THE CONCEPT OF FAITH IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK

by

SERGEY IONOV

submitted in part fulfillment of the requirements for

the degree of

MASTER OF THEOLOGY

in the subject

NEW TESTAMENT

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: PROF P J GRÄBE

JOINT SUPERVISOR: DR P PENNER

NOVEMBER 2001

I declare that

"THE CONCEPT OF FAITH IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK" is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Sergei Ionov

15.11.2001

....
SIGNATURE
(Mr. S. Ionov)

....
DATE

This research has the objective to explore the concept of faith in the Gospel of Mark. An exegetical investigation of the faith terminology (pist-word group) in the Gospel is required for that. An analysis of the model passages with occurrences of the πιστ-word group shows the variety of possible connotations of the term. The most paradigmatic of them are in the sense of *trust in* God [which means to be open towards the highest reality]. Comparison of the results of the analysis with the concept of faith in the Old Testament, Classical Greek, and Hellenistic Greek is helpful to understand the etymology of the Markan use of the pist-word group and to make clear the conceptual meaning of faith in the Gospel which is closer to the Old Testament idea of an active commitment to God expressed in a continuous existence in the presence of Him.

10 key terms

Gospel of Mark

Faith

Belief

Trust

Markan community

Jesus' proclamation

Miracle story

Abraham

Aqedah

Isaiah

SUPERVISOR: PROF P J GRÄBE

JOINT SUPERVISOR: DR P PENNER

CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Gen. – The Book of Genesis

Ex. – The Book of Exodus

Lev. – The Book of Leviticus

Nu. – The Book of Numbers

Deut. – The Book of Deuteronomy

1 Sam. – The First Book of Samuel

2 Sam. – The Second Book of Samuel

1 Ki. – The First Book of the Kings

Neh. – The Book of Nehemiah

Ps. – The Book of Psalms

Is. – The Book of Isaiah

Hos. – The Book of Hosea

Jon. – The Book of Jonah

Mic. – The Book of Micah

Hab. – The Book of Habakkuk

Mal. – The Book of Malachi

Mt. – The Gospel of Matthew

Mk. – The Gospel of Mark

Lk. – The Gospel of Luke

Rom. – The Epistle to the Romans

Col. – The Epistle to the Colossians

Phil. – The Epistle to the Philippians

2 Tim. – The Second Epistle to Timothy

Heb. – The Epistle to the Hebrews

1 Pet. – The First Epistle of Peter

HE – The Church History of Eusebius

MT – The Massoretic Text

This research has the objective to explore the concept of faith in the Gospel of Mark. An exegetical investigation of the faith terminology (pist-word group) in the Gospel is required for that. An analysis of the model passages with occurrences of the πιστ- word group shows the variety of possible connotations of the term. The most paradigmatic of them are in the sense of *trust in* God [which means to be open towards the highest reality]. Comparison of the results of the analysis with the concept of faith in the Old Testament, Classical Greek, and Hellenistic Greek is helpful to understand the etymology of the Markan use of the pist-word group and to make clear the conceptual meaning of faith in the Gospel which is closer to the Old Testament idea of an active commitment to God expressed in a continuous existence in the presence of Him.

10 key terms
Gospel of Mark

Faith

Belief

Trust

Markan community

Jesus' proclamation

Miracle story

Abraham

Aqedah

Isaiah

INTRODUCTION

There are many aspects of the word "faith" in a contemporary lexicon. It may be synonymous to such entities as religion, piety, and dogma. The phrase "to come to faith" commonly means "to adopt a religion", or "to change an ideology". For the religious mind faith can be reduced to a mere code of creeds. The problem of *subjective faith* as an act (state) of a person was abandoned to philosophers and theologians and they answered it in different ways. This variety of interpretations of faith can be revealed by several examples. Scholasticism defined faith as an act of the intellect or assent to a truth (Pope 1909:6). Protestantism, from Luther on, has asserted that faith "is not the acceptance of unproved dogmas,[1] but that it is trust" (Hordern 1959:35). Neo-orthodox theologian Emil Brunner affirmed that faith is "the impersonal attitude to something abstract, a priori doctrinal conviction" (Brunner 1946:38). Paul Tillich defines faith as "the state of being ultimately concerned" and provides an explanation for the variety of definitions in the Introduction to his "Dynamics of faith" showing that the word had experienced a large number of wrong interpretations, distortions, and doubtful definitions (Tillich 1957:1).

Latin theological terminology gives several terms to denote the different elements of faith. The whole conceptual area of faith is subdivided into two main parts: *fides* and *fiducia*. *Fides* is a term to explain the cognitive element of faith, faithfulness; *fiducia* is a person's attitude towards God, trustfulness, and fidelity. *Fides* itself may be considered both objectively (*fides quae creditur*, "the faith that is believed") and subjectively (*fides qua creditur*, "the faith by which one believes") (Muller 1993:115).

The primary aim of this study is to clarify the concept of faith (*fides qua creditur*) in the Gospel of Mark. Since the Greek πίστις can be properly rendered into Latin as *fides* the area of this investigation will be limited to examining the πιστ-word group in the Gospel of Mark.

The method of this study is substantially lexical and etymological. The idea of an etymological approach to an investigation of the term is not original. The definitive articles of Bultmann (Bultmann 1964:VI,174-82, 197-28) and Weiser (Weiser 1964: VI,182-96) are illustrative examples of etymological studies of the πιστ-word group.

---

[1] An escape from intellectualization of faith developed by Kierkegaard resulted in the next definition of faith (summed up by Warfield): "It is a movement of the whole inner man and is set in contrast with an unbelief that is akin, not to ignorance, but to disobedience" (Warfield 1929:501-502).

The core of such an approach consists in a quest for the most adequate meaning of the word on the basis of its "etymological tree". Since the Gospel of Mark is written in Greek and its content is determined by preceding concepts of faith (Old Testament, Hellenistic usage, and expressions in the Septuagint), we have to clarify which concept of faith is adopted by Mark. An analysis of the composition of Mark as determined by his theological motives is also necessary in order to find out the specific meaning of the term. Only after this will we be able to answer the question of the Markan usage of the πιστ–terminology.

The objective of the first part of this study is to define the meaning of πίστις in Mark, analyzing the use of the term and comparing the results of this analysis with major themes in the Gospel. In order to reach this goal, it is necessary to take a look at the background and introductory materials of the book focusing on its structure and purpose. This kind of information is important so as to provide a legitimate exegetical analysis of the passages with a typical use of πίστις (1:1-15, 9:14-29). The first sermonic formula of Jesus (1:15) contains the verbal form of the term in the imperative mode and expresses a short Markan summary of Jesus' teaching. The use of the πιστ-word group in miracle stories of Mark is certainly paradigmatic and determines the conceptual meaning of Markan πίστις in general. The narrative about exorcism in Mark 9:14-29 is to be considered here.

The objective of the second part of the research is to compare the results of the analysis with its possible background in previous ideological perspectives that might have had an influence upon the Markan use of the term. A brief outlook on the faith terminology in (1) the Old Testament, (2) Classical Greek, and (3) Hellenistic Greek will be undertaken for that. The Old Testament term 'mn (origin of Greek πίστις in the Septuagint version) will be considered here in relation to Abraham (Gen.15:6, 22:1-19) and Isaiah (7:9b) where it is adduced in the sense of a trust in God. An examination of the verbal forms of πίστις in Classical Greek (Sophocle, Xenophon, etc.) will show that the word was used as a religious term in the sense of trusting in gods or in their oracle. Only in the late period of Hellenistic Greek will we see the development of the πιστ–word group as faith terminology in the sense of an intellectual assent.

The necessity to deduce the concept of faith in Mark from the miracle stories and to compare it with the Old Testament and Hellenistic-Jewish influence upon his writings will bring us to the opinion, which is the thesis of this research: *faith in the Gospel of Mark is an expected openness of a human being towards another reality.*

I. THE CONCEPT OF FAITH IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK

1.1. Background and Introductory Material on the Gospel of Mark

A review of introductory materials to the Gospel of Mark (such questions as authorship, date, destination of the Gospel, etc.) is necessary before one embarks on an exegetical analysis of texts containing the faith terminology. An adequate awareness of the historical, literary and theological context will help to make proper conclusions about the concept of faith in the Gospel on the basis of exegesis.

At first, we should answer the question of authorship of the Gospel. Both, the Vatican and the Sinai codices, have the text of the Gospel start with a phrase KATA MAPKON (earlier papyruses, such as $\wp^{45}$ do not contain this heading). Another variant reading (EUAGGELION KATA MAPKON) is found in a number of authoritative uncials, such as A, D, L, W, Θ. Both these variants considerably anticipate later additions "Sacred Gospel of Mark" that appeared in the XIII century (*579). Metzger believes that at the very beginning the books of the New Testament did not bear titles at all and they were generated during the process of formation of the canon. In his opinion, EUAGGELION in singular form should be placed before the four Gospels, being a general heading, and making sense of the proposition KATA (Metzger 1998:297). In any case all of the textual evidence testifies that the author of the second book of the New Testament canon was a certain "Mark".

The next question is who this Mark was. In the book of Acts we meet twice (12:12 and 15:37-39) a certain "John Mark". Possibly, John was his Palestinian name and Mark – his Roman name. In the epistles of Paul we meet a certain "Mark" (2 Tim. 4:11, Philemon 24), and once he is called the nephew of Barnabas (Col. 4:10). We meet Mark once more in the first epistle of Peter where he is called "καὶ Μᾶρκος ὁ υἱός μου" (1 Pet. 5:13).

All that is said about Mark in the Patristic testimony is concentrated in the works of Eusebius. Due to his work the statements of Papias, Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, and Origen were preserved. Papias of Hierapolis connects Mark with the apostle Peter: "Mark having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, though not in order, whatsoever he remembered of the things said or done by Christ" (Eusebius *HE*, III:39,15). In the opinion of Clement of Alexandria, Peter even knew that Mark has compiled the Gospel named after him and did not object to it (Eusebius *HE*, VI:14,6-7). As Eusebius himself states, we can see a combined point of view: "They (Peter's hearers) were not satisfied with hearing once only, and were

not content with the unwritten teaching of the divine Gospel, but with all sorts of entreaties they besought Mark, a follower of Peter, and the one whose Gospel is extant, that he would leave them a written monument of the doctrine which had been orally communicated to them" (Eusebius *HE*, II:15,1).

So, the tradition connects Mark and his Gospel with the apostle Peter. If this version was adopted even up to Eusebius, it explains the inclusion of Mark into the canon and even the usage of his Gospel by other Synoptics on the basis of Peter's authority. If we synthesize the internal witnesses with the tradition, the image of a man connected both with Peter and Paul appears. The objection that there are several Marks mentioned in New Testament texts is not proof enough and does create an unnecessary uncertainty (Guthrie 1996:52).

It is unknown, whether Mark was Palestinian or a Jew from Rome. Lyozov, referring to the author's poor knowledge of Palestinian geography (Mk. 7:31, 10:1), rejects him as being of Jewish origin (Lyozov 1996:159).

The basic disagreements concerning the date of Mark (earlier or later) are based on the ambiguity of the tradition and on the interpretation of the "small apocalypsis".

In his "Church History" Eusebius preserves the witness by Irenaeus who correlates the time of the writing of the Gospel with the departure of Peter und Paul. "After their departure Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, also transmitted to us in writing those things which Peter had preached" (Eusebius *HE,* V:8,3).

In a counterbalance to this, Papias, Clement, and Eusebius himself testified that the Gospel of Mark has appeared when Peter was still alive and even knew about this project (Clement and Eusebius) and evaluated it (Eusebius). The question is how we can link Irenaeus' tradition with other witnesses. It will be determined by the interpretation of the word ἔξοδος (exodus, departure, end, death); some theologians believe it to describe the end of the first visit of Peter to Rome (roughly in the 40th). The other version would be to assume that Irenaeus was insufficiently objective in this question. In any case, the possibility to explain Irenaeus' point of view, different from the basic line, seems to be more realistic than to try to link the tradition "when Peter was alive" with the late dating.

A reconsideration attempted at the end of 19th century by the school of form criticism resulted in a postponement of the writing date of the Gospel. The school rejected the tradition and declared that Mark was not written till after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in the year 70, "primarily because it refers to the

destruction of Jerusalem (Mark 13:1–4), which in their judgment must be a historical reference rather than a prophecy" (Hoffmann 1995:51).

The question of the language of Mark is very significant in the context of an etymological research and determinative for the field where we should search for the roots of the Markan concept of faith.

Several attempts were made to present proofs of the idea that Mark originally wrote his Gospel not in Greek. At the end of the 19th century the version about an Aramaic original of the Gospel (Blass 1898:196) was put forward on the basis of the presupposition that some manuscripts of Mark and some quotations of it in patristic writings look like a translation from Aramaic. Such variant is not compatible with the tradition, especially with Papias' witness, which opposes Mark to the Aramaic Gospel of Matthew. Some researchers tried to prove the Latin origin of the Gospel on the basis of the presence of Latinisms (*denarius, Caesar, centurio, census, legio* etc.). But it can be more correctly explained by the fact that the Koine Greek of that time borrowed some terms from Latin (Blass 1898:211).

Since both of these versions are unsubstantiated we have to proceed from the opinion that Mark wrote his book in Greek (this point of view might be considered as common). In the first century this language was widely used in the greater territory of the Roman Empire, including Rome. The vocabulary of the Gospel of Mark shows that its writer was a foreigner who knew well the colloquial Greek language, but was not a professional in its literary usage. Markan Greek is strongly influenced by the Septuagint which, in turn, traced the syntax of the ancient Hebrew original. Lyozov finds the reason of Semitisms in the Gospel to lie in the translation of an Aramaic tradition to Greek (Lyozov 1996:197). It is obvious that the syntax of Mark is frequently determined by Hebrew constructions. The most representative among them are *parataxis* and the construction of the historical present. The construction καὶ ἐγένετο (Mk.1:9; 2:15,23) can surely be correlated with the Hebrew *vajahij*, introducing an adverbial modifier of time.

Concerning the place of origin, early tradition quoted by Eusebius claims that the Gospel was written in Rome. Other witnesses of the tradition to some extent support this version.

Guthrie quotes the idea of Lohmeyer that the center of early Christianity was not Judea, but Galilee (Guthrie 1996:63). In order to provide a sound base for this theory Lohmeyer lists internal witnesses in Mark, such as the confession "Jesus is Lord", the

meeting in Galilee (16:7), and even the opposition "Galilee versus Jerusalem", taken to be theological rather than geographical (Lohmeyer 1936:33). The external witnesses of Galilean Christianity are the sects of Ebionites and Nazarenes. All of these reasons, ostensibly showing that Mark was connected with Galilean Christianity, are put forward by form critical scholars.

The long-standing question of the addressees of the Gospel can be answered partly from the text and partly from tradition. The internal witnesses show that Mark wrote not for a Palestinian audience. He explains some words (3:17, 7:11 and 7:34) and Jewish customs (7:3-4), which become senseless, if the addressees were Jews. Mark does not care for a precise description of the Palestinian geography (7:31, 10:1). Direct quotations from the Old Testament occur only once (1:2-3) and the genealogy of Jesus becomes unimportant. The translation of Greek coins into Roman equivalents (12:42) also serves the proof of connecting Mark's community with Rome.

Tradition (Papias and Irenaeus) definitely connects the Gospel of Mark with Peter and Rome. Clement insists that Mark has written it there, even during Peter's life. Early quotations of the Gospel in the First epistle of Clement and in the "Shepherd of Hermas" also connect it with a Latin audience.

Summary: The following set of answers to introductory questions will be the basis for an exegetical analysis: the author of the Gospel is a certain Mark, connected with the Apostle Peter and his ministry in Rome. The Gospel was originally written (in 60-s' years of the first century) in simple, colloquial Greek. Its syntax is influenced by Hebraisms of the Septuagint. The Gospel was probably intended either for the Roman community or for any other western community undergoing persecutions and requiring encouragement.

1.2. Structure and Purpose of Mark

Many researchers admit the fact that Mark did not follow any special order, that he is simple, even primitive, in the narration. The witness of Papias in some sense confirms this idea by the words "without intention to give the order" (Eusebius *HE*: III:39,14-15). But it is obvious that Papias here speaks about chronological order, which Mark did not explicitly follow. And on the contrary, the phrase "interpreted His teaching according to the needs of the hearers" indicates that Mark is

theologizing while writing history. Certainly, Mark is not as kerygmatic as, for example, Matthew, but we can trace some structure in his narration.

During many centuries the opinion was upheld that the purpose of Mark consisted in presenting the preaching of Peter addressed to the Roman church to prove that Jesus is the omnipotent Son of God. Though there is no explicit statement about the purpose within the text of Mark (as we can see in Luke (1:4) and John (20:31)), the content of Mk.1:1, 15:39 began to be seen as dominant, stating the divine nature of Jesus. Such arguments, as the power above nature, are more apt to an audience with a Hellenistic mentality.

The theory of a *Messiasgeheimnis*[2] (messianic secret) offered by Wrede has suggested a three-sectional model with a constantly increasing tension aspiring to its culmination (passion narrative).

    A. Galilean ministry (1:1-8:26).

        B. The journey to Jerusalem (8:27-10).

            C. Passion narrative (11:1-16:8).
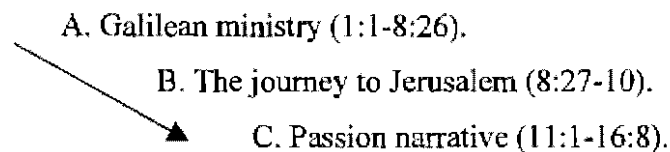
Semi-heathen Galilee becomes the center of eschatological revelation, and sacred Jerusalem becomes the center where disbelief and reluctance of revelation come from (Lyozov 1996:185). The arrangement of material is coordinated by the principle "positive - negative".

In due course almost all representatives of form criticism, and subsequently of redaction-criticism also, have apprehended an apologetic purpose for the Gospel. Mark was trying to change the Christology of the Divine man to the theology of the suffering Son of Man, in their opinion. This can be seen from the author's emphasis on passion narratives and on Jesus' speeches, placed after Peter's confession (Mk. 8:34-38).

The conservative side refused to accept the theory of an apologetic purpose. Guelich proves that a certain heresy could not be the reason of writing the Gospel (Guelich 1989). His colleague from Dallas seminary, Wallace, has put forward, on the basis of the inner witness, a hypothesis that Mark has written the Gospel as a prelude to Peter's prospective arrival to Rome (Wallace 1997). He finds a chiasm in the Gospel:

---

[2] The Messianic secret – is, at first, the demand to keep silent about Jesus' miracles and His real nature (1:25,34,44; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26,30; 9:9). Secondly, it is the presence of parables (elements of mystery) in Jesus' teaching. And, thirdly, it is Jesus' secret epiphanies (baptism and transfiguration).

A. The beginning (1:1-13)

B. Galilean ministry (1:14-6:6a)

C. Withdrawals from Galilee (6:66-8:21)

D. Revelation of the suffering servant (8:22-38)

C¹. Journey to Jerusalem (9:1-10:52)

B¹. Jerusalem ministry (11:1-13:37)

A¹. Culmination (14:1-16:8)

The influence of Jewish tradition determined not only the argument of Mark (quotations from the prophets and an apocalyptic mood), but also the whole plot of the book. Moses, Elijah and Elisha could be the models for interpreting Jesus, both on a pre-literary and on a literary stage of the tradition (Aune 1987:53).

Willard Swartley finds the roots of structure of all the synoptics and of Mark particularly in the sequence of four major Old Testament faith traditions – the Exodus/Sinai, Way/Conquest, Temple, and Kingship traditions of Israel (deSilva 1995:110). He points out that (1) the Exodus/Sinai tradition is especially prominent in the Galilean ministry sections where themes of deliverance from bondage, of testing in the wilderness, of miraculous feeding, predominate. (2) Motifs from the Way/Conquest tradition emerge in the journey sections, in which the means of conquest are transformed into the way of self-denial, cross-bearing, and servanthood, and the Divine Warrior who slays the enemy becomes the Divine Martyr who gives his life for the enemy and establishes peace. (3) Temple traditions dominate the pre-Passion Jerusalem ministry. (4) Finally, kingship traditions underscore the Passion narrative (deSilva 1995:110-111). In that way it is possible to see the roots of the structure of Mark (and of other synoptics) in the Old Testament tradition.

Jesus Event

↓

Exodus/Sinai	Way/Conquest	Temple	Kingship
↓	↓	↓	↓
Galilean ministry	Journey	Jerusalem ministry	Passion narrative
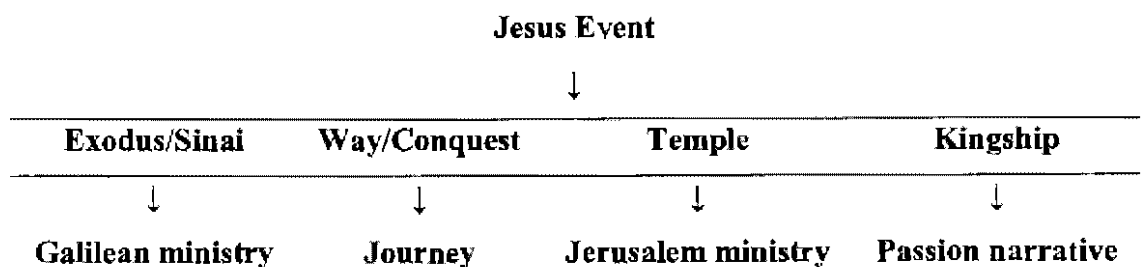
The comparison advanced by Watts helps to see some parallels between structures of Isaiah and the Gospel of Mark (Watts, R. E. 1997:115). He looks for the Markan roots in a new Exodus described in Isaiah:

Isaiah	Mark
A. Yahweh delivers His people from the power of Babylon and from its idols.	A^1. Triumph of Jesus over the power of evil (exorcisms[3])
B. The journey of Yahweh and of his people to Jerusalem.	B^1. The journey of Jesus and his people to Jerusalem.
C. Inauguration of Yahweh.	C^1. Inauguration of Jesus at Calvary.

This three-step system unites proclamation, kingdom, and God Himself. In this case, Jesus, as a prophet, proclaims the message of God and, to some extent, the same things that other prophets have already talked about centuries ago.

Achtemeier assumes that Mark originally borrowed his material from an earlier written collection of two sets of five miracle stories that followed the same pattern: a sea crossing, an exorcism, two healings, and feeding a multitude (Achtemeier 1970:265). The theme in these miracle sets is "reminiscent of miracles associated with the epic of Israel," and the original community behind these miracle collections used them to picture themselves as the new congregation of Israel.

> Here was a Jesus movement that took a look at its members, noticed the social formation taking place, delighted in its novelty, realized how strange they must appear to others, wondered how to imagine themselves in comparison with other peoples, found the comparison with "Israel" fascinating, and had a great time trying out various scenarios before settling on the set of miracles that cast Jesus in the roles of a Moses and an Elijah (Mack 1995:65).

One more attempt to explain the structure of Mark is the consideration of a bibliographic genre. Aune finds the roots of all synoptics, and of Mark in the first place, in a genre of the Greek-Roman biography (Aune 1987:41). In his opinion, Mark's plot includes the following formal features of the Greek tragedy:

1. Introduction (exposition): Old Testament – John the Baptist – Jesus (1:1-13);
2. Increasing action (complication): having proclaimed nearness of the Kingdom of God and necessity to trust in the Gospel, Jesus wanders in Galilee preaching and making miracles. The conflict with Jewish religious leaders rises (1:14-8:21).

---

[3] In Judaism of Jesus' times it was understood that there existed a close relationship between idolatry and demonic power.

3. Culmination (crisis): the central part, framed by two stories about healing blind people. Peter, representing the disciples, identifies Jesus as Messiah, and then Jesus predicts suffering and resurrection of the Son of Man (8:22-10:52).

4. Finishing action: Jesus comes to Jerusalem and his actions cause irreconcilable hostility of the religious leaders (11:1-13:37).

5. Catastrophe: the last Passover, arrest, court and crucifixion (14:1-15:39).

6. Denouement: an empty tomb and declaration of Jesus' resurrection (15:40-16:8).

An attempt to find the roots of Mark's compositional motif in Hellenistic heritage can lead to different models. MacDonald argues that the author of the Gospel used the Homeric epics, the *Odyssey* in particular, but also the last three books of the *Iliad*, as his primary literary resource for composing his account of Jesus' life. In his intertextual approach to Mark MacDonald defines terms like "hypertext" and "hypotext," the latter being the text used in the former, so that *Iliad* and *Odyssey* become the hypotexts for Mark's hypertext (MacDonald 2000:1).

Using the *reader-response* method Iersel argues that Mark provides his intended readers (Christians in Rome after 70 CE) both comfort and hope for their failures during the Neronian persecutions (Iersel 1998). He suggests that the two long discourses (the parable of the sower, 4:3-32, and the apocalyptic discourse, 13:5-37) form the "hearts" of Mark's first and third section (Jesus in Galilee, 1:16-8:2, and Jesus in Jerusalem, 11:1-15:39) respectively.

Summary: From all the variety of attempts to answer the question about the purpose of Mark I consider the exhortatory-narrative purpose to be the most adequate. Focused on prospective readers, this version corresponds to patristic tradition and to most exegetical interpretations of the Gospel of Mark.

In questions of structure it seems justified to start from the model offered by form criticism that envisions the dynamics of the book in a movement to the culmination, found in the passion narratives, and in a theology of the cross as its background.

The fact that behind the structure of Mark we can see some schemes of the Old Testament tradition and of Isaiah materials testifies less to Mark's intention to structure his Gospel on their bases, but underlines the fact that the world of the Torah and the prophets was very familiar to Mark. But it is difficult to say that these

schemes played a role of hypotext for Mark. Mark borrows from this world his ideas, but it is hardly possible to speak about literal borrowing of the structure.

The conclusions made using the reader-response method result in a necessity to divide the material of the Gospel into two main fields, which are: (1) historical material and (2) needs of the Markan community that determined the interpretation and composition of the author.

1.3. Exegesis of the Model Passages

An understanding of the concept of faith in the Gospel of Mark can be reached only in the way of an exegetical analysis of the texts. In this part we shall consider in detail the meaning of the word πίστις in such fragments of the Gospel as 1:14-15 and 9:14-29.

1.3.1. Role of Faith in the Sermonic Formula of Jesus (Mk. 1:1-15)
1.3.1.1. Limits of the Passage

At first glance the segment Mk.1:14-15, opening the first block of the Galilean ministry of Jesus, is not connected essentially with the introduction (1:1-13). However, in my opinion, it is impossible to separate it from the beginning of the book (especially from the very first verse) without any damage to its interpretation.

The construction μετὰ δὲ, which starts our segment, does not appear at any other place in Mark, except for the endings (16:9,12). The use of this construction in other synoptics (Mt. 25:19, 26:32, Lk. 1:24, 18:4) points to a chronological break in one and the same narrative, and not to the beginning of a new narrative. Even in Lk.10:1 the segment introduced by the same construction is connected in some sense with the end of the ninth chapter. Thus, the border between Mk.1:13 and 1:14 is chronological, but not in any way semantic. From the semantic point of view it is necessary to maintain the unity of the text.

The break between these fragments is promoted by the idea that there is no special connection and even less some succession between John the Baptist and Jesus. But such an idea seems to be the result of the centuries-old experience of systematic theology. In Mark John plays a very important role; one could even say that he is the second only important person after Jesus. He is not presented as a relative to Jesus, as we can see it in Matthew and Luke. John does not recognize Jesus during His baptism. One can, however, precisely trace earlier materials in

which both, Jesus and John, are first of all prophets of the Lord, heralds of His truth. John and Jesus are united by their ascetic life in the desert; both of them become enemies of the religious establishment in Judea. Ordinary poor people follow them. Both are awaiting an execution. Jesus, in a sense, continues John's mission. Santos calls their presentation in the Markan prologue as parallel depiction (Santos 1997:456). Therefore it would be unfair to regard Jesus' mission apart from His roots and to start the study of Jesus' ministry without any outlook on John's mission.

Thus, for an exegetical analysis of the first sermonic formula of Jesus (Mk.1:14-15) one should deal with the whole introductory passage. At the same time it is necessary to remember, that 1:14-15 opens the first cycle of Galilean ministry. All this underlines once again that in defining the structure of a book the unity is more important than its divisions.

1.3.1.2. Structure of the Passage

The material of the prologue speaks about two main characters, John and Jesus. The prophecy about John (1:1-3) with the subsequent narration about him (1:4-6) can be correlated with the prophecy about Jesus (1:7-8) and the narration about him (1:9-15). Such parallelism underlines the unity of their mission.

Prophecy about John the Baptist (1:1-3)

        Narrative about John the Baptist (1:4-6)

Prophecy about Jesus (1:7-8)

        Narrative about Jesus (1:9-15)

On the other hand, many scholars adduce an argument of the chiastic structure of the passage:

A. "The beginning of the gospel"

    B. Way of the Lord in the wilderness (Is. 40:3)[4]

        C. Baptizing of the Jews in Jordan

            D. "After me comes he who is mightier than I"

        C^1. Baptism of Jesus in Jordan

    B^1. Way of Jesus in the wilderness

A^1. "Repent, and believe in the gospel"

---

[4] This variant (MT) is clearer in underlining the connection with the 40 days of the temptation of Christ.

But a scheme that takes the broad context into account is more adequate and helpful:

The gospel: "Behold, I send my messenger"	The gospel of the secret Kingdom (1:14-6:13)	The gospel of the eschatological Kingdom (6:30-13:37)	The gospel of the messenger: "Do not be amazed; he has risen". (16:6)
Baptism of Jesus (by John)	Death of John the Baptist (6:14-29)	Death of Jesus (14-15)	

Thus, the good news is intertwined with historical material by a *flash back* model. The line of the narration (top line in the table) refers to Markan kerygma; but from time to time he inserts historical material. In our fragment the historical module refers to the period of about 30th year AD and, as well as in other cases, because of the vividness of description, it is able to almost override the theological "points" (1:1 and 1:14-15).

1.3.1.3. Analysis of Mk. 1:1-13

The Gospel begins as sudden as it comes to an end. Mark omits the description of Jesus' birth, childhood, and adolescence; he does not give any introductory information on His family, community, and the historical context. In the words "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" many see the so-called *heading* of the book and even its *content*.

'Αρχή τοῦ – Many evangelical theologians believe that Mark *is* concerned about the beginning of a series of events in time and space (Chamblin 1997:34).[5] In this way a time coordinate is established where events described by Mark become an important point for humanity. Something has been happening before that point (the time is fulfilled, 1:15), something is only starting (the kingdom of God is at hand 1:15). Marxsen who presents a redaction-critical study of the Gospel comes to the contrary conclusion: 'Αρχή denotes not the "beginning" of a series of events in time and space, but rather the "origin" or the "source" of the proclamation—namely God himself, as expressly stated in 1:14 (Marxsen 1969:132).

---

[5] The closest parallel in Phil. 4:15 points to the beginning of Gospel preaching in a particular geographical area.

The beginning of Mark is parallel to some Old Testament passages. It reminds of the very beginning of the Torah, which is rendered by the Septuagint version with ἐν ἀρχῇ, where the beginning has a chronological meaning and at the same time describes the special status of the creation of heaven and earth (they are put to the head of all creation). It is also interesting to compare it to Hos.1:2 where "the beginning" has the connotation of "the first" of several declarations made by the Lord to His people. In any case such construction will imply the idea of something new.

τοῦ εὐαγγελίου – Compared to the other evangelists, Mark shows a fondness for εὐαγγέλιον (the term occurs four times in Matthew, never in Luke or in John, but seven times in Mark). The seven applications of the term can be divided into two categories:

1. εὐαγγέλιον in utterances of Jesus ((1:15), 8:35, 10:29, 13:10, 14:9); every instance is *unqualified* (there are no genitives attached).

2. εὐαγγέλιον in utterances of the evangelist (1:1,14, (15)); the term is qualified. Chamblin relates these occurrences likewise to Jesus and observes: "Jesus here declares "the gospel of God," i.e., the gospel whose author is God. It is Mark, not Jesus, who declares "the gospel of Jesus Christ" (Chamblin 1997:33)

εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – The main question here is how the good news and Jesus Himself can be correlated. In other words, we should determine the Genitive function of the proper noun. There are two main trends in interpreting this:

Subjective genitive	Objective genitive
Corresponds to the limits of the passage 1:1-15 (flash back model)	Corresponds to the limits of the passage 1:1-8
Unity of 1:1 with the whole book	1:1 as a title of the book
Identity of Jesus' εὐαγγέλιον and disciples' εὐαγγέλιον	The difference between the proclamation of Jesus and the proclamation about Jesus
The good news about God	The good news about Jesus
"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ"	"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God"

Theology proper as the center of Markan theology	Christology as the center of Markan theology
Action-in-process occurs as a noun in Mark (e.g. διδαχῇ in 1:22, 4:2)	Action-in-process would be better represented in the participle form (cf. κηρύσσων in 1:4)
εὐαγγέλιον in 1:1 and in 1:14 are identical	εὐαγγέλιον in 1:1 and in 1:14 are different

According to Marxsen the words Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (1:1) "declare Jesus to be *both* the gospel's *preacher* (subjective genitive) and the gospel's *content* (objective genitive)" (Marxsen 1969:131). But he, then, is also inclined to a layered scheme: Jesus is proclaiming the gospel of God, and Mark is proclaiming the gospel of Jesus. Chamblin, in turn, tries to describe something that is between a subjective genitive and an objective genitive (Chamblin 1997:33).

The qualifier "the Son of God" is not present in the western manuscript tradition (which is connected to the place where the book was written and Mark's addressees lived). The closer one moves toward Alexandria the text includes this addition more and more often. Here we can see the tendency of Alexandrian theology to broaden the heading (Metzger 1994:62). But when the qualifier is added to the text it shows an interesting parallel to the confession of the Roman centurion (15:39).

If we consider the first verse to be only the book's heading, the main text will start with the καθὼς-clause (adverbial clause of time) construction, which is connected to the narrative in v. 2ff. (Gundry 1993:29). But this conclusion can be very poorly substantiated because of the literary imperfection of Mark's Gospel. Moreover, when Mark uses this construction in other places it is connected to the previous text (see 9:13, 11:6, 14:16). But if we only partially accept the idea of the first verse being the heading, its content becomes already a part of the narrative body and partially conveys what determines the idea of the whole book. The main focus is always on Jesus, but some passages can also describe people of minor importance who encountered the Messiah.

So we see that in 1:2 the author flashes back to the story of John the Baptist, which is leading to the narrative about Jesus. But at the same time the beginning of this flash back is connected to 1:1, the connection being underlined by the hermeneutical method of the author. The method is expressed in changing personal pronouns in the quotation to 2nd person pronouns (a direct connection to Jesus Christ

in 1:1). The combination of two[6] prophecies has first of all John the Baptist in mind. This Old Testament segment was a subject of fervent and often fruitless discussions for a long time. Problems of different levels were considered. A reference to the quotation from Isaiah can be better proved textually than the synthesizing approach "in the prophets", which is typical for the Alexandrian tradition.

> *As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare the way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his path straight".*

In this variant the first part, which is freely adapted from Mal. 3:1, clearly presents John as a predecessor whose mission is to prepare the way for "His" coming. In combination with this the quotation from Isaiah seems to point also to the same John and his preaching. In the book of Malachi this reference looks as follows: (first of all, 3:1 is connected to 2:17) "You have tired the Lord out with your talk… by asking, "Where is the God who is supposed to be just?"; I will send my messenger to prepare the way for me. Then the Lord you are looking for will suddenly come to his Temple…I will come to you to judge" (2:17-3:5a). The whole passage is situated in the context of Malachi's preaching about the Day of the Lord. The coming of the Lord is connected to a certain collapse which will bring great suffering to the Jewish nation. The metaphors of judgment, fire, and melting point to the destiny of Jews who will be tested and changed in this way. We see a play on conceptions: Judea demands righteousness (judgment) and the Lord answers: you will have the judgment (in the MT *mishpat* both times). In this context the role of the one who will "prepare the way" (3:1) is practically undeterminable. The Day of the Lord is for Malachi not something remote, he might have meant himself (compare Mal.1:1 and 3:1) and his preaching. But still somebody else will come in future whom Malachi calls Elijah at the end of his book (3:23).

Another variant is possible: "As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: "A voice of one crying: in the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make his path in the wilderness straight".[7] The transmission of Isaiah's prophecy through the Septuagint to Mark shows a good example of shifting the author's (Isaiah's) accent to fit it into a different purpose. The MT of Is. 40:3, which contains synthetic parallelism, leaves us in no doubt that "the wilderness" is the place of the expected action. The voice is

---

[6] Some theologians consider verse two to be influenced by Ex. 23:30 (Markus 1992).

[7] The quotation from Malachi was (hypothetically) omitted to determine the inner logic of the text.

speaking not *in the wilderness* but about *what* will happen in the wilderness. The Septuagint translator omits for some reason the second adverbial modifier of place ("in the wilderness"), and it influences directly the segment structure and the possibilities of its interpretation.

The only change Mark makes is to replace τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν by αὐτοῦ. In this complicated way the basic sermon of the prophet about coming to God turns into a description of John's role in relation to Jesus. But 1:2-3 concerns not only John but also Jesus, both, the context of the prophecy and the broader context, do support this idea. Jesus is connected with the wilderness, Via Dei, and the coming of the Kingdom. Jesus is preparing in some way the people for YHWH's coming. So we see that in this prophecy something concerns Jesus and something concerns John. But an attempt to systematically distinguish according to the principle "man-God" (John-Jesus) will mean a deviation from the original meaning.

The wilderness plays an interesting role here, being a very meaningful image of the people's standing in front of God. In Old Testament prophecies it is used alongside such analogies as the garden, the vineyard, the forest, and not necessarily with a comparatively negative meaning. The wilderness is a place of meeting with God, a place where the prophetic gift matures and drastic changes take place. The reason may be that in the wilderness a person is all by himself/herself without support of other social institutions. On the other hand, the wilderness is a riot fertilizer, a place where one can anytime hide from one's enemy, which to some extent made Israel so stiff necked.

Let us omit several verses talking about John's ministry in the wilderness, Jesus' baptism and His time in the wilderness, and look at the very beginning of His sermonic formula (1:14-15). The connection of these verses to Mark's first verses is of great importance for interpretation.

1.3.1.4. Analysis of Mk. 1:14-15

Closing the first flash back (1:2-13), Mark resumes his interrupted narrative about Jesus' ministry. However, he begins it by mentioning the fact of John's imprisonment. The broad context brings us to the conclusion that this lies in the author's compositional motive. The reasons could be, first, the immediate closeness of the story about John, and secondly, a connection to the following stories about him. The author already knows about John's death and plans to present the whole picture later (in chapter 6). But here he does not go much further than just shortly to

mention the imprisonment. The passive aorist (παραδοθῆναι) is often interpreted as a divine passive[8] (the fulfillment of God's plan during a crucial moment of John's life).

The beginning of Jesus' ministry is not accidentally associated with Galilee. First, He is coming back to the same place where He has come from (1:9). Secondly, and more importantly, two main positively marked cycles of Christ's ministry were connected to Galilee. Almost all of his opponents were coming from Jerusalem. Even when the conflict took place in Galilee, it was initiated by people coming from Jerusalem. Mark does not include Jesus' rejection in his home town of Nazareth (see Lk. 4:16-30). The reason for this is perhaps Peter's warm attitude to his motherland. In any case geography occupies an important place in Mark's theology.

The formula 1:14-15 is not a separate phrase among many others said by Jesus, it is a summary of His proclamation. The same way as the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:1-7:29) and the sermon on a level place (Lk. 6:20-49) are compositional masterpieces of literature, the formula of Mk.1:15 is a synthesis of certain material combined for Mark's special purpose. Taking into account that Mark concentrates on passion narratives (where the narration tempo reaches its peak), we should agree that the beginning of the book is the platform where it takes off its start. The speed here is the lowest, a small passage encompasses the description of a long period of time.

The purpose of the book (passion narrative) is a mystery in its beginning. More than that, it stands in the shadow of the concept of εὐαγγέλιον; it is hidden under it. The book beginning (as we find it) contains the other, opposite side of everything happening. In this sense that which Jesus brought is really good news. Far from being primitive, the beginning of the book uses the real beginning of Jesus' evangelism to show the other, transcendental side of the Epiphany.

Opening the Galilean ministry, the formula 1:14-15 not only describes the essence of Christ's teaching, but is also connected to miracles and exorcisms presupposing the power of the new kingdom. But literally it refers more to the exposition of His teaching (Gundry 1993:65).

The subject of Jesus' sermon is the gospel of the *kingdom*[9] of God. Jesus is shown here as a prophet revealing God's will. The passage structure reminds us of

---

[8] Gundry excludes such a possibility on grounds of research into other cases of passive when Mark uses a human agent (Gundry 1993:64).

[9] Metzger contends that this addition was made by the copyist to establish another connection to the expression "the kingdom of God" in 1:15 (Metzger 1994:64). The

the beginning of prophetic books.[10] Marcus argues that the "good news" (εὐαγγέλιον) of Jesus Christ in Mark 1:1 refers to the "good news" proclaimed in Second Isaiah (cf. Is 40:9; 57:7; 61:1) (Evans 1994:136). εὐαγγελιζόμενος from Is. 40:9 comes, by the way, from the same passage cited by Mark as a prophecy about John. It addresses the nation of Judah, pointing to God Who is coming *to rule* with power, bringing with Him the people he has rescued (40:10). The message has different effects: the Lord will be a shepherd for some people and mean death for the other. In addition to that Isaiah's focus is not on God's action on the earth, but on God Himself.

The general meaning of the word "time" (1:15) is narrowed by the specific meaning of the Greek word καιρὸς: an important, decisive, crucial moment (Delling 1993:459). The statement on the fullness of time can be associated with the fulfillment of all Old Testament prophecies. Jesus talked many times and in different places about the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies in one or another sphere (e.g. Lk. 4:18-21). But here Mark gives a summary of this idea. It may have been introduced by Mark as an annotation to the ministry described. The idea that "the long expected moment came" is directly and indissolubly connected to the concept of the Kingdom.

The idea of the Kingdom (the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Heaven[11]) goes back to the period of the first kings and classical prophets, but it develops to the fullest in the intertestamental period, although the phrase "the Kingdom of God" is not present in the Old Testament. The idea of God's rule carried out by priests in the beginning was preserved even after transition to monarchy. In the prophets' description the Kingdom is associated with periods of Israel's welfare as a result of national righteousness. The prophets talked about the Kingdom in the context of yet

---

longer variant, by the way, is typical of the above-mentioned Alexandrian tradition (see the commentary to 1:11).

10

The prophet's name, origin, the name of the father	Jesus from Galilee+ the first epiphany "My Son..."
Time; "in the days of King..."	"In those days", "after that..."
About whom and for whom it's written "about Judah" is 1:1	John in Judea, Jesus in Galilee
Imperative "listen" is 1:2, "return to me" Hag. 1:5, Zech. 1:3.	Imperative: "repent"="return back"

[11] "The Kingdom of Heaven" in the Gospels seems to be a secondary formation introduced because of the Jew's fear to pronounce God's name. It is used by Mathew only who had good reasons to use this synonym because of his addressees.

another disaster (Is. 24:23, 33:22, 43:14-15) that had come upon the people so that they would change their position toward God. The call to return to God implied the immediate presence of the Holy even when people stopped to believe that. The apocalyptic trend in Judaism constantly shifted the idea of God's ruling from present to the future. The closer to the intertestamental period, the clearer is the preaching about "the Day of the Lord" as a global collapse, an approaching beginning of a completely new order. As a result Jewish apocalyptic teaching lost the understanding of God's activity in historical present (Ladd 1977:61). By the beginning of the first century A.D. two approaches to this question prevailed in Judaism: eschatological (futuristic) and transcendental (parallel to the Hellenistic understanding about eternity without time). The latter could be seen, for example, in the Qumran community where people believed that the Kingdom had already been established in their society and they were taking part in eschatological salvation (Henry 1992:40).[12]

Jesus' view of the Kingdom is interpreted according to the same directions. Futurists, like Schweitzer, stated that Jesus expected the Kingdom to come very soon and therefore sent His disciples to preach (Schweitzer 1996:8). Küng describes this perspective as follows: even if for the religious mind God is placed in the space system "over the world" and "outside the world", for Jesus, however, he is situated in the time perspective "in front of us" (Küng 1978:347).

While doubting the connection with Jewish apocalyptical teaching, Dodd put forward a present "realized eschatology".[13] Later the idea was developed by the Salvation History school as the "already, but not yet" formula. Its main representative Cullman thought that fulfillment of God's plan is placed in a historical line; the division into the present age and the age to come is preserved, but the turning point is shifted from the border between these two ages to the Christ event (Ladd 1977:66). Jesus says that the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Mark uses perfect passive in both cases stressing the completion of the fact. Some researchers see in this completion God's action in history. In any case the accent is not on the action's author but on the action itself or even on its result.

---

[12] At the same time there was an expectation in Qumran of some battle between the angels of light and the sons of darkness (Ladd 1977:62).

[13] Dodd holds that the term ἤγγικεν (Mk.1:15) indicates an absolute arrival of the Kingdom instead of nearness, as is normally held (Walvoord 1970:317). Berkey argues against this position affirming that the text implies only nearness (Berkey 1963:177).

So we see that, according to Mark, the content of Jesus' proclamation is both continuation and fulfillment of the prophetic message about God's position in relation to His people. The question is directly connected to the attitude towards God and Jesus talks about it. Two phrases following the news are its result and practical application.

Repent, and believe in the gospel. Even without these words the gospel of Jesus put people in a state of crisis requiring immediate changes in relationship with God. There are two strong imperatives used by Mark concerning these relationships. Both of them are in present imperative.[14] The present tense shows that a continuous action is needed. Using Barth's terminology we can say that we should "stand in repentance" and "stand in faith" and not just repent and believe.

μετανοεῖτε which denotes a "change of mind" first implies the Old Testament idea of holistic change of a human person (comes from the verb *sub*). The last term might be translated as repentance, turning, and change of direction. The meaning is connected to the general meaning of *the way* as defined by walking before God and a life characterized by standing in front of Him. This analogy was typically used to describe changing the life course in God's direction. The prophets had at their disposal a whole spectrum of symbols to explain the concept of returning to the Lord. According to Isaiah, returning to the Lord is preceded by turning to Him (Is. 31:6) and by God's redemption of Israel (Is. 44:22).

The result of returning back Isaiah sees in coming to God (Is. 21:12) and focusing one's attention on Him (Is. 17:7). Various religious groups in Jesus' time viewed returning to the Lord differently. In classic Judaism the sacrifice system implied inner realization of one's attitude toward God. Both Pharisees and Essenes called the people to make life more righteous and to practice sanctification. John the Baptist preaches the same message of returning to God like that which Israel tried to evade in the time of Isaiah. To a certain degree Jesus is following them. His call to repent described by Mark is definitely related to the background understanding of the idea. But there is something new in it; it does not refer to something yet to come. He is talking about a fulfilled fact and, therefore, the repentance he is preaching about has a new quality (Lunde 1992:671).

---

[14] cf. when faith was needed to work a certain miracle the verb πιστεύω is in aorist (Lk. 8:50).

The second imperative (πιστεύετε) leads us to the main question to be addressed. The present imperative presupposes a constant practice of faith-trust in the subject, which is the Gospel. The interpretation of this word is determined by a presupposed worldview that surrounds the early ministry of Jesus. The Jewish environment in which Jesus lived, the Aramaic language and the experience of Old Testament thinking play a decisive role. Therefore, it is more likely that the notion of trust and consistency in God's covenant with His people is also included in the meaning of the term "faith".[15] But if we look at the text through the eyes of a Hellenistic reader (and the supposed reader could be exactly that) the meaning shifts to the epistemological sphere (intellectual assent with some statement). Generally speaking, in the synoptic gospels the noun πίστις is applied practically only in the context of miracles. But the verb acts differently; the term here is describing a proper answer to Jesus' call (c.f. Lk. 8:12). Actually, the word used here means conceptually "to be Jesus' disciple". The second imperative is related in its meaning to repentance and even more to the idea of the Kingdom (the command to be a part of this Kingdom is contained in the call).

The analysis of this passage is directly connected to the question of historicity of the phrase, which proves to be somehow difficult. First, the narrative position and form testify to the strong influence of the author's theological motive upon the passage. Second, there are several possibilities as to why the author was motivated to create such an image with the purpose of influencing his community's mood.[16]

Sanders finds in this passage an attempt of redaction which is encouraged by an absence of a focus on repentance in Christ's teaching (Sanders 1985:670). Aune states that the formula is a combination of terms Jesus personally used ("the Kingdom of God") and terms of the early church, such as "believe" and "the gospel" (Aune 1987:59). Furthermore, it is almost clear that εὐαγγέλιον in the meaning of a summary of Jesus' message came into use much later (probably in 45-50s). The abovementioned, however, doesn't mean that the whole formula was fabricated to suit the needs of Markan community. Its content is closely related to the

---

[15] It may seem strange, but faith in the meaning of accepting that something is true is completely absent in the Old Testament. The term 'mn (firmness, stability) is used instead. Some connotations of this word refer to architectural constructions. In relation to humans this concept implied (1) reliability of relationship between people, and (2) firm position toward God.

[16] For example, in this way Mark could proclaim the good news in spite of the community being depressed by Christ's crucifixion.

proclamation of Jesus as much as we can see it in the gospels. The preaching of repentance in view of the coming age has parallels with the parables, the earliest tradition which could hardly be influenced by the community. We can say that Mark gave the content of Jesus' sermon his own special style by putting it into a necessary context, thus determining its purpose. Two layers of proclamation, united in this formula, can be illustrated as follows:

The accent on kerygma by the Historical Jesus	The accent on redaction by Mark
μετανοεῖτε: turning towards God (personal and social)	μετανοεῖτε: change of mind, change of position (mental)
πιστεύετε: trust, constancy, and stability (Old Testament type of faith)	πιστεύετε: faith as intellectual assent (Hellenistic type of faith) that requires a direct object (ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ)
Soteriological aspect of faith	Epistemological aspect of faith

1.3.1.5. Summary

"Faith" in the sermonic formula is determined by several elements. It is a practical application of the sermon about the approaching Kingdom of God. It is far from being the center of Jesus' proclamation (in Mark's understanding); the center is pointing to God and His rule. Repentance and faith are only a natural, proper reaction to Jesus' appeal. The whole of Jesus' sermon about the Kingdom can be considered from the perspective of (1) Jewish apocalyptic viewpoint, (2) the parallels with such classical prophets of Israel as Isaiah, and (3) the connection to John the Baptist's ministry. Putting all the elements together, we see an image of a prophet proclaiming God's sovereign rule, a prophet whose distinguishing feature is absolute theocentrism. If, in this context, there was any possibility to attribute the preaching of faith to Jesus, it would be faith "without direct object", (in contrast to "the faith in the Gospel"). Faith here presupposes response to His call and a response of the whole nation rather than that of an individual. It is returning to and standing in the relationship established in the covenant. Faith is consistency in relationship with God without turning away from Him. At the same time faith is a constant exodus from an alien dependency to God's rule.

It is almost impossible to determine Mark's conception of faith from this text because of the merging of two layers of tradition: historical preaching about

faithfulness to covenant relationship, which is not limited by any subject, and Mark's redaction which gives the call to accept the gospel of Jesus (or better about Jesus). It is possible that the author, consciously introducing the latter position, did not aim at hiding or shadowing the proclamation of the historical Jesus saturated with the Old Testament type of faith.

1.3.2. Role of Faith in Miracle Stories (Mk. 9:14-29)

The πιστ-root is mainly used in Mark in connection with Jesus' miracles (2:1-12, 4:35-41, 5:24b-34, 5:21-43, 6:1-6a, 9:14-9:29, 10:46-52, 11:20-33). Aside from this list the πιστ-root occurs only four times in different independent passages of the Gospel. 32% of Mark's Gospel is miracle stories of 3 types: healings, exorcisms and nature miracles. Many scholars (such as representatives of the Jesus Seminar) combine the first two groups (healings and exorcisms) and accept their historicity while regarding natural miracles as metaphorical narratives. The πιστ-word group occurs mostly in the narratives on healings.

Mark describes the miracle of exorcism in 9:14-29 using the term πίστις with its conceptual meaning. This passage is important for our investigation because of its belonging to the "Journey to Jerusalem" block where the πιστ-root occurs only three times (9:14-29,42, 10:52).

1.3.2.1. A Brief Introduction to the Miracle Stories

Miracle stories do not show the deity of Jesus, they are more likely meant to confirm His status as God's messenger, the Messiah (Aune 1987:57). Jesus' miracles prove the arrival of the Kingdom, when God resumes control over the evil present in the world. In the first century, all sickness was attributed to the victim having fallen under the power of Satan (c.f. Lk.12). Also, storms were seen as evil, so Jesus' act of calming the sea was, again, the same proof.

The role of faith in miracle stories always caused different reactions. For some people this role is simply rhetorical (this opinion is often typical of readers who accept that Jesus possesses the attribute of God's omnipotence). Others go as far as to make faith a personified agent, working the miracle (faith movement).

The miracles themselves are also understood differently. Some people believe that the events, described by gospel writers, really took place in history. Others are inclined to critically sift the narrative material through a scientific viewpoint coming

24

to the conclusion that nothing supernatural took place. Instead, it there was mere psychological influence after which people felt some relief (often only a social one), but didn't experience a real miracle. In this relation Marcus Borg says (Borg 2000:1):

> Many modern people understand Jesus' healings as merely faith healings. It is true that some physical conditions are caused by mental states, and sometimes a physical cure can be brought about by addressing the mental state. Moreover, faith or confidence in the power of the healer can bring about a cure. But not all paranormal healings can be accounted for in this way. In some cases, in the gospels and the modern world, the faith of the healed person doesn't seem to be involved. We don't know how to account for them. In my judgment, seeing the explanation as either "supernatural intervention" or as "psychosomatic cure" is too much of a claim for us to make because we don't understand the process involved in paranormal healing. We also don't know the limits of paranormal healing, though I think there are some. I am confident, for example, that missing limbs are never replaced. But there is an impressive range of serious conditions that have been healed by paranormal means.
> Hence, my conclusion: Jesus was a healer and an exorcist. Indeed, more healing stories are told about him than about any other figure in the Jewish tradition. In all likelihood, he was the most remarkable healer in human history.

Several models of structuring miracle stories were offered. Aune assumes that a miracle story includes *three* structural elements: circumstances of the miracle story, the story of the miracle itself, and its confirmation or effect (Aune 1987:48). Comparing miracle stories of the New Testament with other early literature, Theissen notes that they have four parts: the introduction, which describes the appearance of the characters; the exposition, which builds "an internal tension which is released by the following narrative"; the story of the miracle itself; and the conclusion (Theissen 1983:73).

1.3.2.2. Limits of the Passage

At first glance our passage may seem an independent pericope. But it is directly linked to the structure of the immediate context. Rejecting to use revolution and power and talking about self-denial (8:31-38), Jesus at the same time demonstrates strength and power. He says, "Some of those who are standing here will see the Kingdom of God after it has come with power" (9:1). They did not have to wait very long because in six days Peter, James, and John witnessed Jesus' transfiguration. There is no doubt that this phenomenon is at least partially connected to the expression "the Kingdom which has come with power". After that Mark describes Jesus' power witnessed by large crowds of people. In both cases the power demonstration is combined with a certain secrecy (Mark's general tendency toward "the messianic secret"). After the transfiguration Jesus ordered the disciples not to

tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man would rise from the dead (9:9). In this passage, Jesus hurries to complete the exorcism before a crowd gathers (9:25).

The transfiguration narrative (9:1-10) and the exorcism narrative (9:14-29) are related because of their proximity within the gospel, a common power terminology (c.f. 9:1 and 9:23) and the grammatical form of the narrative beginning (καὶ ἐλθόντες). The latter is structured in the same way as in the beginning of the ninth verse which does not break the narrative but adds another sentence to the main text.[17]

1.3.2.3. Structure of the Passage

A comparison of the passage with the description of two other exorcisms in the Gospel points to different formations of these materials. Mark extends here the limits of the typical exorcism structure (1:23-28, 5:1-17) and prolongs the narration of the setting even after the first reaction of the boy (9:21-24) and after the performance the exorcism itself (9:27).

Part of the miracle story (Theissen)	Event	Mk.1:23-28	Mk.5:1-17	Mk.9:14-29	
Introduction	Circumstances of exorcism	23	1-5	14-19	
Exposition	Reaction of demon possessed	24	6-7	20	
					21-24
Story of the miracle itself	Action/word of Jesus	25-26	7-13	25-26a	
Conclusion	Reaction of the crowd	27-28	14-17	26b	
					27

This uniqueness (the more complex structure of story) points to lesser dependence on tradition (larger historical value of the material). This fact makes our passage even more valuable when analyzing the meaning of the term πίστις within it.

---

[17] The same phrase is used in 12:14, where καὶ ἐλθόντες does also not begin a new narrative, but continues the pericope started in 12:13.

The historical value of the material is supported also by the fact that it is presented in the other synoptic gospels without significant changes (Mt. 17:14-21, Lk. 9:37-43). Structural resemblance shows that the succession of pericopes (transfiguration, the question about Elijah, exorcism, the second prediction of Messiah's destiny) goes back to a pre-Markan tradition.

1.3.2.4. Analysis of Mk. 9:14-29

The characters in the miracle story include a protagonist (Jesus), a victim (the lunatic boy), a man of faith (the boy's father), the disciples, the leaders, and the crowd. They can be put in this succession on the basis of an analysis of the miracle story form. But Mark's context shows that the two main parts are attributed to *Jesus* and His *disciples*.[18] After them, we see the minor role of the crowd and the specific role of *the child's father*.

In spite of the continuing tendency to keep His mission a secret (9:25), **Jesus** is presented here as a partially glorified[19] prophet who represents God, as a heavenly mediator rather than an absolute theophany. This suggestion was often stated in Jewish religion in the past (see, for example, the prophets). The idea about this connection between Jesus in our segment and the Old Testament prophets is supported by the resemblance of Mk. 9:14-29 and the narrative about Moses in Ex. 32:15ff. Both Jesus and Moses after an encounter with the Holy (in both cases the experience was associated with the image of height, or mountain) are disappointed at the sight of people, of chaos and misunderstanding of the truth. Jesus is opposed to the crowd as well as to the disciples. Still being a man, he is put by the author in a position closer to God than to humanity.

As in some other parts of the Gospel, the **disciples** are presented not in a very advantageous way. The narrative begins with their *incapacity* (9:18) and finishes with *lack of understanding* (9:28). These two negative characteristics can be explained by the disciples' unbelief.[20] They cannot do the divine action because they

---

[18] This idea is supported by the version that Mark's aim was to indicate the position of his community (the gospel addressees) using the example of the described disciples.

[19] Faith in resurrection as a fulfilled fact influenced the description of Jesus' transfiguration.

[20] Explaining the reason of the disciples' incapacity to work the miracle, Matthew directly talks about their unbelief (Mt. 17:20).

do not understand what is going on, because they do not believe. The motive or reason for their behavior can be found in studying the dilemma between the Christology of a royal Messiah and the Christology of a suffering servant. The disciples did not understand and did not like the prospect of their Master's suffering (8:32). They preferred to consider themselves bearers of a special power, the ones sent to the twelve tribes of Israel and having power over evil spirits (6:7). It is possible that during the events after Christ's transfiguration they continued to consider themselves bearers of that mission. However, the reality was quite unexpected: there was a demon-possessed child, and they could not cast the demon out. The failure puts them into a conflict with their environment. They see, first, the father's despair, second, the scribes' opposition and possible attempts to present them as false witnesses, and, in addition to that, their Master's strong rebuke: "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you?" (9:19). The last phrase was supposed to tell them that they were on a wrong way. And maybe their mistake was the attempt to possess and use the divine curative power without being dependent on its source, which is God. Jesus' words "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer" directly show that the disciples lacked something that Jesus possessed, that is, the experience of God, and the experience of the Holy. It's possible that Markan community had the same problem. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly to whom the words "faithless generation" were addressed, to Jesus' disciples or to the Markan community.

Unlike the disciples' image, that of the **father** presents a positive narrative figure. A comparison to other miracle stories helps us better determine his role. Mk. 2:1-12, 5:21-43, 6:53-56 describes how a third party was needed to bring the sick to Jesus. In all these cases people who needed the miracle of healing couldn't come without a mediator. And at the same time it is difficult to say who displays or who is moved by the main motive in each particular case. In Mk. 2:5 Jesus' actions were determined by the fact that he ἰδὼν τὴν πίστιν αὐτῶν (saw their faith). In the story with Jairus Jesus encourages the same dynamic motive, which makes Jairus to address Jesus: μὴ φοβοῦ, μόνον πίστευε (Do not be afraid any longer, only believe) (5:36). This paramount dynamics (a faith-based decision to bring the sick to Jesus) can be considered as a positive aspect.[21]

---

[21] Any doubt based on the ideal of a disinterested attitude to Jesus (coming to Jesus is positive only if it has no element of pragmatism) is not able to stand critique based

In the description of events before the exorcism an important role is played by the evaluation of the situation, which Mark often attributes to Jesus. Seeing the crowd, the disciples, and the scribes arguing with them, Jesus asks about the reason for the argument (9:16).[22] The explanation comes from the child's father who starts talking about his need. In response to his words Jesus addresses the disciples and gives them a negative evaluation (9:19).[23] It is interesting that up to verse 21 Jesus seems to pay no attention to the child's father. He talks to the disciples all the time and doesn't even turn to him. But starting with verse 21 the situation changes and the focus is totally on the boy in need and his father. The conversation in 9:21-24 includes only Jesus and the boy's father.

It does not look strange that the boy's father addresses Jesus as διδάσκαλε ("Teacher"). Mark describes situations where the same mode of address was used by Pharisees (12:14), Sadducees (12:19), and scribes (12:32). A broader context shows that people probably took Jesus for a teacher – rabbi.

After addressing Jesus the father tells Him that he has brought his son possessed with a spirit, which makes him mute.[24] Because Jesus was absent, the father had asked the disciples for help (who may have even offered help themselves) but they couldn't do anything.

Jesus' first reaction to these words again concerns not the father and his problem, but the disciples whom he severely criticizes and calls unbelieving. Mark uses the term ἄπιστος as an adjective only once, but as a noun it is also used in 6:6 and 9:24. Jesus' reprimand can be partially explained by comparing the narrative to be analyzed to the content of chapter six:

---

on the general context of the gospel. Mk. 6:5 presents Jesus as willing to produce healings, but he is held back by their unbelief.

[22] To answer the question as to whom Jesus' words "What are you discussing with them?" (9:16) were addressed, one needs to look at the word order in verse 14 which shows that the disciples were for Him the main object of discussion. The question was probably also addressed to them.

[23] The fact that the expression "o faithless generation" was addressed to the disciples can be grammatically proved. A pronoun in the 3rd person plural could be addressed only to them.

[24] The symptoms described could mean such psychological illness as lunacy, but it is impossible to prove.

6:6	Jesus rebukes the disciples for unbelief
6:7	Jesus authorizes disciples to perform exorcism
9:18	The disciples are unable to perform exorcism
9:19	Jesus rebukes the disciples for unbelief

The word combination ὢ γενεὰ ἄπιστος is preserved by all the synoptics although Matthew (17:17) and Luke (9:41) add καὶ διεστραμμένη to it. The question we can ask here is whom Jesus addresses in such a harsh way. There are at least three variants of answer to this question.

First it might be addressed to the boy's father or to the crowd he represents. Jesus utters the words right after the father has told Him about his request. This textual proximity makes the reader think that Jesus is displeased with the crowd (its representative), who demand miracles and do not want to understand the meaning of His proclamation. Mark often shows a tendency to avoid popularity and large-scale activity. Such interpretation also shows the readers' attempt at improving the disciples' image. The position is supported by the other two synoptics' interpretation that strengthens the expression ὢ γενεὰ ἄπιστος by a harsher one καὶ διεστραμμένη thus linking the words and the crowd even more.

On the other hand these words might be addressed to Jesus' disciples. Mark's context shows that the main subject of the Gospel is the relationships between Jesus and His disciples rather than His relationship with the crowd. Mark was not really concerned about maintaining his characters' certain image and acts here more historically. Mark's reproach for unbelief matches with Matthew's logia which the latter uses to describe the reason for the disciples' failure (Mt. 17:20). But if Jesus reproaches His disciples there is a question of what the reprimand is about. Beginning from 6:6 and up to the passage to be addressed, Mark constantly introduces the idea that the disciples did not understand the meaning of what was going on and the meaning of His proclamation, in spite of the power given to them. They perceive Jesus' miracles in the same way as would people who hadn't had any experience of relationship with Him.

The supernatural scares and terrifies them. They are frightened to death by seeing Jesus walking on water (6:49-50). They "had not gained any insight from the

incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened"(6:52).[25] Jesus' next reproach concerns their incapacity to understand the simple truth about what defiles a human heart (7:18). In chapter 8 (8:17ff) the reprimand is repeated on the same ground as at the end of chapter six. The disciples were incapable to realize the miracle of feeding 4000 people. And even when Jesus started predicting His suffering and death (8:31-32), it was again beyond the disciples' understanding. A constant contrast between Jesus and the disciples shows that Mark was purposefully creating an image of apostles, who could not understand the essence of the Master's personality and mission. Jesus' world still remained beyond their perception ability. It was the very reason for their incapacity, misunderstanding and unbelief. They were still representatives of people rather than of God. They worshiped God in their own world, and Jesus' world remained transcendental to them. Their unbelief consisted in their incapability[26] to perceive another reality. So we see that the real faith Jesus expected consisted in perception of the other, higher reality.

In spite of the fact that most textual factors speak in favor of the phrase "o faithless generation" to be addressed to the disciples, Martin Buber shows an interesting comparison of this narrative to Is. 28:16, insisting that the phrase was at least partially addressed to the child's father. In Buber's interpretation a believer "will not be in a hurry", he will not use his universal opportunity, will not ask to quicken the events using the prayer power of his soul for that. On the contrary, it is unbelievers who demand mockingly that God hurry up and "quicken" the promised action (Buber 1995:243). This logic leads us to the conclusion that Jesus' rebuke concerns to some extent the child's father who is trying to outstrip the historical order established by God. Any desire for miracle becomes in this interpretation vicious and denies God's supreme power over all events. This creates a picture of Jesus' dualistic attitude to seekers of God's intrusion. He rejoices at their faith, which pushes them to seek the supernatural, but at the same time rebukes them for unbelief,

---

[25] Confirming this is Blomberg's observation that Jesus used the same Old Testament passage (Is. 6:9-10) to rebuke the disciples mildly for their dullness after both a miracle (Mk. 8:18) and a parable (4:11-12) (Blomberg 1986:329).

[26] It's difficult to define the reason of their incapability. If the reason was in them, then it should be rather called unwillingness, deservedness. But in spite of Mark's severity in criticizing the apostles he shows that the reason of their incapacity depended not on them. In the first case Jesus reproach looks more logical if we base it on the conception of Jesus' absolute all-knowingness. But the reproach we see in Mark looks more like the one of a man-prophet.

expressed in the very essence of their desire of change (miracle). However, this point is speculative because Mark is wholly positive about Jesus' miracles.

Another parallel with Isaiah (17:10)[27] (only in the Septuagint version) can be helpful in interpreting Jesus' rebuke. It is φύτευμα ἄπιστον καὶ σπέρμα ἄπιστον (plant of unfaithful and seed unfaithful). The reason for their unbelief/unfaithfulness is reduced to the idea that Israel has forgotten the God who rescues her and who protects her. So we see that for the author of the Greek translation of Isaiah the word ἄπιστον is associated with a conscious position of excluding God from the personal world (the death of God movement is pretty old).

The dialogue between Jesus and the child's father raises again the question of faith and leads to one of the most original expressions about faith that has become classic (9:24). The question of faith could be expected to be raised in this passage just because it is a miracle story description. But beside that the child's father challenges Jesus to enter the conversation by his conditional question (9:22). As Jesus (in Mark's interpretation) perceives such concepts as δύναμις and πίστις to belong to the same sphere,[28] the conditional question about Jesus' power (possibility) sounds like a confrontation, which he immediately transfers into a conversation about faith. The phrase, uttered by Jesus (9:23), presents a difficult textual problem because of a meaning gap in its different textual interpretations.

---

[27] The intertextual connections between OT prophecies and the miracles of Jesus are helpful in interpreting the miracle stories of the Synoptic Gospels (Johnson 1997:89).

[28] The concept of δύναμις is typical of Mark (5:30, 6:2,5, 6:14, 9:1, 9:39, 12:24, 13:25,26, 14:62) and conveys different aspects such as strength, power, miracle, and even God (14:62). It is possible that sometimes the term implies the spiritual world. In Mark the connection between powers/miracles (δύναμις) and faith (πίστις) is completely direct: (1) The positive aspect (there is faith=there is power): see Mk. 9:23 "All things are possible to him who believes"; (2) The negative aspect (no faith=no power): see Mk. 6:5 "And He could do no miracle there; and He wondered at their unbelief". The latter verse sounds rather "dangerous" as it can be "unduly" interpreted the way that Jesus' power was limited by the factor of other people's faith. Possibly because of that Matthew restates the expression somewhat: "And He did not do many miracles because of their unbelief" (13:58). All this brings us to the conclusion that the concepts δύναμις and πίστις belong to one sphere (both terms describe a certain function of a man connected to the sphere of the transcendental).

ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῷ· τὸ εἰ δύνασαι πιστεῦσαι   ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῷ· τὸ εἰ δύνῃ

And Jesus said to him: "If you can believe;   And Jesus said to him: "If you can!

πάντα   δυνατὰ   τῷ πιστεύοντι.   πάντα   δυνατὰ   τῷ πιστεύοντι.

All things are possible to him who believes   All things are possible to him who believes

Buber mentions Merx' statement that, according to the Greek text, the only meaning of 9:23 can be "All things are possible to Me, Jesus; as I believe, I can heal the boy" (Buber 1995:241). Jeremias agrees, "To a Greek ear dative refers to a logical subject. When the words "If you can" are concerned, a believer can do everything. It seems that by "believer" Jesus implies Himself. As a believer he has all of God's power at His disposal" (Jeremias 1999:189). But if the dative τῷ πιστεύοντι ("to him who believes") refers to Jesus, there occur at least two difficulties, which should be discussed. First, no other synoptic gospel talks about Jesus' personal faith. But, according to Jeremias, the main difficulty consists in verse 24, as the word πιστεύω (I believe), used here by the father, clearly shows that he refers the dative τῷ πιστεύοντι to himself (Jeremias 1999:189).[29] This variant makes us suppose that the father referred the utterance to himself by mistake, whereas it referred to Jesus. Such a mistake or "improper" action is confirmed by the correlation of verses 24 and 25. According to the text, Jesus performs the miracle not because of the father's exclamation, in which faith and unbelief were combined, but because a crowd of people was gathering around and Jesus did not want to popularize His ministry.

So a textual analysis of verses 23-24 will constantly preserve the possibility for both answers to the following question: to whom is the term "him who believes" addressed, to Jesus or to the father? Jeremias thinks that the Gospel author could intend the ambiguity. "In this case Jesus would be described as both, having an absolute assurance based on complete faithfulness to God and encouraging others to have faith, full of mercy, others who try to believe but have to admit their unbelief. Thus, Jesus would be a believer and a faith preacher at the same time" (Jeremias 1999:189). The broader context increases the ambiguity by adding the position of the

---

[29] The question about the necessity to link verses 23 and 24 is rather difficult. The author could concentrate "on presenting a teaching about some fundamental fact, rather than on the narrative coherence" (Buber 1995:240).

unbelieving/incapable disciples. If we accept that the disciples are the central theme of the passage and its context, we can suppose that the father's phrase "I do believe; help my unbelief"[30] presents the position of the unbelieving disciples (as well as that of Markan community which they represent). In this variant Jesus' mystifying phrase (9:23) refers primarily to the disciples who don't believe and therefore cannot work a miracle. It is important to note that the whole passage argues "from the negative", as it talks about unbelief as the disciples' (Markan community's) false position toward the divine sphere. Therefore, attempts to deduce some definite teaching about faith according to Mk. 9:14-29 can lead to a serious misunderstanding of the text.

1.3.2.5. Summary

The concept of faith in Mark should be primarily derived from his miracle stories. They are going back to one of the most ancient and historical layers of tradition and are used by Mark to present Jesus as a divine messenger, a prophet and a possessor of supernatural powers which he attains through being part of the divine sphere. For Jesus, God was an experiential reality, not simply an element of belief. The constant reproach addressed to the disciples for not being part of it is a reproach for unbelief, which is the main theme of Mk. 9:14-29.

Jesus, presented here in a prophetic image,[31] evaluates the disciples' position, which combines ambitiousness and unbelief. The rebuke includes a reference to the boy's father who desires a miracle but is more inclined to express unbelief in his attitude to reality.

Unbelief as the incapability to be part of the divine sphere is the main topic of Mk. 9:14-29. The text does not consider the reasons for this incapability, but illustrates wonder/indignation at the absence of striving for the transcendental. The concept of faith can be inferred from this text only "from the opposite". Thus, faith can be determined as a position toward God's supreme power and fulfillment of the eschatological order of events presupposed by it, which was expected from the disciples. Determining the divine sphere as "the other" we can say that the faith, the disciples were expected to have, consisted in their openness to being a part of this "other" sphere of the transcendental.

---

[30] Buber says that such people "according to their self-perception and self-understanding know the condition of the soul that should be called faith" (Buber 1995:240).

[31] Ancient prophets, such as Moses or Isaiah, often rebuked Israel for unbelief.

II. THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE HELLENISTIC ROOTS OF THE CONCEPT OF FAITH IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK

2.1. The Concept of Faith in the Old Testament

Firstly, we have to look at the Old Testament background of faith since Mark's setting was furnished by the late Judaism, which in turn was a development from Hebrew religion as evidenced in the Old Testament.

2.1.1. Faith Terminology in the Old Testament

The Hebrew Bible uses the root *'mn* to express what the Septuagint translates as Greek πίστις. This root occurs in the Hebrew Bible in its noun forms (*'emunâ*), as adjectives (*'emet*), and most frequently in verbal forms. The verb *'mn* occurs in *Qal, Nip'al,* and *Hip'il* forms.

In the *Qal* form (only in the participle) it never means "believe" (Healey 1992:744), but expresses the basic sense of "to carry", "to hold" or the sense of connection between mother, nurse and child (2 Sam. 4:4; Nu. 11:12; Is. 49:23).

The root occurs in the *Nip'al* form referring to firm places (Is. 22:23); permanent posts in the royal service (1 Sam. 2:35; 1 Ki. 11:38); to the people of Israel in perpetuity (Is. 7:9); to a variety of notions all of which have the sense of firmness, stability, confidence (1 Sam. 2:35; 3:20; Deut. 7:9,12; Is. 49:7; Jer. 42:5; 1 Ki. 8:26; Ps. 89:29, 111:7; Neh. 9:8). In most cases the *Nip'al* is used in a profane meaning and connected with an object. It is shown to be a formal concept whose content is in each case determined by the specific subject. The context of practical experience was to impart some special sense to this form.

Only in the *Hip'il* form the root denotes a meaning close to *believe* or rather to *trust*. It also includes an idea of being firm and secure. Most of the texts with the *Hip'il* form imply the meaning of confidence in a certain object and in its qualities. It might be either a human person (Ex. 4:1, 1Sam. 27:12, Jer. 12:6) or information perceived by saying (1Ki. 10:7) or by vision (Ex. 14:31). Very frequently God is presented as an object of such relation (Gen. 15:6, Ex. 14:31, Deut. 1:32, 9:23, 2Ki. 17:14, Ps. 78:22, Jon. 3:5, etc.). With the preposition *b* it means *to put trust in someone* (Gen.15:6), and with the preposition *l* it seems to mean *to hold something to be true, to believe* (Gen. 45:26).

One more term that reflects the idea of faith in the Old Testament is *batah*, which means *to trust in someone* or *to be confident, secure*. In a number of parallelisms *batah* is entirely synonymous to the meaning of *'mn* (Ps. 78:22, Mic. 7:5). In the

noun form the term means being safe, secure (Lev. 25:18, Deut. 33:12). In a verbal form this profane term becomes part of religious language of the wisdom literature as an expression of putting trust into God (the most of *batah* usages relate to the book of Psalms).

Going beyond a merely philological approach, Weiser proposes to regard the fact that two basically different and even contradictory groups of meaning are used for a person's relation to God, namely, *fear* on one side and *trust* on the other (Weiser 1964:183). In this way the *fear of God* could often be quite simply an expression for faith (Gen. 20:11; 22:12; Is. 8:13; 11:2).

In an attempt to define[32] the Old Testament concept of faith meticulous attention will be devoted to the paradigmatic usages of the root *'mn* occurring in the Torah (the faith of Abraham), in the prophets (Isaiah), and in wisdom literature (trust in God in Psalms).

2.1.2. Faith of Abraham (Gen. 15:6, 22:1-19)

The term *'mn* occurs for the first time in the Torah in connection with Abraham, who is probably the most prominent figure of the Old Testament concerning the question of faith. He is adduced repeatedly to as a pattern of life in rabbinic literature and in the New Testament writings (in Paul, James, and in Hebrews). He is also called "father of faith" and "hero of faith". The covenant with Abraham and the offering of Isaac will be considered here as model passages determining the concept of *fiducia* in the Torah. The text of Gen. 15: 6 is considered as one of the infrequent uses of the term *'mn* with the connotation *to believe*. The second passage (Gen. 22:1-19) does not have a word for the meaning of faith but includes the idea of faith described by the "fear of the Lord" which includes a meaning close to the Old Testament concept of faith.

2.1.2.1. Faith in the Narrative of the Covenant (Gen. 15:1-6)

The main part of Genesis (chapters 12-50) may be divided into three parts, (1) the Abraham cycle (11:27-25:11), the Jacob cycle, (25:19-35:29), and the Joseph cycle (37:1-50:26). Gen. 15 relates the agreement between God and Abraham. This agreement concerned two most important questions for Abraham: (1) his offspring and (2) the lands for their living. Verses 1-6 describe God's promise of a son, and verses 15:7-21 concern the question of the land. To some extent the final verses

---

[32] Faith is described rather than defined in the Hebrew Bible (Healey 1992:745).

(15:18-21) can be seen as referring to both promises, although in literal interpretation they are more closely connected to verses 15:7-17. Chapter 15 gives some other grounds for the suggestion that the narratives in verses 1-6 and 7-21 are not chronologically connected. If in verse five the event takes place at night, verses 12 and 17 describe the time before dawn. In verse six Abraham trusts God's promise, but in verse eight he is full of doubt and even decides to test Him. All of these facts let us suppose that the passages 15:1-6 and 15:7-21 are rooted in different sources. But if we study the nature of Abraham's trust in God (15:6), the necessary study context will be the narrative about the promise of a son (15:1-6).

The phrase "after these things" relates apparently to the events described in the previous chapter. The formula is often placed at the border of segments from different sources (e.g., Gen. 22:1,20), and therefore it can be considered as an editorial link necessary to introduce the story of Abraham's vision after the story about Lot's deliverance.

"The word of the Lord came" is a phrase typically introducing a revelation given to a prophet (1Sam. 15-10, Hos. 1:1). In spite of the fact that Abraham was literally called a prophet (Gen. 20:7), his conversation with YHWH cannot be really called a prophecy, as the biblical understanding of the prophecy phenomenon presupposes a prophet who receives a message from God and has to proclaim it (Schiffman 2000:33). Only starting with Moses there appears the figure of a prophet sent to people to communicate God's message.

"Do not be afraid. I am your shield". This admonishment is built on war metaphors. It clearly links the text to the story of Lot's deliverance and is parallel to the idea of God-warrior taking part in the political life of His nation.

"Your reward" is first of all connected to the rejection of payment in 14:22-24. Kaiser suggests that this is the term for a mercenary's pay (Kaiser 1958:125). It is difficult to say whether the payment was connected to the war campaign or to Melchizedek's blessing.

The address "Sovereign Lord" (omitted by the Septuagint) is difficult to associate with the harsh and pessimistic question-reprimand: "What will you give me, since I depart childless?" The matter is that long before that God had promised Abraham descendants (12:2, 13:16) and land to live on (12:7,13:15). But the possibility of a child's natural birth became more unreal year by year, and it caused doubt and pushed Abraham to reproach God (15:2-3).

The second saying of YHWH, introduced by the same formula (*"the word of the LORD came"*), repeats the promise that has already been given to Abraham (12:13): *your heir shall inherit from you.*

The editorial comment (15:6) appears in the construction *waw consec + 3 masc. sg pf hiph*, which is unusual for single events in past time. It may indicate repeated action in the past, "he kept on believing" (Kautsch 1966:112). Concerning the meaning of the *Hip'il* form in this verse Jepsen suggests a list of variants: *it can mean, "he relied on someone, gave credence to a message or considered it to be true, trusted in someone"* (Jepsen 1974:308). "To believe in God *here* is not simply to believe in existence, but meekly to submit to his will and wait upon him in quietness and confidence" (Bultmann 1949:32). Yet, examining the verses in context it is enough to state that the basic meaning of 'mn is trust and reliance, not intellectual acquiescence in the truth of certain propositions (Kellner 1999:15).

This verse describes Abraham's response to the Lord's promise. The promise was first made long before the events described in chapter 15 took place. Then it was repeated from time to time. Postponing the fulfillment of the promise may look like a test of Abraham's faithfulness and his attitude towards God. Chapter 15 describes that because of the long postponement and the latest war actions, which provoked certain thoughts, Abraham was close to losing his trust in God. It is expressed by his reproach-complaint in 15:2-3 and distrust in 15:8. So Abraham was close to losing his trust in God, but a new revelation repeating the previous promise and strengthened by the metaphor of stars in the night sky supports his trust and helps him to survive. In this way Abraham in Gen. 15:6 does not perform any new action which is then reckoned to him as righteousness. He preserves his trust in God, continues to trust in His word.

Arguing for the idea that Rom. 4:1-5:11 is a sermon beginning as a midrash on Gen. 15:6, Lyozov talks about two possible trends in the interpretation of Abraham's "merit" (a reward for human achievements and a reward for faith). He states that rabbinical Judaism considers Abraham as being saved as a person of faith (the same way Paul puts it) (Lyozov 1999:22). Mechilet on Ex. 14:31 read as follows, "Our father Abraham inherited this world and the future world only as a reward[33] for his faith with which he believed, for it is said "and trusted God" (ibid, 22).

---

[33] Here the same term (*śākar*) is used as in Gen. 15:1, where the promised reward to Abraham is discussed.

Interpretations of the phrase «It was counted to him» go in two different directions. Von Rad has postulated that a cultic setting lies behind this statement but the idea of righteousness is not dependent on cultic worship (Rad 1965:125). Others proposed that it has no connection with cultic usage (Oeming 1983:190).[34] A comparison with other uses of the *Qal* (Gen. 38:15, 1Sam. 1:13) does not prove that this form only denotes either profane or religious meaning.

In the Torah the term "the righteous" refers to those people whose deeds and life style became the reason for their salvation.[35] Noah is saved from the flood; Lot is delivered from the dying Sodom. In legal contexts "the righteous" are those who should be acquitted by the judges (e.g., Deut. 25:1). In this way the editor presents Abraham as redeemed from a possible conviction because he preserved his trust in God. Trust as a criterion for Old Testament soteriology can be seen also in Hab. 2:4b where the author puts the results of a righteous man's life in contrast to those of a sinner's life.

Von Rad argues that the story of Abraham's relationship with YHWH has to be seen as a history of "promise and fulfillment" (Rad 1962:I,170). Although the narrative in chapters 12-15 constantly goes back to these two questions, the main activity takes place between the promise and the fulfillment. It can be described with the word "testing". God tests Abraham's faithfulness with time, difficulties, and purposefully created circumstances. All these events are concentrated in the context of a covenant-agreement between the patriarch and YHWH.

To clarify the concept of Abraham's faith we should consider it in the light of the Eastern tradition of establishing a relationship through a covenant-agreement. A present-day person can hardly believe that in Ancient East such relationships were an exception rather than a norm. Relationship establishment was an important event and certain rituals accompanied it. After that the agreement could be cancelled or renewed for some reason. An agreement could be made between two equal parties as well as between a stronger and a weaker party. Usually the stronger party had a potentially bigger possibility to preserve the relationship doing everything it could for it. In this case the weaker party could be sure that the relationship would last. The initiator of any agreement had to have confirmations strong enough that he/she was

---

[34] Oeming proposed to apply the second part of the verse to God's act but it has no support in early Jewish as well as in Christian exegesis (Wenham 1998).

[35] Not to confuse with New Testament soteriology.

capable of maintaining the agreement. Jepsen cites Pedersen's suggestion that such relationship presupposes "assurance that the person has strength and power to maintain the relationship" (Jepsen 1974:298). The opposite party in turn considers the initiator's real possibilities and calculates everything, and only after that gives a positive (or a negative) answer, after which the relationship starts. *Trust* accompanies the establishment of an agreement.

In the agreement between God and Abraham it is difficult to say who is the party with the obligation of a trust credit. On the one hand, Abraham is presented as a man trusting God, and this leads to the reaching of an agreement (or its religious fixation). On the other hand, the very principle of testing Abraham shows certain "distrust" of the testing party (YHWH in our case). But the whole narrative makes it clear that both parties (YHWH and Abraham) act with trust (Stepanova 1998:26). In other words, faith in the story of Abraham is *continuing trust and faithfulness accompanying the attitude of both parties of the relationship.*[36]

Promise	→	*Testing*	→	Fulfillment

↑
Loyalty
of Abraham

↑
Loyalty
of YHWH
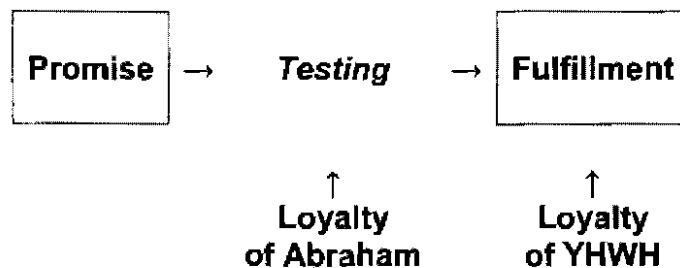
2.1.2.2. Faith in the Narrative of the Aqedah[37] of Isaac (Gen.22:1-19)

Many interpreters attempting to comprehend Abraham's faith focus on the story about the offering of Isaac, although literally there is no mention of either faith nor about testing of faith. The reason is that the New Testament (Heb. 11:17-19) and later interpretations of the Genesis passage based its views on a testing of the fear of the Lord, as a concept synonymous to the concept of faith.

It is rather difficult to define the structure of the passage, which would determine its accents.

---

[36] The circumstances of Abram's testing here are to be described as delay of fulfillment. In the passage on the testing of Abraham (Gen. 22:1-19) they concentrate more on history (demand to offer Isaac).

[37] Jewish tradition calls the passage of the testing of Abraham "the *Aqedah* of Isaac" because of the verb *'āqad* (Gen. 22:9).

Wenham advises a model in which the narrative is constructed of three main dialogues with a long angelic monologue that rounds off the story with a great coda. In each, there is a sequence of similar words and phrases, producing four parallel panels (Wenham 1998). Structuralizing based on the principles of source criticism leads to a two-part scheme: the first part (vv 1–14) related to E, on the grounds of its use of 'ĕlōhîm for the deity, and the second part (vv 15-19) is to J (some look at this passage as a late addition to the original story). Usually they relate these two parts as the cause and effect. Without the second part, the testing of Abraham would be purposeless. "It is only with the inclusion, in the second speech, of the divine confirmation of the patriarchal promises, vv 15–18, that the ultimate aim of the testing becomes clear. Because of Abraham's obedience his children will be blessed" (Seters 1975:239).

"After these things God tested Abraham". First of all, the text presents the premise of the story very abruptly. Semantically, it is difficult to connect the narrative of the testing of Abraham with the end of the previous chapter. The midrashim on the Aqedah offer several ways to understand "After these things." A midrash in the Babylonian Talmud (b. Sanhedrin 89b), for example, says:

> R. Johanan said on the authority of R. Jose b. Zimra: After the words of Satan,[38] as it is written (Gen.21:8), "And the child (Isaac) grew, and was weaned: (and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.)".
> Thereupon Satan said to the Almighty: "Sovereign of the Universe! To this old man You graciously gave the fruit of the womb at the age of a hundred, yet of all that banquet which he prepared, he did not have one turtle-dove or pigeon to sacrifice before You! Has he done anything but in honor of his son? He replied, "Yet if I were to say to him, 'Sacrifice your son before Me', he would do so without hesitation." Immediately, "God tested Abraham."

The use of a definite article for the word "God" is quite rarely in the book of Genesis. More frequently the text uses "the Lord" for introductory parts of the stories (e.g., 17:1; 21:1). But the fact that the narrative begins with the name 'ĕlōhîm and closes with the name YHWH does not give enough ground for the argument of two different gods. Delitzsch may not be correct to see the next perspective: "He who

---

[38] Satan plays an important role in the midrashic interpretation of the Aqedah. He impugns Abraham's loyalty to God. He attempts to sway both Abraham and Isaac from their course. And, finally, when he can do nothing else, he tells Sarah the truth: that Abraham took Isaac away to sacrifice him. When Abraham returns alone, Sarah sees that Isaac is not with him, and she dies from the shock (See 'Aqedath Yishaq, by BEN ISH HAI).

requires from Abraham the surrender of Isaac is God the creator ... but it is YHWH in his angel who forbids the extreme act, for the son of promise cannot perish" (Delitzsch 1978:II,91). The whole narrative leaves us no other possibility than to recognize that the One commanding Abraham to make the sacrifice and the One preventing it in the end is One and the same person. Otherwise the conclusion "now I see that you fear God" would have no sense.
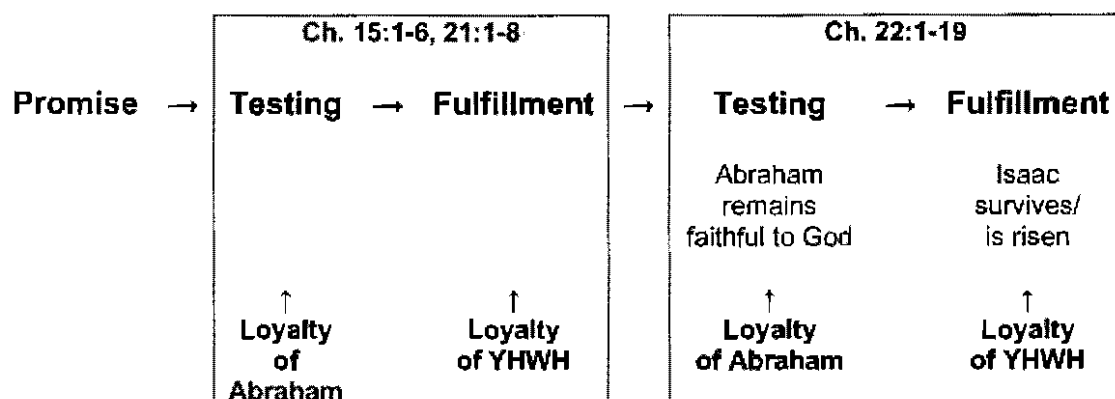
The testing (nāsâ) in 22:1 is the only occurrence of this term in Genesis. Considering the meaning of this word in the rest of the Torah we can note that in most cases it is the prerogative of God Almighty, His right to test His people in order to know the condition of their hearts and their true motives (Deut. 8:2). This text associates testing with the question of "whether you would obey His commands", which can be understood as a test of loyalty. Testing was usually related to some external deprivation such as hunger or thirst. In Abraham's case (which is the only occurrence where God tests an individual) the testing is about an approaching difficulty which Abraham will face. The result is partially expressed in the narrator's tone and grammatical form (pi.pf.3.ms.). So, if the subject of testing was Abraham's faithfulness (this makes the passage Gen. 22:1-19 look like the descriptions of God's testing the people in Exodus (Ex. 15:25, 16:4, 20:20)), then the form or the main circumstance is the demand[39] for Isaac's death.

Such religious rites were quite possible on the territory of Mesopotamia, Syria and Canaan in the age of patriarchs. Many cults had an old custom of offering first-born children to deities. Reinterpretation of the old tradition by the author of the book could be based on (1) the tension to dissociate the roots of Jewish religion from Mesopotamian cults and (2) the use of an argument ad hominem. Taking this into account, the main problem for Abraham is not the moral aspect, but the logical discrepancy between the promise of a son (Gen. 15:4) and the command to sacrifice him.[40] In spite of the coming difficulty the author describes how Abraham without question follows God's command. In this case the author of the text wanted to underline Abraham's obedient submission to God's will.

---

[39] The use of the enclitic "please" is rare in a divine command and makes it more like an entreaty.

[40] The problem of discrepancy between the concept of God's omniscience and the idea of "testing" (in the meaning of finding out) was not important neither for Abraham nor for the editors of Genesis, as anthropomorphic terminology in relation to God went without saying (compare to 18:21).

Because chapter 22 (as well as 15:6) also stresses such notions of a relationship between Abraham and YHWH and a faithfulness test, and the son of promise Isaac is often mentioned here, von Rad's contextual scheme (promise-fulfillment) can be helpful in understanding the general meaning:

Ch. 15:1-6, 21:1-8		Ch. 22:1-19	
Testing → **Fulfillment**		**Testing** → **Fulfillment**	
		Abraham remains faithful to God	Isaac survives/ is risen
↑ Loyalty of Abraham	↑ Loyalty of YHWH	↑ Loyalty of Abraham	↑ Loyalty of YHWH

Promise → (first box) → (second box)

The testing, which demonstrated Abraham's complete faithfulness, has several parallels with the story of Job. Both examples talk about deprivation of the most valuable, and the result is a reverent attitude to the Lord. Both Abraham and Job are tested as to their fear of God (Gen. 22:15, Job 1:1,9). Fear of God is a typical Old Testament expression determining the position of a righteous man, such as YHWH's prophets.

From the systematic theology's perspective testing of a prophet's faithfulness can be considered God's action carried out to do him good. The expression "God tested" is in this case a conditional one: God, being omniscient, does not need to do any actions to know anything. Therefore, the Aqedah represents a scene provided by God for a special purpose that might lead either to improvement of Abraham's loyalty to God or to clarification of his attitude towards YHWH. On the other hand, taking into account anthropomorphic tendencies of henotheism in the age of patriarchs, the testing could be a real faithfulness assessment of one of the agreement-covenant parties. In both cases the subject of assessment is a complex criterion of Abraham's attitude to God. The testing itself is a certain manipulation, which can result in completely opposite reactions (Abraham could potentially disobey God). Ideally the result of a testing should be an attitude equal to the attitude before the testing. To preserve the same attitude would mean to remain loyal. Abraham remains faithful to God, loyal to the covenant relationship. To trust for him means to follow God's will in everything. In that way 'mn in the Abraham cycle reflects an idea of staying on (holding to) the indispensable level of the covenant relations which include the whole person of each partner.

2.1.3. Faith of Judea in the Book of Isaiah (Is. 7:9b)

Another important example of a life of faith is presented in the book of Isaiah where the author exposes the Jews' unfaithfulness to God, predicts their captivity, the return from captivity, and the restoration of the Temple. Unlike Abraham, Isaiah is a classical prophet, who received a message from God and communicates it to the people of Judea. It is not just a subjective religious experience. Isaiah's ministry refers to the social dimension. It means that all religious practices including faith take place in the life of the message recipient (such as the kings of Judea) rather than in the prophet's personal life. The latter is only YHWH's oracle. That is why faith in the context of Isaiah refers to the faith of the Judean people as one of the covenant parties.

Verse 7:9b presents the most concentrated[41] use of the word *'mn*. This text contains a prophetic oracle combined with a historical narrative. Most commentators define the limits of the passage while linking 7:9b to the preceding passage about the Jewish king Ahaz. The events, which chapter 7 is based on, arise from a political conflict between two powers (Assyria and Egypt), which took place in the 30s of the 8th century B.C. Assyria's military advantages forced Egypt to look for other allies among minor countries on the territory between the two states. Israel and Syria became pharaoh's allies and tried to influence Judah in a military way. In a short period of time Ahaz lost his southern and western territories. The danger that this presented to the Holy City drove Ahaz and his people into *strong fear* (7:2,4).

At this moment Isaiah calls him not to *fear* Syria and Ephraim (7:4-9b). He rebukes Ahaz for his *timidity* and reminds him about YHWH's omnipotence (Pfeiffer 1959:162) (the author of 2Chr. 28:5-21 presents the same events in a more negative light). Both the editor (7:2) and Isaiah himself (7:4) stress the king's *fear* of the enemy as the main problem. The depth of this *fear* is expressed by the connotation of a "shaking heart" (7:2). The denotation of this word (*nûa'*) is conveyed in Is. 6:4 where the author talks about weakness of an architectural construction. Later Isaiah defines this lack of strength/firmness of Ahaz' heart as lack of the same *'mn* (7:9b), which in the *N stem* also implies the idea of firmness or endurance.

So the main problem described by the prophet is *fear* of the enemy's attack. YHWH's command refers directly to it: Take hold of yourself and be calm. Do not

---

[41] Alexander Menn states that the passage from Is. 7:9b expresses the very essence of a biblical philosophy of faith (Menn 1992:V,5).

be afraid. *Fear* of a visible problem appears where there is *absence of faith* (7:9b). As faith and fear are synonyms in the Old Testament (see 2.1.1) we can, for the sake of the argument, replace the first occurrence in the wordplay with "fear of God": not fearing God the nation fears external enemies. And on the contrary, fear of the Lord provides freedom from the fear of the enemy.

The end of the passage (7:1-9) is a sentence, which is rhetorically built as a chiasm.

> [7]Thus says the Lord Yahweh:
>
> *It will not stand! It will not happen!*
>> *[8]For the head of Aram is Damascus and the head of Damascus is Rezin.*
>>> *Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be too shattered to be a people*
>> *[9]And the head of Ephraim is Samaria and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah.*
>
> *If you will not believe, you will not be confirmed!*

The connection between 7:9b and its immediate context is rather unclear. To some extent it includes the recipient of the prophecy (Ahaz and Judea) into the general list of the sentenced for apostasy. In this variant a conditionally added conjunction in the phrase "If your faith is not enduring, you, *too*, will not endure" could clarify the matter. But in this case there are many questions from the perspective of a simpler reading, which sets the recipient of the prophecy into contrast to his enemies. All that Ahaz should do is to *trust in* YHWH, and *not be afraid* of the enemy. The unstable position that began in 7:2 ("he and his people were so terrified that they trembled like trees shaking in the wind") could potentially lead to the destruction of Judah's national pivot and later to the factual destruction of the nation.

The wordplay (7:9b) presents a survival condition for the recipient of the prophecy. The phrase "If you will not believe, you will not be confirmed" contains two imperfect forms of the same verb '*mn* in different stems. The first word usage (*H stem*) can be translated as "to believe", "to trust". The second usage (*N stem*) conveys the idea of firmness, stability, and endurance. Preserving the position of distinguishing between these forms, Buber underlines their common source of meaning (Buber 1995:247):

> The correlation of these two verb forms is not just wordplay. As it is almost always characteristic of ancient Hebrew texts, here in this way something should be revealed to the reader or listener and it really is. Two different meanings of the verb in this logia can be reduced to a basic one "to hold firmly to something". Using our conceptual language, the prophet states that only if you hold strongly

to the essential relationship of your life, only then you have real firmness and stability. The real firmness of human life depends on real stability of his basic relationship to the power, which creates his reality.

Such interpretation of the MT defines the subject of the oracle's last part (7:9b) as a call to trust addressed to unfaithful officials (ibid., 248). Trust in turn as a receptive part of relationship presupposes that the whole personality is involved. It is clear that the faith that Ahaz is called to exhibit is not an intellectual act but an act of trust in the action of God (Healey 1992). Isaiah demands from the king a heroic deed of faith. But Ahaz did not meet the challenge. Listening to the prophet, he had already made a choice in his heart and decided to look for salvation in the power of human authorities.

The second usage of 'mn (N stem) can be better interpreted with the help of parallels in historical books of the Old Testament that concern the stability of royal power. In 1Ki. 11:38 our term is also found in the N stem in a phrase "a sure house", which is a promise of YHWH made to Jeroboam on the condition that he follows the commandments and walks before God.

To complete the picture we should go beyond the limits of our passage to the next episode,[42] comprising the continuation of YHWH's words to Ahaz (7:10-16). This episode includes the suggestion made to Ahaz to test God and ask for a sign as a confirmation that everything (7:4-9) would be fulfilled. The objection that any attempt to test God is negative is countered by the fact that the idea of testing was suggested by God himself. The suggestion was intended to strengthen Ahaz' faith (or revive it) as well as to test his trust.[43] In this sense our passage can be compared to the story of Abraham's testing. In both cases faith is associated with testing and can be defined as one's life attitude before the testing itself. Through his obedience, showing trust, Abraham "clearly tested God in return" (Healey 1992), whereas Ahaz receives such prerogative without trusting God before. As a result these two equal conditions (procedures) have two different outcomes: progress in Abraham's case and regress (approaching death) in Ahaz' case.

---

[42] Syntactically the beginning of verse 10 (waw+Impf) is the beginning of a new episode; when meaning is concerned, both passages are connected.

[43] Every encounter in faith consists in a mutual testing. God's action toward His people is a test and a risk (cf. Deut. 4:34). God's blessings and providential acts are "tests" (Ex. 15:25; 20:20; Deut. 8:2). Test and counter test are the very stuff of personal encounter and growth of faith (Watts, J.D.W. 1985).

2.1.4. Summary

The results of the outlook on faith terminology in the Old Testament (*he'emin*) can be summarized in three points as follows.

First, the *'mn* word group in the Old Testament plays the role of a criterion of relationship (in most cases it is a relationship between a human and God confirmed by an agreement-covenant) and can be translated as faithfulness (the active part) or trust (the receptive part).

Second, the *'mn* terminology refers almost exclusively to a test of a person's trust in his/her relationship with God. The initiator of such a test is God. Besides, He constantly demonstrates His own position in this relationship (faithfulness to promises).

Third, trust plays an instrumental role in Old Testament soteriology. Everyone who puts his/her trust in God gets the following benefits:

- One succeeds in the reality of this world. Trust usually guarantees that the promised "is not taken away". But sometimes it happens that trust becomes the reason for new blessings from God (Gen. 22:16-18);
- One acquires a firm existential position of a worshiper who relies on his God and is free from fear of inevitable future;
- One is not subject to God's judgment.

It is necessary to add here that a trust test in the Old Testament is practically always "provoked" at moments when a person starts doubting God (together with gradual moving away from Him). So, a trust test almost always improves a person's attitude towards God.

2.2. The πιστ-word Group in Hellenistic-Jewish World

In a monograph entitled *Two Types of Faith* Martin Buber argues that the New Testament (Christian) concept of faith is primarily a Greek concept. The viewpoint that the New Testament use of the πιστ-word group was significantly influenced by secular Greek usage is supported by a number of scholars (Barth 1982:110). The New Testament was created in an environment using the Greek language and a Hellenistic worldview. That is why the notion about an at least partial relation between the Hellenistic understanding of πίστις and Mark's term is quite possible.

The methodological combination of two research fields (Hellenism and early Judaism) can be explained in the following way. The overview will cover the short period of Early Judaism influenced by Hellenistic worldview and Greek language

(from the 3rd cent BC). At this period all Judaism must really be designated "Hellenistic Judaism" (Hengel 1974:1,103).

2.2.1. The πιστ-word Group in Classical Greek

There are certain methodological difficulties in the research field of 2.1 (the variety of terminology as a possible ground for πίστις), but the research into Classical Greek literature and philosophy aiming at defining the meaning of πίστις has its own difficulties. The specialists of this sphere present a whole spectrum of opinions concerning the term:

- πίστις as a profane term;
- πίστις as an epistemological term;
- πίστις as a religious *terminus technicus* for 'faith, belief'.

The noun πίστις does not commonly occur in the Classical Greek period in reference to religious faith. When the noun appears in the sense of trust, trustworthiness it is almost exclusively in the context of purely secular (human) relationships. In Aristotle's *Eudemian Ethics* πίστις appears in the sense of confidence in someone: "And there is no stable friendship without confidence, and confidence (πίστις) only comes with time" (Aristotle *Eud. Ethics* 1237b). It is therefore accurate to say that πίστις in Classical Greek is *a profane term* (Lindsay 1993:105).

In some cases πίστις acquires an epistemological aspect where faith consists in accepting the truthfulness of a fact. Faith here is a modality of subjective knowledge (or opinion). It is a combination of beliefs and opinions, which are considered to be true even when there is no logical explanation (Reati 2001:56). πίστις here is rather a condition of one's soul corresponding to his thinking and consciousness (Plato, *Resp.*:511b). Faith occupies a subordinate and temporary place in comparison to the "true" and rationally proved knowledge, confirmed by objective criteria. This type of faith (it is better to call it *opinion* or *belief*) is characteristic of knowledge and is completely different from religious faith (Reati 2001:57). Martin Buber calls this very aspect "the Greek type of faith" reducing it to the act of recognition of truth (Buber 1995:236). It is interesting that even Aquinas' definition ("Faith is an intellectual act of a person when he agrees with the divine truth under the influence of his will, being moved by God through grace" (Sum.II.II,q2.a.9)) is based on

Aristotle's philosophy which determines the terminology of the great scholar (Lane 1984:127).

In spite of this tendency in Classical Greek there are some occurrences where πίστις appears in the sense of faith, which is directed toward God (gods). In Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* Kreon advises Oedipus concerning actions which must be taken now that Oedipus has realized his fatal mistake: "for even you would now put trust (πιστίν) in (the) God" (Sophocles, *Oed.*1445). From the context it is very clear that πίστις should be understood as an active faith in God which demonstrates itself through *obedience* to the divine oracle (Lindsay 1993:105).

Bultmann denies the probability of any religious understanding of the adjective πιστός or the noun πίστις in Classical Greek. He only allows for some likelihood that it began to be used as a religious verb πιστεύειν in conjunction with the noun ἀπιστία[44] (Bultmann 1964:VI,179). Lindsay proposed the opinion that it is precisely here at these 'first beginnings of religious use' where a very important development in the use of πιστεύειν as a theological term becomes visible (Lindsay 1993:106). He cites several instances of the phrase πιστεύειν Θεοῖς discovered by Kurt Latte (Gnomon 7) which would indicate that the beginnings of a religious understanding of πιστεύειν, such as we find in the Septuagint version and later in Christian writings, have their place even in 6th – 5th centuries BC (Aesch. Pers., 800 f.; Soph. Phil., 1373-75; Plat. Epin., 980c; Xenoph. Apom., 1.1.5). All of these usages of πιστεύειν imply the meaning of confidence and trust to the gods and oracle but do not include the connotation of assent with the existence of the gods. Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (1.1.5) may be very indicative in this relation:

> Obviously, then, he [Socrates] would not have given the counsel if he had not been confident that what he said would come true. And who could have inspired him with that confidence but a god? And since he had confidence (πίστεων) in the gods, how can he have disbelieved in *the existence* of the gods (οὐκ εἶναι Θεοῖς ἐνομίζεν)?[45]

---

[44] The negative terms (ἀπιστία, ἀπιστείν) are sufficiently often used in philosophical antiquity as a reaction to the primitive polytheism of the people. Greek philosophers, having raised doubt in many postulates, broke with the speculative form of thinking which dominated up to that time (Frankfort 1984:201).

[45] Xenophon here defends Socrates against the charge of atheism and cites as evidence against this charge the fact that Socrates indeed *trusted* in the gods.

Latte draws here the comparison between νομίζειν Θεοῖς and πιστεύειν Θεοῖς upon the basis of this passage (Latte 1931:120):

> For early Hellenistic faith the gods are κρείττονες. The fact that they were believed to have supernatural powers is understood from their being recognized as divine. They demand to be actively revered in the traditional forms (i.e. νομίζειν Θεοῖς): One can only speak of πιστεύειν Θεοῖς in so far as the trust in their help or in their oracles calls for personal action.

Lindsay adds to Latte's list three passages where πιστεύειν Θεοῖς represents trust in the gods and implies an active response on the part of the believer (Lindsay 1993:108).[46] These texts show that at this stage (V-IV cent. BCE) πιστεύειν Θεοῖς is coming closer to a religious term for 'faith, believe' but still denotes more 'trust' than 'assent'. The reason why Buber set a Hellenistic type of faith in contrast to 'mn of the Old Testament is that the expression for believing in the existence of the gods is not πιστεύειν Θεοῖς but νομίζειν Θεοῖς. Both of these expressions in the text of Xenophon (Apomn.1.1.5) are not synonymous; and it is not clear that νομίζειν Θεοῖς even implies πιστεύειν Θεοῖς. On the other hand, it is clear that where there is πιστεύειν Θεοῖς, there is naturally also νομίζειν Θεοῖς. Since, however, νομίζειν Θεοῖς is a technical expression for religious faith in Classical Greek, the very appearance of these terms together in this context already begins to lend religious significance to the verb πιστευειν (Lindsay 1993:110).

2.2.2. The πίστ-word Group in Hellenistic Greek

Hellenistic Greek [Koinê] was the dialect of Greek spoken between 300 B.C. and 600 A.D. Robertson characterizes this as a later development of Classical Greek (Robertson 1934:71):

> To all intents and purposes the vernacular Koine is the later vernacular Attic with normal development under historical environment created by Alexander's conquests. On this base then were deposited varied influences from the other dialects, but not enough to change the essential Attic character of the language.

This research sphere is especially important for answering the question of this paper as both the Septuagint (which influenced Mark) and the whole New Testament were created in the sphere of Hellenistic cultural influence.

Concerning the vocabulary of Koinê, it may be said that there are many shifts in the meaning of words and in the frequency of their usage. This might, at least

---

[46] Thuc.Hist.4.92.7; Xenoph.Apol.15; Aesch.Ctes.1.

partially, be true of the meaning of πίστις. "Whereas in the older Greek world the idea that there are gods used to be expressed by νομιζειν, πιστεύειν can be used instead in a later period. In keeping is the fact that πιστεύειν can take on the sense of *to believe*" (Bultmann 1964:VI,179). The reason for this change is included in the gradual transformation of religious skepticism. If in the time of Socrates unbelief in the gods was an exception, during the time of Plutarch (46-120 A.D.) and Lucian (120-190 A.D.) the usage of πίστ-terminology (and especially in negative aspect) becomes more common. "It seems to me that you, speaking thus, do not believe (ούδε πιστεύειν) in the existence of the gods" (Lucian *Philopseudes*:10).

Lindsay defines Bultmann's position (πιστεύειν in Koinê has adopted the meaning of classical νομίζειν) as a tendency to consider the meanings of πίστις as diametrically opposed. "He does not take into account the use, already present in Classical Greek, of πιστεύειν Θεοίς as an action-modifying trust in the gods" (Lindsay 1993:112).

For Philo (25 B.C. - 40 A.D.) faith is "primarily belief in the one God and trust in His providence" (Bultmann 1964:VI,201). Faith concerns the highest truth, a category borrowed from Plato. But the concentration on a truth search leads not to a relationship with God, but to a person's self-understanding and his worldview. That is why we can say that Philo made a shift toward the Hellenistic understanding of faith. Another reason for the shift from the Old Testament concept of faith in Philo's writings is that he focused on the fate of an individual soul striving for the supersensory rather than on the way of God's people and humanity. The transition from community to the individual in combination with Plato's idealism became the reason of "faith" in a remote God.

2.2.3. The πίστ-word Group in the Septuagint Version

Regarding the question of the roots of the πίστ—word group in the Gospel of Mark it is very important to pay heed to the literary heritage of the Septuagint version. The Jews made use of it long before the Christian era. It was employed in Palestine even by the rabbis; in the time of Christ they recognized it as a legitimate text. The Apostles and Gospel authors utilized it also and borrowed Old Testament citations (including ideas, forms, and aspects of the world view) from it. As mentioned above, the Greek of the Gospel of Mark is strongly influenced by the Septuagint. This means that the reason for similarities between the meanings of

πίστις in the Septuagint and in the Gospel of Mark consists in a continuity of the concept of faith from the time of the Septuagint's translation.[47]

Although the Septuagint is considered as a literary translation (Desnitsky 1999:157), it is "sometimes free and sometimes extremely literal" (Van der Heeren 1912). Concerning the interpretation of the 'mn –group of the Hebrew Old Testament, it is "almost always rendered πιστευειν in the Septuagint" (Bultmann 1964:VI,197). Therefore this word group in the Septuagint must be understood in light of:

1) The faith terminology of the Old Testament (see 2.1);

2) Both secular and religious meanings of the πίστ-word group in Classical Greek;

3) The degree of a tendency to intellectualization of the πίστ-word group in the later period. This is helpful especially for understanding the later parts of the Septuagint (some of the prophets and of wisdom literature were translated in the first century B.C.).

All of these possible backgrounds of πιστεύειν in the Septuagint might be illustrated by the next few passages employing πιστεύειν in a religious sense:

- Gen. 15.6: "And Abraham believed [ἐπίστευσεν Αβραμ τῷ θεῷ] God; and God reckoned it to him as righteousness".

- Ex. 14.31: "And believed in God [ἐπίστευσαν τῷ θεῷ] and in God's servant Moses".

- Ex. 4.5: that they may believe [πιστεύσωσίν] you that the Lord, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you (e.g. Ex. 4:1,8,9,31).

- Is. 7.9: "Unless you have believed [μὴ πιστεύσητε], you will not understand [οὐδὲ μὴ συνῆτε]".

- Hab. 2.4: "But the righteous one shall live by my[48] faith [ἐκ πίστεώς μου]".

---

[47] Translation of the Pentateuch was completed about the middle of the third century B.C.

[48] In the MT amuna has a pronominal ending in the third person that may be interpreted as "his/her faith" meaning a person is righteous. In the Septuagint this text appears already from a different perspective: ἐκ πίστεώς μου which may be interpreted as "My faith" meaning the faith of God Himself.

The Septuagint rendered Gen. 15:6 and Ex. 14:31 literally and (taking into account the fact the Greek translation of the Torah was already available in the third century B.C.) this can mean only a number of connotations from Classical Greek. Since the context of the narratives obliges us to use the term in Gen.15:6 and Ex. 14:31 in a religious sense ἐπίστευσεν/σαν τῷ θεω, it is to be considered as equal to the religious use of πιστεύειν θεῷ in the classical (e.g. Xenoph.1.1.5.) meaning of "trust to God". Though this variant does not cover all the variety of actions described by the Hebrew word *he'emin*, it does reproduce the meaning of the original text quite accurately.

In Ex. 4 the term occurs several times (1, 5, 8, 9, 31) in its secular meaning implying the sense of confidence/trust of Israel in Moses. All of these verses are constructed along the scheme "πιστεύειν + Dative" (except in Ex. 4:31 where the term is used in an absolute construction). Such usage of the term can be considered either emphasizing a secular meaning (trusting to Moses) or an epistemological (Israel's agreement with the truthfulness of Moses' words). Both variants have parallels in Classical Greek.[49]

While we can affirm that the translation of the Torah dates back to the 3rd century BC, it is very difficult to date the translation of the prophetic books, as this could have been done between the 2nd century BC and the 3rd century AD.[50] We can also suppose that later translations (prophets and, almost certainly, the literature of wisdom) were made, taking into account the Hellenistic Greek language. That is why using πιστεύειν to convey *he'emin* can imply a large epistemological connotation in these parts of the Septuagint.

In Is. 7:9b the second usage of the root 'mn (in *N stem*) is conveyed through συνῆτε (you will not understand). It is a good example of how the tendency to literal translation leads to a slight change in the meaning of the original text. Grammatically the interpreter should translate the *N stem* into a concept which is different from *he'emin*, but this obligation will prevent him from conveying the play of Hebrew terms and can lead him to the epistemological sphere.[51] It is Is. 7:9b in the

---

[49] It is difficult to reduce the meaning of the term in these MT passages to only one of these directions.

[50] We can only suggest that the book of Isaiah was translated soon after the Torah.

[51] Although other usages of συνῆτε by Isaiah are parallel to such verbs as γινώσκω (to know) and ὀράω (to see), they still express the idea of an integrated (not just

Septuagint's interpretation that lead Augustine to his correlation of faith and intellect (Copan 1998:249).

In the second chapter of Habakkuk (a later dating of the translation is possible) the noun πίστις is important in God's answer to the supposed question "How long". God proclaims the doom of the unrighteous, but it contains a promise to the righteous as an antithesis (in the MT the term has a pronoun ending of the 3rd person: "a righteous one (saddiq) will survive in his faithfulness"). It is difficult to say definitely how the accents are changed in the Greek translation of this text. In the MT the reason for surviving is justification of a person after which he/she is announced "saddiq", or freed from punishment (see 2.1.1.A). But in the Septuagint the literal translation of 'mn into a noun (ἐκ πίστεώς μου) attributes an instrumental function to faith. Replacing the 3rd person of the noun by the 1st one[52] stresses faith even more, separating it from the righteous person, thus transforming the abstract "for sure" into a reason for salvation.

Most often πιστ-terminology occurs in the apocryphal book of Sirach, written in Hebrew in Jerusalem at about 180 BC by a learned teacher, Jesus ben Sirach, and translated into Greek in Egypt with a preface by his grandson not long after 132 BC. In spite of the influence of Greek literature and epicurean ideas the author is concentrating on pragmatic fulfillment of commandments and living an honest life. Sirach uses the term (mostly as a verb or a noun) with different shades of meaning. His usage of πιστεύειν is most often associated with a secular usage with the meaning of trusting somebody (12:10; 19:15; 27:16; 36:26), but in some places it acquires a religious meaning (2:6,8; 15:15; 32:24) and even a touch of 'mn denotation, which is the idea of firmness and stability (2:13, 40:12). As a noun πίστις can be seen in a merit list together with such qualities as gentleness, wisdom, and fear of God (1:27; 45:4). So we see that the usage of the πιστ-word group in the Book of Sirach goes beyond the translation models seen in other Septuagint books, but it is not subject to Hellenistic "intellectualization" of πιστ-terminology.

The reasons why 'mn is "almost always rendered πιστεύειν in the Septuagint" (Bultmann 1964:VI:197) can probably be (1) the tradition of translation (which was

intellectual) approach to the subject of understanding, which is God (1:3) and His News (6:9,10).

[52] It seems that here the translator uses a method, called parallelism expanded, which is used to transfer Hebrew parallelism into the form of Greek antithesis (e.g. Is. 1:3) (Desnitsky 1999:165).

followed when the Septuagint was created) and (2) the fact that the new religious term was based on the πιστ-word group, which goes back to an ancient Greek and presupposes a whole spectrum of different shades of meaning (the spectrum being to some extent similar to the meaning spectrum of the Hebrew term 'mn). In the Septuagint πιστεύειν most often means to trust, to rely on someone, but we cannot exclude its usage in the meaning of agreement with the truthfulness of a fact (later translations). Here again the two factors, faith and trust, are denoted by the same term.

2.2.4. Summary

To define the roots of Mark's πίστις we need to consider the use of the term in ancient Greek literature. Here we are talking about a history of several centuries in which a language, connected with a worldview, developed and was then used to write the Gospel of Mark (this was probably the author's native language).

In Classical Greek the πιστ-word group was mostly used in the meaning of "to trust somebody". Sometimes, although quite rarely, the term was used in a similar meaning in relation to gods. The religious meaning ("trust in gods") was based on the secular usage that was caused by anthropomorphism of the language of Hellas. Besides, in the end of the classical period πίστις started to be used as a philosophical term in the meaning "to believe in", "to agree with the truthfulness of a fact".

The transition to Hellenistic Greek brought little change to the meaning spectrum of the term although it is more often used in the meaning of "agreement with", "belief in" (usually in the negative aspect). Relationship is replaced by contemplation.

The translation of the Old Testament into Hellenistic Greek presents a whole spectrum of connotations of πίστις which is used to render almost all occurrences of 'mn. The early translations (the Pentateuch) preserve the tendency to literal translation where the term implies interpersonal trust and trust in God. In later translations (prophets and wisdom literature) 'mn is rendered by terms from the sphere of intellectual agreement with the truthfulness of a fact or through πιστ-terminology in the meaning of belief. It shows a gradual transition of worldview concepts towards the thought system of Hellenistic rationalism.

2.3. The Influence of the Old Testament and of Hellenism upon the use of πίστις in Mark

Theologians became interested in comparing the Old Testament concept of faith with the concept of πίστις in Greek culture only in the 19th century, in the context of developing ideas about the origins of Christianity. The classical opinion about the completion of revelation inside the Old Testament church (inside the normative Judaism) was argued against by the Tübingen School, which related the half of the New Testament writings to Hellenistic origins. Because of the literary discrepancy between the Jewish world and the Gospel of Mark the latter became the basic model in the teaching of this school. Only by the beginning of the 20th century there was a revival of interest to Jewish roots of Christianity, now defined as "syncretistic phenomenon" (Bultmann 1949:175) uniting eschatologically minded Palestinian Christianity and Hellenistic Christianity with their skeptic attitude to Christ's soon coming. Theological conclusions of next decades were determined by the interpreter's position and his preference of one or the other original variant (in many cases both variants were accepted).

There were different answers to the question about the origin of the New Testament (Mark's in this case) usage of the term. Bultmann relates the Christian usage of the πιστ–word group to the Old Testament heritage (Bultmann 1964:VI,205). Buber, in turn, comes to the conclusion (in spite of following Bultmann's exegetic ideas (Buber 1995:238)) that "the Christian type of faith originated from Hellenistic religiousness" (ibid, 237). The controversy between them is only apparent. Talking about the influence of the Old Testament idea of trusting God, Bultmann does not exclude the variants of specific occurrences of πίστις in the meaning of "acceptance (of the kerygma)" and "the content of faith (*fides quae creditur*)" (Bultmann 1964:208-209), whereas Buber understands Hellenistic religiousness as religiousness formed by the late Greek *eidos* (Buber 1995:237). In this way the types of faith set in contrast by Buber do not represent an opposition of two different cultures, but rather a result of two different ages and two different approaches to an understanding of personal existence. The abovementioned facts also show the necessity of an epochal distinguishing rather than a territorial one. We cannot oppose the Jewish and the Greek types of faith, assuming that they are diametrically different, based on the fact that the original idea of '*mn* is absent in the Greek πίστις. It can be already explained by the fact that the meaning spectrum of

'mn is not limited to the *N stem* meaning, whereas the Greek πίστις also does not imply only an intellectual recognition that a fact is true. The general correspondence of the meaning specters can be presented as follows:

milieu	sense of condition		sense of relation		sense of notion
			Secular	religious	
MT	*Qal* To carry, hold	*Nip'al* firmness, stability (Is. 7:9b)	*Hi'pal* trust in someone, vote of confidence (Ex.4)	*Hi'pal* trust in God (Gen. 15:6)	
Classical Greek			trust in someone in a context of human relationships	trust in the gods	belief as modality of the subjective knowledge (Plato, Aristotle)
Hellenistic Greek			trust in someone in a context of human relationships	trust in the gods	belief in negative aspect (Plutarch, Lucian, Philo)
LXX			primarily in the early parts of the version (Torah)		primarily in the later parts (prophets/wisdom literature)

Mark, the author of the Gospel, was influenced by the heritage of the Old Testament idea of trusting God as well as by more modern tendencies, provoked by people's skepticism. He could remember the former, treating it as holy and revealed in the Torah, but live in the environment of the latter. Looking at the way he uses the term πίστις we cannot say that the author maintains only one of the two understandings. In every concrete occurrence of the term Mark presents a complex synthesis of ideas, combining the Jewish-type stems of faith-trust with the Hellenistic type of agreement-acknowledgement.

2.3.1. The Roots of πίστις in Mk. 1:15

The definition of the meaning of the imperative in the first sermonic formula of Jesus should go in two directions: (1) the meaning, which the historical Jesus attributed to this phrase,[53] and (2) the meaning attributed to it by Mark.

As has already been indicated, the central part of the sermonic formula is Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God. This proclamation is fully based on Jewish

---

[53] The perspective of the historical Jesus in relation to Mk. 1:14-15 is possible because the sermonic formula text contains the main point of Jesus' kerygma (Dunn 1997:53).

apocalyptic ideas, which largely determined Jesus' kerygma. So the imperatives (1:15) representing the response Jesus expects from His listeners should be considered while taking into account the Jewish background of His time. Although the Judaism of the Second Temple time was subject to general Hellenistic influence, it was still strongly connected to Old Testament roots. That is why the whole formula as well as the imperative πιστεύετε should be first of all considered from the Old Testament perspective. As the immediate context doesn't allow to go beyond the religious language limits, the closest parallel to it will be 'mn in the meaning of "to trust" or even "to stand firm" in relation to God. The other imperative (μετανοεῖτε) conveyed probably the Jewish idea of turning back (sub), a life turn which includes the whole person's existence. πιστεύετε in this way acquires the meaning of fixation in the position a man occupies after his turning back. Faithfulness as standing in God does not this way acquire a passive shade; the Greek grammar forms imply a call to be active in both directions, which in this case means being active in maintaining a firm relationship with God.

On the other hand, attention to the object of faith (ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ) which the Gospel's author suggests can lead to completely opposite interpretations. It is highly possible that the expression is not Jesus' authentic speech. It is difficult to say at what stage it was added to the original words. The question remains of whether it was an addition/conclusion during the period of oral transmission or whether it is the author's edition conditioned by one of his purposes (to encourage the reader's immediate response-decision). The Gospel words acquire in this way a double addressee: they are addressed to (1) Jesus' supposed listeners and to (2) the Gospel's real addressees (Mark's community). When considering the imperative πιστεύετε from this perspective, we can (and even must) base the interpretation on a completely different meaning of the term πίστις, namely that which was typical for the Greek eidos when the expected response begins to be connected to the epistemological aspect of faith. πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ in Mark's interpretation is a call to agree to the truthfulness of the Gospel. A response from the reader is expected on a cognitive level. The "place in life" for Mark's re-proclamation can be either ignorance (for which the proclamation then becomes Good News), or unbelief, so typical for skeptically thinking masses of that time, or unwillingness to accept the approaching rule of God. An adequate response to Mark's calling could be expressed in conscious self-exclusion from this environment and an acceptance of the truth about Jesus.

In this way, conclusions about the meaning of the term πίστις in Mk. 1:15 are determined by the interpreter's purpose and his concentration on one or on the other tradition layer. Jesus' tradition calls for standing in God, which means long trustful relationships to the Sovereign. Here we can talk about a Jewish type of faith encouraging a person's holistic position in his/her relationship with God (*fiducia*). Mark's tradition, in turn, expresses a call to have faith-agreement with the truthfulness of the Gospel. In this variant we can talk about a Hellenistic type of faith (*fides*).

2.3.2. The Roots of πίστις in Miracle Stories (Mk. 9:14-29)

The use of πίστις in Mk. 9:14-29 (9:23,24) is a typical terminology for miracle stories in Mark (compare to Mk. 2:5; 5:34,36; 6:5-6). The meaning of this term under the influence of the narratives' context can be considered as the conceptual meaning of "faith" in the Gospel of Mark (primary meaning). It means that in most cases (or first of all) Mark applies this term in the meaning as used in miracle stories. The question remains of whether Mark used the Old Testament type of faith ('*mn*) or the later Greek ideas, and also which connotation or shade of meaning he used to convey his notions.

There is no doubt that Mark was at least to some extent influenced by the Old Testament tradition. The ground for such a conclusion is his vocabulary and syntax, which were influenced by the Septuagint, and the structure of the book that reflects structural elements of the Old Testament tradition. Besides, and this is of no less importance, Mark presents Jesus as performing a prophetic ministry, as a successor to John the Baptist and to the whole prophetical movement in ancient Israel.

The position of a prophet in the Old Testament (probably the main key role in Jewish religious institutions) represented a person who received and delivered a message to a recipient. A prophet's distinguishing feature was his experience of the Holy, the transcendental. Very often in the Old Testament the prophets are presented as performing miracles. And it must have been their experience of the divine, which determined their ability to perform miracles. The miracles played the role of a sign indicating that the person was really a messenger of God. Moses performed several miracles so that Israel trusted in him and in God's deliverance message. Elijah the prophet performed miracles to expose the Phoenician cult and to restore the worship of YHWH. Every prophet was open to the other reality, thus receiving an access to the transcendental.

In Mark's miracle stories Jesus is described as a successor of the Old Testament prophets' tradition. But at the same time he is unique. The activity of an Old Testament prophet was a prerogative of only some persons, something remote from ordinary people and wrapped in mystery, whereas Jesus in Mark reveals to the disciples and people an internal principle of God's intrusion in people's lives (11:22,23,24). He authorized the disciples to perform exorcisms (6:7). He even makes ordinary people "responsible" for miracle performing (6:5-6; 9:23; 11:22,23,24). Things covered with holy mystery in Old Testament times are made available by Jesus. He even preaches and offers people to experience "The Other" in which everything is possible. πίστις from this perspective denotes concentration of a person not on his/her inner world (the type of a pre-Christian human being[54]), but rather on the other, Higher reality, in which everything is possible.

The setting, or *Sitz im Leben*, of Mark's πίστις is the situation of unbelief (4:40; 6:5-6; 9:24; 11:22), which can be interpreted as incapability (or even unwillingness) to experience the sphere of God, as lack of a person's concentration on God. Mark attempts to change the situation calling people to have πίστις - trust in God, in His power and His supremeness, πίστις which means striving for the Higher, πίστις as firmness of intentions leading a person to the final purpose. So we see that πίστις in Mark (in miracle stories) conveys the meaning of trusting in God, relying on Him, which was typical of ancient Jewish type of faith ('mn) as well as for early usage of πίστις in Classical Greek and early Septuagint translations.[55] Here we talk about a relationship drawing a person into a holistic, qualitative, and long relationship with God (*fiducia*).

---

[54] Bultmann suggests, "impotence and fear marked the life of pre-Christian man" (Bultmann 1949:189). This definition of the social context is especially interesting taking into account that impotence and fear are antonyms for "power" and "faith".

[55] It is rather difficult to talk about borrowing the late Greek concept of πίστις in the meaning of truth acknowledgement, for example, in the acknowledgement of Christ's deity (in this very meaning the term is used by John).

CONCLUSION

To find an answer to the question about the subject of faith is a vital necessity of the religious mind. The only way to solve the problem of faith for today is to try to reinterpret this word, to release it from the misleading nuances that are mostly the heritage of the last centuries (Tillich 1957:1). A systematic understanding of the act of faith is always composed of the list of definitions given by different thinkers. As mentioned in the introduction, the primary aim of this study has been to investigate the meaning of faith (πίστις) in the Gospel of Mark. Several steps were taken to achieve this goal.

A study of the introductory questions (also the quest for the proper structure of the Gospel) has shown the connection of Mark with the Old Testament (late Judaism as the *Sitz im Leben* of Jesus) and the Greek (language of Mark and his community) heritage. After that I have analyzed exegetically the main texts of the Gospel including the πίστ–word terminology in order to find the passages using the term in Mark's conceptual meaning. The most determinative use of the term seems to be in connection with the miracle stories. Faith as presented in these narratives is the motive of a person that moves him/her toward Jesus. It becomes a source of hope for a new beginning. The sermonic formula (Mk. 1:15) contains the term in the imperative form. This passage is significant for this research as (1) determining the theological motives of Mark and (2) enriching the main concept of faith in Mark with its own connotation spectrum.

Having gone through the primary analysis of the texts, I have searched for the nearest semantic equivalents available in the Old Testament and in the Greek heritage. Investigation of the faith terminology of the Old Testament (using the example of Abraham and the book of Isaiah) showed us the spectrum of meanings of 'mn (semantic equivalent to the Greek πίστις). Having its origin in a secular denotation of 'firm' or 'stable' the term gradually assumed the sense of religious trust in God. This variant is used several times in the Old Testament in the sense of stable relations with God.

The use of the word (πίστις) in Greek literature presupposes gradual modification of the semantic spectrum of the word. In ancient Greek this term was used in a secular meaning but sometimes also expressed the sense of 'trust in gods'. In late Hellenistic Greek, being under the influence of skepticism, the term started to be used in the epistemological meaning (assent to).

Having analysed all the semantic matrices of the word πίστις and compared it with the results of an exegetical analysis of the Mark passages, we may come to the conclusion that can be summarized in three points as follows.

Firstly, it is clear that both, in the Old Testament ('mn) and in Classical Greek (πιστεύειν), faith terminology occurs in the sense of trusting in God [in the gods] or in his [their] words. This trust may not be considered as an intellectual assent to the truth of His [their] existence, but an active involvement in a relationship with God [the gods]. In the late Hellenistic period there was a tendency to use the πίστ–word group in the sense of intellectual belief. Mark adopts partially all of these aspects of faith. But in the matter of his conceptual or predominant meaning of the πίστ–word group, one must not go beyond the Old Testament concept of trust in God. This kind of faith does not include the sense of belief in the existence of God.

Secondly, in the sermonic formula of Jesus (Mk. 1:15) different elements of faith can be found. They arise from the different traditions (Jesus' teaching and composition of Mark) and do not play a determinative role for the interpretation of πίστις in the Gospel. (1) The call to faith of the Historical Jesus is to be considered in the sense of trust in God (Jesus' teaching is completely theocentric). Thus, for Jesus, faith is primarily an *action* in which the *whole person* (not only cognition) is involved. (2) Mark's combination of Jesus' teaching with his own idea of εὐαγγέλιον results in the call to repentance and to belief in the Good News (or possible to trust in Jesus' proclamation). In this case the meaning of πίστις includes the cognitive activity.

Thirdly, in the miracle stories of Mark we can see the conceptual meaning of faith. It is required here for the performance of Jesus' supernatural acts; Jesus encourages those who come boldly to Him as to the Mighty One. The lack of faith [portrayal of the disciples and of the Markan community] is a rather natural condition for the audience of the author and is rebuked by him. Mark had expected from the recipients of the Gospel that they would be more open towards another reality, confident in God's providence, and free from the fear of persecution.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Aquinas, T. The Summa Theologica (Benziger Bros. edition, 1947), in <u>Christian Classics Ethereal Library</u>, CD-ROM 1998.

Aristotle. <u>Aristotle in 23 Volumes</u>, Vol. 20, tr. by H. Rackham. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd. 1981.

Eusebius. The Church History of Eusebius, in <u>The Nicene and Post- Nicene Fathers</u>, Series 2, Vol. 1. ed. by P. Schaff, H. Wace. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991.

Lucian of Samosata. <u>Selected works</u>. tr. by B. P. Reardon. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965.

<u>Novum Testamentum Graece</u>. ed. by B. Aland, K. Aland. 27th edition (eighth revised edition). Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994.

Plato. <u>Platon, sobranie sochineniy v tryech tomach</u>. Tom 3 (Plato, Collected works in three volumes. Vol. 3). Moskva, 1971.

Sophocles. <u>The Oedipus Tyrannus of Sophocles</u>. ed. by R. Jebb. Cambridge University Press, 1887.

Xenophon. <u>Xenophon in Seven Volumes</u>, Vol. 4. ed. by E.C. Marchant. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1979.

Monographs and Other Books

Aune, D. E. 1987. <u>The New Testament iu Its Literary Environment</u>. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.

Blass, F. 1898. <u>Philology of the Gospels</u>. London: Macmillan.

Brunner, E. 1946. <u>Revelation and Reason: The Christian Doctrine of Faith and Knowledge</u>. Philadelphia: Westminster.

Buber, M. 1995. <u>Dva Obraza Very</u> (Two types of faith), ed. by P. S. Gurevich, S. Y. Levit, S.V. Lyozov. Moscow: Respublika.

Bultmann, R. 1949. <u>Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting</u>. tr. R. H. Fuller. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Delitzsch, F. 1978. <u>A New Commentary on Genesis</u>. tr. by S. Taylor. Edinburgh: Clark.

Dunn, J. D. G. 1997. <u>Edinstvo i Mnogoobrazie v Novom Zavete</u> (Unity and Diversity in the New Testament). Moscow: SABTI.

Epschtein, I. 1959. Judaism. England: Penguin Books Ltd.

Frankfort, G. 1984. V Preddveriyi Philosophiyi (On the Threshold of Philosophy). Moscow.

Guelich, R. A. 1989. Mark 1-8:26, in Word Bible Commentary; ed. D. A. Hubbard, G. W. Barker; vol. 34. Dallas, Texas: Word Books (CD-ROM edition).

Gundry, R. H. 1993. Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans.

Guthrie, D. 1996. Vvedenie v Novyj Zavet (Introduction to the New Testament). Odessa: "Bogomyslie".

Hengel, M. 1974. Judaism and Hellenism. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Hordem, W. 1959. The Case for a New Reformation Theology. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.

Iersel, B.F.W. 1998. Mark: Reader-Response Commentary. Sheffield Academic, JSNTS.

Jeremias, J. 1999. Bogoslovie Novogo Zaveta: Provozvestie Iisusa. (Neutestamentliche Theologie. Ester Teil. Die Verkündigung Jesu). Moscow: "Vostochnay Literatura" RAN.

Kautsch, E. 1966. Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar. tr. by A. E. Cowley. London/New York: OUP.

Kellner, M. 1999. Must a Jew Believe Anything? ed. By C. Webber. London, Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.

Küng, H. 1978. On Being a Christian. New York: Pocket Books.

Ladd, G. E. 1977. A Theology of the New Testament. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans.

Lane, T. 1984. Christian Thought. Lion Publishing.

Lohmeyer, E. 1936. Galilaa und Jerusalem. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht.

Lyozov, S. V. 1996. Istoriya i Germenevtika v Izucheniyi Novogo Zaveta (Historicism and Hermeneutics in the Study of the New Testament). Moscow-Saint-Petersburg: Universitetskaya kniga.

MacDonald, D.R. 2000. The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Mack, B. L. 1995. Who Wrote the New Testament? The Making of the Christian Myth. San Francisco: Harper.

Marcus, J. 1992. The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark. Louisville: Westminster.

Marxsen, W. 1969. Mark the Evangelist. Nashville: Abingdon.

Menn, A. 1992. Istoria Religii (History of religion). Vol. 5. Slovo.

Metzger, B. M. 1998. Kanon Novogo Zaveta: Vozniknovenie, Razvitie, Znachenie. (The Canon of the New Testament: its Origin, Development, and Significance). Moscow: BBI.

Metzger, B. M. 1994. Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament. UBS.

Muller, R.A. 1993. Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

Rad, G. von. 1962. Old Testament Theology. tr. by D. M. G. Stalker, New York: Harper and Row.

Reati, F. E. 2001. Religiya kak Osvobozdayushaya Sila v Philosophiyi 20 veka (Religion as a delivering power in philosophy of the 20th century). Saint-Petersburg: Evropeysky dom.

Robertson, A.T. 1934. A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research. Nashville: Broadman Press.

Sanders E.P. 1985. Jesus and Judaism. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Schiffman, L. 2000. Ot Texsta k Tradizii:Istoriya Iudaisma v Epochu Vtorogo Chrama i Period Mishni i Talmuda (FROM TEXT TO TRADITION: A History of Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism). tr. by A. Syvertseva. Moscow: Mosty Cultury/Jerusalem: Gesharim.

Schweitzer, A. 1996. Zisn' i Misli (Life and Thoughts). tr. by A. L. Chernyavsky. Moscow: Respublika.

Seters, J. Van, 1975. Abraham in History and Tradition. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Stepanova, E.A. 1998. Postizenie Very (Comprehension of Faith). Ekaterinburg:Ural University Press.

Theissen, G. 1983. The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition. ed. by J. Riches. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Tillich, P. 1957. The Dynamics of Faith. New York, London.

Warfield, B. B. 1929. Biblical Doctrines. New York: Oxford University Press.

Watts, J. D. W. 1985. Isaiah 1-33, in Word Bible Commentary. ed. by D. A. Hubbard, G. W. Barker; vol. 24. Dallas, Texas: Word Books (CD-ROM edition).

Watts, R. E. 1997. Isaiah's New Exodus and Mark. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Wenham, G. J. 1998. Genesis 1-15, in Word Biblical Commentary. ed. by D. A. Hubbard, G. W. Baker. Vol. I. Dallas, Texas: Word Books (CD-ROM edition).

Articles

Achtemeier, P.J. 1970. Towards the Isolation of Pre-Markan Miracle Catenae. Journal of Biblical Literature 89: 265–291.

Averbeck R.E. 1981. The Focus of Baptism in the New Testament. Grace Theological Journal 2/2: 265-301.

Barth, G. 1982. Pistis in hellenistischer Religiosität. Zeitschrift fur die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 73: 110-126.

Berkey, R. F. 1963. ΕΓΓΙΖΕΙΝ, ΦΘΑΝΕΙΝ, and Realized Eschatology. Journal of Biblical Literature 72: 177-187.

Blomberg, C. L. 1986. The Miracles as Parables, in The Miracles of Jesus, ed. by D. Wenham, C. Blomberg. Sheffield: JSOT.

Borg, M. 2000. The Mighty Deeds of Jesus. Online edition. http://www.beliefnet.com/author/author_52.html

Bultmann, R. 1964. 'πιστευω', in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. by G. Kittel. Vol. VI. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans: 174-182, 197-228.

Chamblin, K. 1997. Euangelion in Mark: Willi Marxsen Revisited. Westminster Theological Journal 59/1: 31-40.

Copan, P. 1998. Augustine and the Scandal of the North African Catholic Mind. Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 41/2: 287-295.

Delling, G. 1993. 'καιρος', in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. by G. Kittel. Vol. 3. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Desnitsky, A. 1999. Septuaginta kak chudozestvenny perevod (The Septuagint as a Literary Translation), in: The Bible: Literature and Linguistic Research. ed. by S.V. Lyozov, S.V. Tishchenko. Vol. 3. Moscow: 157-186.

Evans, C. A. 1994. A book review on: Joel Marcus. The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark. Trinity Journal 15/1: 135-138.

Healey, J. P. 1992. Faith, the Old Testament, in The Anchor Bible Dictionary. Ed.: David Noel Freedman. Doubleday (CD-ROM edition).

Henry, C. F. H. 1992. Reflections On The Kingdom Of God. Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 35/1: 39-49.

Hoffmann, R. J. 1995. The Origins of Christianity: A Guide to Answering Fundamentalists. Free Inquiry 5: 50-56.

Jepsen, A. 1974. 'mn, in Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament. ed. by G. Botterwack, H. Ringgren. Vol. 1. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Johnson, D. H. 1997. Preaching the Miracle Stories of the Synoptic Gospels. Trinity Journal 18:1: 85-97.

Kaiser, O. 1958. Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung von Gen 15. Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 70: 107-126.

Latte, K. 1931. A Book Review of the 'Inscriptiones Epidauri'. Gnomon 7:120-122.

Lindsay, D. R. 1993. The Roots and Development of the pi,st–Word Group as Faith Terminology. Journal of Society of the New Testament 49: 103-118.

Lunde, J. M. 1992. Faith, in Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels. ed. by J. B. Green, S. McKnight. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Lyozov, S. V. 1999. Midrash ob Avraame v Poslanii k Rimljanam (A Midrash on Abraham in Romans), in Popytka ponimaniya: Izbrannye Raboty (An attempt to Understand: Selected Works). Moscow-Saint-Petersburg: Universitetskaya kniga: 21-30.

Oeming, M. 1983. Ist Gen 15:6 ein Beleg für die Anrechnung des Glaubens zur Gerechtigkeit? Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 95: 182-197.

Pfeiffer, E. 1959. Glaube im Alten Testamen. Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 71: 151-164.

Pope, H. 1909. Faith, in Catholic Encyclopedia. Online edition by K. Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05752c.htm

Rad, G. von. 1965. Faith Reckoned as Righteousness, in The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays. tr. by E. W. T. Dicken. Edinburgh.

Santos, N. F. 1997. The Paradox of Authority and Servanthood in the Gospel of Mark. Bibliotheca Sacra 154/616: 452-460.

Scott, B. R. 1998. Jesus' Superiority over Moses. Bibliotheca Sacra 155/618: 201-210.

deSilva, D.A. 1995. A book review on: Willard M. Swartley. Israel's Scripture Traditions and the Synoptic Gospels. Trinity Journal 16/1: 110-111.

Van der Heeren, A. 1912. Septuagint Version, in Catholic Encyclopedia. Online edition by K. Knight. http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13722a.htm

Wallace, D. F. 1997. Mark: Introduction, Argument, and Outline. Online edition. http://www.bible.org/docs/soapbox/markotl.htm

Walvoord, J. F. 1970. Realized Eschatology. <u>Bibliotheca Sacra</u> 127/508: 313-323.

Weiser, A. 1964. 'πιστευω', in <u>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</u>. Vol. VI. ed. by Gerhard Kittel. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans: 182-196.