the children (Mark 10:13-16) and the anointing of Jesus (Mark 14:3-9), the reacting party utters disapproval of the action of the first party. In both cases this first party takes the initiative of seeking Jesus, either to receive a blessing or to anoint him. But while the woman had already anointed Jesus, the children were hindered to even receive the blessing of Jesus by the disciples. However, in both stories the opposing poles are the action of one party and the disapproval of the other.

The reacting party in both pericopes initially addresses the first party only (Mark 10:13b; 14:5). However, the thread of the story continues because Jesus recognizes what is happening. In the story of the blessing

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1 It is being addressed to some extent in the verses following the limits that had been established for this pericope (i.e., Mark 7:14-23).
of the children the text explicitly states: "But seeing, Jesus . . ." (Mark 10:14a). In the other story the reply of Jesus implies that he has heard the harsh rebuke (Mark 14:6). However, Jesus does not come to the rescue of people who are unconnected to him, just because they are treated unjustly. The description has already established a relationship between Jesus and the other party, although in the case of the people approaching with the children, this relationship is only anticipated. In this respect, we see that Jesus is indirectly drawn into the narrative. The reaction also affects him.

The reply of Jesus in both stories is spoken to the reacting party. However, its content vindicates the first party. Jesus makes clear that he not only wants the children to come, but that they are a model for those who seek to enter the kingdom (Mark 10:15). Moreover, Jesus not only puts an end to the rebuke of the woman, who has anointed him, but he promises a continuing memory for her deed (Mark 14:9). In the case of the former narrative, the vindication of the people and the children naturally leads to the conclusion, where Jesus blesses them, thereby granting their wish. In the case of the anointing woman, such a conclusion is not necessary, since she had already performed her action. The completion of the story in the conclusion can also be found in the healing narratives which are discussed next.
In the two healing miracles (Mark 2:1-12 & Mark 3:1-6), Jesus' own behavior becomes the target of the accusation. Jesus' begun or anticipated actions constitute the descriptive part which is opposed in the reaction part. Even though in both stories the critical thoughts are not expressed openly, it is clear that Jesus knows what they think. This is explicitly stated in Mark 2:8; it is implied in Jesus' address to his opponents in Mark 3:4. These thoughts are directed against Jesus.

Even though the thoughts of Jesus' opponents are directed against him, they also affect the persons that are to be healed. The story is told in such a way that when the opponents of Jesus "win," the healing cannot take place. Consequently the hopes and the faith of the sick persons are shattered.

Here Jesus' refutation of the reacting party makes it possible for him to bring the healing to a successful completion. Jesus' reply addresses both parties explicitly. He first poses a question to his opponents, to which they have no answer; then he utters the healing command to the sick (Mark 2:8-11; 3:4-5).

The conflict in the narrative of Jesus' company with sinners (Mark 2:15-17) is over his eating with "tax collectors and sinners." The repetition of this phrase makes it very explicit that this is indeed the issue.1

1See above, pp. 86-88.
Jesus' behavior and the views of the Pharisees clash on this point.

The accusing question of the reacting party addresses the behavior of Jesus. However, his behavior involves his relationship with the so-called tax collectors and sinners. Particularly in view of the fact that this relationship was mutual, the accusation thus immediately impacts not only Jesus, but also his company.

Jesus' reply is spoken to the Pharisees. Its content, however, justifies his company with sinners. Again we have a strong emphasis on Jesus' understanding of himself. But the issue is not just between Jesus and the Pharisees. With his reply Jesus takes sides with the sinners, justifying their presence with him; at the same time he refutes the arguments of the Pharisees.

In the story of Zebedee's sons (Mark 10:35-45), the request of James and John towards Jesus evokes the indignation of the ten. This indignation represents the reaction part of the situation of this tripolar narrative.

The reaction—the indignation—is explicitly directed against James and John (Mark 10:41). But the reaction also affects Jesus. These are his disciples who are disputing

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1 I deal with the fact that the criticism of the Pharisees is spoken to the disciples above, p. 91. I point out there that this simply indicates that the hostility between Jesus and the Pharisees is not as yet completely in the open. Nevertheless, the criticism is clearly directed against Jesus.
here. As their teacher, this situation is not acceptable. So he is the one who replies to the reaction by instructing them in the true nature of discipleship.

The third part of this tripolar narrative is atypical. Jesus does not align himself with any position. Instead of taking sides with either the sons of Zebedee or the ten, Jesus transcends both positions showing that true discipleship is to be found on a different plane altogether. Again we also find a strong emphasis on his own mission in Jesus' reply (Mark 10:42-45).

Summary

I have shown that tripolar pronouncement stories exhibit a distinct dynamic and are clearly to be differentiated from dipolar pronouncement stories. These tripolar and dipolar narratives have in common that they are "saying" stories. They share the fact that they conclude with a pronouncement of Jesus. However, preceding the pronouncement, dipolar narratives present only one character who represents one position (i.e., a question, challenge, or accusation directed toward Jesus). The pronouncement of Jesus has thus only one reference point. Tripolar pronouncement stories, on the other hand, present two characters who exhibit two opposing positions. These two positions are expressed in two parts of the narrative, the

\footnote{See above, pp. 147-78.}
"description" and the "reaction." These two parts comprise two reference points to which the pronouncement of Jesus replies. The contrasting of the two parties in the description and the reaction part results in a dramatic juxtaposition of the two characters.¹ The uniqueness of tripolar pronouncement stories lies in the fact that the situational part preceding the pronouncement of Jesus presents two opposing rather than a single character, and that the pronouncement subsequently replies not to one, but to two parties.

Tripolar Pronouncement Stories as a Literary Device within Mark’s Story of Jesus

Taking tripolar pronouncement stories as rhetorical devices within the narrative of the complete gospel story, leads me to ask how they contribute to the gospel story as a whole. In particular, I want to show their impact on the characterization of its participants as a whole, and their contribution to the overall development of the plot and the formal structure of the Gospel. This section begins by examining the presentation of the main characters and the broad outline of the plot of Mark’s Gospel. Then it addresses the place that tripolar pronouncement stories occupy in the overall scheme of the Gospel.

¹I expand on the dramatic juxtaposition below, pp. 201-211.
The Characters of Mark’s Gospel

In this discussion of the characters in Mark’s Gospel, I basically follow Kingsbury’s as well as Rhoads’ and Michie’s division. Accordingly I deal with the following parties: Jesus, Disciples, Authorities, Crowd, Minor Characters.²

Jesus is the dominant character of the Gospel story.³ Bilezikian observes:

'Tolbert alerts us to the fact that we must not read our modern notions of characterization into the ancient text of the Gospel of Mark. Mark employed illustrative characters which were "static, monolithic figures" who basically stayed the same throughout the book. In contrast, representational characterization, in which change and psychological development of the individual parties were described, was only employed at a much later stage. "Illustrative characterization is not better or worse than representational; it is just different. However, it is a difference modern readers have special difficulty recognizing and acknowledging because of the importance of internal psychological character development in the modern novel" (Mary Ann Tolbert, Sowing the Gospel: Mark’s World in Literary-Historical Perspective [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989], 77).

Even though the portraits of the individual parties do not include psychological change, we do find movement and developments which reveal the true nature of the characters to the reader. Rhoads and Michie aptly express this fact: "The narrator of Mark’s story cleverly reveals the characters in such a way that the readers are constantly expanding or shifting their impressions of those characters as the story develops" (Rhoads and Michie, 103).

²Kingsbury, Conflict, 4-27; Rhoads and Michie, 101-36. Rhoads and Michie leave out the "crowds," while Kingsbury only lists the "religious authorities." My division combines the categories of both lists so as to be more inclusive.


³See above, p. 68.
Although Mark may have been motivated by a complex of multiple purposes in composing the Gospel, it is evident that the transmission of instruction from and about Jesus was a preponderant concern.  

Right from the opening line of the Gospel, Jesus is established as the "central, heroic figure."  

The characterization of Jesus is very complex. It is shaped by what Jesus does and says, by the way others react to him, and by supernatural revelations. Jesus' actions include healing, exorcising demons, performing miracles, and symbolic and contentious deeds. His message is the message of God's kingdom, expounding God's will, his being, and his plan of salvation.  

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2Rhoads and Michie, 103. Ryken observes with regard to the Gospels in general: "The most important unifying factor in the Gospels is unity of hero. Everything in the Gospels focusses on the person, acts, and sayings of Jesus, on this is one of the chief identifying traits of the genre" (Ryken, Words of Life, 32).  

Tannehill asserts that Jesus' role as the "chief actor and speaker in Mark" shifts towards the conclusion of the narrative. However, "Jesus' passivity expresses his basic acceptance of this commission" (Tannehill, "Narrative Christology," 81).  

3Rhoads and Michie, 103. "Story does not just describe the character or the doings of the protagonists, but it develops the protagonist's character through demonstration" (William L. Osborne, "The Markan Theme of 'Who Is Jesus'," Asia Journal of Theology 3 [1989]: 304).  

The reactions to his works and message are quite diverse. They reach from gratitude and obedience, to disagreement and hostility. It is quite important to recognize that people who appear in support of Jesus are generally portrayed in a positive light; those who oppose him in a negative. However, this cannot be unequivocally applied to the disciples who occupy a somewhat ambiguous position. In their failure to follow their commission, particularly towards the end of the story, they constitute a stark contrast to Jesus' faithfulness. "The disciples' failure makes them contrasting figures to Jesus." 

Supernatural revelations take several forms: they are given by God himself, they are uttered by demons, and...

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1With regard to the Gospel of John, Culpepper distinguishes between seven types of responses that are found in the text: (1) hostile rejection, (2) acceptance without open commitment, (3) acceptance of Jesus as miracle worker, (4) belief in Jesus' works, (5) commitment in spite of misunderstandings, (6) discipleship, and (7) defection (Culpepper, 146-48).

2We need to recognize that also the antagonists contribute to the character portrait of Jesus. Tannehill rightly points out that also the mocking scenes in Mark's story are Christological (Tannehill, "Narrative Christology," 80).

3That does not mean that Jesus' supporters are morally perfect or always act in the best interest of Jesus and his mission. However, as a whole the reader receives the impression of their genuineness and their openness to receive guidance. In contrast to them, "the opponents are blind to the rule of God... Not only blind to the rule of God, the opponents are also blind to their wrongness and destructiveness of their own mentality" (Rhoads and Michie, 118).

4Tannehill, "Narrative Christology," 84.
they can be perceived in the forces of nature. In relationship to the supernatural forces Jesus is presented in such a way that he is completely aligned with God. Kingsbury asserts:

The circumstance that Mark establishes God's evaluative point of view as normative for his gospel-story has far-reaching consequences for any probe of Mark's christology. In principle, it means that the conception of Jesus which is normative in Mark's story is God's conception.¹

The characterization of Jesus establishes his different roles. He is the compassionate healer, the messenger from God, the savior, the son of God, the son of man,² the martyr, the teacher, the "influencer,"³ the hero. Adding to the complexity of Jesus' portrait is the so-called "messianic secret."⁴ "The idea of Jesus' hidden identity is woven throughout the gospel in many ways, but it is never

¹Kingsbury, Christology, 50.

²Kingsbury asserts that the son of God and the son of man are the two major roles of Jesus which complement each other "within the plot of Mark's story" (ibid., 174).

³Tannehill, "Narrative Christology," 63-65.

⁴I cannot enter the discussion on the theme of the messianic secret in this study. Even though the interpretation of the phenomenon may be different, scholars of various schools generally agree that the messianic secret is a theme that can be found in Mark. (For a brief discussion see Kingsbury, Christology, 13-23.) From a narrative critical viewpoint it is primarily important to recognize it as a literary feature. The interpretation of its significance both theologically and historically is secondary from the narrative critical perspective and does not need to concern us here.
This literary feature brings the recognition of Jesus into the realm of faith. The presentation of Jesus follows a specific purpose. "The gospel’s theme is designed to incite people to make a choice about who Jesus is." In fact, the other characters appear in the story to "represent alternative responses to Jesus so that the reader can see their attendant misunderstandings and consequences."

Closely associated with Jesus are his followers, the disciples. They are generally represented as a group. However, we also receive an impression of the diversity of this group by individual portraits, in particular those of Peter, James, and John. "Although the number of Jesus’ disciples is greater than twelve, the twelve nevertheless epitomize the disciples." Those disciples are mainly characterized through their interaction with Jesus, and to

1 Osborne, 305.

2 "The ‘messianic secret’ plays a vital role to the whole by giving a theological thrust to the understanding of belief as revelation involving faith" (ibid., 311).

3 Ibid., 311.

4 Culpepper, 145.

5 Tannehill points out that the commission of the disciples is in parallel to that of Jesus himself. This parallel expresses that they are "meant to be co-ameliorators and co-influencers, subordinate to Jesus but sharing in his work" (Tannehill, "Narrative Christology," 65).

6 Kingsbury, Conflict, 102.
some degree through their relationship with other people. The interaction between the disciples and Jesus has two components: first, what Jesus does to the disciples and second, how the disciples react to Jesus.¹

The disciples are those who are called by Jesus and who are received into his fellowship. Jesus commissions them to become "fishers of men" (Mark 1:17) and includes them in his mission. The disciples experience Jesus' protection and help in difficult situations. They are privileged to receive the mysteries of the kingdom (Mark 4:11), to receive his special instructions and explanations. But they are also corrected and admonished by Jesus when their behavior is deficient.

The disciples become active in that they respond to Jesus' initiative and his instruction. They positively answer his initial call and show a willingness to follow him. They are his helpers in various situations and are frequently found on his side. In general they follow the instructions and commands which they receive from Jesus. They take advantage of their master's insight by asking him questions. A major flaw of the disciples, however, is their lack of understanding. Even though they are privileged to be so close to Jesus, they still do not understand the basic

concerns of Jesus' mission. The disciples are willing but fallible followers of Jesus.\footnote{For an exposition of these two aspects of the characterization of the disciples see Klauck, "Jünger im Markusevangelium," 6-17.}

The disciples are also portrayed in relationship to other people. In serving as Jesus' representatives\footnote{Weeden suggests three stages in the disciples' relationship to Jesus: Stage I: Unperceptiveness, Stage II: Misconception, and Stage III: Rejection. All of these three stages emphasize the negative. This agrees with his conclusion that Mark "is intent on totally discrediting them" (Weeden, 26-51).} they also perform miracles on others and proclaim Jesus' message to them. As they become identified with Jesus and also express this in their actions, they become the target of Jesus' opponents. Clashes with the Pharisees occur because

\footnote{Tannehill and Malbon on the other hand, while recognizing the problematic and imperfect sides of the disciples, still see them as potential models (Robert C. Tannehill, "The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role," Journal of Religion 57 [1977]: 394; Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "Disciples/Crowds/Whoever: Markan Characters and Readers," Novum Testamentum 28 [1986]: 104).

Klauck rejects the notion that the presentation of the disciples is polemic in nature. Instead, he finds that the distinct presentation of the disciples' inadequacy has significance for the Christian's self-understanding: "Am Beispiel der Jünger erkennt der Leser, daß er seinen Glauben an Jesus Christus allein der freien Gnadelwahl Gottes verdankt" (Klauck, "Jünger im Markusevangelium," 26).

One finds that the text of Mark's Gospel includes both positive and negative traits of the disciples. It seems safe to say that instead of painting either a clearly negative or a positive picture the disciples are thus presented in an ambiguous light. And I agree with Best that the original readers of Mark "cannot but be startled by his picture of their infidelity and failure" (Ernest Best, "Mark's Narrative Technique," Journal for the Study of the New Testament 37 [1989]: 55).

\footnote{Tannehill, "Narrative Christology," 65.}
of the disciples' disregard of the traditional interpretations of the law and the Pharisaic principles.¹

The authorities enter the picture as the antagonists of Jesus.² The authorities include the Jewish³ and Gentile authorities who have in common that they are "in positions of power and leadership."⁴ With a few exceptions⁵ they are


²Malbon holds that the foes of Jesus embody the truly negative party in Mark's gospel story. By fulfilling solely this aspect they are "flat" characters (Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "The Jewish Leaders in the Gospel of Mark: A Literary Study of Marcan Characterization," Journal of Biblical Literature 108 [1989]: 277-81).

³Kingsbury rejects attempts to distinguish between the different groups of religious authorities, like the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Instead he asserts that the "several groups of religious authorities present themselves as a united front militantly opposed to Jesus and thus can be treated as a single character" (Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The Religious Authorities in the Gospel of Mark," New Testament Studies 36 [1990]: 47).

⁴Rhoads and Michie, 117.

⁵Jairus, a synagogue ruler, a scribe, Joseph of Arimathea, and the centurion at his crucifixion. Rhoads and Michie appropriately count them as belonging to the "minor characters" (Rhoads and Michie, 117). Kingsbury comments that the scribe is an ironic figure, while he counts Joseph of Arimathea as a "minor character" (Kingsbury, "Religious Authorities," 48-50).

Malbon concludes: "Thus, it would seem, although members of the Jewish religious establishment are generally
only represented in opposition to Jesus. They do not understand Jesus because their hearts are hardened and they are not willing to accept and believe in Jesus. At certain places the authorities come into contact also with the other characters of the Gospel: the disciples, the minor characters, and the crowds.\(^1\)

The antagonism of the authorities is found throughout the gospel.\(^2\) It is expressed through their accusations, disruptions, and traps with which they oppose Jesus and his work. "With rhythmic regularity and accelerated intensity the conflict is flashed before the eyes of the reader."\(^3\) The antagonism of the authorities becomes increasingly clear as they plan the execution of characterized as foes of the Marcan Jesus, they not be automatically so categorized." She suggests that the exceptions suggest "that being a foe of Jesus is not simply a matter of one's social or religious status and role, but a matter of how one responds to Jesus" (Malbon, "Jewish Leaders," 276, 280).

\(^1\)With regard to his literary analysis of the Markan miracle stories, Matera aptly brings out the contrast between the "believers" and the authorities: "Whereas Jesus heals the sick and expels demons in order to bring salvation to those who believe, the Pharisees seek a sign from heaven that will relieve them of the need to believe" (Frank J. Matera, "He Saved Others; He Cannot Save Himself: A Literary-Critical Perspective on the Markan Miracles," Interpretation 47 [1993]: 21).

\(^2\)Smith rightly observes that the opponents of Jesus are introduced in Mark 1, while in Mark 2 they are brought "onto the stage" (Stephen H. Smith, "The Role of Jesus’ Opponents in the Markan Drama," New Testament Studies 35 [1989]: 180).

\(^3\)Weeden, 21.
Jesus. It reaches its climax at Jesus' crucifixion. In their antagonism they embody the element of conflict which moves the plot forward. Additionally, their character portrait forms a stark contrast to the character of Jesus.1

The crowds frequently appear in the role of the chorus.2 The crowds are the audience of Jesus, who listen to the message of Jesus and witness his miracles and works.3 They give an important indication of Jesus' initial popularity and success.4

One finds that the sentiment of the crowds toward Jesus changes in the Gospel of Mark. At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, the crowds receive Jesus' preaching positively. In contrast to the authorities5 they appear to

1Rhoads and Michie, 118.

2I have noted above that Rhoads and Michie do not include the crowds in their discussion of the (major) characters. The do include a "note on the crowds" (Rhoads and Michie, 134-35).

The secondary role of the crowds is also recognized by Kingsbury. Even though he discusses their characterization separately, he does not deal with their "story line" as he does in the case of Jesus, the disciples, and the authorities (Kingsbury, Conflict, 29).

See my comment above, pp. 60-61.

3"Crowds are used in the ancient novel and in Mark, much as the chorus in a drama, to express general views or opinions on the action" (Tolbert, Sowing the Gospel, 76).

4Weeden finds that the crowds' role is "to dramatize by contrast with the religious leaders, the positive response to Jesus" (Weeden, 22).

5"In being well disposed toward Jesus, the crowd stands in sharp contrast to its leaders, the religious authorities" (Kingsbury, Conflict, 22).
be open to Jesus' message and respond favorably to his actions. Their expectations are raised and they are amazed at what they see. However, they are not able to adjust their preconceived notions about Jesus. The true nature of Jesus' mission escapes them. Even though they are amazed at Jesus' deeds, they have not understood his message.¹ Rhoads and Michie comment: "For the narrator, awe is not an appropriate response to Jesus, for it implies a lack of understanding."²

In their disappointment, the crowds become vulnerable to the negative influence of the authorities and turn against Jesus. This change of sentiment contrasts the initial popularity of Jesus with his solitude at the end of his mission. It heightens the dramatic effect of the conflict between Jesus and the authorities. In the beginning of the conflict, they appear to be on Jesus' side; toward the end they desert him and even support the antagonistic party.³

¹Patten points out that the crowds in Mark hope that Jesus is more than a miracle worker. They "hope that the miracles indicate that the Kingdom of God is near." When they realize that their (political) hopes are disappointed they turn against Jesus (Bebe Rebecca Patten, "The Thaumaturgical Element in the Gospel of Mark" [Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 1976], 269).

²Rhoads and Michie, 135.

³Malbon asserts that the crowd can well be compared with the disciples: "Both the disciples and the crowd follow Jesus. Both the disciples and the crowd are fallible." In presenting these two modes of discipleship Mark's expression of "discipleship is both open-ended and
In contrast to the unreliable crowds, with these unnamed "many," the Gospel of Mark presents individual characters who become models of true discipleship and faith. "The minor characters make brief cameo appearances and then disappear, yet the role of each is often quite memorable."¹

The positive traits of these "little people" appear as they relate to Jesus in an exemplary way. They accept his message and respond to him appropriately. "Typically, these persons approach Jesus in the firm belief that he possesses divine authority to do as they ask."² In this role, the reader perceives the contrast between them and other groups. They are juxtapositioned over against the demanding; fellowship is neither exclusive nor easy" (Malbon, "Discipleship/Crowds," 124).

Even though the crowds may express Jesus’ inclusive attitude I disagree with her parallel representation of the crowds and the disciples. The characterization of the crowds and that of the disciples reveals an essential difference: even though the disciples fail at the time of the crucifixion they do not join forces with the antagonistic authorities like the crowds. And even though the faith of the disciples is deficient they understand that he is more than a prophet. Besides, Jesus himself distinguishes between the crowds and the disciples by explaining the significance of the parables only to the latter group. See Kingsbury, Conflict, 23.

Matera rightly points to Jesus’ question "Who do you say that I am" (Mark 8:29) to indicate that Mark clearly differentiates between the attitude of the crowd and that of the disciples in relationship to Jesus. "Within Mark’s narrative, the force of Jesus’ latter question to the disciples is that it shows that the people’s prophetic opinions about Jesus are false . . . , and the reader suspects that they have not repented" (Matera, "He Saved Others," 20).

¹Rhoads and Michie, 129.

²Kingsbury, Conflict, 26.
hostile authorities, but also over against the disciples, who are willing, but clearly deficient in their response to Jesus.¹

This discussion of the characters has shown how interwoven the portraits of the individual parties are. Even though Jesus is the dominant character and the other characters are generally presented in relationship to him, Mark also interrelates the individual characters with one another. This connection between the individual parties is established either by their direct encounter or by the contrast the different portraits bring out. In any case the description of one has an influence on the view the reader gets from the other parties.²

The Plot of Mark’s Story

The various episodes of Mark’s story of Jesus are told not only to reveal certain character portraits to the reader, they are put together in such a way as to create a story line, the plot.¹ In this way the narrative becomes a

¹Malbon asserts that the imperfection of the disciples and the crowds similarly indicates that “Mark challenges both the absolutism of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ (no one is a perfect disciple) and the absolutism of types determined by status and role (no one is ruled out as a disciple)” (Malbon, “Jewish Leaders,” 280).

²On the use of foils in literature see Ryken, Bible as Literature, 54-55.

³In addition to Kingsbury’s and Rhoads’ and Michie’s explications of the plot in relationship to the Gospel of Mark, see also Matera’s and Culpepper’s discussions on Matthew and John respectively: Frank J. Matera, “The Plot
whole story: events and characters are interconnected, and the story moves towards a climax.2

Generally the plot is driven by conflict.3 This is also the case in the Gospel of Mark. The main conflict here revolves around Jesus and his antagonists.4 The antagonistic forces with which Jesus has to deal are the authorities5 on the one hand, and the demonic forces on the other. Later the crowds join the opposition against Jesus. This conflict increases as the narrative unfolds and finds its climax and resolution in the crucifixion of Jesus. This of Matthew’s Gospel," Catholic Biblical Quarterly (1987) 49: 233-40; Culpepper, 80-98.

1Tolbert calls this form of narration the "episodic plot pattern" (Tolbert, Sowing the Gospel, 76). Breytenbach refers to Mark as "episodical narrative." "Mark creates narrative connection by linking individual episodes to one another" (Cilliers Breytenbach, "The Gospel of Mark as Episodical Narrative: Reflections on the ‘Composition’ of the Second Gospel," Scriptura: Journal of Bible and Theology in Southern Africa, Special Issue [1989]: 13).

2Wilder points out that the stories in the Gospel "present the larger story in microcosm." In this respect they not only become part of the story, they in fact may represent the story as a whole (Amos N. Wilder, Early Christian Rhetoric: The Language of the Gospel [London: SCM Press, 1964], 67).

3Kingsbury, Conflict, 29. Kingsbury discusses the conflict of the plot in relationship to the three primary story lines of Jesus, the authorities, and the disciples.

4Smith recognizes three main cycles of controversies: (1) a Galilean controversy cycle, (2) a Judean conflict cycle, and (3) a Jerusalem ‘passion’ cycle (Smith, "Jesus’ Opponents," 178-79).

5For an excellent discussion of the development of the conflict between Jesus and the religious authorities, see Kingsbury, "Religious Authorities," 42-65.
resolution is ironic in nature. "The congruence of Jesus' commission with their own plans is not seen by those who intend to oppose him. The result is dramatic irony."

Conflict further arises in the relationship between Jesus and his disciples. The disciples have entered into a master-disciple relationship with Jesus. However, because they lack understanding and faith, they are deficient in their roles as students, supporters, and representatives of Jesus. "The disciples are in conflict with Jesus because they have not seen beyond the surface meaning of his mighty deeds." Even though this conflict does not involve hostility as in the case of Jesus' antagonists, the frustration and suspense surrounding the relationship between Jesus and his disciples are very powerful. At the end this conflict is only resolved negatively. The

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1 Tannehill, "Christology," 78. Kingsbury asserts: "In Jesus' death and resurrection, the conflict of the story comes to fundamental resolution. In Jesus' Parousia, it will come to final resolution" (Kingsbury, Conflict, 28).

2 In fact, Weeden almost entirely focusses on this conflict and asserts that the source of the conflict is Christological (Weeden, 52).


4"Because the conflict is harsh and frustrating between these two aligned parties, it causes great tension for the reader" (Rhoads and Michie, 95). In comparison to the opponents of Jesus "the role of the disciples in Mark is far more intricately developed and far more difficult to interpret." Weeden regards the unfavorable representation of the disciples through which Mark addresses his opponents and their deficient christology (Weeden, 23, 70-100).
disciples fail to live up to their calling. Even after the crucifixion the reader looks in vain for a forceful resolution of this conflict.¹

The two major conflicts of the Gospel of Mark—Jesus and the antagonists, as well as Jesus and the disciples—"overlap and interweave"² They are distinct but not separate; they are to be read as one story.³

Episodes in which minor characters or the crowds appear further contribute to the plot. Even though their role is limited, their presence adds significant details, which makes the reading of the Gospel both more meaningful and interesting. As an example of such an extremely meaningful episode, one may refer to the centurion, who at the moment of Jesus' crucifixion expresses: "Surely, this man was the son of God" (Mark 15:39). Stock comments that the centurion's acclamation is of "pivotal importance because it constitutes for the first time in Mark's story

¹For literature discussing the various interpretations concerning the open-endedness of the portrait of the disciples, see Rhoads and Michie, 153; also Tolbert, Sowing of the Gospel, 288-99.

²Rhoads and Michie, 100.

³Tannehill asserts that Mark is a "unified narrative" (Tannehill, "Narrative Christology," 60). He holds that the basic story lines are: the commission of Jesus, the commission of the disciples, and the task of the opposing party. These three story lines are in agreement with the major two conflicts as emphasized by Rhoads and Michie. The three story lines of Jesus, the disciples, and the adversaries meet in the two conflicts between Jesus and the disciples and Jesus and his adversaries.
the open confession of Jesus as the Son of God on the part of a human being."¹

The two major conflicts around Jesus (one personified by the Pharisees, the other by the disciples) and the episodes involving the other characters form the one gospel story of Mark. Each part contributes to how Mark's story means.

The Function of Tripolar Pronouncement Stories in Mark's Gospel Story

Tripolar pronouncement stories contribute to the overall composition of the Gospel of Mark. They are episodes with a distinct characteristic. Together with other pericopes they make up the "episodic plot pattern" of the gospel story.

How do tripolar pronouncement stories contribute? Who are the characters that appear in them, and in what way do tripolar pronouncement stories add to their portrait? How do tripolar pronouncement stories fit in with the plot as a whole?

As we have seen in our chapter 3, a variety of characters appear in tripolar pronouncement stories. Jesus is always one of them. In fact, he is the dominant character, since he utters the pronouncement as the final reply. In the parts that I have called description and reaction, however, many different characters appear. The

¹Stock, 414.
following table gives an overview of the parties of the Gospel of Mark that were identified above and at which places within the tripolar narrative they can be found.¹

**TABLE 1**

THE CHARACTERS OF TRIPOLAR PRONOUNCEMENT STORIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character:</th>
<th>Jesus</th>
<th>Disciples</th>
<th>Authorities</th>
<th>Minor Characters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narrative:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paralytic (2:1-12)</td>
<td>DESCRIPTION</td>
<td>REACTION</td>
<td>DESCRIPTION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinners (2:15-17)</td>
<td>DESCRIPTION</td>
<td>(DESCRIPTION)</td>
<td>REACTION</td>
<td>DESCRIPTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grain (2:23-28)</td>
<td>DESCRIPTION</td>
<td>REACTION</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crippled Hand (3:1-6)</td>
<td>DESCRIPTION</td>
<td>REACTION</td>
<td>DESCRIPTION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclean (7:1-13)</td>
<td>DESCRIPTION</td>
<td>REACTION</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children (10:11-16)</td>
<td>DESCRIPTION</td>
<td>REACTION</td>
<td>DESCRIPTION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John/James (10:35-45)</td>
<td>DESCRIPTION</td>
<td>DESCRIPTION (2)</td>
<td>REACTION (10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anointing (14:3-9)</td>
<td>DESCRIPTION</td>
<td>REACTION (?)</td>
<td>REACTION (?)</td>
<td>DESCRIPTION</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tripolar narratives let three different parties appear on the same scene. These parties are placed in a specific relationship to each other. This allows for

¹I left out the "crowds" because of their role mainly as a chorus. Besides, my analysis of tripolar narratives has shown that they do not function as one of the three poles.
dramatic juxtaposition of these characters: juxtaposition, because their actions and motives are placed side by side; dramatic, because their differences in values and traits create conflict since they now encounter each other. With three participating characters, tripolar pronouncement stories have the capacity of describing three different encounters within one episode.

Tripolar pronouncement stories are capable of juxtapositioning party one with party two and three, party two with party one and three, and party three with party one and two. In these direct or indirect encounters, the relationships between the characters are either corollary/supportive or contrasting/antagonistic. A review of how the dramatic juxtaposition of the characters applies to the different tripolar pronouncement stories in the Gospel of Mark now follows.

The paralytic and his friends in the first tripolar narrative of Mark (Mark 2:1-12) are characterized in relationship to Jesus and the scribes. Their actions receive the approval of Jesus by the spiritual and physical healing of the paralytic. They become a model for how to approach Jesus. Their faith in Jesus' power is solid, even in the face of obstacles. This trait stands out sharply when compared with the attitude of the scribes, whose

1Kingsbury uses the term "juxtaposition" to describe the contrast between the crowds and the authorities or the disciples (Kingsbury, Conflict, 21-24).
criticism and accusation contrasts sharply with the exemplary faith of the paralytic and his friends.

The scribes in this narrative exhibit an antagonistic attitude toward Jesus. Their character is further revealed by the contrast with the trusting paralytic and his friends. In their antagonism against Jesus they appear uncaring with regard to the fate of the paralytic. In order to prove Jesus wrong, they have no consideration for the investment of faith and hope on the side of the paralytic. By reporting the healing miracle of Jesus, the narrative indicates that the scribes’ accusations are unfounded. At this point the narrative does not indicate if they will accept the position of Jesus and change their attitude. However, the narrative makes clear that their conflict with Jesus cannot be supported by sound arguments; it becomes an expression of their inner, hostile disposition toward Jesus.

The relationship with the paralytic allows Jesus to reveal his healing power. Even more, it provides an opportunity to underline his perception (of sins) and his authority to forgive sins. Thus the narrative characterizes Jesus as the one who heals the sick, who knows the hearts of people, and who has the authority to forgive sins. This places Jesus in a superior position over against the paralytic. At the same time the narrative indicates his favorable attitude towards the paralytic. In fact, Jesus
vindicates the faith and actions of the paralytic and his friends over against the scribes. In his conflict with the scribes Jesus emerges as the "winner." His words and his actions indicate the legitimacy of his claims and his superiority over the scribes.

Jesus’ company with sinners (Mark 2:15-17) presents the so-called sinners and tax collectors in relationship to Jesus and the scribes of the Pharisees. The sinners have responded to Jesus in that they are part of the table fellowship with him. In their fellowship with Jesus they display their spiritual receptiveness. This receptiveness stands in contrast to the hostility and critical spirit of the scribes of the Pharisees.

The scribes of the Pharisees are the antagonists who direct their efforts against Jesus. They object to his social bonds with the sinners. Their legalistic concerns appear in strong contrast with his willingness to fellowship with these people. By using the term "tax collectors and sinners" they express their perceived superiority over this group. The narrative reveals not only their critical position against Jesus but also their separating attitude toward the sinners.

Jesus, in relationship with the Pharisees, turns the logic of their accusation around and skillfully justifies his own behavior. This brings out the superiority of Jesus. In this respect he is like the Cynic philosopher who becomes
the hero by wittily countering critical charges. However, Jesus is also the vindicator of the sinners who fellowship with him. In his pronouncement he asserts that the behavior of the sinners is appropriate. As in the case of the healing of the paralytic, he unequivocally stands by his supporters.

In the story of the disciples' plucking of the grain (Mark 2:23-27), the disciples become the target of the Pharisaic accusation. Their behavior contrasts with the traditions and interpretations of the Pharisees. Within the context of this narrative, the plucking of the grain on the Sabbath characterizes the disciples as violators of the Pharisaic traditions. The behavior of the disciples may be seen as an indication that they have begun to put Jesus' teaching into practice. In any case, they find support in Jesus who answers the charges that are brought against them. Thus the disciples are also characterized as belonging to Jesus.

At first the Pharisees appear on the scene in reaction to the disciples' behavior. The behavior of the disciples constitutes the basis for the conflict between these two parties. However, as the narrative progresses it becomes clear that the value system of the Pharisees is in direct contrast to Jesus'. Their interpretation of the Sabbath is much more restrictive than that of Jesus and his disciples.
Jesus is presented in this story as an able expositor of the Scriptures. According to the story he "wins" by presenting his case in a series of arguments. Jesus' skillful exposition contrasts with the Pharisees' rigid position, and his emphasis on the Sabbath as a blessing for humans contrasts with their legalism. Besides being an able communicator, Jesus is also portrayed as the teacher who takes care of and stands behind his disciples.

The characterization of the man with the crippled hand (Mark 3:1-6) is less elaborate than that of the paralytic with his friends. Since his initiative is not dealt with, he assumes more the role of a living object lesson in support of Jesus' case. His obedience toward Jesus and the fact of his healing provide a contrast to the stubbornness of the Pharisees.

The focus of the Pharisees is on Jesus from the beginning of the narrative. The reader knows about their antagonism toward him. This narrative also explains that their antagonism stems from their hardened hearts. Their attitude would have prevented the healing of the man with the crippled hand.

The healing encounter between Jesus and the man with the crippled hand characterizes Jesus as a miracle worker and brings out his benevolence. His understanding of lawful behavior is determined by relationships with people, not by impersonal rules. In this respect, Jesus' actions stand in
contrast to the convictions of the Pharisees. That he performs the miracle, regardless, expresses also Jesus’ determination over against the Pharisees. Jesus’ arguments are convincing. However, it becomes clear that the Pharisees will not give in. Even though the Pharisees cannot refute his reasoning, their antagonism continues. This narrative presents Jesus as a person who is endangered by the Pharisees: after the miracle they went out to plan his destruction. This tripolar pronouncement story thus establishes for the reader that Jesus is unjustly accused.¹

In the dispute about clean and unclean (Mark 7:1-13) we can find a similar dynamic as in the case of the disciples’ eating of grain on a Sabbath. Again the disciples are presented as followers of Jesus, who behave in contrast to the Pharisaic laws and in agreement with Jesus’ teaching. They find that Jesus is on their side and argues their case.

The Pharisees again are represented as the antagonists. Their objection to the disciples’ behavior stems from a fundamental difference in values. Their rigid observation of tradition contrasts with the seemingly careless behavior of the disciples. The difference in values is further underlined in Jesus’ reply. Here Jesus

¹The tension between Jesus’ innocence and his superior arguments with the (unjustified) antagonism hints at the impending conflict between Jesus and the authorities, which climaxes at the crucifixion.
establishes that the Pharisaic traditions are in fact human
traditions in violation of God's will (Mark 7:9).¹

Jesus is characterized in this pericope as the
reliable master of his disciples: their issue becomes his
issue. He argues on their behalf with the Pharisees. In
comparison to the story of the plucking of the grain, Jesus' role in relationship to the Pharisees becomes more emphatic
and confrontational. Jesus is presented as the determined
fighter, who makes his position clear and does not shrink from confrontation.

In the pericope about Jesus' blessing of the
children (Mark 10:13-16) we find the people and their
children approaching Jesus. This action establishes their
humility and some understanding of Jesus' special position.
In fact, Jesus points out that their behavior and attitude
are a model for how to enter the kingdom of God. This
behavior stands in contrast to that of the disciples, who
not only hinder them from coming to Jesus, but also fail to
understand the deeper significance of it all.

The disciples are characterized by their connection
with Jesus and their reaction to the children. The
connection of the disciples with Jesus is contradictory. On
the one hand they are referred to as "disciples," indicating

¹The seriousness of this accusation from a narrative point of view becomes clear when we realize that the author's influence on the audience is to a large extent based on the fact that he himself and Jesus are aligned with
God (see Kingsbury, Christology, 47-50).
their close relationship with Jesus, their willingness to follow him, and to receive his instructions. On the other hand they behave in a way that is in opposition to Jesus’ will and in opposition to Jesus’ very understanding of the kingdom. This contrast comes out even sharper when the disciples are compared with the children.¹ Their outward opposition to the children reveals their deficient spiritual condition and lack of comprehension.

Jesus, in this situation, is presented as the one who corrects the misconception of the disciples. In this way the difference of maturity between the disciples and their master is brought out. At the same time Jesus approves of the actions of the people with their children and rewards their efforts. Here Jesus again is seen as the vindicator, who defends the innocent against the misplaced demands of others.

The request of Zebedee’s sons (Mark 10:35-45) brings out details of their character in relationship to Jesus. Their own pretentious image of themselves stands in contrast to Jesus’ humility. Their request forms the basis of the conflict that develops with the other ten disciples. Obviously they thought of themselves as superior in comparison to the rest of the disciples.

¹The conceptual contrast between the children and the grown-up men is also noteworthy.
The reaction of the other ten disciples indicates that they are on the same level as the other two. The conflict between the two parties indicates a general spiritual immaturity. This spiritual immaturity contrasts sharply with Jesus' maturity, his understanding of true discipleship, and his commitment to his own mission.

Through his reply Jesus is seen as the spiritually mature master over against which both groups appear deficient. By not endorsing either position, Jesus is no longer the hero or the vindicator. He assumes instead the role of the teacher and wise man, who is able to look at the root of things.

In the tripolar narrative of the anointing woman (Mark 14:3-9), the woman is described as performing an act of devotion on Jesus. Her willingness to sacrifice the costly perfume indicates her dedication to him. Through Jesus' reply the spiritual significance of this act is heightened. The contrast with the unnamed group of people, who voice their disapproval, further indicates her spiritual maturity and courage.

The unnamed opposing party tries to present itself as ethically more advanced. Their wordy and harsh rebuke contrasts with her quiet act of anointing. Through Jesus' reply it becomes very clear that instead of being ethically superior than the woman they are lacking in spiritual insight.
Jesus' rebuke of the opposing party brings him into the position of authority. He is the one who is judging the situation according to his standards. On the other hand his words in support of the anointing woman give him the role of the vindicator and protector.

We have seen that the Markan tripolar pronouncement stories interconnect the different characters by providing a direct encounter between them. By contrasting and aligning the different characters, the effect of dramatic juxtaposition is achieved. This dramatic juxtaposition enhances the characterization of the individual parties, not only within the individual pericopes, but also within the overall story of Mark.

When one compares the tripolar pronouncement stories with dipolar pronouncement stories on the characterization of the parties, we realize how much more intricate and complex tripolar pronouncement stories are. Dipolar pronouncement stories present only two participants at a time: Jesus and one additional character. Their characterization is affected by one relationship only. This relationship describes the encounter between actor—corrector, actor—commendor, quester—responder, objector—winner,¹ inquirer—teacher.² The story line is

¹The winner masters the challenge he is confronted with. This notion is particularly evident in Cynic chreiai. (Mack and Robbins, 66).
usually very straightforward. The outcome can easily be anticipated and can be conceived of in terms of black and white: Jesus would either know the answer or he does not, he would either be able to correct the situation or not, he would either be the winner or the loser.

Tripolar pronouncement stories broaden this narrow focus. They clearly illustrate that the situation not only affects Jesus and the other character, it also affects a third character. The story line is no longer straightforward; black and white solutions are not available any more. Because it becomes more difficult to anticipate the outcome, suspense is increased. Actions and relationships are dramatically placed into a larger context. Characterization becomes more intricate through juxtaposition.

Especially noteworthy is the difference in the characterization of Jesus in tripolar pronouncement stories. His role still includes the notion of the corrector, commender, responder, winner, and teacher as in dipolar narratives. However, it is significantly enlarged to include the roles of a judge, vindicator, ally, protector, and mediator. Above all, Jesus becomes the model and authoritative example of how to deal with complex situations.

\footnote{This role description is based on Tannehill's typology (Tannehill, "Varieties," 102-16).}
As we have seen above, the plot of Mark is driven primarily by the antagonistic conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees, the conflict of incomprehension and frustration between Jesus and his disciples, and the additional interactions between Jesus and the minor characters.

Tripolar pronouncement stories play a vital part in the description of these conflicts and interactions. By bringing together three characters they also combine the different story lines. The dramatic juxtaposition not only adds dramatic details to the plot as a whole, it also helps to connect the different conflicts into one single story. In some cases the conflict is broadened: it is no longer only a matter between Jesus and the Pharisees, but also between the Pharisees and Jesus’ disciples or certain minor characters. The misunderstanding of the disciples is no longer only directed against Jesus, it now also frustrates the people with their children. And as has been pointed out previously, this juxtaposition is dramatic, because now the different characters with their distinct roles and traits appear on the same scene and clash with each other directly or indirectly.

The Threefold Progression of Tripolar Pronouncement Stories and the Formal Structure of Mark

In addition to their contribution to the overall characterization of the different parties of the Gospel of Mark and the merging its different story lines, one finds
that tripolar pronouncement stories have structural significance: the threefold progression of these stories are part of Mark's use of "series of three."¹ The three-step progression within the Gospel of Mark can be recognized on two different levels: (1) the level of words and short phrases, and (2) on the level narratives.²

The series of three in Mark's Gospel can be seen on a primary level in sequences of similar words or phrases, often connected by the term kai.³ Examples of these cases are Mark 5:37: "Peter and James and John," Mark 11:27: "the chief priests and the scribes and the elders," or Mark 4:8: "thirtyfold and sixtyfold and hundredfold." These series of three are clearly a stylistic device of Mark.

A threefold progression can similarly occur on the level of a whole pericope. This progression is characterized by the threefold repetition of a specific phrase or action or a sequence of three elements. Examples of this are, Peter's denial (Mark 14:69-71) and Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-42). In the former example, Peter is approached three times and denies his association with Jesus, in the latter, Jesus returns three times from praying finding the disciples asleep. A sequence

¹Neirynck, 110.


³Ibid., 98.
of three units of action is found in the passion prediction: (1) Jesus goes to a new place with his disciples; (2) he engages in a particular kind of interaction; and (3) Jesus calls and summons his disciples.\(^1\)

Robbins finds that the whole Gospel of Mark can be structured according to narratives which follow a three-step progression in the same way as the passion predictions. He lists the following pericopes: Mark 1:14-20; 3:7-19; 6:1-13; 8:27-9:1; 10:46-11:11; and 13:1-37. Robbins points out:

> These three-part scenes function as interludes that establish the narrative program on the basis of interaction between Jesus and his disciples. These interludes bring themes and activities from the preceding narrative to a conclusion in the same context in which they introduce themes and activities that direct the narrative program in the next section of the Gospel.\(^2\)

The three-part scenes address the theme of discipleship and unfold Jesus' attributes. In the pericope Mark 1:14-20 the theme of discipleship is clearly articulated in Jesus call to follow him. Mark 3:7-19 concludes with the appointing of the twelve apostles. In Mark 6 the disciples are sent out to preach in the villages. The characteristics of true discipleship is addressed in Mark 9:27-9:1. Here Jesus "calls" the crowds and his followers to himself and describes discipleship in terms of

\(^1\)Robbins, Jesus the Teacher, 25. The text contains also three elements of Jesus' passion, namely Jesus' "public mistreatment, killing, and rising" (ibid., 23).

\(^2\)Robbins, "Summons and Outline," 105-106.
denying oneself, taking up the cross, and following Jesus. According to Mark 10:46-11:11 Jesus "sends out" two of his disciples after having healed the blind Bartimaeus. Finally, in Mark 13:1-37 Jesus gives his disciples specific instructions for times of trouble.

With regards to Jesus’ portrait in these pericopes Robbins asserts:

The pattern of behavior that Jesus repeats again and again reveals his social role as an itinerant teacher who transmits his system of thought and action to a group of disciple-companions. In the setting of this repetition, special attributes and titles of honor emerge to exhibit the distinctive character of his thought and action.¹

The attributes of Jesus that are presented in the three-part scenes are: Jesus as a prophet-teacher, a miracle worker, a rejected prophet, a Messiah/Son of man, and authoritative Son of David, and a messianic prophet-teacher.²

Tripolar pronouncement stories also follow a three-step progression. As I have pointed out, this threefold progression is not dependant upon a repetition of words, but can be recognized when the action of each of the three characters is considered. The threefold progression in these narratives is realized in the sequence description—reaction—reply.

What is the significance of the three-step progression within Mark? The three-step progression is a 

¹Robbins, Jesus the Teacher, 27.
²Ibid., 26.
stylistic device that creates tension without making the story too complicated for the reader to understand. "By lengthening the scene to three repetitive units, the narrator introduces a moment of suspense that sets the stage for an emphatic conclusion." The empathic conclusion becomes a forceful vehicle for decisive information. As the examples cited by Robbins have shown, three-step narratives emphasize the themes of discipleship and develop the portrait of Jesus. This is also true to some extent with regard to tripolar pronouncement stories. In most of the examples the disciples are present; exceptions are the healing stories and possibly the anointing of the woman. However, the latter examples also provide ample instruction in discipleship. However, in tripolar pronouncement stories, the call to discipleship is less explicit than in the three-step interludes.

The Rhetorical Significance of Tripolar Pronouncement Stories

In discussing the rhetorical significance of tripolar pronouncement stories, I conclude this chapter by assessing the impact of this type of story upon the reader. The category of the reader, more precisely the "implied"}

1Ibid., 25.

2Powell points out that narrative criticism is actually concerned with the "ideal," and not the "implied" reader. He explains the difference: "An ideal reader is described and defined entirely by the text, while an implied reader (in the sense that secular literary critics use the
reader, is part of the narrative critical methodology, which seeks to uncover "how a text means."

term) is defined through the dialectic tension of a real reader’s encounter with the text" (Mark Allen Powell, "Types of Readers and Their Relevance for Biblical Hermeneutics," Trinity Seminary Review 12 [1990]: 76). In his definition of the implied reader Powell follows Iser who holds that "the work is more than the text." And "the convergence of text and reader brings the literary work into existence" (Wolfgang Iser, The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett [Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974], 274-75).

Powell’s observations as to Iser’s use of the term "implied reader" are correct. However, Powell’s terminology is misleading. Narrative critics do not generally speak about the "ideal reader," but about the "implied reader." It is right that Iser’s definition and that of narrative criticism of the "implied reader" differ. However, to introduce another term to mark off this difference is not very helpful and creates more confusion than it solves. It is inappropriate to claim the term "ideal reader" for narrative criticism on three accounts. (1) The definition of the implied reader as employed by narrative critics is to be traced back to Chatman’s narrative-communication model (see Culpepper, Anatomy, 6; Longman III, 84-85; Malbon, "Narrative Criticism," 27-28). He uses the term in a different way from Iser. Chatman advances that the implied reader is part of the narrative text (Chatman, 151). (2) Narrative critics in general use the term "implied reader" themselves. While describing the position of narrative criticism, it is not helpful to switch to a different vocabulary. In fact, Powell himself employs the term "implied reader" with respect to narrative criticism in another publication which appeared in the same year as the article quoted above (see Powell, Narrative Criticism, 19). (3) The term "ideal" reader is not without problems since it is also used to describe the competent critic who supersedes the implied reader and the implied author (see Robert M. Fowler, Let the Reader Understand: Reader-Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991], 36-37). I conclude that the term "implied reader" has been claimed by different authors and has received different definitions. However, in discussing the implied reader in the framework of narrative criticism, I employ it according to their usage as an inter-textual construct.
Who Is the Reader?

The concept of the implied reader in narrative criticism is to be differentiated from the real reader, the competent reader, and the intended reader. The real reader would be any "flesh and blood person who picks up a book (or whatever) and reads it."¹ It is close to impossible to evaluate the impact a certain text has on any real reader.

Real readers vary in intellect and commitment. They have different personality types and they process information in different ways. The responses of real readers are impossible to predict.²

The methodology which takes the contribution of the real reader most seriously is reader-response criticism. Here "meaning is no longer considered a given."³ In his interaction with the text, it is the reader who is seen to be ultimately responsible for determining meaning. "Instead of What determines the meaning of a text? reader-response critics prefer the question, Who determines the meaning."⁴ Or as McKnight puts it succinctly: "Readers make sense."⁵

The competent reader stands for the reader who approaches the text with a structuralist understanding of

¹Powell, "Types of Readers," 68.
²Ibid.
⁴Ibid., 52.
⁵McKnight, The Bible and the Reader, 133.
how literature works. ¹ Even though structuralism shares a synchronic view of the text with the narrative criticism,² its methodology is different³ in that it presupposes certain rules that the competent reader applies to the text.

The competent reader has assimilated the conventions. He or she brings nothing to the interpretation of the text besides an explicit and implicit knowledge of how literature "works."⁴

The intended reader describes the audience a text was originally meant to address. This historical approach to the text seeks to illumine its meaning by an understanding of the situation, the needs, the conventions, the theological positions, and economical and sociological conditions. The quest for the intended reader has been an important part of traditional exegetical methodology.⁵ Also, rhetorical criticism, in seeking to identify the original "rhetorical situation," focusses on the historical

¹The notion of the competent reader comes closest to the role of the exegete in the traditional sense. However, the competent reader takes the text as a given and does not share the historical interest of traditional exegesis.

²Powell, Narrative Criticism, 14.

³"Narrative critics do not necessarily regard the laws of literature as following elaborate structural principles. In general, they are more concerned with the linear progression of a narrative than with the relationships that may be discerned on other levels" (ibid., 14).

⁴Longman III, 32.

position of the intended recipients. Here the writing "is understood from the perspective of those to whom it is directed."¹

The concept of the implied reader in narrative criticism is based on the information which is contained in the text itself.² The implied reader is an imaginary person who is to be envisaged "as responding to the text at every point with whatever emotion, understanding, or knowledge the text ideally calls for. Or to put it differently the text is to be thought of as always reaching its fulfillment."³

The implied reader actually mirrors the implied author, since he or she responds appropriately to the intentions of the implied author. The implied reader recognizes what the implied author wanted to show. This interaction between the implied author and the implied

¹Powell, "Types of Readers," 72.

²This does not exclude any concern for the historical background. Several scholars have rightly pointed out that Mark was written as an oral message. An adequate "reading" of the text would take its orality into account. That means the gospel story was experienced as a sequence, and not analyzed by moving back and forth in the document (see Best, "Mark's Narrative Technique," 50; Joanna Dewey, "Mark as Aural Narrative: Structures as Clues to Understanding," Sewanee Theological Review 36 [1992]: 45-56; Tolbert, Sowing the Gospel, 44; against Kelber, The Oral and the Written Gospel, 207-11).

reader is to be recognized on the basis of the text only. The implied reader is an ideal reader insofar as he or she is willing to accept the point of view of the author.

The author presents the story with a specific point of view. This means the story is not simply narrated as a

"The implied author is the author as he or she would be constructed, based on inferences from the text. The work may contain and advocate beliefs and opinions that the real author does not actually hold" (Longman III, 84).

Wayne Booth explains: "The 'implied author' chooses, consciously or unconsciously, what we read; we infer him as an ideal, literary, created version of the real man; he is the sum of his won choices." "The author creates, in short, an image of himself and another image of his reader; he makes his reader as he makes his second self, and the most successful reading is one in which the created selves, author and reader, can find complete agreement" (Booth, Rhetoric of Fiction, 74-74, 138).

Using Chatman's distinction between story and discourse Malbon summarizes: "The interaction of implied author and the implied reader is part of the discourse. The interaction of the characters is part of the story" (Malbon, "Narrative Criticism," 28).

Henceforth, references to "the reader" are to be understood as "the implied reader" and references to "the author" as "the implied author."

See above. With regard to the Gospel of John, Culpepper describes the ideal narrative audience as the one who "adopts the narrator's ideological point of view, penetrates the misunderstandings, appreciates the irony, and is moved to a fresh appreciation of transcendent mystery through the gospel's symbolism" (Culpepper, Anatomy, 208).

I am here mainly concerned about the "ideological point of view." Other aspects of the point of view deal with the spatial, the temporal, and the psychological. In Mark the author appears as omnipresent, transcending time, and omniscient. "This unlimited knowledge of the omniscient narrator, unbound by time or space and able to know the minds of the characters, gives the narrator tremendous authority with the reader, who comes to trust the narrator as a reliable guide in the world of the story" (Rhoads and Michie, 37-38; see also Longman III, 87-88; Chatman, 151-58)
historical event; it is given a specific interpretation and is evaluated accordingly:

"Evaluative point of view" has to do with some conception of reality. It denotes a particular way of looking at things which also entails rendering some judgment on them in terms of the degree to which they are "good" or "bad," "right" or "wrong." It needs to be recognized, though, that the evaluation of an event is mainly implicit, not explicit. One of the reasons why the author’s evaluation is so effective is that he has established himself as reliable. In fact, he has aligned himself not only with the dominant character, Jesus, but also with God. The author is able to communicate his evaluation by the way he tells the story, by his rhetoric. This includes in particular how he presents the characters:

Are they on God’s side or do they oppose him?

The narrator does not give disinterested portrayals so that the readers can decide for themselves about the characters; the narrator clearly favors some characters over others. Also, the narrator guides the reader’s attitude toward the different characters by telling in a variety of ways who the "good" characters are and who the "bad" ones are in the story world.

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1 The narrator creates "a world of values as well as of events" (Petersen, "Point of View," 108).

2 Kingsbury, Matthew as Story, 34.

3 Petersen, "Point of View," 107-108; Kingsbury, Christology, 47-50.

4 See Kingsbury, Matthew as Story, 34. "The implied reader will tend to empathize with those characters who express God’s point of view and will seek distance from those characters who do not" (Powell, Narrative Criticism, 25).

5 Rhoads and Michie, 40.
Expressing a point of view through stories has been designated as showing and telling. Through every story which the author "shows" he "tells" of his or her convictions. Booth puts it succinctly: "In short, the author’s judgment is always present, always evident to anyone who knows how to look for it."¹

Tripolar pronouncement stories are a specific rhetorical device. They have a specific impact upon the reader. I want to pursue the question of how tripolar pronouncement stories influence the reader. What is the significance of tripolar pronouncement stories with regard to the reader? What difference does it make to the reader if a story is told with three characters rather than with two? My answer to these questions illuminates four aspects: the personification of the message, the participation of the reader, the identification with the characters, and the application of the message.

The Personification of the Issue

Stories bring out the emotional aspect of a message. They "capture the imagination" of the reader.² In this respect they lead the reader to visualize an event rather than conceptualize a statement. They tell by showing.

¹Booth, Rhetoric, 20.

Instead of a technical and cognitive emphasis, they have an emotional, holistic, and aesthetic quality.¹ "Having selected the appropriate materials, Mark then weaves them together in a way that is aesthetically effective. The story has beauty."²

The issues are not explained in static pronouncements, instead they are presented as issues of life, they are real case-studies: they effect people, who may get hurt, whose hopes are suddenly put in jeopardy, whose well-being and survival is threatened, who experience ecstasy and joy, who are subject to hunger and thirst, exhaustion and physical limitation, who fail and who succeed, who are good and bad. Best expresses this aspect aptly by stating: "Mark has a way of startling us as we listen to him."³

Tripolar pronouncement stories share the aspect of the personification of the issue, since they are narratives. The difference is one of degree. Tripolar pronouncement stories with their three main characters are able to express more subtly shades of personalities as well as the complexity of relationships. As a first step this fact

¹Longman III, 70.
²Blackwell, 92.
³Best, "Mark's Narrative Technique," 55. Ryken writes: "Literary texts . . . appeal to what modern psychology calls the right side of the brain—our capacity to take in the truth imagistically, experientially, intuitively, and wholistically" (Ryken, Words of Life, 23).
should be appreciated on an aesthetical level. As was pointed out in the introduction, the focus of narrative criticism is not on what the story means, but how it means. Or as Flannery O'Connor has expressed it: "The whole story is the meaning, because it is an experience, not an abstraction."^2

The narrative of the healing of the paralytic may serve as an example of how an issue is communicated through an event: the technical and theological issue of this narrative is the authority of the son of man to forgive sins. However, this "issue" affects the relationship between Jesus and the scribes, which becomes dangerously hostile. And it affects the hopes of the paralytic with his friends, who have risked so much and struggled so hard. The issue of the authority of Jesus has come alive. The reader is hooked and attentively observes the complexity of the

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^1 The aesthetic level may be more accessible when the gospel is being performed. In a reenactment of the Gospel the difference between dipolar and tripolar narratives would certainly be experienced by the performer and the listener. See Rhoads’s interesting reflections on his nearly 200 performances of the Gospel of Mark (David Rhoads, "Performing the Gospel of Mark," in Body and Bible: Interpreting and Experiencing Biblical Narratives, ed. Björn Krondorfer [Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1992], 102-119).


^3 See Ernst, 89.
relationships and characters; at the same time, important messages are transmitted.¹

The Participation of the Reader

By personalizing issues, stories invite the readers to become active participants of the events. Storytellers "pluck us out of our own time and place and put us into another time and place."² The readers become participants in the story. "By bringing the remembered past into the present, the story enables the participant to take part in the story, to be present at the saving act."³ The reader is led on "an imaginary journey into the past."⁴

Perrin and Duling aptly explain:

"The natural function of narrative is to help the reader hear the voices, take part in the action, get involved in the plot. The effectiveness of the evangelist Mark as a preacher is that he has cast his message in a narrative rather than in the direct discourse of a letter or a homily. We appreciate once again the significance of the realism of Mark's narratives, for it enables the reader to be caught up into the narrative as a participant."⁵

¹For a insightful analysis of the pericope from a narrative perspective, see Petersen, "Point of View," 99-103.

²Ryken, Bible as Literature, 34.


⁴Petersen, "Point of View," 101.

The reader participates in the story according to the way the author has "plotted" the time.\(^1\) The events are described in a specific order by the author. This "narrative time" does not necessarily agree with the sequence, duration, and frequency of the events in reality.\(^2\) However, the reader is bound through the text to experience the story the way the author tells it.\(^3\)

Tripolar pronouncement stories have a distinct movement. They carry the readers from description to response to reply. As shown above,\(^4\) dipolar narratives have a simpler structure. They portray a simple situational description followed by the reply. The situational description, relating an inquiry, accusation, or circumstance, deals with one issue only. Thus the movement goes straight from A to B; and the reader participates in this movement.

In tripolar pronouncement stories the plot moves from A to B to C, from description to reaction to reply. The reader, who participates in this movement, is drawn into

\(^1\)Malbon, "Narrative Criticism," 32.

\(^2\)Culpepper, 53-75.

\(^3\)Powell, Narrative Criticism, 35-40; see also Chatman, 62-63, on the differenciation between story and discourse time. A fundamental work on the topic of the time of discourse is Gerald Genette, Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980).

\(^4\)See above, pp. 171-82.
the story by the description, experiences the conflict that arises through the response, and feels the resolution which comes in the reply. The description does not provide just the setting for the reply. It is already full of movement and action: a paralytic and his friends trying to overcome numerous obstacles in order to come to Jesus; a highly significant dialogue between Jesus and the sons of Zebedee; a woman pouring expensive perfume upon Jesus. The reaction part adds a new dimension, changes the movement, and interrupts the flow of the narrative. The reaction takes issue with the action or interaction that was taking place in the description. The reader is confronted with the fact that the movement of the narrative is interrupted; an obstacle prevents its smooth continuation. The resolution is then provided in the reply. It is a resolution for the whole narrative: it brings the description to a satisfactory conclusion and overcomes the obstacle of the reaction. It resolves the conflict between description and reaction through the pronouncement of Jesus.¹ In participating in the development of the plot, the reader experiences a unique movement in tripolar pronunciation stories.

¹On the movement from conflict to resolution as an essential aspect of the plot, see Ryken, *Bible as Literature*, 40.
The Identification of the Reader

More than participating in the development of the narrative, the reader is moved to identify with characters. That means they come to recognize themselves in the narrative. Tilley asserts that the Gospel writers "sought to tell the truth by confronting the hearers with a story that turned them on and made the hearers the active subjects of a new story."¹

The identification of the reader with the characters does not obscure the fact that both groups are different. However, the reader recognizes similarities and can relate on that level to what happened to the individual participants of the narrative. Since the life of the reader overlaps with that of the characters of the narrative, the former can identify with the latter.²

Identification can be either positive or negative. "At its very heart, narrative is a form in which authors influence their readers to respond with either sympathy or aversion to what happens in the story."³ Further, the


³Wilder points out: "The myriads of men taught by the Bible know that the children of God in his family are all different, and each has his own history, and his own gifts, and his own guilt and his own blessing. Nevertheless the various plots and histories overlap in various wonderful ways, and especially perhaps our moral histories" (Wilder, 66).

³Ryken, *Bible as Literature*, 66.
description of the characters can create either closeness or distance.¹

Tripolar pronouncement stories provide the opportunity to identify with three different characters. These three characters are placed in dramatic juxtaposition to each other. This makes the process of identification more complex and in fact demanding to the reader.

The one character that appears in all tripolar pronouncement stories, and who is the dominant character of the Gospel of Mark, is Jesus. As Rhoads and Michie point out, Jesus is presented in a very favorable light. Yet, at the same time "the awesome, mysterious, and demanding aspects of Jesus' character keep the reader at a distance and make it difficult for the reader to identify easily with Jesus."² Yet at the same time, Jesus provides the standard of judgment.

The other two characters are directly or indirectly in contrast to each other. At the same time, they are aligned with or in opposition to Jesus. By identifying with one of the other two characters, the readers will automatically identify themselves with a specific reaction to Jesus, and this decision will either be affirmed or

¹Dewey correctly observes that the process of identification occurs sequentially. In this respect it is possible that the readers identify with more than one character (Dewey, "Mark as Aural Narrative," 55).

²Rhoads and Michie, 104.
challenged by the reply of Jesus. The case of Jesus’ blessing of the children may serve as an example: to identify positively with the children means to receive Jesus’ affirmation; to identify positively with the disciples means to receive Jesus’ rebuke. To identify positively with Jesus results in a sympathetic attitude toward the children and a negative view of the disciples.¹ Thus we can see that the dramatic juxtaposition of the three characters in tripolar pronouncement stories allows for a differentiated process of identification on the part of the readers.

The Application of the Narrative
Having moved from observation to participation to identification, the readers are now able to apply the message of the narrative to specific situations in their own lives. In this way the narrative becomes a vehicle for conveying values² that are relevant beyond the original

¹On the role of conflict and contrast in the Gospel of Mark see, Mary R. Thompson, *The Role of Disbelief in Mark: A New Approach to the Second Gospel* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989). According to Thompson, the most significant contrasts/conflicts are those between Jesus and John the Baptist, Jesus and official Judaism, and Jesus and his own disciples.

²On the aspect of the value judgement a story implies Patrick and Scult write: "The story particularizes one possibility among the many that could have been. The choice to tell it this way rather than that is one of strong moral import. The narrator strongly implies that it happened this way rather than that for a reason, a reason that has to do with the moral order of the world as the narrator sees it" (Dale Patrick and Allen Scult, *Rhetoric*
situation. The original situation takes on the meaning of a model that prescribes a pattern that can be applied or avoided.1

Tripolar pronouncement stories share with other pronouncement stories the answer, endorsement, or correction of Jesus in his reply. In this way the correct answer or desired behavior is indicated to the reader.2 However, the relationship described in dipolar pronouncement stories is only between one character and Jesus. Dipolar pronouncement stories may address the issues concerning relationships outside of the encounter, such as who is my neighbor, should


1In his analysis of the Gospel of Mark, Kermode employs the term "the unfollowable word," indicating that the reader can only receive a "momentary radiance," since the narratives are "hopelessly plural, endlessly disappointing" (Frank Kermode, The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative, The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, 1977-78 [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979], 145).

Thiemann takes issue with Kermode's stance. I agree with Thiemann that the biblical stories are indeed "coherent" and "followable." They "function to invite the reader into the world of the tale" (Ronald F. Thiemann, Radiance and Obscurity in Biblical Narrative," in Scriptural Authority and Narrative Interpretation, ed. Garrett Green [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987], 38).

2Ryken asserts: "Most important of all is the way in which a story ends. One of the inherent principles of narrative is the idea of outcome. If characters in stories undertake experiment in living, then the outcome of that experiment is an implied comment on its adequacy or inadequacy" (Bible as Literature, 65).

In the case of pronouncement stories, and with them also tripolar narratives, the conclusion carries further weight as it is a saying of Jesus (see Rhoads and Michie, 104).
one pay taxes to Caesar, etc. But they do not describe a real-life situation with these other characters present.

The pericope about the sons of Zebedee (Mark 10:35-45) can illustrate this point. The message of the narrative is that discipleship means serving others and that the son of man will act accordingly and give his life as a ransom for many. In a dipolar narrative, this message could be conceived of as a reply to a question on true discipleship or as a reaction to a specific criticism. However, the dipolar narrative would only establish the relationship between the questioner or accuser and Jesus. It would not be able to portray any other interaction outside of this relationship.

The advantage of tripolar pronouncement stories is that they describe real-life situations that happen in addition to the interaction with Jesus. Instead of giving verbal instructions, Jesus here actually intervenes in a social process. In the case of the above-mentioned example, we find two groups of disciples fighting over questions of superiority. Jesus' subsequent pronouncement is therefore more than a simple instruction or justification of his own position. His intervention represents an evaluation of a social interaction. At this point we can realize how the complexity of tripolar pronouncement stories allows them to become case-studies in social interaction with a definite conclusion through Jesus' pronouncement.
Being case-studies of social interactions, tripolar pronouncement stories can easily be applied to similar situations. They not only indicate the proper response to Jesus and his message, but also illustrate the consequences of following him in relationship to other people. They show how to be courageous in the face of antagonists, to welcome children, to serve fellow disciples, and to follow Christ in a more complete way.

Summary

The significance of tripolar pronouncement stories has been considered under three aspects. In the first part, I compared tripolar pronouncement stories with dipolar pronouncement stories and Hellenistic χρησίαι. This comparison showed a considerable difference in the structure of these two kinds of narratives. Dipolar narratives present Jesus with a situation to which he needs to respond. This situation consists either of a question or accusation, or of an incident. This constitutes the singular reference point to which Jesus' reply would answer. In contrast to dipolar pronouncement stories, tripolar pronouncement stories present Jesus with a situation that is more complex. The situation consists of two parts: the description and the reaction. These two parts contain two reference points, represented by the two characters and their concerns. These two concerns are to be addressed by Jesus in his reply. Since the two concerns are diametrically opposed, it is
impossible for Jesus to reply to one of the parties without affecting the other. The vindication of one party becomes the judgment of the other. The uniqueness of tripolar pronouncement stories has to be seen in their complex situational part (description and reaction) and the equally complex pronouncement of Jesus.

Tripolar pronouncement stories are part of the episodic plot pattern of the Gospel of Mark. As such, they contribute to the development of the plot as a whole and the characterization of the individual parties. In tripolar pronouncement stories, three characters are put in dramatic relationship to each other. They appear on the same scene. Their traits and characters are brought out by contrast and alignment. This was called the dramatic juxtaposition of three characters. This feature is notable, particularly, when compared to dipolar narratives. In dipolar narratives, two characters appear, allowing for one kind of interaction. In tripolar pronouncement stories, however, we encounter a triangle of relationships. Three characters relating to each other allow for three sets of interaction. This leads to the creation of a complex dynamic and provides the opportunity for intricate characterization. This is particularly significant with regard to Jesus. He is no longer only the corrector, commender, responder, defender, teacher. Instead his roles are enlarged to include those of
the judge, vindicator, ally, protector, mediator, the model and authoritative example.

The rhetorical significance of tripolar pronouncement stories has been seen in their unique impact upon the (implied) reader. The (implied) author communicates his message (telling) by way of narrative (showing). The impact of tripolar pronouncement stories upon the reader has to be seen on four levels:

1. Tripolar pronouncement stories have first to be appreciated on an aesthetic level.

2. Tripolar pronouncement stories invite the reader to take part in the threefold development of the story. Having been lured into the story by the description, the reader is suddenly confronted with the interruption of the reaction to finally experience resolution in the reply of Jesus.

3. Tripolar pronouncement stories present the reader with the task of identifying with three characters. The identification can be positive or negative. This process of identification is particularly intricate since the characters do not emerge one after the other, but in dramatic juxtaposition appear on one scene. In the final analysis, Jesus becomes the standard according to which the reader can correct his own perceptions.

4. Tripolar pronouncement stories provide a model which serves to convey certain values. They are
case-studies of social interaction. This is a feature which dipolar pronouncement stories cannot express because they are limited to one character who interacts with Jesus. Tripolar pronouncement stories illustrate in a real-life situation that believing in Jesus not only concerns the individual's relationship with Jesus, but has also social consequences. The medium of the narrative makes it possible for the reader to apply the message to similar situations and to use it as a paradigm.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been an examination of tripolar pronouncement stories. Throughout this examination, the perspective has been that of narrative criticism. Narrative criticism is concerned with the question: "How does the text mean?" Applying this question to this study I asked: How do tripolar pronouncement stories mean? What are their features? What are the Markan tripolar pronouncement stories? How do they contribute to the gospel story of Mark? What is their significance to the reader?

Narrative criticism is a literary methodology that was developed on the grounds of various literary approaches. At the same time it has decidedly exegetical aims. Because of this, narrative criticism is a biblical methodology "without exact counterpart in the secular world." In order to establish a methodological base, I have followed Stephen D. Moore's suggestion to utilize Rhoads and Michie's as well as Culpepper's agenda which they employed in their books

\[\text{Moore, 55.}\]
Accordingly, narrative criticism is concerned with the plot, characters, setting, and rhetoric of a story. The plot describes the progression of the story, the characters are the actors within the narrative, and the setting provides the backdrop of the story in terms of time and place. The rhetoric deals with the impact of the text upon the reader, which can be inferred from the text itself. It recognizes the implied reader and the implied author as well as specific rhetorical devices.

I have pointed out that I have approached the Markan tripolar pronouncement stories in a twofold way. On the one hand I regard them as devices within the gospel story of Mark which contribute to the whole; on the other I see them as narratives with a setting, characters, a plot, and a specific rhetorical impact upon the reader, comparable to the narrative features of the gospel as a whole. Characteristic of tripolar pronouncement stories are three main characters, which represent three poles within the story, and a threefold progression of the plot according to description—reaction—reply. The last element of tripolar pronouncement stories, the reply, contains a pronouncement of Jesus. Because of this feature, these tripolar narratives belong to the group of pronouncement stories.

1Ibid., 51.
Tripolar pronouncement stories have not been previously recognized as a specific subgroup of pronouncement stories. The review of literature in the second chapter surveys therefore the scholarly debate that deals with pronouncement stories as a whole. I wanted to see which insights have been established that could be helpful to my analysis of tripolar pronouncement stories.

The first section presents the results of the form-critical examination of pronouncement stories. I am indebted to the early form-critics for the discovery of the pronouncement story as a specific form, with a fixed pattern. Their limitation has to be seen in their diachronic approach and their general emphasis on the final pronouncement instead of a more balanced appreciation of the narrative as a whole. One of the first form-critics, Martin Albertz, asserted that these stories always present only two characters. This thesis directly challenges that assertion.

The second section of the review of literature deals with the connection between NT pronouncement stories and Hellenistic chreiai. Their common characteristic is that they are sayings stories (i.e., they are made up of a situational part, followed by a significant saying). More specifically NT pronouncement stories fit the description of elaborated or expanded chreiai. It has been pointed out that the expanded quality of NT pronouncement stories calls
for a detailed recognition of their overall narrative composition.

The third section of the review of literature deals with suggestions for the classification of NT pronouncement stories and Hellenistic chreiai. The lack of consensus indicates that it is difficult to find verifiable and distinctive features for the various categories. It is my conclusion that pronouncement stories should be evaluated as whole stories and not only on the basis of their concluding statement. Because of its descriptive quality, I consider narrative criticism as an appropriate tool to accomplish this end.

In the third chapter, I analyze the eight tripolar pronouncement stories which occur in the Gospel of Mark: (1) Mark 2:1-12 (The Healing of the Paralytic), (2) Mark 2:15-17 (Jesus’ Company with Sinners), (3) Mark 2:23-28 (Plucking of Grain on a Sabbath), (4) Mark 3:1-6 (The Healing of the Crippled Hand), (5) Mark 7:1-13 (Clean and Unclean), (6) Mark 10:13-16 (Jesus Blesses the Children), (7) Mark 10:35-45 (Zebedee’s Sons), (8) Mark 14:3-9 (Jesus’ Anointment). We have been able to identify the temporal and local settings of these narratives, the three participating characters, and the threefold progression of the plot with description—reaction—reply.

This analysis verified that the common elements of the tripolar pronouncement stories of the Gospel of Mark are
to be seen in the presence of three characters and the threefold progression of the plot. Otherwise they show a great deal of variation and versatility. They play in different settings, describe different issues, and use a variety of characters.

The fourth chapter demonstrates the significance of tripolar pronouncement stories on the basis of their common elements. In the first section of that chapter tripolar pronouncement stories were compared with dipolar narratives of NT pronouncement stories and Hellenistic chreiai in order to identify their distinctiveness. Dipolar and tripolar pronouncement stories have in common that they are saying stories (i.e., they contain a situational part which is followed by a reply). However, the situational part of tripolar pronouncement stories is extended and more complex. It consists of two parts, the description and the reaction and involves two characters that are placed in dramatic juxtaposition towards each other. The reply of Jesus in response to this complex situational part is also more complex. It has to address two conflicting behaviors and attitudes. The vindication of one of the parties by Jesus automatically implies the rejection of the other.

In the second section, I have demonstrated the contribution of tripolar pronouncement stories with regard to the story of Mark’s Gospel as a whole. Tripolar pronouncement stories contribute to the characterization by
providing an encounter between three characters as opposed to two in dipolar narratives. By contrasting and aligning those three characters in dramatic juxtaposition, nuances and shades of meaning are communicated. Tripolar pronouncement stories contribute to the plot of the story as a whole by adding rich details and by combining the different story lines of the Gospel of Mark.

I have pointed out that tripolar pronouncement stories contribute in particular to the characterization of Jesus. Dipolar narratives present him as the corrector, commendor, responder, winner, and teacher. Additionally, tripolar pronouncement stories describe Jesus also as a judge, vindicator, ally, protector, mediator, and authoritative example of how to deal with complex situations.

The last section deals with the unique impact of tripolar pronouncement stories upon the (implied) reader of the Gospel on four levels:

1. Tripolar pronouncement stories have an impact upon the reader as a specific aesthetic form presenting an issue in the form of a story with three participants.

2. Tripolar pronouncement stories invite the reader to participate in their narrative time which is characterized by a distinct movement leading from the description to the reaction to the reply.
3. Tripolar pronouncement stories offer the reader the choice to identify with three different characters. This process of identification is richer and more subtle in these narratives than in dipolar narratives. In contrast to dipolar narratives, which present one character in relationship to Jesu, tripolar pronouncement stories describe two characters. These two characters not only relate to Jesus but are also placed in dramatic juxtaposition with each other.

4. Tripolar pronouncement stories provide case-studies in social interaction. Issues are not only illustrated as they relate to Jesus, but also in the context of human interaction. As such, tripolar pronouncement stories provide a model which can be applied to similar situations.

This study has established the validity and usefulness of the category of tripolar pronouncement stories. Their distinct form and significance warrant the recognition of tripolar stories as a separate category of pronouncement stories.

As outlined in the introduction, this study was limited to the tripolar pronouncement stories of the Gospel of Mark. The tripolar pronouncement stories of the other gospels can be made the subject of further research. This means the same questions that were used to elicit answers regarding the tripolar pronouncement stories of Mark can be
applied to the other gospels as well. With respect to the
synoptic gospels, it may also be rewarding to compare the
tripolar pronouncement stories of the different gospels when
they describe the same incident.

The review of literature indicated the difficulty in
finding verifiable criteria to establish meaningful and
distinct categories of pronouncement stories. The approach,
which was used to support the usefulness of the category
tripolar narrative, can also be applied to other types of
pronouncement stories and narratives. A consistent
application of the basic parameters of narrative criticism
to individual pericopes of any gospel can lead to a
meaningful classification of its features and a systematic
understanding of its various narrative functions. This
means each pericope can be classified and compared according
to the setting, the characters, and the plot.
APPENDIX 1

SCHEMATIC REPRESENTATION OF TRIPOLAR NARRATIVES

PARTS I & II:

1) Description
   1st PARTY <--------------------->
   Action or Interaction
         J E S U S

2) Reaction
towards 1st party & Jesus

   3rd PARTY

PART III:

       J E S U S

3) Reply
to 3rd party
possibly interaction with 1st

                              
                              
   3rd PARTY {+++++++++++++++++++++} 1st PARTY

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APPENDIX 2

A TABLE OF CLASSIFICATIONS

The following chart provides a comparison of classifications. We have included all pronouncement stories that have been recognized by Taylor and Tannehill, as well as all Streitgespräche recognized by Albertz, all apophthegms except for the biographical apophthegms as classified by Bultmann, and all paradigms by Dibelius. Hultgren’s classification appears under that of Bultmann because he agrees completely with Bultmann’s Streitgespräche. The first column identifies all tripolar narratives corresponding to our definition.

The chart also indicates the different subcategories as employed by Bultmann, Hultgren, Dibelius and Tannehill. We employ the following abbreviations:

Bultmann (Bult):
- B = Behavior of Jesus or his disciples is reacted to
- H = Healing is reacted to
- O = Opponents question is replied to
- I = Inquiry of a disciple or another person

Hultgren (Hu)
- NU = Non-Unitary Conflict Stories
- U = Unitary Conflict Stories
Dibelius (Dibe):
- P = Pure paradigm
- D = Developed paradigm

Tannehill (Tann):
- Cr = Correction stories
- Ob = Objection stories
- Cm = Commendation stories
- In = Inquiry stories,
  include Test = Testing Inquiry Stories
- Qu = Quest stories
- De = Description stories (does not apply to Mark)

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