

SUBVERSIVE FAITH AND COMPETITION IN PATRONAGE: A NOTE ON ΠΙΣΤΙΣ IN MARK

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Abstract

In her influential monograph *Roman Faith and Christian Faith: Pistis and Fides in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches*, Theresa Morgan has convincingly shown how closely the early Christian discourse on 'faith' was bound up with similar notions in the broader Greco-Roman world, particularly in relation to the system of patronage, with both humans and deities fulfilling the role of (trustworthy and trusted) patrons. Thus, she has shifted attention from *πίστις/fides* as a primarily 'theological' notion to an interpretation along more 'social' lines and situated it in realm of human and divine/human relations. She also analyses this in relation to the Gospel of Mark, showing how Mark also fits this general picture. This note builds on Morgan's work and will further develop one aspect of Mark's use of the language (and concept) of patronage and *πίστις*. This is its subversive character, which is present to a lesser extent in Morgan's work; by calling for *πίστις* directed to him on the part of the people that he encounters, Jesus also draws these people away from other allegiances and '*πίστις* commitments', that is, intersubjective relationships based on trust and leading to personal allegiance.

1. INTRODUCTION

In her influential monograph *Roman Faith and Christian Faith: Pistis and Fides in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches*,¹ Theresa Morgan has convincingly shown how closely the early Christian discourse on 'faith' was bound up with similar notions in the broader Greco-Roman world, particularly in relation to the system of patronage, with both humans and deities fulfilling the role of (trustworthy and trusted) patrons. Thus, she has shifted attention from *πίστις/fides* as a primarily 'theological' notion (in

¹ Theresa Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith: Pistis and Fides in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

the sense of an abstract, noetic concept, having to do primarily with beliefs in ideas about God, Jesus, and the world)² to an interpretation along more ‘social’ lines (which can be argued to be just as theological), and situated it in realm of human and divine/human relations. She also analyses this in relation to the Gospel of Mark, showing how Mark fits this general picture as well. This note builds on Morgan’s work—and that of earlier social-scientifically oriented exegesis—and will develop one aspect of Mark’s use of the language (and concept) of patronage and *πίστις* further. This is its subversive character, which is present to a lesser extent in Morgan’s work.³ It will be argued that by calling for *πίστις* directed to him (and/or through him to YHWH, the god of Israel) on the part of the people that he encounters, Jesus also draws these people away from other allegiances and ‘*πίστις* commitments’, that is, intersubjective relationships based on trust (and the trustworthiness of the persons/parties involved) and leading to personal allegiances.⁴ In doing so, this note further develops ideas that were set forth by Collins (in relation to John 2),⁵ and is in line with approaches in the tradition of social-scientific exegesis, such as Neyrey’s, who has paid much attention to

² A good example of an understanding of faith ‘pre-Morgan’ can be found in William Loader, ‘The Concept of Faith in Paul and Mark’, in Oda Wischmeyer, David C. Sim, and Ian J. Elmer (eds) *Paul and Mark: Comparative Essays Part I: Two: Authors at the Beginnings of Christianity* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 423–64, one of whose paraphrases of Markan faith runs as follows: ‘For the figures within Mark’s narrative world, faith means primarily believing Jesus’ claim to be bringing the kingdom of God and therefore his ability through the Spirit to heal and exorcise. Beyond that, a faith response means both believing what he teaches and living accordingly by doing God’s will as expounded by Jesus, which has particular application to wealth but also the ethical commandments generally, being alert and prepared to endure persecution and not be deceived in the future by false claims, and, for some, following Jesus in his tours of ministry and sharing in his activity.’ (440)

³ This also applies to the older, but still highly relevant study by Thomas Söding, *Glaube bei Markus* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1987 [1985]), which pays scant attention to the broader (historical and political) context of the gospel. The same is true for the other recent larger study of Markan faith: Christopher D. Marshall, *Faith as a Theme in Mark’s Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁴ This broad definition, which functioned in a variety of constellations with diverging expectations attached to them, probably covers the core of the kind of ‘faith’ that Morgan has set out to research. Cf. Morgan, *Faith*, esp. 1–36.

⁵ See Matthew S. Collins, ‘The Question of *Doxa*: A Socioliterary Reading of the Wedding at Cana’, *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 25 (1995), 100–9.

questions of honour and patronage,⁶ and whose work is, like that of Malina and other social-scientifically oriented exegetes, absent from that of Morgan. Here, its relatively intensive use takes place with an awareness of its limits and of the criticism that has been levelled against it, for example when it comes to the use of models:⁷ its employment here is primarily heuristic in nature, as it enables one to highlight the social function and relational character of πίστις, but without intending to conflate the historical reality with the models used to describe it.

In order to argue all of this, first a survey will be given of faith-language in Mark, which will subsequently be analysed from the point of view of the question of whether, and if so how, such language functions in a subversive manner; all of this is prefaced by a brief discussion of faith and patronage. In doing so, the present note is connected to ‘imperial criticism’, as it has become part of New Testament studies in the course of the past decades, including studies of the Gospel of Mark.⁸ In this respect, this paper takes part of its cue from the work of Leander and others, who have sought to position the Gospel of Mark in the context of literary negotiations of ‘empire’.⁹ In interacting with Leander and others, it is assumed that ‘empire’ was a pervasive reality, structuring the world around the Mediterranean basin. This will not always be argued separately, but serves as a point of departure for the analysis of the Markan text and the discussion with other scholars.

By proceeding in this manner, this contribution seeks to build on Morgan’s work in two ways. First, it will focus somewhat more on the narrative whole of Mark than Morgan does, who tends to be interested in the traditions behind Mark (historical

⁶ See Jerome H. Neyrey, *The Gospel of John in Cultural and Rhetorical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), *passim*, and esp. 454–76.

⁷ Cf., e.g., the survey and discussion in: Petri Luomanen, ‘Social-Scientific Modeling in Biblical and Related Studies’, *Perspectives on Science* 21 (2013), 202–20.

⁸ Cf., e.g., Adam Winn, ‘The Gospel of Mark: A Response to Imperial Propaganda’, in Adam Winn (ed.), *An Introduction to Empire in the New Testament* (Atlanta: SBL, 2016), 91–106, and the literature cited there. Another survey is offered by Jeremy Punt, ‘Teaching Mark Through a Postcolonial Optic’, *HTS Theologese Studies/Theological Studies* 71 (2015).

⁹ Cf. Hans Leander, *Discourses of Empire: The Gospel of Mark From a Postcolonial Perspective* (Atlanta: SBL, 2013), 151–83.

Jesus) and somewhat neglects Mark's narrative artistry,¹⁰ as it has become recognized among Markan scholars,¹¹ also in relation to faith.¹² In other words, the 'world of Mark' is of primary interest here, not the world 'behind' Mark in terms of the historical origins of terms and expressions. This also leads to a closer connection between Markan 'faith-language' and the crucifixion, which is of obvious importance to Mark and to which 'faith-language' can also be shown to have a connection (which does not happen in Morgan's work). Second, this note will take into account the historical context of the Gospel of Mark more emphatically *qua* literary text that interacts with its immediate social surroundings. This is to say, it places Jesus as 'patron' who seeks to inspire πίστις or even demands this from others in a context in which many, both divine and human—the distinction is often one of degree not of kind in antiquity¹³—sought to do the same. The choice, it emerges, is not between faith in Jesus or no faith at all, but between (some kind of) faith in Jesus and faith in other entities that one might entrust oneself to. This gives faith in Mark a specific theological and socio-political profile, which adds further relief to the picture that Morgan has already painted. In fact, it somewhat challenges Morgan's idea that early Christian communities were also generally able to entertain relationships of πίστις/*fides* with a whole range of partners without too many problems. At least for the foundational narrative of these communities, this seems to be somewhat more problematic. In all of this, the focus will be on the occurrence of forms of the stem πιστ- in Mark. This may lead to accusations of being guilty of (fallaciously) thinking that a concept is only present when a particular word referring to it is, which, of course is not the case (e.g. the story of

¹⁰ Cf. Morgan, *Faith*, 350–5.

¹¹ Cf., e.g., Kelly R. Iverson and Christopher W. Skinner (eds), *Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect* (Atlanta: SBL, 2011), reflecting on the foundational David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 3rd edn (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012 [1981; first two editions by Rhoads and Michie]).

¹² E.g., both Söding, *Glaube* and Marshall, *Faith*, employ a narrative approach, this is also followed here (cf. in particular Marshall, *Faith*, 30–3).

¹³ Cf., e.g., the extensive (and excellent) treatment by M. David Litwa, *We Are Being Transformed: Deification in Paul's Soteriology* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 37–85. See also, e.g., Adam Winn, *The Purpose of Mark's Gospel* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 97–8 (against Stuhlmacher and Guelich).

Peter's wrestling with his commitment to Jesus and his eventual betrayal of his friend in the passion narrative can very well be read as a story of ἀπιστία,¹⁴ or the story of the four men lowering their friend through the roof [2.1–12] can be understood as one about the exercise of πίστις, as is confirmed by 2.5).¹⁵ Yet, both to avoid having to discuss all of Mark in the scope of one paper and in order to base the present considerations on texts in which the question of πίστις clearly plays a role—because the stem πιστ- is being used—this limitation is being employed here.

2. FAITH AND PATRONAGE

As is generally acknowledged, and as Morgan also stresses, relations of patronage were based on πίστις/*fides*, both in the sense that a patron would need to be regarded as trustworthy (*pistos*), that is, embodying πίστις as a virtue, and that an attitude of trusting (*πιστεύω*) was called for in relation to him.¹⁶ This, of course, depended on someone's reputation, the standing a person had, which can be summed up in a person's δόξα—in that sense, John 2.11 probably sums up the dynamics nicely, when it says of Jesus ἐφάνηρσεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταί

¹⁴ As one also could infer from Morgan's argument that following Jesus is an expression of 'faith' (*Faith*, 361). See explicitly so, Loader, 'Concept', 437.

¹⁵ For both, see Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 153–82. In social-scientific exegesis, 'faith' is consistently understood as 'loyalty', see in addition to the work of Malina and Rohrbaugh also, e.g., David deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000). See also the survey in Winn, *Purpose*, 146–7. The observation concerning Mark 2.1–12 would also nuance Morgan's thesis that in Mark 'human beings are never urged to practice *pistis* towards one another nor described as practicing it' (*Faith*, 350). See also Udo Schnelle, 'Paulinische und markinische Christologie im Vergleich', in Wischmeyer, Sim, and Elmer (eds), *Paul*, 283–311, 300: 'Gestalten des Glaubens sind aber auch die zahlreichen namenlosen Helfer der Kranken, die Kinder als Vorbilder reinen Glaubens (Mk 10,13–16), der reiche Jüngling mit seiner Traurigkeit (Mk 10,17–22), der verständige Schriftgelehrte (Mk 12,28–34), die arme Witwe mit ihrer Bereitschaft zum Geben (Mk 12,41–44), die Frau, die Jesus salbt (Mk 14,3–9), Josef von Arimathäa (Mk 15,43) und die Frauen unter dem Kreuz, beim Begräbnis und leeren Grab (Mk 15,40–16,8)'. In a similar manner, this may also apply to the attitude of a variety of demons vis-à-vis of Jesus (right faith, wrong attitude, however), as Loader, 'Concept', 427 notes.

¹⁶ See for this: Morgan, *Faith*, 60–5, as well as Morgan, *Faith*, 36–122 in general.

αὐτοῦ.¹⁷ Ideally, both parties of a πίστις-relationship are trustworthy, of course, and a network of trust/faith/loyalty begins to develop. As Morgan has it: ‘When patronage is working well, the πίστις/fides of each party helps them not only to do business with one another, but to extend their relationships in new and productive directions.’¹⁸ Simultaneously, it should be stressed that πίστις/fides was always precarious, a source of ‘constant doubt and anxiety’.¹⁹ Accordingly, ‘Trust between patrons and clients . . . is better understood as a hopeful risk, rooted in the need of all agents in Greek and Roman public life to make friends, connections and allies, and the sense that alliances may maximize benefits to all parties.’²⁰ This also means that, on the one hand, a(n) ambitious person was served best by cultivating as many relationships of πίστις as possible, given that this would enhance his ability to make profitable connections and deals. On the other hand, it also meant that, when conflicting interests were at stake, competition could arise: πίστις in relation to one person could compromise or make impossible the same in relation to another in a manner analogous to the way in which relations of patronage were structured and functioned; this certainly applied to the early Christian experience regarding loyalty to the κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός and other κύριοι.²¹ Therefore, this needs some general attention now too.

Patronage of clients, including the sponsorship of festivities and the provision of subsidized foodstuffs, as well as many other kinds of sponsorship, such as of public works, played a role of high importance at various levels of the Greco-Roman world, specifically of the Roman Empire.²² The

¹⁷ See, e.g., Neyrey, *John*, xi, 83. For considerations about patronage and discipleship, see, e.g., Jonathan Marshall, *Jesus, Patrons, and Benefactors: Roman Palestine and the Gospel of Luke* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), and Zeba A. Crook, *Reconceptualising Conversion: Patronage, Loyalty, and Conversion in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004).

¹⁸ Morgan, *Faith*, 62.

¹⁹ Morgan, *Faith*, 63.

²⁰ Morgan, *Faith*, 64, see also 117–20.

²¹ Cf. Peter Lampe, ‘Paul, Patrons, and Clients’, in J. Paul Sampley (ed.), *Paul in the Greco-Roman World*, vol. 2, revised edn (London: Bloomsbury, 2016) 204–38; Morgan, *Faith*, also discusses the question of competing kinds of faiths, arguing that there was among early Christians a certain spectrum of attitudes vis-à-vis the question to what extent different loyalties were compatible, cf. 473–83.

²² See, e.g., the overviews provided by Richard P. Saller, *Personal Patronage under the Early Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 7–39; Frederick W. Danker, *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and*

emperor,²³ Roman officials such as consuls and senators,²⁴ and provincial officials such as governors,²⁵ down to the level of more local figures of social and political importance, exercised patronage to socially lower-ranking persons and institutions, while in turn often being clients, formally or factually, to higher-ranking individuals themselves. As noted, patronage often had the form of providing resources (e.g. foodstuffs).²⁶ In fact, the various levels of patronage and clientship can be imagined as a hierarchically structured network of relationships of dependence. This structure of relationships was also closely bound up with ruler ideologies, in which the ruler (e.g. king, emperor) was conceptualized as the supreme benefactor of his people and generally closely associated with deities (or a deity) as the ultimate source of such benefaction.²⁷ At the same time, deities could also be described and factually be understood as patrons of a special kind, often with specializations regarding patronage and sponsorship. Simultaneously, within these hierarchically structured relationships, heavy competition between (would be) patrons, both between those located on the same tier of what may be termed a 'pyramid of patronage', as well as between those on neighbouring tiers, was also part of the system.²⁸ While social

New Testament Semantic Field (St. Louis: Clayton, 1982); Kathryn Lomas and Tim Cornell, 'Introduction: Patronage and Benefaction in Ancient Italy', in Kathryn Lomas and Tim Cornell (eds), *'Bread and Circuses': Euergetism and Municipal Patronage in Roman Italy* (London: Routledge, 2003); John Nicols, 'The Civic Religion and Civic Patronage', in Lukas de Blois, Peter Funke, and Johannes Hahn (eds), *The Impact of Imperial Rome on Religions, Ritual and Religious Life in the Roman Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 36–50. For the New Testament see, e.g., DeSilva, *Honor*, 23–93.

²³ See, e.g., the treatment of Saller, *Patronage*, 41–78, as well as, with a focus on Italy, John R. Patterson, 'The Emperor and the Cities of Italy', in Lomas and Cornell (eds), *'Bread'*, 89–104.

²⁴ See, e.g., the discussion of Saller, *Patronage*, 119–43.

²⁵ See, e.g., the analysis of Saller, *Patronage*, 145–94 (North Africa).

²⁶ See, e.g., Peter Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply in the Graeco-Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 58–63.

²⁷ See, e.g., Peter-Ben Smit, *Food and Fellowship in the Kingdom: Studies in the Eschatological Meal and Scenes of Nutritional Abundance in the New Testament* (Mohr Siebeck: Tübingen, 2008), 14–18; see also Nathan MacDonald, *Not Bread Alone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 134–218.

²⁸ On patronage and competition between patrons in the Empire, see, e.g., David Braund, 'Function and Dysfunction: Personal Patronage in Roman Imperialism', and Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, 'Patronage in Roman Society: From Republic to Empire', both in Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (ed.), *Patronage in Ancient Society* (London: Routledge, 1989), 6–88, 137–52, as well as Claire

mobility was limited in the Greco-Roman empire, it did exist, and, even without much mobility, one's honour, whether human or divine, was always under attack and needed to be defended and (at least) safeguarded in the public sphere, or, quite literally, the marketplace.²⁹

3. FAITH IN MARK

The stem *πιστ-* occurs in a number of texts in Mark,³⁰ to wit, the noun *πίστις* in: 2.5 (the faith of the lame man and his friends); 4.40 (stilling of the storm); 5.21–43 (the healing of the daughter of Jairus and of the woman suffering from haemorrhage); 10.46–52 (healing of the blind Bartimeus); 11.19–26 (withered fig tree, discourse on faith and prayer); the verb *πιστεύω* in: 1.14–15 (beginning of Jesus' proclamation); again 5.36 (Jesus to Jairus); 9.23–4 (part of 9.17–27/9, healing of a boy with a 'dumb spirit'), 9.42 (part of 9.38–42, discourse of Jesus on the little ones); 11.23–4 (as above, discourse on faith and prayer); 11.31 (part of 11.27–33; discourse on Jesus' and John the Baptist's authority); 13.21 (part of the eschatological discourse); 15.32 (deriding of Jesus on the cross by the high priests and scribes)—it also occurs in the secondary ending (16.13–14, 16–17). The antonyms *ἄπιστος* and *ἀπιστία* occur in 6.6 (Jesus in his hometown), 9.19, and 9.24 (both part of the healing of the boy with a dumb spirit), the latter also in 16.14. In what follows, the occurrences in the secondary ending of Mark will be left out of consideration.

When considering this list, the majority of the occurrences have to do with instances of a patron, namely Jesus, invoking *πίστις*, or expressing dismay at the lack of it, and 'delivering' in the form of healing or of other 'goods' (as in the more general discourse on prayer in ch. 11).³¹ This is what Morgan concentrates on and rightly illuminates with regard to the discourse on (divine) patronage. Yet a focus on these texts only would seem to neglect two texts that both build an *inclusio* around all of these texts dealing with, mainly, the delivery of 'goods' by a patron and expressions of or references to ensuing or preceding faith such 'delivery', that provides a hermeneutical key for understanding

Holleran, 'The Development of Public Entertainment Venues in Rome and Italy', in Lomas and Cornell (eds), *Bread*, 46–60, esp. 49–52.

²⁹ See, e.g., the treatment of DeSilva, *Honor*, 95–156, 157–256.

³⁰ See also the survey offered by Morgan, *Faith*, 349.

³¹ Cf. also Schnelle, 'Christologie', 300, 'der Glaube in all seinen Ausprägungen ist durchgängig auf die Person Jesu Christi bezogen'.

the broader meaning of *πίστις* in relation to Jesus (and the deity represented by Jesus). In a sense, this amounts to a fairly traditional move: connecting everything Jesus does to his proclamation of the reign of God, *βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ*, as this is the result of looking at Mark 1.14–15, the beginning of Jesus' proclamation (¹⁴Μετὰ δὲ τὸ παραδοθῆναι τὸν Ἰωάννην ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν κηρῦσσαν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ¹⁵ καὶ λέγων ὅτι πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς καὶ ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ· μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεῦτε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ) and 15.31–2, the deriding of Jesus by the high priests and scribes (ὁμοίως καὶ οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς ἐμπαίζοντες πρὸς ἀλλήλους μετὰ τῶν γραμματέων ἔλεγον· ἄλλους ἔσωσεν, ἑαυτὸν οὐ δύναται σῶσαι· 32 ὁ χριστὸς ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἰσραὴλ καταβάτω νῦν ἀπὸ τοῦ σταυροῦ, ἵνα ἴδωμεν καὶ πιστεύσωμεν) as a hermeneutical key for gaining access to the scope of calls for and expressions of *πίστις* in relation to Jesus. The consequence of doing so would be that 'faith in Jesus' becomes an allegiance to the kind of divine/royal rule of the god of Israel, YHWH, who is represented by Jesus and stands in opposition to the representation of the same rule by the Jerusalem establishment, in cooperation with the Roman imperial authorities.

4. EXEGETICAL REMARKS ON MARK 1.14–15 AND 15.31–2

Where 1.14–15 presents Jesus as the one who proclaims the kingdom of God and calls for faith in the good news that announces the commencement of this rule, 15.31–2 shows how Jesus, imagined as the king of this kingdom of Israel, is called upon to validate his rule—however misunderstood by the high priests and scribes, at least according to Mark's narrative representation—by descending from the cross, thereby overcoming the cruel power of this instrument and symbol of imperial rule, in order to invoke faith in them. Both texts deserve some further exegetical attention before proceeding to situate the other references to 'faith' in Mark within the interpretative framework that they provide.

5. MARK 1.14–15

First, Mark 1.14–15, which is, in terms of content, a narrative and programmatic restatement of what Mark's *incipit* expresses,³² that is, *Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* (Mark 1.1; leaving aside

³² Cf. Söding, *Glaube*, 133, 'programmatisches Eröffnungslogion'. (See also Söding, *Glaube*, 134–6, for Mark 1.14–15 as a literary unit and as the climax of the opening section of the Gospel—cf. on this also Marshall, *Faith*, 36–9.)

the text-critical issue of the ‘Son of God’, the original presence of which would only strengthen the case made here, given the contrast between ‘Sons of God’ that it would create—see also Mark 15.39).³³ The term *εὐαγγέλιον* itself is drawn, of course, from the ‘secular’ realm and ‘was closely associated with Roman emperors, as it was frequently used to describe the emperor’s birth, political ascension, or victory in battle’.³⁴ This is reflected in sources roughly contemporary with the Gospel of Mark and stemming from a similarly culturally hybrid setting, such as Josephus’ *Jewish War* 4:618 (4.10.6): *πάσα μὲν πόλις ἐώρταζεν εὐαγγέλια [δέ] καὶ θυσίας ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ ἐπετέλει* (‘Every city kept festival for the good news and offered sacrifices on his behalf’) and 4:656 (4.11.5): *Εἰς δὲ τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρειαν ἀφιγμένῳ τῷ Οὐεσπασιανῷ τὰ ἀπὸ τῆς Ρώμης εὐαγγέλια ἦκε* (‘On reaching Alexandria Vespasian was greeted Vespasian at Alexandria by the good news from Rome’). Here the good news is in both cases that of Vespasian’s own proclamation as emperor.³⁵ Similarly, the so-called Priene Inscription offers good insight into the use of the term *εὐαγγέλιον* in the broader Greco-Roman context, stating in particular that ‘the birthday of the god Augustus was the beginning of the good news (*εὐαγγέλιον*) for the world that came by reason of him’.³⁶ The use of the term *εὐαγγέλιον* to introduce the Markan narrative is therefore likely politically connoted; at the same time, an ‘average reader’, certainly of a non-Jewish background—as may well have been common for the first readers of Mark—would have been struck by the person with whom this good news was associated: Jesus Christ, of which the first part is a relatively exotic name, pointing to a minority group in the Roman Empire and the latter

³³ Cf., e.g., Winn, ‘Gospel’, 95–6, Winn, *Purpose*, 101–2, on the question of ‘Son of God’ from a Greek and Roman perspective in general and on Mark 15.39 in particular, see Adele Yarbro Collins, ‘Mark and His Readers: The Son of God among Greeks and Romans’, *Harvard Theological Review* 93 (2000), 85–100, 96: ‘Those members of the audience of Mark familiar with the imperial cult would understand that the centurion recognized Jesus as the true ruler of the known world, rather than the emperor.’ See also Schnelle, ‘Christologie’, 301: ‘programmatische Glaubens-Forderung’.

³⁴ Winn, ‘Gospel’, 92.

³⁵ Text and translation: LCL; also quoted by Winn, ‘Gospel’, 92.

³⁶ For text and translation, see: Craig A. Evans, ‘Mark’s Incipit and the Priene Calendar Inscription: From Jewish Gospel to Greco-Roman Gospel’, *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 1 (2000), 67–81, 69. See also Winn, ‘Gospel’, 92–3, and especially also the more extensive discussion in Leander, *Discourses*, 185–92; see also Schnelle, ‘Christologie’, 281–95.

incomprehensible, unless someone already knew it as Jesus' 'last name' or was familiar with its Semitic background, strengthening the suspicion raised by the first name Jesus that here a kind of *εὐαγγέλιον* is being introduced that is not from the centre of the empire, but rather from its margins, which might suggest some kind of competition with the *εὐαγγέλιον* coming from Rome.³⁷

When Jesus enters the narrative stage in 1.14 and proclaims (*κηρύσσων*, another term closely associated with the 'political' use of *εὐαγγέλιον* at large) the Gospel of God,³⁸ he is presented as speaking in the key already introduced in 1.1: 1.1–1.15 can be seen as forming an *inclusio*³⁹—that of political proclamation in relation to the rule of an emperor. This assertion is supported by the words that Mark has Jesus speak in 1.15: *πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς καὶ ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ· μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ*.⁴⁰ Whereas *καιρὸς* denotes a decisive—in Jewish circles, apocalyptic—moment,⁴¹ the notion of *βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ* is again heavily politically in nature.⁴² When calling for faith in a (divine, cf. 1.14) *εὐαγγέλιον* that is associated with a kingdom of God,⁴³

³⁷ Acts 1.8 contains a similar play with centre and margins, but now in the key of topography. See Peter-Ben Smit, 'Negotiating a New Worldview in Acts 1:8? A Note on the Expression *ἕως ἐσχατοῦ τῆς γῆς*', *New Testament Studies* 63 (2017), 1–22.

³⁸ Cf. only the representative use in the in LXX in (religio-)political contexts, even only for the verb *κηρύσσω*, e.g. in Gen. 41.43; 2 Kgs. 10.20; 2 Chr. 20.3; 24.9; 36.22; Est. 6.9, 11; 1 Macc. 5.49; 10.63–4, etc. The use is consistent and in line with the broader use of the term, denoting public proclamation of a public message. This also agrees with its use in Mark, to wit: 1.4, 7, 14; 1.38–9, 45; 3.14; 5.20; 6.12; 7.36; 13.10; 14.9. The translation 'preaching' is, for Mark at least, misleading as it suggest a 'conventicle' setting, which is not given.

³⁹ Cf., e.g., John Painter, *St. Mark's Gospel* (London: Routledge, 1997), 35

⁴⁰ Morgan, *Faith*, 353, is mainly interested in the historicity (i.e. Jesuanic character) of the language used this verse when it comes to its discussion. Marshall, *Faith*, 34, rightly notes that the two halves of the verse form a 'synthetic parallelism'.

⁴¹ Cf. the considerations of Söding, *Glaube*, 152. Ched Meyers, *Binding the Strong Man* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2008 [1988]), 103–4 (131–2 on *καιρὸς*), rightly stresses the subversive nature of the apocalyptic, as it presents a different take on reality, questioning the existing order from the perspective of what is being revealed.

⁴² Cf., e.g., Werner Kelber, 'Roman Imperialism and Early Christian Scribality', in R. S. Sugirtharajah (ed.), *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader* (London: Blackwell, 2006), 96–111, 98.

⁴³ The notion of the *βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ*, as it occurs in the beginning of Jesus' proclamation, has convincingly been connected to political tensions in the Roman Empire, understanding it as a subversive notion—also in Mark's

which is probably not identical with the rule of the Roman emperor, such faith would amount to treason, when seen as an invitation to shift away from former allegiances (*μετανοεῖτε*) and to turn towards this faith, similar in structure to, but different in content from other kinds of faith. As Malina and Rohrbaugh have it: '[A] proclamation announcing a forthcoming theocracy, the rule of God in whom the readers are asked to place their loyalty.'⁴⁴ With Loader, it should be stressed that not repentance (as in the case of John) or conversion is the focus of faith, but: 'Faith's focus is the coming kingdom of God.'⁴⁵ Calling for faith in the gospel means, therefore, calling for faith in the kingdom, given that that is the content of the gospel.⁴⁶ With Morgan, the faith at stake can well be understood as relational in nature, thus circumventing the choice that, for example Söding, in his standard work on faith in Mark, sees himself forced to wrestle with: the choice between faith as trust or faith as 'belief' (in the propositional sense of the word),⁴⁷ a struggle also occurring in Marshall's book on faith in Mark.⁴⁸ In the terminology of the patron/client system that dominated the Mediterranean world, Jesus appears as someone who invites people to opt for a different patron and to shift their 'faith commitment' to this person, who happens to be God, as whose supreme broker and representative Jesus appears. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same applies to John the Baptist, who announces Jesus.

The scope of the divine rule that Jesus announces is all-encompassing, involving in the end a renewal of creation and the defeat of all powers of evil and death.⁴⁹ Yet, one aspect of this is also the

narrative world and his theology. See, for a nuanced discussion, Jens Schreiber, 'Der politische Jesus Die Jesusbewegung zwischen Gottesherrschaft und Imperium Romanum', *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 64 (2013), 174–94. For the connection between the call for faith, *μετάνοια*, and the 'gospel', see also Söding, *Glaube*, 133–4.

⁴⁴ Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Commentary*, 148. Cf. also Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, revised edn (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 215, stressing that the movement around Jesus was based on loyalty towards him and his cause. When speaking of 'den eschatologischen Herrschaftsantritt Gottes' (*Glaube*, 150), Söding comes close to imperial matters, but does not address them.

⁴⁵ Loader, 'Concept', 425.

⁴⁶ Cf. Söding, *Glaube*, 228 (see also 252), 'Evangelium ist die "Gute Nachricht" von der heilhaft nahegekommenen Gottesherrschaft ... , vom Heilstod und von der Aufstehung Jesu'.

⁴⁷ Cf. Söding, *Glaube*, 140–2.

⁴⁸ Cf. Marshall, *Faith*, 54–6.

⁴⁹ Cf., e.g., Loader, 'Concept', 426.

political order. Accordingly, the divine rule that Jesus proclaims is somewhat at odds with Roman rule. This would already be strongly suggested by Mark's own contextualization of Jesus' initial proclamation, namely *μετὰ δὲ τὸ παραδοθῆναι τὸν Ἰωάννην*, which, as Mark's return to this topic in chapter 6 will show, is a remark fraught with imperial significance.⁵⁰ That is to say: the manner of John's arrest and subsequent death casts rather dark light on Herod's rule as a vassal ruler and its narration is contrasted, by means of the juxtaposition of the two meals in Mark 6, with a narration of the much more benevolent and beneficial rule of Jesus (or rather: the deity that he represents), embodied by and performed through the banquet in the desert.⁵¹ (The contrast between the two meals is really the contrast between two kinds of patronage that one can opt for, the imperial and the divine ones, respectively.) When Mark presents Jesus' proclaiming as starting after the 'handing over' of John, this amounts to the political contextualization of the former. To the extent that 'handing over' had already become something like a *terminus technicus* it would also point forward to Jesus' own impending fate—as Mark contains an overwhelming amount of texts suggesting this, this is not unlikely (cf. Mark 3.19; 9.31; 10.33; 14.10–11, 18, 21, 41–2, 44; 15.1, 10, 15; see also: 13.9, 11–12). Also, the proclamation of John, as presented by Mark, that, of course, precedes the note on his arrest, is strongly cast in the language of traditions from Israel's Scriptures that have to do with the liberation (and renewal) of God's people in times of exile and oppression. In other words, the choice between 'imperial' (c.q. 'political') and Isaianic ('theological') backgrounds for understanding Mark 1 is a false one;⁵² rather, both point into the same direction, casting Jesus (and John) in the role of the prophet of a new rule based on the marginal deity of a marginal people, speaking 'in such a tongue as the people understandeth', namely political vernacular. This would further the impression that the 'gospel' at stake here is different from that of the emperor. To be sure, none of this means that the imperial dimension is the only dimension there is to the

⁵⁰ Accordingly, it goes beyond the question of the 'theological' significance of Jesus in a narrower (or apolitical) understanding of the term; the imperial dimension is, for instance, not identified by Söding, *Glaube*, 136; see also 140 'theologische Aussage'.

⁵¹ Cf. recently, Peter-Ben Smit, 'The Ritual (De)Construction of Masculinity in Mark 6: A Methodological Exploration on the Interface of Gender and Ritual Studies', *Neotestamentica* 50 (2017), 327–51.

⁵² Cf., e.g., Winn, 'Gospel', 93; Winn, *Purpose*, 97.

Markan notion of God—for instance the contrast with the reign of Satan in 3.20–35 suggests that the scope is broader than the Roman Empire alone,⁵³ although it may well be a significant expression of Satan’s reign.

6. MARK 15.31–2

In ‘imperial criticism’, the significance of Jesus’ trial and crucifixion as the exercise of imperial power has not gone unnoticed; certainly the crucifixion *qua* punishment was an enactment of such power *par excellence*, theatrically enacting power relations, marking the victim as unfree, unroman (the *titulus* adds to this) and, as a consequence, fundamentally unhuman.⁵⁴ This is no different for the Gospel of Mark; various aspects of this Gospel’s account of Jesus’ last hours can be convincingly related to imperial symbolism and the exercise of power.⁵⁵ When it comes to Jesus’ actual execution, however, it seems that the words of the centurion in 15.39, acclaiming Jesus as (a) Son of God (cf. the longer text of Mark 1.1) have received substantially more attention than the mocking of Jesus by the high priests and scribes in 15.31–2, although the two verses are full of language that was also part of the imperial discourse. For instance, a verb like *σώζω*, in the sense of ‘delivering’, and key v. 31, has been shown to be very frequent in accounts of emperors delivering the empire (or part of it); the

⁵³ Söding, *Glaube*, 155, rightly uses this pericope as a lens to tease out the significance Mark’s understanding of God’s rule. See for a fitting definition of the *βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ* also Söding, *Glaube*, 188: ‘Sie ist die eschatologische Zukunft der Menschen und der Geschichte schlechthin; denn sie ist die eine große und umfassende Heilsgabe Gottes, der den Tod zum “ewigen Leben” wendet.’ Cf. similarly, Marshall, *Faith*, 34.

⁵⁴ See for some reflections on the crucifixion as *imperial* means of execution and the early Christian response to it, Peter-Ben Smit, ‘Crucifixion? Crucifixion as a Failed Ritual in Phil. 2’, *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 46 (2016), 12–24. Leander, *Discourses*, 246, rightly draws on Cicero’s *Pro Rabirio reo perduellionis* 16, in order to illustrate this: ‘How grievous a thing it is to be disgraced by a public court; how grievous to suffer a fine; how grievous to suffer banishment; and yet in the midst of any such disaster some trace of liberty is left to us. Even if we are threatened with death, we may die free men. But the executioner, the veiling of the head, and the very word “cross” . . . should be far removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen but from his thoughts, his eyes and his ears. For it is not only the actual occurrence of these things or the endurance of them, but liability to them, the expectation, nay, the mere mention of them, that is unworthy of a Roman citizen and a free man.’ (Translation: LCL.)

⁵⁵ Cf., e.g., the survey provided by Winn, ‘Gospel’, 102–4. See for this and the following also and especially Myers, *Binding*, 384–9.

same goes for the designation *σωτήρ*, which, when used of Jesus, also serves to put him on a par with (and hence in competition with) others for whom this title was used.⁵⁶ The imperial connotations of ‘cross’ as a punishment, mentioned explicitly in 15.32, as the place or instrument that holds Jesus captive and from which he cannot descend, have already been mentioned. Also, the somewhat hyperbolic manner, in which the high priests and scribes, whose belonging to the ruling elite and close cooperation with the Roman authorities in order to get rid of Jesus would have been well known to Markan readers on the one hand and have been made more than clear in the course of the story on the other hand⁵⁷ address Jesus, that is, as *ὁ χριστός ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἰσραὴλ* (v. 32), is virtually oversaturated with (religio-)political significance.⁵⁸ The hyperbolic form of address suits the scope of the charges brought against Jesus and the capital verdict that he had received earlier on in the narrative. An anointed king of Israel, as the statement might be well understood (rather than as a reference to two roles or entities conjoined in Jesus, leading to translations such as ‘the messiah, the king of Israel’), given that by the juxtaposition of *ὁ χριστός* and *ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἰσραὴλ* the latter becomes a further explanation of the former and the two can also be represented by turning the first into an adjective (again, given that is now functions as a substantive adjective), is a figure charged with political meaning—and hence ‘rightly’ executed on imperial authority and in a very imperial manner. When, then, the high priests and scribes suggest that they might have faith in Jesus, that is, recognize him as their patron, if he, *quia ὁ χριστός ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἰσραὴλ*, were to descend from the instrument of Roman imperial power, the cross, thereby overcoming its power, they make a suggestion that is also political in nature. Of course, they suppose that no such thing will happen (and indeed, it doesn’t), for which

⁵⁶ Cf. the differentiated survey of Martin Karrer, ‘Jesus, der Retter (Sôtêr). Zur Aufnahme eines hellenistischen Prädikats im Neuen Testament’, *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 93 (2002), 153–76. Although texts using the term do not become anti-state pamphlets, as Karrer rightly notes, it does turn them into texts claiming something for their (main) protagonists that was also claimed for, for instance, the emperor.

⁵⁷ I.e. from the indication of the plot against Jesus in 3.6 has been announced: *Καὶ ἐξεληθόντες οἱ Φαρισαῖοι εὐθὺς μετὰ τῶν Ἡρωδιανῶν συμβούλιον ἐδίδουν κατ’ αὐτοῦ ὅπως αὐτὸν ἀπολέσωσιν*. See for the following also Marshall, *Faith*, 200–9.

⁵⁸ The disqualification of other authorities than Jesus is also an ongoing in theme in the recent Jan Rüggebauer, *Poetik der markinischen Christologie: Eine kognitiv-narratologische Exegese* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017).

reason they can continue their allegiance to Roman rule,⁵⁹ opting for the emperor as their supreme patron (or even for the imperial deities). Yet, their way of phrasing things, carefully crafted by Mark, does indicate the political and competitive nature of faith—faith in one person precludes that in another; allegiance to Jesus descending from the cross would terminate faith in Rome.

When reading Mark 1.14–15 and 15.31–2 in conjunction with each other, then it would seem that the high priests and scribes deliver in 15.31–2 their final, imperially accented reaction to Jesus' equally imperially accented call for repentance and faith in the gospel of God's reign (rather than the emperor's). The leaders of the people have made up their mind, while the centurion in Mark 15.39, belonging to the realm of empire, responds by recognizing a Son of God in Jesus (even if it is unclear what effect his words have—there is no response to them).⁶⁰ In addition, the pericope refers back to Mark 11.27–33, in which, using 'faith-language', Jesus' precursor John is also depicted as someone in whom the high priests, elders, and scribes put their trust. Furthermore, in Mark 15.31–2 and 15.39, the 'Erkenntnisprozess' that the Gospel of Mark is in terms of narrative, has a double outcome: disbelieving Jewish leaders (opting for loyalty to their patron, the emperor) and a confessing centurion, who, in that sense, takes the side of God (cf. 1.9–11—he is moving into the realm of a different patron, accordingly).⁶¹ That the two are connected is also indicated by the use of the verb 'ἰδεῖν'.⁶² The ongoing identification of Jesus as 'Son of God' in the Gospel is thus completed, integrating divine status and

⁵⁹ Cf. representatively, France, *Mark*, 648.

⁶⁰ Cf. Leander, *Discourses*, 292: 'There is no human being in Mark's Gospel that fully comprehends what it means that Jesus is God's Son. The disciples try but fail. The Jewish authorities denounce the claim with outrage. The Roman centurion utters the right words, but their meaning slips away, much like the naked man who ran into the woods when Jesus was arrested (14:51–52). Mark does not offer a fixed position vis-à-vis Rome, but points instead toward a continuous process of destabilizing identifications.'

⁶¹ Cf. Schnelle, 'Christologie', 289, 'Zum Ziel gelangt dieser Erkenntnisprozess erst am Ende des Evangeliums, am Kreuz, erst hier ist es ein Mensch und nicht Gott, der Jesus als *υἱὸς θεοῦ* erkennt (Mk 15,39).' Söding, *Glaube*, 272, rightly stresses that the faith of the centurion indicates in particular that faith in the gospel means faith that God's rule comes about also through Jesus' suffering and death.

⁶² Cf., e.g., Söding, *Glaube*, 261 (and 262–8); of course, not just the occurrence of *ἰδεῖν* is of significance for seeing a connection here, but also the broader context: seeing Jesus in a particular way leads to a particular attitude vis-à-vis him.

human suffering into one person.⁶³ Even if the centurion's words are taken as less than a full confession, as has been argued,⁶⁴ for the reader of Mark, who already knows of divine (1.9–11; 9.2–13) and demonic (e.g. 3.11) designations of Jesus as Son of God, this does not matter: s/he knows the centurion's confession to be to the point, even if he may intend it differently.⁶⁵

With this, the subversive, potentially anti-imperial connotations of *πιστ*-language in Mark 1.14–15 and 15.31–2 has been established. What remains is a closer look at other instances of the same in Mark, to see whether the hermeneutical framework that Mark proposes through his creation of the *πίστις-inclusio* in chapters 1 and 15 actually contributes to the exegesis of the gospel, or whether its beauty can only be found in the eye of the beholder.

7. FAITH IN MARK AND EMPIRE

When surveying the use of *πιστ*-language in Mark following its first use in 1.14–15, the following sequence of texts is of relevance.

The first instance of *πιστ*-language is in Mark 2.5, part of the narrative of Jesus' healing of a lame man, whose friends lower him, through the roof, into the house where Jesus is. The statement that concerns 'faith' is: *καὶ ἰδὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὴν πίστιν αὐτῶν λέγει τῷ παραλυτικῷ· τέκνον, ἀφιένται σου αἱ ἁμαρτία*. Neither it, nor the setting of the narrative, would seem to have an imperial connotation to it. It follows on a series of exorcisms and a healing in ch. 1, which serve both to demonstrate the power of the kingdom and to further identify Jesus (note the manner in which demons address him). The concluding healing ends with Jesus sending the healed person to the Temple in order to bring the appointed sacrifice (v. 44: *ὑπαγ ε σαυτὸν δείξον τῷ ἱερεὶ καὶ προσένεγκε περὶ τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ σου ἃ προσέταξεν Μωϋσῆς, εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς*): Jesus is working with the (religious) system, not against it. Subsequently, a confrontation ensues between Jesus and scribes, representatives of the larger

⁶³ Cf. Schnelle, 298: 'Im kompositorischen Gerüst des Evangeliums sind Taufe, Verklärung, Verwerfung und Bekenntnis unter dem Kreuz die Grundpfeiler, um die herum Markus seine Traditionen in Form einer vita Jesu gruppiert.' In all of these narratives, the term 'Son of God' appears.

⁶⁴ Cf., e.g., the doubts expressed by Myers, *Binding*, 391–2. See for a representative version of the view Myers is critical of, France, *Mark*, 658–60.

⁶⁵ In that sense, the 'confession' may be similar to the function of the titulus in John's gospel, cf. Peter-Ben Smit, 'A Note on the Structure of Jesus' Trial in the Gospel of John', *Revue Biblique* 115 (2008), 383–95.

socio-religious order, who criticize Jesus' statement that the lame man's sins are forgiven, stressing that only God can forgive sins.⁶⁶ Jesus' claim is blasphemous and accordingly faith in him, that is, as a person who claims to have the authority to forgive sins, is incompatible with ('orthodox') faith in God. Mark's point is, of course, that in Jesus God is encountered, or more precisely: God's incipient rule, which is what the faith refers to.⁶⁷ This difference of opinion is a first indication of the conflict between different groups within Palestinian Judaism that will lead to Jesus' death eventually, a conflict in which questions of empire play a role of significance. The narrative of Mark 2.1–12 also shows that one kind of faith commitment can conflict with another kind—faith in YHWH conflicts with faith in Jesus, at least from the point of view of the scribes appearing in this story. Again, this can also be phrased in the language of the patron/client system, as what is at stake here are different patrons, who all look for the loyalty of potential clients.

The next instance of 'faith' in Mark, following the opening section of the gospel, is in 4.40, as part of the narrative of the stilling of the storm (4:36–41). Here Jesus comments on the despair of his disciples by stating *τί δειλοί ἐστε; οὐπω ἔχετε πίστιν* and thereby identifies a lack of *πίστις*. It is not explicitly contrasted with *πίστις* in something else. Rather, Jesus is presented as a person who performs the kind of deeds that are worthy, or should be worthy, of *πίστις* in him. Although a variety of backgrounds have been suggested for the story,⁶⁸ such as the creation narrative,⁶⁹ the story of Jonah, or—even—the works of Homer,⁷⁰ Winn has rightly pointed to a number of parallels with Greco-Roman rulers, which may well be of relevance: In 2 Macc. 9.8, Antiochus IV is

⁶⁶ Cf. also Myers, *Binding*, 154–5, for a more socio-economic reading; I am not fully convinced by it, but his description of the scribes as 'Torah interpreters and co-stewards of the symbolic order' who 'control determinations of indebtedness' is apt (155).

⁶⁷ Cf. Söding, *Glaube*, 414: 'das Vertrauen darauf, in der Begegnung mit Jesus die helfende Macht Gottes zu erfahren.' The point is indeed that this is *God's* helping power, not someone else's.

⁶⁸ Cf. the concise summary of Rick Strelan, 'A Greater Than Caesar: Storm Stories in Lucan and Mark', *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 91 (2000), 166–79, 167.

⁶⁹ A position also taken by Morgan, *Faith*, 355: 'Jesus wields the power of God himself.'

⁷⁰ Cf. Winn, 'Gospel', 101, further details in Wendy Cotter, *Miracles in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook for the Study of the New Testament* (London: Routledge, 1999), 131–48.

described as *ὁ δ' ἄρτι δοκῶν τοῖς τῆς θαλάσσης κύμασιν ἐπιτάσσειν διὰ τὴν ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπων ἀλαζονείαν* ('Thus he who only a little while before had thought in his superhuman arrogance that he could command the waves of the sea'); emperor Augustus is described by Philo as *οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ Καῖσαρ, ὁ τοὺς καταρράξαντας πανταχόθι χεμιῶνας εὐδιάσας* (*Leg.* 145; 'This is the Caesar who calmed the torrential storms on every side'). Similar accounts exist regarding Julius Caesar, as Strelan has shown.⁷¹ Such (partial) parallels from the realm of superhuman, quasi-divine rule are, for obvious reasons, relevant for understanding the way in which Mark 4:36–41 may have been heard and what effect it may have had on the characterization of Jesus in the eyes of its early audience.⁷² What is achieved in this manner is probably not so much direct competition between Jesus and others performing similar feats and demanding *πίστις* because of it, but at least it places Jesus in the same class of people, even going as Winn notes, beyond the vain boldness of Antiochus IV and performing literally what Augustus 'only' did metaphorically. One can, therefore, read the narrative as implying a comparison among powerful patrons past and present, with Jesus (of course) standing out as of the strongest of all of them. It is true that in this text, the object of the (lacking) *πίστις* is not made explicit,⁷³ yet this may well have to do with the close association of Jesus and God in the Gospel of Mark, with Jesus acting as God's ambassador, both proclaiming and embodying the Good News,⁷⁴ thus representing God (in a manner similar

⁷¹ Cf. Strelan, 'Greater'.

⁷² In the following, the focus will be on the 'imperial connection', but Strelan is probably right when he concludes: 'Mark asks his audience the question: Who is this? (4,41). Some in his audiences would answer: A greater than Jonah is here (compare Matt 12,41/7 Lk 11,32); this man has the authority of Yahweh. Others would reply: A greater than Caesar is here; this man has the authority of Zeus/Jupiter. All would hear the claim that Jesus is the protector of his people, the controller of their destiny. In contrast to Lucan's view of the gods, Mark's Jesus is not removed, not distant, not unconcerned. He is in the same boat as his fearful followers in their transitions and he speaks with authority over the forces that threaten. He is to be recognized, also by Romans, as *νόσ θεοῦ* (15,39).' (Strelan, 'Greater', 179.)

⁷³ Cf. Morgan, *Faith*, 356.

⁷⁴ This is, as e.g. Loader ('Concept' 425-426) emphasizes with Söding (*Glaube*, 223), apparent from the entirety of Mark, but 8.35 combines Jesus and the Gospel in a particularly explicit manner: *ἐνεκεν ἐμοῦ καὶ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου*, cf. Schnelle, 'Christologie', 295. One may suppose that the *καὶ* here is even exegetical in nature, which would lead to a translation 'because of me, that is to say: because of the Gospel.' The intricate interrelation between Jesus and

to other envoys representing the people sending them).⁷⁵ To expect a clear distinction between sender and the one who is sent would seem to go against ancient views of this relationship.⁷⁶ In fact, Mark seems to use the narrative to invite the reader to ponder Jesus' identity further, by having the disciples say: *τίς ἄρα οὗτός ἐστιν ὅτι καὶ ὁ ἄνεμος καὶ ἡ θάλασσα ὑπακούει αὐτῷ* (4.41). If the subsequent narrative of the Gerasene demoniac contains any clue to this identity, it is also likely that this narrative also ends on a note that points into Jesus' anti-imperially accented identity, given that it is frequently interpreted as playing with the presence of the Roman legion *Legio X Fretensis* in Palestine, and thus as anti-empire in nature.⁷⁷ If this is the case, then the *πίστις* in 4.40 is also one that would seem to be at odds with *πίστις* directed towards the Roman military presence in Palestine.

Then, attention should be given to the interlocking narratives of Jesus' healing of Jairus' daughter and the healing of the woman suffering from haemorrhage in Mark 5.21–43 that follow from the narrative of the Gerasene demoniac and contain two uses of *πιστ-*: in v. 34, Jesus tells the (unnamed) woman *θυγάτηρ, ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε* and in v. 36 he tells Jairus *μὴ φοβοῦ, μόνον πίστευε*. Both instances are more than just individual accounts of healing, but are part of the overarching narrative of Mark, in which the miracles from Mark 4.36 onwards are expressive of the same

God's reign is also a point that Söding, *Glaube*, never tires of making (cf., e.g., 156).

⁷⁵ Morgan, *Faith*, 356, rightly notes that the addressee of the 'faith' in Mark 4.40 is ambiguous: it can be God, Jesus, or a combination of both—as long as Jesus is present, faith in God is appropriately channelled through God's representative, whether this means that this changes post-Resurrection, i.e. 'direct' faith in God, analogous to Jesus' faith, takes the place of such mediated faith, is a possibility, but not one supported by other strands of early Christian tradition, such as Paul's letters; it is *through Christ* that persons gain access to God—a mediated immediacy, if one likes. At a later stage of her argument (*Faith*, 364), Morgan also stresses that the faith of the various people expressing it (and being commended for it) can be rather diffuse or imprecise: faith does not require full understanding, '*pistis* offered up in the spirit is enough for God, and Christ, to work with; it is enough to release people from their sins and give them hope for the kingdom of God.' Similarly, e.g., Loader, 'Concept', 436–7.

⁷⁶ Cf. the overview in relation to *διάκονοι* provided by Anni Hentschel, *Diakonia im Neuen Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 90–184.

⁷⁷ Cf. Winn, 'Gospel', 94–5, and especially the extensive discussion offered by Leander, *Discourses*, 201–19.

εὐαγγέλιον that Jesus has outlined in the parables preceding them. This gospel has as its scope the introduction of the kingdom of God, to which physical healing also belongs.⁷⁸ In that sense, the two healings and the πίστις that belongs to them, or rather on which they are based, are expressive of the kind of divine rule Jesus announces and (proleptically) embodies and performs. The faith of the ἀρχισυνάγωγος and the unnamed woman, as it is called for in the one and identified in the other by Jesus, and which provides the basis for Jesus' action, is also indicative of the scope of the positive reaction to his proclamation, which is also indicated by the demoniac, of course, and will be further unpacked through the sequence of encounters that Jesus has with people that have faith in him. It also certainly precludes dividing the world in too simple a manner, as if members of the Jewish elite always responded negatively to Jesus: Jairus is doubtlessly a member of the elite and the woman may have been as well (given that she had ample money to spend on doctors, cf. v. 26). Some of the people of Israel are indeed responding positively to the gospel of the kingdom. In fact, they saw in Jesus a trustworthy and powerful patron—in this respect, Jairus' prostration in Mark 5.22 says it all!

Following on from this, one of two instances of lack of faith, ἀπιστία, deserves attention; it occurs in the narrative following from the two healings in Mark 5, namely 6.1–6, Jesus' failed visit to his hometown. The narrative serves as a counterpart to Jesus' success story in what has preceded. It is striking that Jesus performs healings here, although there is no faith in him. ('What Jesus requires is loyalty and commitment to the God of Israel, solidarity with others bent on obedience to the God of Israel. Jesus' countrymen lacked this.') Given the strongly intra-Jewish setting of it all, it does not seem likely that the ἀπιστία here is connected to 'imperial' resistance against Jesus, rather it would seem to be an illustration of the veracity of what Jesus quotes from the

⁷⁸ As Holmgaard has argued for Matthew, the scope of the kingdom coincides with the scope of new creation, of which healing is an integral part, see Christian Holmgaard, *On Earth as It Is in Heaven: New Creation in Matthew's Gospel* (PhD dissertation; Vrije Universiteit [Amsterdam], 2018). See also Söding, *Glaube*, 372–4 (concerning prayer) and 496, concerning Jesus' miracles: 'Für Markus gehören Jesu Machttaten integral zur Basileia-Verkündigung; die Wunder sind Kontenpunkte der dynamischen den gegenwärtigen Äon durchformenden Gottesherrschaft.' See also Söding, *Glaube*, 420, concerning this healing in particular.

⁷⁹ Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Commentary*, 169.

Scriptures: the traditional resistance of the people of God against God's prophetic representatives—and hence the paradoxical unfaithfulness of God's own people.⁸⁰ God may be the best patron available, but it does not mean that his 'clients' always recognize this; 'faith' can be a fickle thing, both 'spiritually' and 'socially', that is, as a 'faith commitment' in Morgan's sense.

Next, a combination of references to faith and lack thereof occur in Mark 9.14–29, the healing of a boy with a 'dumb' spirit. First, *ἄπιστος* occurs in 9.19, where Jesus rebukes the people present (or the disciples) for lacking *πίστις* (*γενεὰ ἄπιστος*), presumably in God, although this is debated. Next, Jesus responds to the father of the boy who questions whether he is able and willing to cast the demon out: *τὸ εἰ δύνῃ, πάντα δυνατὰ τῷ πιστεύοντι*. Both belief and unbelief return in v. 24, when the father calls out *πιστεύω· βοήθει μου τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ*. It is probably the most impassioned expression of faith in the Gospel of Mark. The particularly difficult exorcism that is performed by Jesus in this part of Mark strengthens his status as an extraordinary powerful exorcist, going beyond the feats that he has performed so far. Although not explicitly critical of other forms of faith, namely faith directed at other people or deities than himself and YHWH, the story does make clear that in the end, only the kind of faith that Jesus calls for, that is, faith that the good news of the kingdom has the power to overcome even demons such as the one possessing the boy. The 'self-reflection' of the father—namely *πιστεύω· βοήθει μου τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ*—also indicates the precarious character of *πίστις*, as it is apparently in danger of being threatened by lack of faith, that is, of loyalty or trust. The source of the weakness of the afflicted boy's father's faith is not entirely clear from Mark 9, but in other instances the precariousness of *πίστις* is revealed by it being threatened—or even overcome—by fear (Mark 4) or scepticism (Mark 6, probably also 15), which fits the general picture of faith and its assailants in the ancient world well.⁸¹

Furthermore, in 9.42, part of 9.38–42, the discourse of Jesus on the little ones, a use of *πιστ*-language occurs that is illustrative of the precarious nature of the exercise of *πίστις* in relation to Jesus: apparently it is relatively easy to cause someone who has such faith to stumble, or to be led into stumbling due to body parts

⁸⁰ Cf. also the comments of Söding, *Glaube*, e.g. on 439 'Dennoch ... hat Markus den Unglauben der Nazaretaner grundlegend als Abkehr von Gott verstanden.'

⁸¹ Cf. Morgan, *Faith*, 357.

(presumably references to sins that can be committed using the same). In the background is likely the notion of competing kinds of faithfulness or allegiance again (or competition among various patrons and their spheres of influence): committing oneself to Jesus apparently excludes committing oneself to an allegiance with sin or sinning, which can well be understood as patterns of behaviour that may well be compatible with the world 'outside' of the community of Jesus followers, but not for those on the inside of this community. *Πίστις* is performed by living one's life in a particular way—the immediately preceding discourse on being the greatest and the child that Jesus subsequently uses as an example is also indicative of this (cf. 9.34–7), as is the second discourse on children in 10.13–16. In this sense, this section of Mark prepares for what will follow in ch. 10 on the same subject, again using the language of faith.

Mark 10.46–52, the account of the healing of the son of Timaeus, Bartimaeus, which also contains 'faith language', would, at first sight, be a relatively self-contained narrative unit with few connections to the overall theme of empire in the Gospel of Mark.⁸² Yet, it is worth considering its place in the Markan storyline: between Jesus' discourse on Gentile views of leadership and rule (10.41–5) and his own and the entry into Jerusalem (11.1–19) and—beyond that—the storyline from Peter's confession to Jesus' crucifixion.⁸³ The former connection would invite reading the healing narrative as a concrete performance of the kind of 'rule' that Jesus is aiming at and the appropriate attitude of people vis-à-vis of him, namely *πίστις* (v. 52), which leads both to healing (*σέσωκέν*, with a strong connotation of 'delivering', as a *σωτήρ* would do, cf. the same in 5.34—various other such people were indeed credited with healings)⁸⁴ and the following of Jesus, which invites viewing Bartimaeus' 'sight' metaphorically as 'insight' as well (similar to Mark 8.22–6). As the next episode of Jesus' journey, of which Bartimaeus is now

⁸² For which its prehistory offers, of course, an explanation, but this needs to remain beyond the scope of this paper. See, however, Maarten J. J. Menken, 'The Call of Blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46–52)', *HTS Theologische Studies/Theological Studies* 61 (2005), <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v61i1/2.442>.

⁸³ Cf. with this emphasis, e.g., Juan Carlos Ossandón, 'Bartimaeus' Faith: Plot and Point of View in Mark 10,46–52', *Biblica* 93 (2012), 377–402.

⁸⁴ Cf. Morgan, *Faith*, 360; for healings by other 'saviours', see, e.g., Winn, 'Gospel', 98–100 (Vespasian). Cf. also Loader, 'Concept', 430: 'The use ... of *σώζω* suggests that more than simply bodily healing is being described. At the very least they are experiencing the blessing promised for the end time in the prophets.'

part, involves Jesus' royal entrance into the Temple (unhindered, surprisingly enough), this following of Jesus is also connected to a deeply political theme: Jesus' symbolic enactment of his 'rule' in the Jerusalem Temple, hailed there as king (the Temple's patron, representative of the divine rule!), thereby delegitimizing the rule of the actual Jerusalem elite.⁸⁵ In two ways, therefore, the faith of Bartimaeus is connected to empire-critical themes: the theme of appropriate leadership and rule in Mark 10.42–5, of the benefits of which he is the direct and first recipient, and the theme of alternative rule in Israel, of which, as a follower of Jesus, he is suggested to be a part. Jesus' recognition of Bartimaeus' faith is therefore positioned in such a way that it identifies this faith as faith in a person who both rules Israel and does so in a different manner than Gentile rulers, while providing the same 'goods' such as healing, which was frequently associated with rulers such as Vespasian.⁸⁶ Furthermore, in a manner not dissimilar to the role of faith in the healing of the woman suffering from haemorrhage, as Beavis has stressed, the blind man is a marginal figure who has faith in an exemplary way.⁸⁷ Although marginal persons are certainly not the only ones showing faith (Jairus is by no means marginal, nor is the father of the boy with the 'dumb' spirit, or the unnamed woman who had spent all her money on doctors in Mark 5), it may well be another aspect of faith in Mark that it is (also) a faith of the marginal (or on behalf of the marginal—then Jairus and his daughter and the father and his stricken son would be 'in' as well),⁸⁸ a loyalty to a saviour who will, in the course of his messianic 'career', also embody the marginal himself by being crucified. When it comes to being a patron, Jesus appears to be one, or to represent one in a rather specific manner.

Then, πιστ- language is used in 11.19–26, Jesus' discourse on prayer following the withering of the fig tree at the entry to Jerusalem, due to Jesus' cursing of the same. The key statements about faith are in v. 22, ἔχετε πίστιν θεοῦ, and in v. 23, καὶ μὴ διακριθῆ ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ, ἀλλὰ πιστεύση. In both cases, the faith

⁸⁵ Cf., e.g., Schreiber, 'Jesus', 189–91. See also the nuanced treatment of Leander, *Discourses*, 255–67.

⁸⁶ See Winn, 'Gospel', 98–100.

⁸⁷ Cf. Mary Ann Beavis, 'From the Margin to the Way: A Feminist Reading of the Story of Bartimaeus', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 14 (1998), 19–39.

⁸⁸ Cf. for this also Morgan, *Faith*, 359–60, focusing on vulnerability rather than marginalization, however.

must be 'direct' faith in God,⁸⁹ analogous to Jesus' own faith—his commitment to his own 'patron', unto whom he entrusts himself completely—which is probably assumed to have led to the hearing of his own prayer and that is now offered as a paradigm to his disciples.⁹⁰ In doing so, the Markan Jesus presents himself as someone who embodies the kind of πίστις that makes him the recipient of divine favour and is thereby able to perform feats that go far beyond the abilities of anyone else. The invitation to this kind of faith that Jesus subsequently issues is, therefore, also an invitation to privilege this kind of faith, presumably over other kinds of faith, in order to experience the same kind of fulfilment of prayer as Jesus.⁹¹

In 11.31, πιστεύω occurs again, in relation to a discussion of John the Baptist's authority. The matter at stake is partially an intra-Jewish one: if John the Baptist's authority was of divine origin, he should have been awarded πίστις, yet it is partially also an imperial one, given the manner of John the Baptist's death, that is, at the hands of the somewhat dubious Roman vassal tetrarch Herod, as recounted in ch. 6. If John was worthy of πίστις, then Herod and the authorities that he represented cannot be worthy of the same (again, this can be seen as a choice between patrons). The catch-22 in which the high priests, elders, and scribes find themselves is of a similar kind: if they admit that John's authority was divine, they must account for their lack of faith in him (and for their allegiance with those who executed John, most likely) and if they deny his heavenly authority, then they must deal with people who do 'believe' him, namely the masses who view John as a legitimate prophet (and a representative of the supreme patron, God). As one cannot have one's cake and eat it, the Jerusalem elite is here forced to choose between different kinds of allegiances, which can all be encapsulated well, as v. 11.31 does it itself, by the term πίστις. The pericope is also connected to the final occurrence of πιστ- in Mark, i.e. 15.31–2, where

⁸⁹ Which is grammatically not the only possible interpretation, but by far the most likely—cf. Morgan, *Faith*, 354, for other options.

⁹⁰ It would go beyond the scope of this contribution to consider the relationship between imitation of Jesus and faith, here it can only be noted that the kind of faith (in the gospel of the kingdom) also includes imitation of Jesus' own faith in God, as it is implied by this narrative—Morgan, *Faith*, 349–54, also seems to argue that Jesus' faith is implied here. For a broader consideration of faith in Christ, the faith of Christ and imitation (in the letters of Paul), see: Suzan J. M. Sierksma-Agteres, 'Imitation in Faith: Enacting Paul's Ambiguous Πίστις Χριστοῦ Formulations on a Greco-roman Stage', *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 77 (2016), 119–53.

⁹¹ Cf. also Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Commentary*, 197.

Jesus, executed in analogy to John (the John/Jesus parallelism is a theme in Mark),⁹² is also explicitly disbelieved by the (Jewish) authorities, as he does not demonstrate his power in a manner recognizable to them. Morgan does not make this connection, but does note that ‘If John had divine authority, then he was to be trusted, and, by the same token, so is Jesus.’⁹³

The final time in which the stem $\pi\iota\sigma\tau-$ occurs, prior to 15.31–2, is 13.21, as part of the eschatological discourse. It is unlikely to have a close connection with Markan imperial criticism, given that Jesus warns here not to trust others announcing that the Christ, the anointed one, the Messiah, is ‘there’. Presumably this is directed against people who point to others than Jesus as the Christ, possibly against the background of the first Jewish War and figures such as Menahem ben Judah.⁹⁴ In this respect, the statement is political in nature, but directed in a different way than the other statements on faith.

It would seem, therefore, that Markan faith, occurring in ‘healings, exorcisms . . . nature miracles, teaching materials, disputes between Jesus and the Jewish authorities, and in the passion narrative’,⁹⁵ is somewhat at odds with faith in other authorities than Jesus, notably Roman ones, or in the terminology of the patron/client system: it is at odds with allegiance to other patrons. This would seem to be contradicted by one Markan text, which Morgan discusses in relation to Markan faith. Therefore, before proceeding to concluding reflections, it needs to be addressed briefly here as well: 12.17, referred to by Morgan as a memory of ‘Jesus telling Jewish to pay their Roman taxes, which implies at least the minimum loyalty of keeping law of empire’.⁹⁶ Yet, Jesus’ statement there, $\tau\alpha\ \text{Καίσαρος}\ \alpha\pi\acute{o}\delta\omicron\tau\epsilon\ \text{Καίσαρι}\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \tau\alpha\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon\ \tau\hat{\omega}\ \theta\epsilon\hat{\omega}\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \acute{\epsilon}\xi\epsilon\theta\alpha\acute{\upsilon}\mu\alpha\zeta\omicron\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\pi\prime\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\hat{\omega}$, is part of a longer discussion in which he is tested.⁹⁷ The point is,

⁹² Cf., e.g., Gudrun Guttenberger, *Die Gottesvorstellung im Markusevangelium* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 63.

⁹³ Morgan, *Faith*, 355.

⁹⁴ Cf., e.g., James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 251.

⁹⁵ Morgan, *Faith*, 349.

⁹⁶ Morgan, *Faith*, 479–80.

⁹⁷ For the discussion see, e.g., Michael Bünker, ‘“Gebt dem Kaiser, was des Kaisers ist!”—Aber: Was ist des Kaisers? Überlegungen zur Perikope von der Kaisersteuer’, in Luise Schottroff, Luise Schottroff, and Willy Schottroff (eds), *Wer ist unser Gott? Beiträge zu einer Befreiungstheologie im Kontext der “ersten” Welt* (München: Kaiser, 1986), 153–72; Albert Fuchs, ‘Die Pharisäerfrage nach der Kaisersteuer. Mk 12,13–17 par Mt 22,15–22 par Lk 20,20–26’, *Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt A* 26 (2001), 59–81; J. S. Ukpong, ‘Tribute to

probably, not so much that Jesus instructs his followers, or rather the Pharisees and Herodians who have sought him out for a debate, to pay Roman taxes, but rather that rhetorically he expertly (a) problematizes the presence of coins with the effigy of the Roman emperor as such; (b) problematizes the presence of such coins in the hands of Jesus' Jewish interlocutors *in the Temple*;⁹⁸ and (c) subversively raises the question what is due to the emperor when compared to what is due to God.⁹⁹ In the words of Leander, Jesus' answer 'appears to leave an opening to ponder and negotiate over what factually belongs to Caesar now that God's empire is emerging'.¹⁰⁰ The first of the aspects just mentioned problematizes Roman (pagan) presence in Palestine, the second turns the Herodians and Pharisees in to factual collaborators, the third 'establishes a certain distance in relation to imperial demands, by which Mark's audience is granted a sense of negotiating agency'.¹⁰¹ Therefore, rather than encouraging people to pay their taxes, Jesus seems to undermine the legitimacy of these taxes.

In sum, therefore, Markan faith is focused on human behaviour vis-à-vis the kind of persons or institutions in which they put their trust and to whom they are loyal—this is the flipside of what Morgan rightly observes: Mark is not particularly interested in God's faithfulness or Christ's faith(fullness) or in the 'faith' of human beings among each other.¹⁰² 'Faith-language' is strongly associated with Jesus who calls for it, commends it, or bemoans

Caesar, Mark 12:13–17 (Mt 22:15–22, Lk 20:20–26), *Neotestamentica* 33 (1999), 433–44.

⁹⁸ For (a) and (b), see concisely: Andreas Lindemann, 'Die "Zinsgroschenperikope" Mk 12,13–17 und ihre Auslegung im frühen Christentum', in Uta Heil and Jörg Ulrich (eds), *Kirche und Kaiser in Antike und Spätantike* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 1–43, 6–7.

⁹⁹ Cf., e.g., Schreiber, 'Jesus', 185: 'Auf der Oberfläche bedeutet diese Aussage eine Befürwortung der Steuerzahlung an Rom. Dieses Zugeständnis schützt die Existenz der Unterworfenen innerhalb der politischen Machtverhältnisse und vermeidet blutige Konflikte. Unterhalb der Oberfläche werden aber kritische Töne laut: Was bleibt noch für den Kaiser im Angesicht Gottes? Diese Delegitimierung der römischen Herrschaft versteht sich im Kontext von Jesu *basileia*-Botschaft, die die völlige Entmachtung der Mächtigen impliziert. In diesem Bewusstsein ist es möglich, die unumgängliche Steuer zu bezahlen, ohne die eigene Identität preiszugeben.'

¹⁰⁰ Leander, *Discourses*, 283.

¹⁰¹ Leander, *Discourses*, 284.

¹⁰² Morgan, *Faith*, 350: 'Human beings are urged in Mark to put their trust in God and in the good news, and some passages only make sense if people are also expected to put their trust in Jesus, but human beings are never urged to practice *pistis* towards one another not described as practicing it, either within the group of Jesus' followers or beyond.'

its absence—always in relation to God and/or himself.¹⁰³ With this, all attention is given to the way in which people relate to Jesus (and through him to God) and, because of that, to God's imminent and incipient rule (with all its imperial relevance). In addition, it can be observed that in Mark, faith typically precedes a miracle (or, if absent Jesus bemoans its absence *prior to* the miracle) and does not result from it;¹⁰⁴ in this sense, it also fits the relational bond between people, that Morgan has described as 'faith'. It is not very likely that Mark recounts the various healing stories in order to show how people come to faith.¹⁰⁵

8. CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the above considerations, the following can be concluded concerning 'Markan faith'. To begin with, its use is clarified substantially by Morgan's analysis of it, given that all aspects of 'faith' that were discussed here can be understood easily as aspects of her basic understanding of what 'faith' amounts to. Furthermore, the narrative contextualization of the various instances of $\pi\iota\sigma\tau$ -language added to its understanding in three ways: (a) $\pi\iota\sigma\tau$ -language was seen to be connected closely to Jesus' proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom and his 'performance' as king, representing the supreme patron of the Jewish people, YHWH; (b) $\pi\iota\sigma\tau$ -language was seen to be expressive of the attitude of (frequently vulnerable or marginal) people vis-à-vis Jesus, primarily as either a powerful person himself or a representative of YHWH—the addressee was frequently ambiguous, which suits the characterization of Jesus as God's representative as it enfolds throughout the Gospel of Mark; and (c) 'faith' appeared to be both precarious, in the

¹⁰³ Morgan, *Faith*, 350. Emphasized also by Söding, *Glaube*, 523–7.

¹⁰⁴ Cf., e.g., Paul J. Achtemeier, "And He Followed Him": Miracles and Discipleship in Mark 10.46–52', *Semeia* 11 (1978), 115–45, esp. 134: 'When faith is mentioned or implied in miracle stories, it seems to be regarded as in effect prior to, not as a result of, the miracle (cf. 2:3–5; 5:23, 34; 7:29), or the story is shaped to describe the absence of faith in those who have observed and anticipate miracles from Jesus (9:14–29). When something like faith does result, it is made public contrary to Jesus' wishes (1:44–45; 7:36–37), or the person who proclaims it nevertheless does so in contrast to Jesus' instructions (contrast 5:19, "how much the *Lord* has done," with 5:20, "how much *Jesus* had done"). Mark apparently has less confidence than Luke in the ability of Jesus mighty acts to awaken useful faith in Jesus.' See also Morgan, *Faith*, 359.

¹⁰⁵ Diff., e.g., Schnelle, 'Christologie', 300: 'zum Glauben befähigen.'

sense of being threatened by fear, scepticism, and the like, and to align a person with one, rather than other authorities, for example with Jesus or YHWH, then to a much lesser extent with imperial authorities (or their partners in Jerusalem). Miracles based on faith are indicative of the reality that becomes accessible when a person answers the call to relate oneself to the gospel of the kingdom (Mark 1.14–15). Because of all of this, Markan faith, connected as it is to Jesus' proclamation of God's rule, must be seen as part of Mark's self-positioning vis-à-vis empire, which is, at the very least, critical, inviting readers of Jesus' story to begin questioning the state of affairs in their and to reconsider their 'faith commitments'.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Leander, *Discourses*, 304, may be too cautious when it comes to reading Mark from the perspective the gospel of (colonial deity) YHWH's imminent rule: 'Most of its dealings with imperial discourse, however, take place in the more ambivalent terrain represented by mimicry/mockery, catachresis, metonymic gap, and the opening of a third space. The position's evasive character, I here argue, was more threatening to imperial discourse than was downright opposition. As represented by the mustard seed, the real threat to imperial discourse did not lie as much in the oppositional contrasting of Jesus and the emperor as it did in the playful, yet profound, destabilizing of imperial notions of strength and triumph that were enacted in anticipation of God's unimperial empire.'