

## THE GOSPEL OF MARK AS EPISODICAL NARRATIVE \*

### Reflections on the 'composition' of the second gospel

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#### O. Introduction

The gospel of Mark as 'episodic narrative'?<sup>1</sup> The second gospel has remained controversial<sup>2</sup> since Johann Gottfried Herder had classified it as a narrative<sup>3</sup>. Although most interpreters have come to realize that the gospel of Mark is a narrative text, this realization has not always been precipitated in the determination of genre or the method of interpretation<sup>4</sup>. However, if the gospel of Mark is a narrative<sup>5</sup>, it ought to be scrutinized and classified as a narrative text<sup>6</sup>. Yet it is not our intention once again to classify the gospel of Mark in terms of literary history<sup>7</sup>. We are interested in something else, namely, to prove that the gospel of Mark is in fact a narrative text, and to attempt an evaluation of the narrative qualities of this text with regard to the 'composition' of the gospel. Even if the question of genre is left open for the time being (see below 1), it is quite possible to evaluate the fact that the gospel of Mark is essentially a narrative text, for an analysis of its composition.

Now, it is generally agreed that the synoptic gospels are composed of small, self-contained units. Exegetes agree about the delimitation of these units<sup>8</sup>. In contrast to this consensus, there are the most divergent proposals concerning the delimitation of the gospel<sup>9</sup>. The reason for this is that the small units are assembled differently, which in turn has two causes. Firstly, differing principles of delimitation are used<sup>10</sup>. Some interpreters regard geographical viewpoints as the major criterion<sup>11</sup>, others proceed from the main themes of the contents<sup>12</sup>, other yet again pay particular attention to the major groups, with whom the principal figure, Jesus, is involved<sup>13</sup>, whereas some take the influence of pre-Markan material<sup>14</sup>, or the function of the so-called collective accounts of the evangelist<sup>15</sup>, as point of departure. Another possibility would be to base one's deliberations on specific schemes which shaped the composition of the text<sup>16</sup>. Secondly, and this is the other side of the problem, there seems to be a lack of text-related structural principles. However, subsequently we wish to show that, as a narrative (2), an 'episodic narrative' (3), the gospel of

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Mark contains some inherent structural principles which can be used for describing the composition of the text (4). Before tackling this question, I wish to make some preliminary remarks (1).

## 1. Preliminary reflections

The following deliberations concern themselves mainly with narrative research of continental design. There are still a host of unanswered questions and unsolved problems within the realm of narratology. I shall mention only a few, so as to stress the preliminary and open-ended nature of the theoretical basis of my contribution. Nevertheless, I do believe that the theory would benefit from more diversified research.

### 1.1

Firstly, it is to be noted that even the narrative researchers have difficulty in giving a theoretical description and definition of that which we intuitively recognize as 'narratives'<sup>17</sup>.

### 1.2

Secondly, the relationship between the narrative structures which constitute narration and the historic genres, has not as yet been clarified<sup>18</sup>. Does one explain the narrative ability anthropologically, whereas genres are specifically epochal phenomena which owe their origin and variations to social interests and needs? However, what then is the relationship between narrative theory, which examines types of narrative that overlap in time and the properties of narration, and the history of genre?<sup>19</sup>

### 1.3

Within this context it is important, in the third place, to point out that the examination of the gospel of Mark as narrative text can only be a preparation towards establishing the genre of the gospel, in so far as the canonical gospels do actually constitute one genre. Only on this condition can they fit into a history of the 'Gospel' genre. Should the gospels not constitute an individual genre, the classification of the gospels as narratives does not yet decide, whether, in terms of literary history, they ought to be regarded as part of the Hellenistic biographies<sup>20</sup>, or as analogies to the stories of redemption of the Old Testament<sup>21</sup>, as for instance the Exodus story<sup>22</sup>, for all of these are, after all, narrative texts. If the gospel of Mark is classified as narrative text, it must, nevertheless, be observed that some possibilities of classifying it in terms of history of literature are excluded. Observed from this angle, it will be difficult to classify the gospel, in terms of literary history, as prophecy<sup>23</sup>, as *midrash*<sup>24</sup> or as tragedy (in the Aristotelian sense)<sup>25</sup>, since these genres are not narratives.

It may well come as a surprise that the possibility of an analogy to the tragedy is rejected so quickly, for some exegetes in recent years tried to grasp the 'disposition' of the gospel of Mark<sup>26</sup>, or the 'plot' of the gospel<sup>27</sup>, by means of the Aristotelian

description of the *mythos* (plot) of the tragedy. Such attempts should not be confused with more daring theses, as for example, that the gospel of Mark were a tragedy<sup>28</sup>. Even if the attempts at describing the composition of the gospel in this way are not quite plausible<sup>29</sup>, it is important to consult the poetics of Aristotle with regard to possible yields for the investigation of the gospel of Mark.

It then appears that the gospel of Mark does not resemble a tragedy, but the epos as defined by Aristotle! Because the difference between the *mythos* (plot) of the tragedy and the *mythos* (plot) of the epos are neglected due to far-reaching similarities, interpreters come to the confusing conclusion that the plot of the gospel of Mark resembles that of an Aristotelian tragedy<sup>30</sup>.

Now it is immediately apparent that the *tragōidia* (tragedy) first of all differs from the *epopoia* (epos) with regard to phraseology. Whereas the tragedy simulates reality by way of presentation, the epos has to rely on dramatic narration<sup>31</sup>, which means that the gospel of Mark in its form of expression is in all respects more closely related to the narrative epos. Aristotle is well aware that the plot can be expressed in various ways; after all, a written tragedy is performed<sup>32</sup>. Indeed, the tragedy and the epos do first of all set the authors the same task: they must generally give a sketch of the subject matter in itself and at the same time see to it that the action, which is to be imitated, is homogenous and compact<sup>33</sup>. Yet the intention is to transform the subject matter, i.e. the backbone of the *mythos* (plot) into an episodic presentation (*epeisodioun*). Even if the plot of the tragedy comprises everything which is also necessary for the plot of the epos<sup>34</sup>, they differ considerably from each other in the episodic development (*epeisodioun*) of the general exposition (of a sketch of the *katholou*). It is only through the (*epeisodioun*) that the general outline<sup>35</sup>, which had already been sketched in the plan is converted into individual 'episodes' (*epeisodia*). The character, the number and the variety<sup>36</sup> of these episodes of the epos differ from those in the tragedy. Narrative allows more frequent changes of scenes and the parallel presentation of several lines of action<sup>37</sup>. This allows for a larger spread of the epos and opens up the possibility of arousing the interest of the listeners through variation<sup>38</sup>, which is inconceivable with regard to the stage-bound tragedy. Narration permits portrayal of the miraculous. Wouldn't it be ridiculous to try and visualize Mk 6:45-51 on stage<sup>39</sup>! It is precisely the narrative of the account that allows for flash-backs (6:17-29) or simultaneousness of two trains of action (5:21-24a,24b-34,33-43). As in the Homeric epos<sup>40</sup>, the narrator of the gospel of Mark also often relates (reports - *apangellein*) in the role of someone else by using direct speech; like the Iliad and the Odyssey, the gospel of Mark presents several actions which each in itself are of a certain magnitude (*megethos*<sup>41</sup>) with enough material for an entire tragedy. And indeed, according to Aristotle, such episodes can each be fashioned into a tragedy<sup>42</sup>.

In my opinion the comparison between the gospel of Mark and the Aristotelian tragedy only creates confusion and distorts Aristotle's Poetics. One can, however, learn from Aristotle's theory of literature (see also 2.3).

## 1.4

From the preceding it will probably have become clear that Aristotle differentiates between the plot (*mythos*) and the result of the episodic presentation (*epeisodioun*), whether it be in the tragedy or the epos. The plot (*mythos*) is not to be equated with the *tragōdia* or the *epopoia* (tragedy or epos). This distinction of Aristotle has remained largely valid until the present day<sup>43</sup>.

Given these preconditions, we can, though simplified, visualize the composition of the gospel of Mark as follows: on the lowest level we have the textual micro-level, the sequence of sentences and episodes; the second level constitutes the global contents which link the individual episodes together; these contents are in turn linked together by a narrative superstructure. At the second level we have the global contents which link the individual episodes together; these contents are in turn put into relation with one another by a narrative superstructure<sup>44</sup>. They could also have been structured differently though; in a sermon one could subject these contents to an appellative sermon-scheme, but then it would no longer be a narrative. It is also conceivable to disengage the narrative macrostructure of the gospel of Mark from its form of expression, the Greek discourse, and express it through another medium, e.g. a comic strip.

Subsequently we shall deal with the fourth preconsideration, namely a description of the macrostructure of the gospel of Mark. This macrostructure has two dimensions, on the one hand the global contents (themes), on the other hand the relationship between these global contents, the macro-themes. Their constellation is determined by a narrative superstructure or a narrative scheme<sup>45</sup>.

## 2. The gospel of Mark as narrative

Up to now we have tacitly presupposed that the gospel of Mark is a narrative text. But what is a narrative text?<sup>46</sup>

### 2.1 Characteristics of a narrative text

First of all narrative texts consist predominantly of action sentences - that is, sentences with verbs which above all depict human action and have animated subjects. Since narrative texts cannot be restricted to human action alone, it can be said that they depict changes brought about mainly by human or animated actors.

Secondly, this transformation belongs to the past and comprises a change of the point of departure towards a new finite situation. Something must, therefore, have changed.

Thirdly, by means of a narrative superstructure, or rather, a narrative scheme, the main themes of a narrative text are brought into a specific relationship with each other, typical of narrative texts.

Fourthly, the text of a narrative must satisfy the normal conditions of textuality.

The gospel of Mark, without doubt, satisfies conditions one and four: there can hardly be any doubt that the gospel of Mark is a carefully composed text. It is already well known that the gospel of Mark depicts action: either the action of Jesus and his disciples, or that of his opponents is in the foreground. In some instances, like Mark 1:15; 8:31; 9:12; 14:21, and in the *passiva divina* it becomes clear that the human actions are based on God's eschatological act of salvation which is the ultimate guideline. I shall come back later to this aspect, as well as to the question what changes take place. The conditions two and three are more problematical.

## 2.2 The minor narrative units in the gospel of Mark

### 2.2.1 The narrative scheme as exemplified by Mk 9:2-8.

The question arises whether the gospel of Mark is governed by a narrative superstructure. Since I dealt with the function of a narrative superstructure within a text elsewhere in connection with the text model of Teun A van Dijk<sup>47</sup>, I can be brief here and point out first of all that the gospel of Mark consists of many minor narratives. Let us, for example, examine Mk 9:2-8<sup>48</sup>.

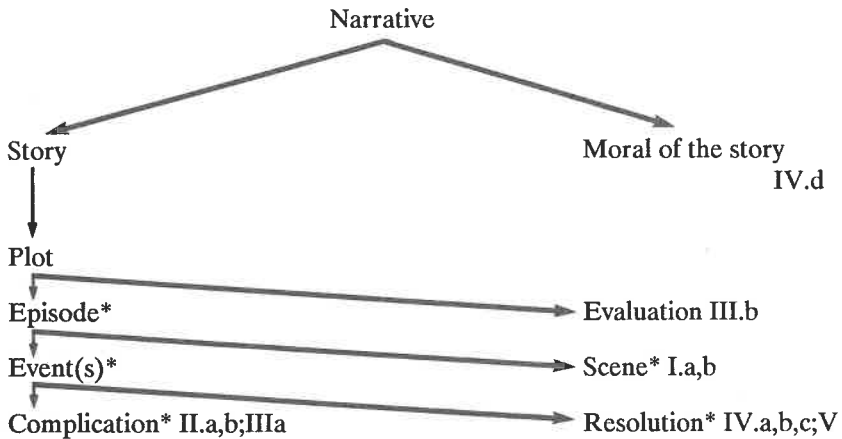
Here a scene is created by the statements in Mk 9:2a,2b. These statements constitute the framework within which the events take place. In Mk 9:2c,3 the complication is introduced. An unusual, unexpected event is depicted, which changes the initial situation. In 9:5 the complication is strengthened. The two enraptured figures from the history of Israel, whose return had been prophesied for the last days, appear to the transformed Jesus who through his white robe is shown as eschatological heavenly figure. In Mk 9:5f the tension is intensified once more. There has been so much excitement; how must it be evaluated? Peter furnishes the evaluation. He finds it good and wants to stay. The narrator immediately rejects this evaluation of Peter and says that Peter has misunderstood the whole event. Thereby the evaluation is again repealed, and a second complication is introduced, which reaches beyond the textual context and which is linked to the lack of understanding on the parts of the disciples. Only in v 7 the tension of the introductory complication is resolved with the occurrence of the resolution, in that God, who, after all, had transformed Jesus, explains the transformation and the appearance of Moses and Elias: Jesus is the only Son, who surpasses all the prophets - even Moses and Elias must heed Him - and who is revealed as a transformed white figure in his eschatological glory as the Son of God. It is furthermore part of the resolution that everything returns to the point of departure (v 8). The moral of the narrative is clear. The disciples are to obey Jesus, the Son of God. He is destined for the eschatological glory and already at this stage bearer of the revelation according to Dt 18:15(v 7d).

Let us visualize the narrative macro-level of the text schematically. We have the following global contents:

- I a Jesus and the three disciples ascend a mountain.  
b They are alone.
- II a Jesus is transformed into an eschatological heavenly figure.  
b Other eschatological heavenly figures speak with Jesus.

- c The disciples witness IIa,b.
- III a The disciples wish to retain this situation, as they don't understand it.  
b The narrator rebukes this evaluation as lack of understanding.
- IV a God proclaims the transfigured Jesus as His only Son.  
b God emphasizes the revelatory function of Jesus.  
c The disciples receive this revelation.  
d God commands the disciples to obey Jesus.
- V Everything returns to the point of departure.

The global contents are attached to a narrative scheme:



(\*These categories are recurrent and may occur several times, also embedded into one another. A 'plot' may have several episodes, and an episode may consist of several events).

To draw up such an explanation of the macro-structure of a discourse is, of course, only possible on the basis of a careful analysis of the micro-level of the text <sup>49</sup>. This applies even more so for an analysis of the macro-structure of the complete gospel of Mark.

Before I attempt this, I wish to point out briefly that several minor units in the gospel of Mark can be regarded as narrative texts because

- a) they are depicting a sequence of events;
- b) their global contents are organized by a narrative super-structure;
- c) their discourses satisfy the normal criteria of textuality <sup>50</sup>, and
- d) they portray changes through action.

### 2.2.2 Narrative texts within the gospel of Mark.

I demonstrated the narrative superstructure of Mk 12:1-9 elsewhere<sup>51</sup>. Obviously parables are also narrative texts. Likewise one could demonstrate that the scheme or thematic frameworks of a miracle story can be traced back to a narrative superstructure<sup>52</sup>. Similarly the so-called biographical *apophthegmata*<sup>53</sup>, are subject to a narrative superstructure and refer to an action. The scene is initially only briefly outlined (Mk 1:16,19; 2:14a; 6:1-2a; 12:41; 14:3); then follows the unusual, that which is worth relating (Mk 1:17,20a; 6:2b-3; 12:42; 14:4), the complication. After that, Jesus immediately presents the resolution, which also contains the moral of the story (Mk 6:4; 12:43f; 14:6-9). In the missionary narratives the resolution lies in the unconditional reaction of the disciples (Mk 1:18,20b; 2:14c).

The situation is more difficult in Mk 2:1-12, 15-17; 3:1-6; 10:13-16, 17-21; 11:20-25 - which are also *apophthegmata*<sup>54</sup>. Whether one can view these texts as narratives will ultimately depend on the definition of human action. Here the words and actions have, however, a very specific intention, so that it may well be said that we are dealing with texts in which human action is in the foreground<sup>55</sup>.

Exceptions with regard to the above are the *apophthegmata* which can be shown rather to be argumentative texts<sup>56</sup> (Mk 2:18-22; 3:22-29; 7:1-23; 11:27-33; 12:13-17), and those texts whose subject is not human action itself, but which refer to rules of action (Mk 2:23-28; 10:2-12; 12:18-27,28-34) or that want to guide the actions of the disciples (Mk 9:38-40; 10:35-45). We can, nevertheless, conclude that a considerable number of the *apophthegmata* included in the gospel of Mark satisfy the conditions of narrative texts. This does not apply only with regard to the smaller units, but also to the complete story of the Passion, Mk 14:1f,10-16:8, which, in my opinion, already includes Mk 11:1-11,15-18,27-33.

An analysis of the superstructure of Mk 16:1-8 proves that here too we are dealing with a small unit. A narrative structure with two events is involved here: in v 1f the scene is portrayed, whereas v 3 depicts the complication which in turn is dissolved in v 4. v 5a once more portrays a scene with a complication in v 5b: the women are frightened by the heavenly youth who is sitting at the place where they expected Jesus. v 6f brings the resolution which in turn again ends in a complication - this time with the tension remaining.

### 2.2.3 Prospectus

It can be shown that the gospel of Mark is composed of a host of minor narratives.

The gospel of Mark comprises several narratives, but is the text as a whole a narrative? One can also conceive of an argumentative text as including minor narrative units as partial arguments, as is done by Paul, for example, in Gal 1:13-2:14. On the other hand the gospel of Mark also contains texts which evidently are not narrative texts, as for instance Mk 8:34-9:1; 9:35-50; 13:5b-37. The classification and description of non-narrative texts within the narrative structure of a global narrative text represents one of the unsolved problems of narrative research<sup>57</sup>. We

are, however, of the opinion that taking note of narrative sentences may assist in explaining the classification of such texts within the total composition of the gospel of Mark. This will be attempted later in this essay (3).

However, what is the situation with regard to the minor narrative texts in the gospel of Mark, and what is their position in relation to the overall narrative? Are they part of a larger narrative at all?

### 2.3 The narrative macro-structure of the gospel of Mark

The global content themes of the gospel of Mark, such as the Messianic secret, the disciples' lack of understanding, the passion of the Son of Man, and the coming of the Kingdom of God, have been subjected to intensive research during the last three decades. This led to a considerable expansion of the work done by William Wrede. It is not possible to repeat here all the particulars concerning the reduction of the Marcan macro-themes<sup>58</sup>. It is our intention, rather, to show that these macro-themes are organized by a narrative superstructure, and that these two elements form the macro-structure which, from a global point of view, show the gospel of Mark to be a narrative text.

#### 2.3.1 The scene

In the scene the reader is lead towards the narrative. He is guided by the narrator in order to obtain a clear concept of the 'text space', so that he knows when, where and by whom the narrating is done. This information must also introduce the text.

At the beginning of the gospel of Mark the reader is immediately introduced to the time period in which the eschatological expectation of the prophet Isaiah is fulfilled: 'Beginning of the glad tidings of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as it is written in the Prophet Isaiah'<sup>59</sup>. Subsequently it is then shown how John the Baptist by his actions shows himself to be the voice that calls in the wilderness and prepares the way of the Lord. His actions constitute the beginning of the eschatological Gospel of Jesus Christ. From the title the reader already knows that with Jesus the Son of God is meant. Then the account of the baptism of Jesus assures him that God Himself testified that Jesus was his only Son<sup>60</sup>, upon whom He had let His Spirit descend, that Jesus of Nazareth be the authorized eschatological Saviour (Is 42:1). The Spirit has taken possession of Jesus and drives Him into the desert where he is tempted by Satan and, as a sign of the eschatological salvation, lives with the wild animals (Is 11:6-8; 65:25; 2 Bar 73:6). The time framework is clearly drawn, the eschatological expectations are beginning to be fulfilled. In Mk 1:14, whose statements also serve the purpose of creating a scene, the time is defined in minute detail: after the delivery of John (into prison). Now the reader is also acquainted with the place: Galilee.

Herewith the scene for the action is properly set. Subsequently only the subordinate figures are still introduced: The disciples (Mk 1:16-20; 2:15f; 3:13-19; 4:11), the adversaries of Jesus in the individual episodes (Mk 2:1-3:6; 3:20-35; 4:11f) and the people (Mk 1:21f,28,32-34,45; 3:7-11).



It is noteworthy that here, where he doesn't have the necessary episodes from tradition at his disposal, Mark himself sets the scene for the complete gospel by means of editorial comments. This applies in particular with regard to the theme 'crowd'. Concerning the disciples he can, for this purpose, refer to the tales of their calling (Mk 1:16-20; 2:14), which he then, to be sure, supplements by Mk 3:13-19 (the list of names is probably traditional). With regard to the opponents the information for the scene of the complete story is already provided by the scenes of the individual episodes. Later in the gospel Mark will reinforce this tendency (Mk 3:22, 7:1; 10:33). That the theme 'opponents' is important to him, is already shown in Mk 1:22, where the reader is already being prepared for the conflict portrayed in chapter 2.

### 2.3.2 The complication

By the complication the reader is prompted to carry on reading and to get involved in the narrative, because now it becomes clear why the gospel is told and what makes it worth being told. Mark was brief. The time, predetermined by God, has come, the decisive epoch in the time guided by Him, therefore Jesus commences with his preaching: 'The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.' (Mk 1:15).

In many individual episodes the coming of God's Kingdom is depicted vividly. Mk 4:1-34 is a clear explication of the guiding principle of Mk 1:15<sup>61</sup>. But this also applies for the numerous miracle stories. As Mk 7:37 reveals, following Is 35:5ff, the salvation dawns in the work of Jesus. The work of Jesus is inextricably linked together with his teaching, as is shown in most exemplary fashion in Mk 1:21-28 and 6:30-33,34ff. This indicates that the miracle stories are to be understood in conjunction with the *basileia*-message<sup>62</sup>. From the outset, the individual episodes carry the macro-theme which states that the Kingdom of God is at hand, and they unfold it in many different ways.

Mk 1:15b is dealt with in a similar way. The human reaction to the *basileia*-message could, however, not have been fashioned as strongly from traditional material as the message itself. Therefore Mark makes an editorial addition referring to the reaction of the crowd (Mk 1:21f,27f,32-34,45; 3:7-11; 6:53-56). In similar fashion he deals with the reaction of the disciples (Mk 4:13; 4:40; 6:52; 8:14-21; 9:32; 10:24,26), whereas in the case of the opponents he only needs to strengthen the trend of the individual episodes from the tradition (Mk 3:6), in order to transfer them into the information of the passion story (Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:32-34).

The complication of the theme of the reaction to the message of the Kingdom of God lies in the fact that, although the people follow Jesus in large numbers, they do not believe in him unequivocally (Mk 6:14-16; 8:28), whereas the disciples, who have been informed about the mystery of the Kingdom of God (Mk 4:11), also do not understand the teaching of Jesus (Mk 8:32f; 9:32-35; 10:40-45), and finally desert him (Mk 14:27,50,72); Peter, on the other hand, renounces him (Mk 14:66-72). The reaction of the adversaries points at the imminent Kingdom of God in Jesus who, in

God's place, forgives sins (Mk 2:10) and, like God, is Lord of the Sabbath (Mk 2:28); furthermore that they are obdurate, and plan to kill him (Mk 3:5f; 4:11).

The macro-themes are, therefore, in a differentiated way classified as belonging to the category 'complication'. Although concealed, the Kingdom of God is definitely approaching (Mk 4:3-8:26-29,30-32; 1:15). This manifests itself in the work and the preaching of Jesus. It is part of the theme of the coming of the Kingdom of God that it is proclaimed when the time is fulfilled. The action of Jesus is, therefore, from the outset placed within an eschatological framework.

If then, in Mk 8:31-33 (with the *dei* statement)<sup>63</sup>, and in Mk 9:12; 14:21 (with reference to the Old Testament), the passion of Jesus is regarded as part of the will of God for the last days, the tension in the theme of the coming of the Kingdom of God is intensified even more. How can the *basileia* come if the principal actor, who with work and deed brings close the Kingdom of God, is killed? The complication is furthermore intensified precisely by the fact that Jesus, after announcing his passion (Mk 9:1), and on the evening before his crucifixion (Mk 14:25), once more refers to the theme of the coming of the *basileia*, and affirms with two 'Amen words', that the Kingdom of God will come, and indeed within the generation of his listeners (Mk 9:1)<sup>64</sup>.

With regard to the theme 'Messianic secret' things are not different. The reader certainly knows who Jesus is (Mk 1:1,11), and also the demons (Mk 1:24f,34; 3:11), for they are supernatural beings. For the figures in the narrative, however, this is a mystery (Mk 4:40; 6:14-16; 8:28). When the disciples finally bring themselves to testifying who Jesus is supposed to be (Mk 8:29), it transpires that they (represented by Peter) have misunderstood their acknowledgement of Jesus as Messiah. Peter thinks of it in human terms (Mk 8:33) and repeals his acknowledgement (Mk 14:71). The people, incited by the leaders, want to crucify him (Mk 15:8-15), showing thereby that they had not expected a suffering son of David (see Mk 11:9f). When Jesus refuses to present his enemies with a messianic sign to prove his identity (Mk 8:11-13), Jesus's blasphemy culminates in his statement that he is the Son of God (Mk 14:63f). For those who are obdurate the only remaining possibility exists in mocking at the cross that he, who supposedly is the redeemer, should free himself (Mk 15:31f). Neither the disciples, to whom it is given to know 'the mystery of the Kingdom of God' (Mk 4:11), nor the enthusiastic crowd (Mk 1:27f through 12:37b; 14:1f), nor the three who witnessed the transfiguration (Mk 9:2-8), grasp who Jesus really is, and that his advent is inseparably linked to his cross. They do not understand what they hear in his preaching; they do not recognize what they witness in his actions (Mk 4:11f; 8:17). The disciples cannot grasp his suffering (Mk 9:32; 8:32f; 10:35-45). They do not recognize that God's eschatological revelation secretly comes to pass in Jesus and is directed at the cross. It seems as if Jesus did come in vain. The complication is complete and demands to be resolved.

One macro-theme, nevertheless, does find a preliminary solution: the conflict between Jesus and his enemies. With the aid of Judas (Mk 14:10f) the conflict of Mk 2:1-3:6 is intensified in 3:20-35; 7:1-23; 8:11-13; 8:31; 10:32-34; 11:27-12:40 up to 14:1f, to such an extent that Jesus is slain and the enemies, for the time being, attain

their goal. The resurrection which, after all, had been announced from the outset (Mk 8:31; 9:9f), once more poses the question, whether Jesus will fulfil his threat (in Mk 14:61f) and his prophecy concerning the destruction of the temple (Mk 13:1f), both of which immediately concern his enemies. Thus the tension remains.

### 2.3.3 The evaluation

The evaluation of the macro-themes has, after all, already been stated at the outset by the narrator and by God (Mk 1:1,11). Furthermore, the 'it must come to pass' expression of Mk 8:31 and the direct reference to the scriptures (Mk 9:12; 14:21), with the *peplērōtai* phrase in Mk 1:15, serve to explain that the actions and passion of Jesus fit in with the eschatological divine plan. This evaluation is further supported by Jesus's own submission to the will of God (Mk 14:36; 8:33), as well as the numerous references to the Old Testament in the passion story, which interpret Jesus's passion as an event in accordance with the will of God<sup>65</sup>. Similarly Mk 15:39, where the heathen centurion comes to realize that precisely he, who died on the cross, was the Son of God, forms part of this category of the narrative scheme. The answer to the question 'what kind of man is this?' (Mk 4:41; 6:14-16; 8:28) is only provided with the realization of the centurion (Mk 15:39) from the cross. This statement sharply condemns the behaviour of the disciples, the people and the opponents.

We would already have a plot, a narrative framework, a story, if we were not still lacking the resolution. The latter is not supplied in Mk 16:1-8, since the Easter message also meets with lack of understanding. The tension remains.

Following Norman Petersen, I argued elsewhere that Mk 13:24-27 represents the actual conclusion of the gospel of Mark<sup>66</sup>. I do not wish to repeat myself here, but, with reference to these considerations, to put forward the proposition that the solution to the Marcan macro-theme is not narrated, but rather predicted. This means that the solution to the complication of the 'narrative' macrostructure should be sought in the statements which go beyond that which is related up to Mk 16:8. Therefore narrative portrayal of past action is no longer involved here, which means that, at least in view of the current definitions of narration, one has to be circumspect when referring to the gospel of Mark as a narrative text. An important modification of an essential element of the narrative scheme is involved here. Since this element 'resolution' nevertheless plays such an important role (albeit no longer constituting an important part of the discourse in the sense of portraying human action, but rather as prediction of eschatological events and in the form of apocalyptic prophetic sentences<sup>67</sup>) and is not absent, I am of the opinion that one can refer to the gospel of Mark as a narrative text; however, one has to elucidate and qualify this more specifically in detail.

### 2.3.4 The resolution

The resolution of Jesus's predictions, that the *basileia* is at hand (Mk 1:15) and will surely still come in his generation (Mk 9:1), has not yet come about at the moment

of his death (Mk 14:25). The expectation that the disciples will understand and recognize Jesus, has, at Easter, not yet been realized. Jesus's reckoning with his enemies has not yet taken place either.

Now, as Robert Tannehill has made it plausible, the gospel of Mark presupposes that after Easter the disciples do come to understand and can recognize the continuity between the community and that which is the earthly Jesus <sup>68</sup>. A statement like Mk 13:37 and the predictions in Mk 13:9-13; 14:9 imply this. The solution to the theme of the disciples's injudiciousness is not related, but only projected by statements like Mk 14:27 and 16:8. Thus a resolution did come forth and is presupposed.

What then is the situation regarding the *basileia*-theme? The juxtaposition of Mk 8:38 and 9:1 combines the appearance of the Kingdom of God 'with power' with the eschatological coming of the Son of man as the glorified Son of God *en tē doxē tou patros*. If we look at Mk 14:61f, it becomes clear that here too the coming Son of man and the enthroned Son of God refer to each other. The opponents will see him in the future (*opsesthe*) - this future tense determines the tense of the two participles <sup>69</sup> - as the enthroned Son of God. If we read Mk 9:1 and 14:25 against this background, the conclusion is obvious, that the Kingdom of God will then have come 'ith power' when, after the cosmic catastrophe of Mk 13:24f, the Son of man comes as judge and saviour, as this is predicted in Mk 13:26f. In spite of all opposition (Mk 4:3-8) the Kingdom of God will, until then, be small and concealed (Mk 4:30-32), but, secure 'of itself' continue coming (Mk 4:26-29). Like Jesus's coming (Mk 1:15), his death (Mk 8:31; 9:12; 14:21) and his resurrection (Mk 8:31), his return is destined by God alone (Mk 13:20,32). It is, however, still to take place in the generation of those who listen to Jesus <sup>70</sup>.

Thus, the final solution of the Messianic secret lies in the future. All mysteries are eschatologically revealed by God (Mk 4:22). Until the coming of the Son of man the identity of Jesus will remain controversial, and there will be space for false Messiahs (Mk 13:5b,6,21f) <sup>71</sup>. However, the story of the transfiguration anticipates the solution of the complication of the mystery. Here Jesus is transfigured into a heavenly, eschatological figure and, dressed in white garments, identified by God himself as His Son (Mk 9:2f,7). Admittedly, the disciples are allowed to tell others this secret because of their meeting with Jesus at Easter (Mk 14:27; 16:7; see above), and Mark also does this, but for the enemies (Mk 14:61f) and for all those who are ashamed of Jesus (Mk 8:38), the mystery of the Son of God will only be revealed when the Son of man shall come.

The narrator and the reader do hear what God has said about Jesus (Mk 1:11; 9:7). For them and the congregation this is, however, believed knowledge, and one can therefore not state that the mystery has actually been revealed. It is the hope with regard to the return of him, whom one anticipates as the exalted Son of God.

### 2.3.5 The moral of the story

Finally then, the moral of the story of Mark is to be understood from the future expectation. In view of this future expectation the story wants to call on the congregation to keep watch (Mk 13:33-37), to persuade them to remain faithful to the words of Jesus (Mk 8:38), to persevere until the end (Mk 13:13), to adhere to the word (Mk 4:16-20). As I have indicated elsewhere, this 'following of Jesus' is closely linked to the preaching of the gospel (see Mk 13:9f) to the heathens <sup>72</sup>.

### 2.3.6 Summary

To Mark, narrating that which Jesus has done, is part of the preaching of the gospel (see Mk 5:19 - *apangelein*; 14:9 - *lalein*). Therefore he called his narrative of that which Jesus had done and what had to, according to the eschatological divine plan, happen to him, the 'Gospel of Jesus Christ' (Mk 1:1). In addition to our evidence, that the global themes of the gospel of Mark can be classified as a narrative scheme, there are numerous other arguments which demonstrate that the gospel of Mark is a narrative text. In addition to the mentioned work of Petersen and Robert Tannehill, I wish to refer to the book by David Rhoads and Donald Michie <sup>73</sup>, in which many other narrative aspects of the second gospel are examined. It can hardly be disputed any more that the gospel of Mark does have a narrative macro-structure and, therefore, has to be considered as a 'narrative text'. On the other hand, this narrative text consists of many texts, which are mainly self-contained narratives (see above 2.2.1).

Now then, how are we to understand the relationship between the global narrative, which, after all, derives its unity from a narrative macro-structure, and the small independent narratives?

## 3. The gospel of Mark as an 'episodic' narrative

### 3.1 The linking together of episodes

Mark creates a narrative connection by linking individual episodes to one another. This is the most simple technique. Following Rudolf Bultmann, Gerd Theissen drew attention to the linking together of individual episodes using time, place, event and motivation as connecting elements. As early as 1928, Ernst von Dobschütz pointed out that Mark links together individual episodes by interlocking them, whereas Robert Henry Lightfoot drew attention to the scheme of three when arranging the subject matter, as well as to the contrasting effect between Bible passages prescribed for scripture reading. All these techniques refer to two or three such Bible passages and produce the textual relationship on the linear level <sup>74</sup>.

Admittedly, attempts have been made, especially by Dutch and Flamish theologians, to extend this type of arrangement to longer passages, thereby arranging five or more episodes in a concentric scheme A B C B'A'. But this kind of arrangement not only disregards the fact that a narrative texts emulate the structure of human action,

but also overlooks the various levels of textual communication and the dynamics within the text <sup>75</sup>.

### 3.2 The linking together of several narrative strands

In a few cases the narrator makes use of techniques <sup>76</sup>, which are suitable for linking up various plots. He correlates the narrative about the death of the Baptist (Mk 6:17-29), in which human arbitrariness plays the decisive role, with the Passion of Jesus (see Mk 9:12) and in advance prompts the reader to experience parallel anticipations. Furthermore, Jesus's self-denial and sacrifice of life as fulfilment of his own conditions of discipleship (Mk 8:34f; 10:45) are sharply contrasted with the action of the disciples, who are worried about their own honour (Mk 9:35f; 10:35-40) and save their own lives, whilst Jesus is arrested.

Finally, the narrator establishes causal relationships between the conflict of Jesus with the Jewish leadership about his authority, Sabbath practice and his conduct in the temple (Mk 2:1-3,6; 11:15-19,27-33) on the one hand, and the death sentence on the other hand.

### 3.3 The 'dense' text parts <sup>77</sup>

In some episodes the narrative contains plenty of embellishments (Mk 5:1-20). However, in some parts of the gospel the portrayal of the action is only sketchy, rough and summary.

The so-called summaries show that, in these passages, the author summarily characterizes Jesus's activity in a pronouncedly selective form, from a specific perspective. Because these passages in the text represent the narrator's selection and accentuation with regard to the work of Jesus, they also indicate how he wants the detailed scenic presentation of the work of Jesus in individual episodes to be accentuated. Judging by the reports, the reader can, both retrospectively as well as looking ahead, survey the individual episodes, since the former portray the work of Jesus summarily, thereby representing a greater abstraction than the episodes.

Similarly, the prophecies regarding the Passion belong to the summarised parts of the text. They arrange the Passion of Jesus as part of the basic eschatological theme of the gospel, and already at an early stage draw the reader's attention to Jesus's passion and his enemies.

### 3.4 Episodic portrayal

We have already seen that the gospel of Mark contains numerous pericopes, most of which are narrative texts (2.2), that the global themes of the gospel of Mark are governed by a narrative superstructure (2.3), and that some pericopes are definitely interlinked (3.1), and that some interwoven actions are correlated or contrasted (3.2).

Tannehill, Petersen, Rhoads and Michie have all demonstrated how the narrator composed the text in great detail, and we gratefully take cognisance of it. There is, however, another aspect, namely the episodic development of a global theme <sup>78</sup>.

This is very clear in the theme 'Conflict between Jesus and the Jewish authorities'. This theme is developed almost throughout in individual episodes, intensified by the predictions of the passion, and carried over to the description of the passion.

The conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leadership is depicted broadly and detailed, and at decisive stages these conflicts are then quoted as cause for the death sentence (Mk 3:6; 12:12; 14:1f - after 12:1-44). By the description of the action the theme is unfolded, as is natural for narrating. However, the action is portrayed in numerous individual episodes.

This is not the only way of unfolding a theme narratively. The theme 'Attitude of the crowd towards Jesus' is depicted episodically only twice (Mk 11:1-11; 15:6-14). In the remaining instances this attitude of the people towards Jesus is not in the limelight; it is rather the people's reaction to the action of Jesus that is portrayed. Thus the theme 'crowd' is not depicted episodically, but rather linked to the episodic development of the activities of Jesus. Hence the episodes Mk 11:1-11; 15:6-14 become part of the network of connections, which were established by the calls of acclamation after the miracles <sup>79</sup>, by the evaluating remarks made by the narrator (Mk 12:37b), by the statements of the opponents (Mk 12:12; 14:1f), by the statements of the people themselves (Mk 1:21,27f; 6:14-16; 8:28), and by the summaries (see only Mk 1:32-34; 6:53-56). This theme is carried through just as consistently as the one concerning the relationship between Jesus and his enemies, yet the theme 'crowd' is not extended so strongly episodically, nor is it unfolded as diversified and detailed.

With regard to the disciples's lack of understanding the portrayal shows even less of an episodic character. Outside the passion story this theme is treated episodically only once, and that in Mk 8:14-21 <sup>80</sup>. In the other cases, in Mk 4:13; 4:40; 6:52; 8:32b,33; 9:6,10,32, the lack-of-understanding-motif is introduced more as an evaluation on the part of Jesus or the narrator, or it is part of the disciples's reaction to the imminent Passion of Jesus or his resurrection.

That should suffice as proof. With the episodic portrayal Mark converts the global themes of the gospel into the mimesis of action.

It is equally possible for an episode to unfold a secondary theme. Such a portrayal of a secondary theme is far more graphical than if it had been interwoven with the main action. The theme 'heathen mission' is never treated episodically, except in Mk 7:24-30; it is only hinted at (Mk 14:9; 13:9f). Yet Mk 7:24-30 illustrates the theme in narrative fashion by means of an 'event' in the life of Jesus. Thereby new light is shed on the statements in Mk 13:9f; 14:9; 15:39.

To summarise, one can state that the narrator time and again raises the global themes in individual pericopes, even if the action of the episode is not essentially connected with that theme; at a few places he does, however, summarise the theme, and in some episodes the theme is then unfolded in detail. The teaching of Jesus is continuously mentioned (Mk 1:21f,27f; 2:1,13; 6:6b; 10:1), once presented in condensed, summary fashion (Mk 1:14f), and once described in detail as a major episode on the lake shore (Mk 4:1f,3-9,26-32). In this way the narrator avoids the

necessity of constructing too complicated an action, which would have become obscure due to too much detail. On the other hand, he succeeds in fashioning a lively and diversified narrative, and by means of episodic arrangement he avoids that the reader gets bored by the one comprehensive macro-narrative (see above 2.3), which provides the unity.

### 3.5 Episode-like traits in the gospel of Mark?

In Mk 2:1-3:6 and 4:35-5:43 the sequence of episodes is, nevertheless, interchangeable, which would also be possible with regard to Mk 12. The arrangement of episodes is not always necessary, nor is it always plausible, e.g. 7:1-23; 2:23-28, so that Mark has to accept the rebuke that his development of the *mythos* is *episodiodes*. In Mk 4:35-8:26 the text also creates a clear episodic impression. Yet the episodic development of the overlapping story did not throughout result in an episodic portrayal, for many episodes have their fixed place in the thematic development of the gospel. The episodic is situated on the linear level of the text sequence<sup>81</sup>.

## 4. The composition of Mark

The postulate that the gospel of Mark is an episodic narrative has some consequences for the 'structure' of the gospel. From the following it will become clear that it is more useful to consider the hierarchically arranged levels of the narrative text, than to try and arrange it regardless of the delimitation of individual pericopes or segment it in its linear sequence.

### 4.1 Levels of narration<sup>82</sup>

In the gospel of Mark narration is done on several levels. First of all let us distinguish between that communication level on which the narrator acquaints the reader with the figures through portrayal of their actions, and the level of communication between figures within the narrative, embedded in the first communication level. After that, further communication levels will be dealt with.

Often a communication level other than that of narrative communication between the narrator and the reader can be recognized in that the narrator draws the attention to change in the communication level by using narrative sentences. By means of this technique he indicates, that now it is no longer a question of communication with the reader alone, but rather, that the reader is involved in the communication between the characters in narrative. Thus the words *proskalesamenos autous en paraboliis elgen autois* (Mk 3:23a: 'And he called then unto him, and said unto them in parables, ...') introduce the words of Jesus to his listeners. Mk 3:23b-29 is situated on the embedded level of communication, and in Mk 3:30 the narrator again gives a signal that he has now returned to the level of the portrayal of action. This Mk 3:23b-29 is embedded in the narrative of Mark, which also applies for Mk 7:15, 18b-19a.

In Mk 7:1-23 further interesting observations can be made. In 7:1 and in 7:2, 5a, 6a, 9a, 14a, 17-18a, 20a the narrator tells the reader what the characters have done;



here we are, therefore, dealing with narration on the first level. If we leave out the direct speech in vv 5b, 6b-8, 9b-13 for the time being, we observe that in the section Mk 7:1-13 the verses 3-4 lie on a different level. Here the narrator also addresses the reader, yet he does not relate by describing an event, but he explains something to the reader. In v 19c he does something very similar: he once again helps the reader to recognise the theological importance of Jesus's statement in vv 18a-19b. The narrator not only uses narrative sentences, so that he can draw attention to embedded utterances, but he also uses meta-narrative sentences (Mk 6:52; 7:3-4,19c), to enable him to comment on his narrative. These statements are therefore (like Mk 13:14,37) situated on the communication level between the narrator and the implied reader. The text moves on several levels; this will have to be taken into account when structuring the entire text.

The following example will show how important this differentiation of the text levels is. Mark often avails himself of a framework technique. In Mk 4:1f,35f he tells about Jesus's teaching at the Lake Gennesaret and his departure in the boat. Verses 3-9, 26b-20, 30b-32 present accounts on the embedded narrative level. Now Jesus is the narrator and the crowd are the listeners. Mk 4:10 creates a new frame. In vv 11f, 13b-20, 21b-23, 24b-25 we are once more dealing with a communication situation on an embedded level. Once again Jesus is the speaker. This time, however, he doesn't narrate; he explains (vv 14-20), reproaches (v 13), pronounces something which he elucidates by means of a quotation from the Old Testament (v 11f), and makes further statements (vv 21b-23, 24b-25). Mk 4:33f is situated on yet another level. Here the narrator does not relate direct actions of Jesus, but, in summary fashion, provides information about that which Jesus frequently did. v 1f and v 35f, together with v 10, are situated on the level of the narrative description of the action, whereas v 33f is situated above it. Here the narrator, in summary, characterizes the action of Jesus.

The technique of evaluating that which has been narrated in summary fashion, can also be found in Mk 6:52, where the reaction of the disciples to the miracle of the bread is interpreted. Mk 7:19c and Mk 12:37b as well as the other aspects of the narrator's comments, in which the narrator guides the reader's reception of the text, form part of the same context.

To summarize, it can, therefore, be stated that there are four narrative levels in Mark's text: Firstly, the normal narrative level. This is the level of communication between narrator and reader, where the narrator portrays the actions of the characters. Secondly, there is the level of communication between narrator and reader, where the narrative is interpreted, elucidated or underlined (see Mk 4:33f; 6:52; 7:3f,19b; 13:14). Thirdly, there is the embedded level of communication. This concerns communication between the characters portrayed in the narrative (see Mk 3:23b-29; 4:3-9,26b-29,30b-32; 9:35-50; 13:1-37), where the narrator draws attention to a change from narrative portrayal to an address by means of framework remarks. Fourthly, there is the direct speech, which is inserted into the first communication level (by using words like *kai elegen autois*, etc). This level cannot be sharply separated from the embedded level. If, however, one assumes that the direct speech

in Mk 1:7,11,15, 17:24,24,37,40,41,44 is integrated into the narrative portrayal of the action, whereas Mk 3:23b-29; 4:1-34; 7:1-23; 9:35-50; 13:5b-37 are clearly 'insertions' into the narrative sequence, this differentiation may well be justified.

This, then, may provide us with an indication with regard to the structuring or composition of the gospel of Mark. In their unity and because they belong to the embedded level of communication, Mk 4:1-34 and 13:1-37 distinguish themselves from the narrator's remaining portrayal. The words of Jesus in Mk 9:35-50 (after sitting down in Mk 9:35, Jesus stands up according to Mk 10:1) and 12:1-37 are also mainly part of the embedded communication level, because the portrayed action is related, both for the sake of the disciple sermon, and for the sake of the continuation of the debate in the temple. In Mk 3:20-35 and Mk 7:1-23 the portrayed action (Mk 3:20f,22,31f; 7:1,5,14,17f) constitutes the framework for the respective speech of Jesus, so that here too the words spoken to the characters of the story or the verbal dispute on the embedded communication level predominate.

We can, therefore, conclude that, seen from the perspective of the communication level, Mk 3:20-35; 4:1-34; 7:1-23; 9:35-50; 12:1-37; 13:1-37 distinguish themselves from the other parts of the gospel of Mark, and, therefore, in an analysis of the composition cannot be accommodated on the same level. Furthermore, it is clear that in many of these texts we are not dealing with 'narratives'. Whereas this is still the case in Mk 4:3-8,26-32, the other texts cannot be described as narrative texts. They are, however, included in the narrative text by using narrative sentences and framework remarks, and the reader is made aware of the fact that the communication level changes in each case.

This embedding technique enabled Mark to incorporate plenty of parenetic material in his narrative. If one takes into account the narrative framework remarks in Mk 8:34a, it becomes evident that the speech Mk 8:34-9:1 also lies on the embedded communication level. In the case of this text the scene is, however, not as clearly demarcated as in Mk 9:35f and 13:1-37.

Next let us examine the formation of scenes as 'structuring principle', which only involves the local aspect.

#### 4.2 Scene formation <sup>83</sup>

The scene in the second main part (Mk 8:27-10:52) of the gospel of Mark is the road to Jerusalem. In this section there is only one more detailed scene. Here, Jesus travels through Galilea (9:30), and from Caesarea Philippi (8:27) he comes to the house (note the definite article!) of Peter in Capernaum (9:33), where he sits down (9:35a) and talks to the disciples (9:35b-50). This scene has been embedded in the major scene 'Jesus on his way to Jerusalem', to accommodate the speech.

In Mk 11:27-12:44 we find a comparable procedure. The third main part, Mk 11:1-12:44, is arranged in a three-day-scheme, and the action is concentrated on the temple of Jerusalem. Whereas Mk 11:11 constitutes the preparation for the eviction from the temple, which takes place the following day, the question of authority in Mk 11:27f is, in turn, linked to the eviction from the temple. Thus Mk 11:1-12:44 clearly is a thoroughly composed unit <sup>84</sup>. On the third day Jesus is once again in the

temple (11:27), and he only leaves it in Mk 13:1. In this temple scene Mark now presents a number of episodes which take place within this broad framework. For the respective events the scene is, however, specified. Although it is clear that Jesus and his disciples are present, and that the opponents attack him (Mk 11:27f), we do learn from Mk 11:32; 12:12,37b that the people are witness to these alterations which culminate in a harsh evaluation of the scribes.

Thus, Mark did insert the conflict with the opponents into a large framework, the temple dispute, but the conflict itself he unfolds through the portrayal of minor episodes. These episodes have their fixed position in the temple dispute, and they serve the purpose of intensifying the conflict between Jesus and his opponents. Within the temple dispute Mk 11:27-33 is fixed in prime position. The other episodes are interchangeable. Whether Mk 12:13-17 and 12:18-27 are changed around, is immaterial. Were it not of importance for the overlapping scenic framework, this episodic trait would be annoying. However, the numerous episodes rather tend to contribute to the lively development of the global themes, namely that of the dispute between Jesus and the Jewish leadership in the presence of the people, and Jesus's superiority over his opponents.

In this way Mark used the formation of larger scenes to find a meaningful place for the minor stories within the larger context of the whole, notwithstanding the variety of episodes, without causing the reader to lose the perspective. With regard to the 'arrangement' of the gospel it is important that this embedding of minor episodes into major scenes be taken into account. This will enable one to do justice to the hierarchical composition of this gospel.

There is little sense in arranging the first main part of the gospel (1:16-8:26) according to geographic criteria. As the temple of Mk 11:1-13:1f serves the purpose of orientating the reader within the ambit of the text, so does the Lake Gennesaret in Mk 1:16-8:26. The action is concentrated around the sea, and the boat motif together with the passage motif serves the purpose of creating a common scenario for the many episodes. Mk 1:16-20; 2:13f (cf *palin*); 3:7-12; 4:1-34,35-41, as well as 5:1-20,21-43; 6:32-44,45-52; 8:1-10,11-13,14-21,22-26, all take place around or on the lake. It is unimportant, on which side of the lake the action takes place; the lake and its shore are the main scene<sup>85</sup>. Since Capernaum is situated by the lake, this more accurate localization fits in well with the scene. The narrator can launch several episodes directly in Capernaum, and even describe a whole day in Capernaum (Mk 1:21-34). At Capernaum by the lake he then chose the house of Peter as exact location (Mk 1:29-35; 2:1-12; 3:20-35; see also 9:35f; 7:17 is doubtful)<sup>86</sup>, and twice the synagogue (Mk 1:21-28; 3:1-6). The lake, its shore and Capernaum with the house of Peter together form the basic points of reference for the reader to enable him to visualize the local aspect of this scene of the first main part. At the same time one must accept that the narrator assumes the reader has some schematic knowledge about the region around the sea of Galilee, and knows where Capernaum is, or rather, that it is situated on the shore of the sea.

In a few cases, where it is necessary for the unfolding of a particular topic, the reader is introduced to an even more confined, or if necessary, other ambit of the

text. Thus Mark can for instance localize the discussion about Jesus's association with the publicans and the sinners in the house of Levi (Mk 2:15-17), and follow this up immediately with the criticism of Jesus's practise of fasting (Mk 2:18-22). After all, the reader assumes that he is supposed to remain within the ambit of the text he was dealing with, until the narrator guides him further. If, however, the theme should demand that the scene around the sea of Galilee be expanded (Mk 1:35-39), or that one is to leave Galilee (Mk 7:24,31), then the narrator takes the reader along. It is precisely an episode like Mk 7:24-30 or 6:1-6a, which shows that the information presented by the scene is a prerequisite for the portrayal of the action. It is, however, very important to note that, after such thematically determined 'excursions' Jesus and his disciples always return to the basic scene of action, i.e. the sea of Galilee (see Mk 2:1; 6:31-45; 8:10; Capernaum and the boat and passage motifs).

Some episodes presuppose this scene at the sea, without it being specifically localized (Mk 2:23-28; 7:1-23), whereas the episode Mk 1:40-45 takes place somewhere in Galilee. However, it remains a fact: not all particulars about locality are on the same level. Some form the scene of one single episode, others the scene of action, a scenic framework, which in turn is filled out with numerous individual episodes. Therefore, a segmentation like 'Jesus in Galilee' (1:14-5:48), 'Jesus travelling in and outside Galilee' (6:1-9:50) is not feasible because they even out the various levels of the particulars provided for the forming of scenes. A narrative text has several levels which merit consideration.

In this part of the discussion we confined ourselves to local data. With regard to the chronological perspective we wish to refer to the book by Norman Petersen. Apart from the important consequences regarding the placement of chapter 13 in the 'composition' of the gospel of Mark, which we referred to in 2.3.3, it is quite clear that Mk 6:17-29 cannot be accommodated on the same segmentation level as Mk 1:16-6:16,30-8:26. In Mk 1:14 the text is arranged chronologically. Seen in global context, the chronological aspect of the scene is fixed after the delivery of the Baptist. Then, according to Mk 6:17, something is narrated that happened prior to this period, as it were, between Mk 1:9-11 and 1:14f. If one were to segment the text of Mark on a linear level, one could not do justice to this narrative flash-back.

#### 4.3 Density of action

The narrator does not give an equally detailed account of all actions. Some events are only sketched in broad outline. This is done either by depicting several events in summary fashion (as in the so-called summary reports) or by attaching to an episode, in brief concluding remarks, the reaction of the crowd to the action of Jesus (see only Mk 1:27f,45; 7:37). These narrative sections, which are not aimed at depicting individual aspects of events, but much rather emphasize the general, characteristic aspects of the action, consequently explain the individual episodes. They are, therefore, not situated on the same narrative level as the individual episodes, but rather are to serve as orientation points for the reader, to assist the latter in finding a guideline, and in reading the numerous small episodes with regard to a common trend.

When doing an analysis of the structure of the gospel of Mark, this function of the *'sammelberichte'* must therefore be taken into account. If one treats them as equivalent to the individual episodes, as is done in a linear segmentation of the entire text, one doesn't do them justice. It is precisely the generalizing manner of presentation of the summaries which indicates that it is the intention to bring across and emphasize tendencies, and that detail is irrelevant. The overall tendency of the summaries is directed at assisting the reader, in order to enable him to advance towards the overall contents of the episodic account. In this way the collective reports summaries assist the reader in establishing and understanding the global narrative context <sup>87</sup>.

#### 4.4 Prospects

To carry out a 'composition analysis', further elements of the evangelist's narrative technique have to be considered. In this article I deliberately avoided repetition of those elements highlighted by Tannehill, Petersen and Rhoads and Michie.

It is obvious that the narrator's comment is not situated on the same level as the narrative presentation. Similarly, the parts which quote the Old Testament are located on a different level than the narrative portrayal itself, and also predicting elements like Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:32-34 cannot be placed on the same level as the portrayal of action within the immediate context.

It did, however, transpire that the distinction between various communication levels within the Mark text, the differentiation between macro-narrative and individual episodes, between narrative portrayal and quotation, prediction, admonition and the decision between the narrative text itself and its narrative macro-structure, cause the multiplicity of the text to become so evident, that one cannot do it justice by means of a linear classification.

In conclusion, I wish to point out an unresolved problem: Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn <sup>88</sup> has already pointed out the important role played by the pre-Markan collections with regard to the composition of the gospel of Mark. Petersen <sup>89</sup> supported him in this point of view. It is, however, only possible to evaluate the importance of the pre-Markan collections with regard to the composition of the gospel of Mark, if an oral tradition, based on a written source, can be reconstructed. For that purpose, the stimulating ideas of the more recent discussion about the problem of 'oral and written texts' have to be followed up <sup>90</sup>. Only if it is possible to determine the scope of pre-Markan collections and tradition units in terms of form criticism, can the role of pre-Markan tradition in the composition of the text under discussion be explained. The thesis represented here could, in my opinion, assimilate such perceptions without having to be changed fundamentally.

## ENDNOTES

1. Cf. C. Breytenbach, *Nachfolge und Zukunftserwartung nach Markus* (ATHANT 71) Zürich: Theologischer Verlag 1984, par 3 fn. 46.
2. Cf. F. Hahn, Einige Überlegungen zu gegenwertigen Aufgaben der Markusinterpretation, in F. Hahn (Hrsg.), *Der Erzähler des Evangeliums* (SBS 118/119), Stuttgart: KBW 1985, 171-197.
3. Cf. Breytenbach, *Nachfolge*, 88 fn. 11.
- 4Cf. Breytenbach, *op. cit.* 16-68.
- 5Cf. *ibid.* 75-84.
6. For an overview cf. R. Pesch, *Naherwartungen* (KBNT) Düsseldorf: Patmos 1968, 50-53.
7. Cf. W.S. Vorster, Der Ort der Gattung Evangelium in der Literaturgeschichte: *VuF* 29 (1/1984) 2-25, R. Guelich, The Gospel Genre, in: P. Stuhlmacher (Hrsg.), *Das Evangelium und die Evangelien* (WUNT 28) Tübingen: Mohr 1983, 183-219, and D. Dormeyer, *Evangelium als literarische und theologische Gattung*, Darmstadt 1989, for the most recent discussion.
8. Cf. N.R. Petersen, The Composition of Mark 4:1-8:16: *HThR* 73 (1980) 185-217, there 186f. Cf. also fn. 6.
- <sup>9</sup> Cf. Petersen, *op cit.* 187; D.-A. Koch, Inhaltliche Gliederung und geographischer Aufbau im Markusevangelium: *NTS* 29 (1983) 144-166, there 145 ff.
10. On the following cf. Breytenbach, *op. cit.* 2.
11. Cf. W.G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (NTL) London: SCM 1975, 82f; Koch, *op cit.* 144 (with fns. 4-6!).
12. Cf. Ed. Schweizer, *The Good News according to Mark*, London: SPCK 1970, 380-386.
13. Cf. F. Hahn, *Mission in the New Testament* (SBT 47) London: SCM 1965, 112-115.
14. Cf. R. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*. 1. Teil (HThK 11/1) Freiburg-Basel-Wien: Herder 1977, 32-39.
15. Cf. Schweizer (in Breytenbach, *op. cit.* 32) and W. Egger, *Frohbotschaft und Lehre. Die Sammelberichte des Wirkens Jesu im Markusevangelium* (FThS 19) Frankfurt a. M.: Knecht 1976, 162.
16. Cf. V.K. Robbins, Summons and Outline in Mark: The Three-Step Progression: *NT* 23 (1981) 97-114, there 102-105.
17. Cf. W-D. Stempel, Zur Frage der narrativen Identität konversationeller Erzählungen, in: E. Lämmert (Hrsg.), *Erzählforschung*, Stuttgart: Metzler 1982, 7-32, there 7, and E. Gülich and U.M. Quasthoff, Narrative analysis, in T.A. van Dijk (ed.), *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. Volume 2. *Disciplines of Discourse*, London/New York: Academic Press 1985, 169-197, there 170-172.
18. Cf. W. Voßkamp, Einführung zum zweiten Tag des Symposiums: Erzähltheorie und Gattungsgeschichte, in: E. Lämmert (Hrsg.), *Erzählforschung* 197-201, there 197-199.
19. Cf. H. Kallweit, Erträge der Diskussion, in: *ibid.* 348-358, there 348.
20. Cf. Vorster, *Gattung* 12-14.
21. Cf. *ibid.* 17.

22. Cf. *ibid.* 17.

23. Cf. *ibid.* 19.

24. Cf. *ibid.* 20.

25. Cf. *ibid.* 15.

26. Cf. M. Hengel, Probleme des Markusevangeliums, in: Stuhlmacher (Hrsg.), *Evangelium* 221-265, there 226-230.

27. Cf. W.S. Vorster, The Gospel according to Mark: Introduction and Theology (1978), in: A.B. du Toit (Ed.), *Guide to the New Testament IV*, Pretoria: NGKB 1983, 102-143, there 117-121.

28. Cf. G. Bilezikian, *The Liberated Gospel. A Comparison of the Gospel of Mark and Greek Tragedy*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1977.

29. It is correct to say like Vorster: 'Up to 8:27 there is a mounting delineation of Jesus, the Son of God, as conqueror. But in 8:27-33 there comes a turn in the success-story ... From this point on ... the narrative structure is reversed.'; Vorster, *Mark*, 119. As from Mk 4:13 Jesus was misunderstood by his disciples. Already in 3:6 his enemies have decided to kill him. From the outset, as it were, his own family rejects him (Mk 3:20 f; 31-35) and he experienced 6:1-6a). Also after 8:27 there are positive signs: The people have not yet decided (see Mk 11:1-11; 12:37b; 14:1f.) and the Bartimaeus scene (Mk 10:46-52).

30. Versus Hengel, *Probleme* 226, 229.

31. Cf. Arist. *Poetica* 1448a, 20-24 and in this connection cf. S. Koster, *Antike Epötheorien* (Palingenesia V) Wiesbaden: Steiner 1970, 49ff; cf. also *Poetica* 1459b, 25.

32. Cf. Arist. *Poetica* 1462a, 10ff.

33. Cf. Arist. *Poetica* 1455b, 1-15 and see K. Nickau, Episodion und Episode. Zu einem Begriff der aristotelischen Poetik: *Museum Helveticum* 23 (1966) 155-171, there 161-163.

34. Cf. Arist. *Poetica* 1449b, 10-20; 1459b, 8-13.

35. Cf. Arist. *Poetica* 1451b, 5-10; cf. Nickau, *op. cit.* 160f.

36. Cf. Arist. *Poetica* 1459b, 30-34; Nickau, *op. cit.* 163f.

38. Cf. Arist. *Poetica* 1459b, 30-34.

39. Cf. the parallel example in Arist. *Poetica* 1460a, 12-18.

40. Cf. Arist. *Poetica* 1460a, 6-10; 1448a, 25-27; cf. also the remark of M. Fuhrmann, in: *idem.* (Hrsg.), *Aristoteles, Poetik. Griechisch/Deutsch*. Stuttgart: Reclam 1982, 105 fn. 1.

41. Cf. Arist. *Poetica* 1462b, 4-12; 1450b, 24-34; 1451a, 11-15.

42. Cf. Arist. *Poetica* 1460a, 4f.

43. Cf. W. Haubrichs, Einleitung: Für ein Zwei-Phasen-Modell der Erzählanalyse, in: *idem.* (Hrsg.), *Erzählforschung* 1 (LiLi Beiheft 4) Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1976, 7-28, there 11-13.

44. Cf. T.A. van Dijk, Story Comprehension. An Introduction: *Poetics* 9 (1980) 7-29, there 11-16; Breytenbach, *Nachfolge* 94-100.

45. Cf. Breytenbach, *op. cit.* 94-105.

46. On the following cf. van Dijk, *Story Comprehension*, 11-16; E. Gülich, Ansätze zu einer kommunikationsorientierten Erzähltextanalyse (am Beispiel mündlicher und schriftlicher Texte), in: Haubrichs (Hrsg.), *Erzählforschung* 1, 224-256, there 225; Stempel, *op. cit.* (fn. 17) 10-16 und Arist. *Poetica* 1449b.
47. Cf. Breytenbach, *Nachfolge* 94-100.
48. Cf. *ibid.* 238-251 for an Analysis.
49. *Idem.*
50. Regarding the criteria of textuality cf. R.-A. de Beaugrande und W. U. Dressler, *Introduction to Text Linguistics*, London: Longman 1981, 1-13.
51. Cf. fn. 47.
52. See the explanation of the motive framework R. Pesch and R. Kratz, *So liest man synoptisch II & III*, Frankfurt a. M.: Knecht 1976 (Anhang).
53. Cf. R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, Oxford: Blackwell 1963, 55-61.
54. Cf. *ibid* 39-55.
55. It is doubtful anyway whether it is permissible to restrict narrative texts to discourses which portray only intended human action, as T.A. van Dijk maintains, cf. Stempel's criticism (cf. fn. 17 above).
56. Regarding the superstructure of argumentative texts cf. T.A. van Dijk, *Macro-Structures*, Norwood/N.J.: Erlbaum 1980, 117-119.
57. Cf. Stempel, *op. cit.* 8f, 14.
58. Cf. Breytenbach, *Nachfolge* 253-270.
59. First of all a philological remark should be made. Contrary to my former decision (cf. Breytenbach, *Nachfolge*, 265 fn. 353), the argumentation of R. Gülich, 'The Beginning of the Gospel, Mark 1:1-5', *JR* 27 (1982) 5-15; *idem.*, The Gospel Genre, in: Stuhlmacher, *Evangelien*, 183-219 there 204-206, have convinced me. The set introductory phrase *kathos gegraptoi* (cf. Bauer, Gindrich, Danker, *A Greek English Lexicon*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1979, 166; E. Mayser, *Grammatik der griechischen Papyri aus der Ptolemäerzeit*, Berlin: De Gruyter 1914-1934, II/3, 94) generally has a correlative character (see however Romans 9:13) and as is usually done in the New Testament, Jewish literature and the Papyri (cf. Luke 2:23; John 6:31; 12:14; Romans 1:17; 3:4.10 *et seq.*; 9:33; Acts 7:42f and Mayser *loc. cit.*) links that what has been prediced in the pre-phrase with the following quotation. That in Mk 1,1 the copula is missing when one correlates v.1 and 2f., need not cause concern (see Romans 3:4); this is explained by the heading character of v.1, which is a simple, aphorism-like sentence (see Blass-Debr. par. 127; Mayser, *Grammatik*, II/3, 4f., 16f.). Materially and philologically undifferentiated are the expositions by H. Wéder, 'Evangelium Jesu Christi' (Mk 1,1) und 'Evangelium Gottes' (Mk 1,14), in: *Die Mitte des Neuen Testaments (FS. E. Schweizer)*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1983, 339-441.
60. Cf. Breytenbach, *Nachfolge* 260.
61. Cf. *ibid.* 180-182.
62. Cf. *ibid.* 203.
63. Cf. *ibid.* 208.



64. Cf. *ibid.* 230.

65. Cf. *ibid.* 162 fn. 207.

66. Cf. *ibid.* par. 8.1 and fn. 68 and 73 below.

67. Cf. also H. von Soden, *Die Entstehung der christlichen Kirche* I. Leipzig: Teubner 1919, 66.72; V.K. Robbins, Mark as Genre: *SBL Seminar Papers* 19 of 1980, 269-399, there 392.

68. Cf. R. Tannehill, The Disciples in Mark: The function of a Narrative Role: *JR* 57 (1977) 386-405; cf. also N.R. Petersen, When is the End not the End? Literary Reflections on the Ending of Mark's Narrative: *Interp.* 34 (1980) 151-166.

69. Cf. Mayser, *Grammatik* II/1 168.175. It is improbable that this in each case is *participium imperfectum*.

70. Cf. Mk 9,1; 13,30 and in this connection Breytenbach, *Nachfolge* 298-300.

71. Cf. *ibid.* 289, 295.

72. Cf. *ibid.* par. 7.5 und 9.2.

73. Cf. Tannehill *op. cit.*; Petersen *op. cit.* and idem, *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics*, Philadelphia: Fortress 1979, 49-80; idem., Point of View in Mark's Narrative.; *Semeia* 12 (1978) 97-121; D. Rhoads and D. Michie, *Mark as Story. An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1982.

74. Cf. Breytenbach, *Nachfolge* 23-26.

75. Cf. only B. Standaert, *L'évangile selon Marc. Composition et genre littéraire*, (Kath. Univ. Nijmegen), Brugge 1978, and in this connection R. Schnackenburg: *BZ NF* 24 (1980) 282-285. As a counter-position to J. Lamprecht's segmenting of Mk 4,1-34 und 13,1-37, cf. Breytenbach, *op. cit.*, par. 5.2.1.4 and 8.3.

76. On the following cf. E. Lämmert, *Bauformen des Erzählens*, Stuttgart: Metzler 1955 = 1980 Teil B I.  
77. Cf. *ibid.* 82-85 and Egger *op. cit.* (cf. above fn. 15) 160-163.

78. Regarding the following cf. Aristoteles, *Poetica* 1459a, 17 to 1459b, 7 (= par. 23) and in this connection Koster, *op. cit.* 62-66 (including his criticism of Nickau); Fuhrmann, *op. cit.* 114 (fn. 8), 116 (fn. 2), 124 (fn. 4) and 133 (fn. 5). The terms *epeisodioun*, *epeisodion*, *epeisodiodes* are used by Aristotle in very difficult ways. We may distinguish between (a) episodic portrayal *epeisodioun*; (b) episode as text unit with its own magnitude (*megethos*) *epeisodion*; (c) episode - like *epeisodiodes*; cf. fn. 81 below.

79. Cf. also G. Theißen, *Urchristliche Wundergeschichten* (StNT 8) Gütersloh Gerd Mohn 1974, 205 and G. Lüderitz, Rhetorik, Poetik, Kompositionstechnik im Markus-evangelium, in: H. Cancik (Hrsg.), *Markus-Philologie* (WUNT 33) Tübingen: Mohr 1984, 165-203, there 183f.

80. For an analysis cf. Breytenbach, *Nachfolge* par. 6.

81. Cf. *ibid.* 82 and Lüderitz, *op. cit.* 198 fn. 79. Aristotle calls the plot and actions as episodic (*epeisodiodes*), which portray the episodes in such a way that they succeed one another neither according to probability nor according to necessity (Poet 145b, 33). Please note that the gospel of Mark is not an episodic narrative but a narrative with a uniform plot which refers to a complete self-contained action (to God's final action). However, occasionally, this action is portrayed episodically. Regarding the problem, cf. Nickau, *op. cit.* (cf. fn. 33 above), in particular 165f.

82. Regarding the following Gülich, *Ansätze* (cf. fn. 46 above) and also J. Dewey, Point of View and the Disciples in Mark: *SBL Seminar Papers* 21 of 1982, 97-106 there 102ff.
83. Regarding the following cf. R. Winkler, Über Deixis und Wirklichkeitsbezug in fiktionalen und nicht-fiktionalen Texten, in: Haubrichs, *Erzählforschung* 1, 156-174 und K. Ehrlich, Deiktische und phorische Prozeduren beim literarischen Erzählen, in: Lämmert, *Erzählforschung*, 122-129.
84. Cf. K. Stock, Gliederung und Zusammenhang in Mk 11-12: *Bib.* 59(1978) 481-515.
85. Cf. Koch, *op. cit.* (see above fn. 9) 150f.
86. Cf. K. L. Schmidt, *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu*, Berlin 1919 (Nachdruck Darmstadt: WB 1969), 79,120f,230.
87. Cf. T.A. van Dijk and W. Kintsch, *Strategies of Discourse Comprehension*, New York: Academic Press 1983, 52, 193, 206.
88. H-W. Kuhn, *Altere Sammlungen im Markusevangelium* (StUNT 8), Göttingen 1971, 214-226.
89. Cf. Petersen, *Composition* (see above fn. 8).
90. Cf. now W. Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel*, Philadelphia: Fortress 1983 (cf. his bibliography); D. Tannen (Ed.), *Spoken and Written Language: Exploring Orality and Literacy*, Norwood/N.J.: Ablex 1982. Cf. also, W.J. Ong S.J., Oral Remembring and Narrative Structures, in: D. Tannen (Ed.), *Analysing Discourse: Text and Talk*, Washington: Georgetown University Press 1982, 12-24. C. Breytenbach, Das Problem des Übergangs von mündlicher zu schriftlicher Überlieferung, in: *Neotestamentica* 20 (1986), 47-58.