

# Baptism – the Revelation of the Filial Identity of Jesus and the Christian

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**ABSTRACT:** The author analyses Jesus' baptism in Jordan, looking for its parallel in the Christian baptism. He begins by acknowledging the historicity of Jesus' baptism and reflects on the meaning of the baptism of John by juxtaposing it with similar rites described in the Old Testament texts, in Second Temple Jewish literature, and in rabbinical sources. Then he analyses the meaning of Jesus' baptism, criticizing the historical-critical interpretations that separate the scene of baptism from the theophany that follows it. According to the author, such an operation is unfounded due to the nature of ancient texts and the literary and thematic continuity between baptism and theophany in the synoptic Gospels. Further, the author presents arguments demonstrating that Jesus comes to Jordan already aware of his identity and mission, which the Father's voice announces to others and objectivizes. In the last step, it is argued that Jesus' baptism in Jordan together with the Lord's death and resurrection could have been a point of reference for the early Christian understanding of baptism connected with the gift of the Spirit, with the filial dignity and the "Abba" prayer and with the inheritance of heaven. All these elements can be found in Rom 8:14-17,23 which describes the new life of those baptized in Christ.

**KEYWORDS:** the baptism of John, the baptism of Jesus, theophany, Jesus' consciousness, Christian baptism, Spirit, filial relationship with God

The baptism of Jesus in the Jordan is undoubtedly an important event as it was recorded by all Evangelists, including John. None of them ignored this fact, although they had good reasons to do so. The baptism in the Jordan is an event that may have confused Jesus' disciples, since how is it possible for the Messiah to submit to his relative as if He were dependent on him? Why does Jesus enter the waters of the Jordan, if this rite was supposed to serve sinners and the forgiveness of sins (Matt 3:1-6; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:6)? What was the significance of the baptism of Jesus? How are the subsequent events related to it, i.e., the descent of the Spirit and the voice from heaven (Matt 3:16-17; Mark 1:10-11; Luke 3:22)? Finally, is there any connection between the baptism of Jesus and the baptism of a Christian?

From the point of view of biblical research, the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan was, and still is, one of the most debated issues.<sup>1</sup> The centre of gravity in this discussion has shifted today from the historicity of the event itself to its theological interpretation. The construction of the narrative, in which the biblical scholars studying the historical Jesus separate baptism and the theophany that follows it, is also an important contentious issue. The former one is still history, the latter is, in the opinion of some, a secondary interpretation, or, to use the language of David Friedrich Strauss, a “historical myth” created by Christ’s disciples.<sup>2</sup> Baptism, as James D.G. Dunn also argues, must be clearly separated from the theophany by the river Jordan which practically denotes anointing Jesus for his future mission.<sup>3</sup> In the New Testament, it should not be associated with the baptism of a Christian, a parallel which was developed only from the second century onwards by the Church Fathers.<sup>4</sup> This article will begin with the uncontroversial issues of the historicity of the baptism of Jesus and the nature of John’s rite, to gradually proceed to the centre of the problem, that is, the significance of Jesus’ baptism, its relationship with the theophany by the river Jordan and the Christian’s baptismal experience. Starting from the continuity between the accounts of baptism and theophany, it will also strive to depict the continuity between the baptism of Jesus and the baptismal experience of the faithful.

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- 1 See the monographs and recent collective studies devoted to baptism, with a rich bibliography, such as L. Hartman, *Into the Name of the Lord Jesus. Baptism in the Early Church* (SNTW; Edinburgh: Clark 1997); S.E. Porter – R.E.O. White (eds.), *Baptism, the New Testament and the Church. Historical and Contemporary Studies in Honour of R.E.O. White* (JSNTSup 171; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1999); S.E. Porter – A.R. Cross (eds.), *Dimensions of Baptism. Biblical and Theological Studies* (JSNTSup 234; London – New York: Sheffield Academic Press 2002); A. Malina, *Chrzest Jezusa w czterech Ewangeliach. Studium narracji i teologii* (Studia i Materiały Wydziału Teologicznego Uniwersytetu Śląskiego w Katowicach 34; Katowice: Księgarnia św. Jacka – Wydział Teologiczny Uniwersytetu Śląskiego 2007); E. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church. History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2009); D. Hellholm et al. (eds.), *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism. Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity* (BZNW 176; Berlin – Boston, MA: De Gruyter 2011).
  - 2 D.F. Strauss, *The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined* (Lives of Jesus Series; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress 1972) 87, 242–246. Similarly, M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (Greenwood, SC: Attic 1982) 271–272.
  - 3 J.D.G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Christianity in the Making 1; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2003) 371–377.
  - 4 J.P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus. II. Mentor, Message, and Miracles* (New Haven, CT – London: Yale University Press 1994) 105.
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## 1. The Historicity of the Baptism of Jesus

In the second volume of his monograph *A Marginal Jew. Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, John Paul Meier outlines the prevailing modern consensus about the Jordan baptism event, which is a strong starting point for most scientific reconstructions of the historical Jesus.<sup>5</sup> Since this point is not controversial today, let us briefly consider a few basic criteria that confirm the historicity of the baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan<sup>6</sup>:

1) *The criterion of embarrassment.* It is difficult to imagine that the first Christians were interested in creating a fictional story in which Jesus was presented as obedient to John. All Evangelists present the Baptist as the Messiah's forerunner and the one who prepares his mission (Matt 3:11-12; Mark 1:3-4; Luke 3:15-17; John 1:6-8,14-27). Meanwhile, the baptism scene suggests that the Messiah initially becomes John's disciple by being baptised with his hand. Additionally, Christ, presented in the New Testament as sinless, subjugates Himself to a ritual aimed at "conversion and forgiveness of sins" (Matt 3:1-2,6-11; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3-14). In connection with this, Meier decodes certain editorial interventions of the Evangelists, aimed at "damage control," diminishing the significance of the baptism by John and elevating the figure of Jesus: Mark, having briefly narrated his baptism, immediately proceeds to theophany, which appears as the first event in which God confirms supremacy of Jesus to the Baptist (Mark 1:10-11); Matthew describes the latter's resistance and Jesus' statement confirming the importance of baptism in which God's plan of salvation is

5 Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 100. Similarly E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM 1985) 11; R.L. Webb, "Jesus' Baptism. Its Historicity and Implications," *BBR* 10/2 (2000) 261; U. Luz, *Matthew 1–7. A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress 2007) 144; D.J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew* (SP 1; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press 2007) 63; R.H. Stein, *Mark* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 2008) 56; C.S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew. A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans 2009) 131; M.E. Boring, *Mark. A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox 2012) 44. See also the works of earlier authors: E. Haenchen, *Der Weg Jesu. Eine Erklärung des Markus-Evangeliums und der kanonischen Parallelen*, 2 ed. (De Gruyter Lehrbuch; Berlin: De Gruyter 1968) 60–63; M.S. Enslin, "John and Jesus," *ZNW* 66/1–2 (1975) 1–18. Both emphasize the fact that the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan is an early Christian creation.

6 Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 101–105; Webb, "Jesus' Baptism," 261–274. On the usability of the criteria and the model on which they are based, see T. Hägerland, "The Future of Criteria in Historical Jesus Research," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 13/1 (2015) 43–65 (the author speaks in favor of the nuanced use of the criteria); C. Keith, "The Narratives of the Gospels and the Historical Jesus. Current Debates, Prior Debates and the Goal of Historical Jesus Research," *JSNT* 38/4 (2016) 426–455. Chris Keith makes a negative assessment of the form-critical model and its criteria which are aimed at seeking a pure, devoid of interpretation version of the historical event. In its stead, she proposes studies and models related to collective memory (social memory theory), which in her view are incompatible with form-critical categories.

fulfilled (Matt 3:14-15); Luke even omits the name of the Baptist (Luke 3:21); and John practically omits the baptism scene, placing the Baptist in the role of a witness to the theophany that took place by the river Jordan (John 1:19-34).<sup>7</sup> The embarrassment of the baptism scene is so great that none of the Evangelists and disciples of Christ could create this narrative.

2) *The criterion of multiple attestation.* It causes some problems, because Matthew and Luke resort to Mark in their narrative about baptism and the theophany that follows (Mark 1,9-11 = Matt 3:13,16-17; Luke 3:21-22). Nevertheless, the slight discrepancies between Matthew and Luke, departing from Mark's version, could, according to Meier, suggest that they use another source in their description of the event, perhaps Q.<sup>8</sup> The very structure of the narrative about the Baptist in Q and the temptation of Jesus led out into the desert by the Spirit (Matt 3:16 – Matt 4:1; Mark 1:10 – Mark 1:12; Luke 3:22 – Luke 4:1) imply that there must have been some other event during which the Spirit descended upon Jesus (see also the declaration on the divine sonship of Jesus linking both events: Matt 3:17 – Matt 4:3; Luke 3:22 – Luke 4:3).<sup>9</sup> An additional argument for the multitude of sources of the tradition would be provided by John, who speaks of Jesus coming through water and blood in 1 John 5,6, where the water is interpreted by some as a reference to baptism.<sup>10</sup>

3) *The criterion of discontinuity.* The authors of the New Testament never present the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan as a model for Christian baptism, they rather do it by using Christ's death and resurrection (cf. Rom 6:3-11). The parallel begins to appear only with Ignatius of Antioch ("Jesus was baptised to cleanse the waters of baptism with his passion") and becomes popular since the second century (Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Methodius, Ephrem, Gregory of Nazianzus, Maximus of Turin, Peter Chrysologus and Proclus).<sup>11</sup> Meier, citing Rudolf Bultmann and many other representatives of the historical-critical school,

7 Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 102–103.

8 Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 103.

9 Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 102–103. Cf. also W.D. Davies – D.C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (ICC; Edinburgh: Clark 1988) I, 329; A. Suhl, *Die Funktion der alttestamentlichen Zitate und Anspielungen im Markusevangelium* (Gütersloh: Mohn 1965) 99; A. Polag, *Die Christologie der Logienquelle* (WMANT 45; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag 1977) 2; M. Sato, *Q and Prophetie. Studien zur Gattungs- und Traditionsgeschichte der Quelle Q* (WUNT 2/29; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1988) 18, 25–26; J.S. Kloppenborg, *Q Parallels. Synopsis, Critical Notes and Concordance* (FF; Sonoma, CA: Polebridge 1988) 16.

10 Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 104–105. On the baptismal interpretation of 1 John 5:6, see R.E. Brown, *The Epistles of John* (AB 30; New Haven, CT – London: Yale University Press 2008) 572–575.

11 Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 105. On the rite and theology of baptism in the patristic period, see K. McDonnell, "Jesus' Baptism in the Jordan," *TS* 56/2 (1995) 209–236; Hellholm et al., *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism*, 767–1380.

concludes that there is no reason to doubt the historicity of the baptism of Jesus.<sup>12</sup> Doubts, however, begin to multiply when the discussion about its meaning is undertaken.

## 2. The Baptism by John in the Context of Jewish Rites of the Second Temple Period<sup>13</sup>

Before we proceed to the meaning of Jesus's baptism, we should pause to consider the very rite mediated by John. The ablution rite associated with water occurred commonly in the ancient Mediterranean Basin.<sup>14</sup> What was the meaning of the baptism administered by John by the river Jordan? Three main areas are

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- <sup>12</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 105, with reference to: R. Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word* (London: Collins 1934) 26, 110–111; E. Käsemann, “On the Subject of Primitive Christian Apocalyptic,” *New Testament Questions of Today* (NTL; London: SCM Press 1969) 108–137, esp. 112; G. Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Harper & Row 1960) 54; H. Conzelmann, *Jesus* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress 1973) 31.
- <sup>13</sup> On John, interpretation of his role as a prophet and the character of his baptism, see among others: R.L. Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet. A Socio-Historical Study* (JSNTSup 62; Sheffield: JSOT 1991) 179–205; Webb, “Jesus’ Baptism,” 278–294 (John is a prophet, his rite is of initiatory and eschatological character and is related to God’s forgiveness, purification, or even to a protest against the temple establishment); J.E. Taylor, *The Immerser. John the Baptist within Second Temple Judaism* (Studying the Historical Jesus; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1997) (the baptism by John as a repeatable purification rite); B. Chilton, “John the Baptist. His Immersion and his Death,” *Dimensions of Baptism. Biblical and Theological Studies* (eds. S.E. Porter – A.R. Cross) (JSNT-Sup 234; London – New York: Sheffield Academic Press 2002) 25–44 (John is not a prophet, his rite exhibits the character of Jewish purifications); C.A. Evans, “The Baptism of John in a Typological Context,” *Dimensions of Baptism. Biblical and Theological Studies* (eds. S.E. Porter – A.R. Cross) (JSNTSup 234; London – New York: Sheffield Academic Press 2002) 45–71 (John as a prophet of the eschatological transformation, his rite being of initiatory, eschatological and purifying character).
- <sup>14</sup> On the popularity of water-related purification rites as part of the initiation rituals in the Mediterranean Basin in antiquity, see Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 25–59; A. Klostergaard Petersen, “Rituals of Purification, Rituals of Initiation. Phenomenological, Taxonomical and Culturally Evolutionary Reflections,” *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism. Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity* (eds. D. Hellholm et al.) (BZNV 176; Berlin – Boston, MA: De Gruyter 2011) 3–40; F. Graf, “Baptism and Graeco-Roman Mystery Cults,” *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism. Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity* (eds. D. Hellholm et al.) (BZNV 176; Berlin – Boston, MA: De Gruyter 2011) 101–118. Fritz Graf refers to the Greco-Roman context, the cult of Isis, Mithra and Demeter in the Eleusinian mysteries. The author underscores the specific character of Christian baptism which involves transformation and becomes a place of meeting with God, while pagan rites served only as a form of preparation for a potential meeting with a deity (p. 111). Only in few pagan rites, the purification ritual signifies a kind of collective act or transformation, yet water is not always used there (air, fire). Such rites are sparsely known and display no geographical relevance to the Christian places. Thus, they could not have influenced the practices of Christ’s disciples (pp. 112–114).
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singled out that may shed some light on how John might have understood the ritual he practised<sup>15</sup>:

1) *Baptismal groups in Palestine in the first century AD, the Essenes and Banus*. The Essenes, a desert dwelling group of priestly ancestry, practiced ritual ablution, being part of their communal life (1QS 3.4-12; 5.13-14). They also referred to ablution as a metaphor for the purification of a person by the Spirit (1QS 3.6-9; 4.20-22; 1QH<sup>a</sup> 4.38; 15.9-10; 17.26).<sup>16</sup> The popularity of the purification rite not only in Qumran is evidenced by the number of mikvaahs and ritual cleansing pools in Palestine.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, Josephus Flavius in *Vita* 11 mentions a certain Banus, an ascetic who, living in the desert, washed his body day and night with cold water to keep himself clean and free from sin. Flavius joined him and, as he claims, spent three years with him. For some, both the Essenes and Banus would be an example of the popularity of baptismal movements during the 1st century BC – 1st century AD, of which John the Baptist is also a representative.

2) *Rabbis and proselyte ablutions*.<sup>18</sup> The ritual practised by the Baptist would also have a parallel in the rituals related to conversion to Judaism. According to Talmudic traditions, the converts to Judaism were washed in water and assisted by witnesses instructing them about their newly undertaken obligations (b. Yebam. 46a-b; 47a-b; b. Pesah. 92a; y. Pesah. 92a; cf. also the treatise Gerim 1,1-8).<sup>19</sup>

15 Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 49–56; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 356–361; Malina, *Chrzest Jezusa w czterech Ewangeliach*, 219–224.

16 The baptism by John is traced back to Qumran by O. Betz, “Die Proselytentaufe der Qumranekte und die Taufe im Neuen Testament,” *RevQ* 1 (1958) 213–234. On the ritual ablutions in Qumran, see G.R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (London: Macmillan – New York: St Martin’s Press 1962) 11–18; Webb, “Jesus’ Baptism,” 112–116, 133–162; I.C. Werrett, *Ritual Purity and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (STDJ 72; Leiden – Boston, MA: Brill 2007); A. Labahn, “Aus dem Wasser kommt das Leben. Waschungen und Reinigungsriten in frühjüdischen Texten,” *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism. Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity* (eds. D. Hellholm et al.) (BZNW 176; Berlin – Boston, MA: De Gruyter 2011) 168–208.

17 See S. Freyne, “Jewish Immersion and Christian Baptism. Continuity on the Margins?,” *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism. Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity* (eds. D. Hellholm et al.) (BZNW 176; Berlin – Boston, MA: De Gruyter 2011) 230–237.

18 The proselyte baptism as a possible model for the baptism of Christians was proposed by Joachim Jeremias, *Die Kindertaufe in den ersten vier Jahrhunderten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1958) 185. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 18–31, does not spot the relationship, although he recognizes the existence of the Jewish proselyte baptism in the first century. See also S.J.D. Cohen, “The Rabbinic Conversion Ceremony,” *JJS* 41/2 (1990) 177–203; Webb, “Jesus’ Baptism,” 122–130; D. Sänger, “«Ist er heraufgestiegen, gilt er in jeder Hinsicht als ein Israelit» (bYev 47b). Das Proselytentauchbad im frühen Judentum,” *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism. Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity* (eds. D. Hellholm et al.) (BZNW 176; Berlin – Boston, MA: De Gruyter 2011) 291–336.

19 Cohen, “The Rabbinic Conversion Ceremony,” 195–196; Sänger, “«Ist er heraufgestiegen, gilt er in jeder Hinsicht als ein Israelit» (bYev 47b),” 311–321.

3) *Old Testament*.<sup>20</sup> Finally, John's activities would find their parallels in the ritual laws of the Old Testament and the accompanying ablutions (Lev 14:5-9; 15; 16:4,24,26,28; 17:15,16; 22:6; Num 19:13,20-21; 31:20). The images related to cleansing, apart from the Pentateuch, also appear in the teachings of the prophets and in the psalms as a metaphor for conversion and renewal accompanied by the Spirit (cf. Isa 1:16; Ps 51:7). Moreover, washing and cleansing are also implied in the prophetic image of the Spirit sprinkled on Israel in the last days (cf. Joel 3:1-5; Ezek 36:25-27).

When looking for an explanation of John's cleansing in the area of baptismal movements, the ritual of proselytes or Old Testament texts, we must also draw attention to the serious differences between them. Beginning with the baptismal movements of the 1st century AD, Banus is an example of an ascetic, and frequent ablutions are part of his harsh lifestyle. In contrast to him, John practices baptism not on himself but on others; he does not do this for preserving the virtue of purity or controlling one's own body but for conversion. The baptism by John, unlike Banus' practices, appears to be administered only once, it is not repeated.<sup>21</sup>

This also distinguishes him from the practices of the Qumranians. Additionally, they used ablutions to maintain a state of ritual purity, not to obtain the forgiveness of sins. The rite was a permanent part of their communal life, whereas most of those baptised by John returned to their homes. The Essenes practised it themselves, while John immersed others in the Jordan. According to Meier, Qumran and John shared the apocalyptic nature of their teachings: a vision of Israel departing from God's ways, a search for inner purification through repentance and conversion, and the hope of salvation in the coming time of judgement.<sup>22</sup> However, this does not change the fact that the ritual ablutions practised by the Essenes differ significantly from those of John's.<sup>23</sup> Antje Labahn concludes that Qumran ablutions are characterised not only by diversity (they are related to human life and sanctity; they bring closer to God, allow to maintain ritual purity, define identity and affiliation to a community) but also by the lack of a fixed

<sup>20</sup> On the significance of the purification rite in the Old Testament and Jewish literature of the Second Temple period, see Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 1–10; Webb, "Jesus' Baptism," 95–132; J.D. Lawrence, *Washing in Water. Trajectories of Ritual Bathing in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Literature* (AcBib 23; Leiden: Brill 2007); Malina, *Chryst Jezusa w czterech Ewangeliach*, 219–229; Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 60–82; Labahn, "Aus dem Wasser kommt das Leben," 157–220.

<sup>21</sup> Chilton, "John the Baptist," 32–33.

<sup>22</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 50. Similarly Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 18.

<sup>23</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 357–358. On the similarities and differences between the ablutions depicted in Jewish literature of the Second Temple period and in John, see Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet*, 207–213; A. Yarbro Collins, *Mark. A Commentary on the Gospel of Mark* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress 2007) 139–140.

rite and form.<sup>24</sup> Summing up the presentation of early Jewish texts mentioning the rites of cleansing, the author states that they basically do not contain reference to sins, but they speak of ritual purity (with only a few halakhic texts from Qumran being an exception here). The purification envisaged in the Jewish texts is also closely related to the temple. Through purification rites, the author concludes, a person's ritual purity is restored and he or she is brought back to life.<sup>25</sup>

Moving on to the parallel between the baptism by John and the practice of immersing proselytes in Judaism, certain convergence appears here, such as the once-in-a-lifetime character of the ritual or the conversion which it implies. The differences include the aforementioned self-immersion of a proselyte, different from the immersion performed by John, the missing element of atoning sins, the lack of an eschatological aspect with a simultaneous connection with the temple, the new community, and the new status which the proselyte acquires. While the baptism of proselytes was intended for Gentiles, John's ritual was addressed primarily to the Jews.<sup>26</sup> The weakness of the comparison also lies in the nature of the sources in which the reference to the initiation rite is questioned in general (T. Levi 14.6; *Sib. Or.* 4.162-169; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.9.19-21; b. Pesah. 92a; y. Pesah. 92a) or they are considered to be late, originating from approx. 2nd century AD (b. Yebam. 46a-b; 47a-b).<sup>27</sup> Dieter Sanger is also sceptical about the fact whether the practices of immersing proselytes functioned as initiation rites (lack of the proselyte's renewal, confession of sin, turning away from the previous life, conversion to God, prayer, community integration, liturgical form and symbolic robe).<sup>28</sup> The practice of immersing proselytes is not mentioned in Flavius Josephus, Philo, the New Testament, or in the most important work about the conversion of a Gentile to Judaism, *Joseph and Aseneth*.<sup>29</sup> For the Judaism of the 1st century AD, circumcision is still the most important rite of inclusion in the chosen people, which is also evidenced by numerous references there-

24 Labahn, "Aus dem Wasser kommt das Leben," 207–208.

25 Labahn, "Aus dem Wasser kommt das Leben," 211–212.

26 Mark 1:5, Matt 3:5. See also Sanger, "«Ist er heraufgestiegen, gilt er in jeder Hinsicht als ein Israelit» (bYev 47b)," 301–302.

27 See T.M. Taylor, "Beginnings of Jewish Proselyte Baptism," *NTS* 2/3 (1956) 193–198; J. Nolland, "In such a manner it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Reflections on the Place of Baptism in the Gospel of Matthew," *Baptism, the New Testament, and the Church. Historical and Contemporary Studies in Honour of R.E.O. White* (eds. S.E. Porter – R.E.O. White) (JSNTSup 171; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1999) 69; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 356–358; Sanger, "«Ist er heraufgestiegen, gilt er in jeder Hinsicht als ein Israelit» (bYev 47b)," 297–322. James D.G. Dunn argues that the data illustrating the popularity of the baptismal rites in the first century is flimsy, as is the parallel with the rabbinical rituals of immersing converts (pp. 356–357). John's exceptionality is indicated by the epithet "the Baptist" (p. 357).

28 Sanger, "«Ist er heraufgestiegen, gilt er in jeder Hinsicht als ein Israelit» (bYev 47b)," 322–323.

29 Taylor, "Beginnings of Jewish Proselyte Baptism," 195; Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 19–20; Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet*, 127–128.

to in Paul (Rom 2:25–3:2; 4:9–12; 15:8; 1 Cor 7:18; Gal 2:7–9; 5:2–3; 6:12–13; Phil 3:3–5; Col 2:11), the story of the conversion of King Izates of Adiabene described by Flavius Josephus (*Ant.* 20.34–48) and rabbinical texts.<sup>30</sup> In the Talmudic literature, immersion is also regularly mentioned alongside circumcision (b. Yebam. 46a–b; 47b). According to some rabbinical authorities, such as Rabbi Eliezer, circumcision is also sufficient to become a proselyte, although the majority insists on the necessity of both rites (b. Yebam. 46a–b).

The most important parallels to the baptism by John, therefore, seem to be the rites of purification mentioned in the texts of the Old Testament.<sup>31</sup> The rites are associated not only with purification but also with the confession of sins (Lev 5:1–5; 16:16), to the extent in which the aspects of ritual uncleanness and sin overlap in the Book of Leviticus.<sup>32</sup> These two themes converge in the baptism of John, which additionally shows the expectation of the gift of the Spirit and the eschatological renewal of the nation described in Ezekiel (36–37).<sup>33</sup> Adela Yarbro Collins interprets the baptism by John as a transformation of priestly ablutions in the light of prophetic end-of-time expectations.<sup>34</sup> In the texts of the Old Testament, the one who purifies the individual of sin is God Himself. While the cleansing and confession of sins depend on a person, the forgiveness is granted at a time determined by God. On this basis, Artur Malina discerns a connection between the baptism by John and the rituals of purification contained in the Book of Leviticus. They describe a state in which, even after a ritual purification, the believer may remain impure for some time (Lev 11:23). According to the author, “John’s preaching of future baptism for the forgiveness of sins corresponds to the announcement of a future purification, which is preceded by the ritual of cleansing with water.”<sup>35</sup>

This brings us finally to the question of the nature of the baptism by John. In Mark 1:4, John proclaims “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.”<sup>36</sup> Noting that the syntagma is never uttered by the lips of the Baptist himself or Jesus, Meier warns of its possible early Christian origins.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, however, he states that the expression could have originated in the circle of John’s disciples and constituted the original (historical) description of the bap-

<sup>30</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 28–29.

<sup>31</sup> Thus Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 138–140.

<sup>32</sup> Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 139.

<sup>33</sup> Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet*, 206–207.

<sup>34</sup> Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 140. See also an earlier text by the author, A. Yarbro Collins, “The Origin of Christian Baptism,” *Studia Liturgica* 19 (1989) 28–46.

<sup>35</sup> Malina, *The Baptism of Jesus in the Four Gospels*, 229.

<sup>36</sup> On the syntagma, see S.E. Porter, “Mark 1.4, Baptism and Translation,” *Baptism, the New Testament and the Church. Historical and Contemporary Studies in Honour of R.E.O. White* (eds. S.E. Porter – R.E.O. White) (JSNTSup 171; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1999) 81–98.

<sup>37</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew; Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 53.

tism by John. This is evidenced by the fact that the New Testament tradition does not use it to describe the baptism of the Christian and does not associate the latter with the confession of sins and their forgiveness (cf., however, Acts 2:38). In the light of the contemplated formula, John's ritual would have a role similar to that assigned to the saving work of Jesus in Matt 26:28. What is then the meaning of the Johannine baptism performed "for the forgiveness of sins?"

Meier excludes the sacramental or quasi-sacramental dimension of the event by the Jordan because it is associated with much later theological categories.<sup>38</sup> The significance of the baptism by John should be considered in the context of John's address and the announcement of the coming of the "more powerful one" who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire (Mark 1:7; Matt 3:11; Luke 3:16). If the baptism by John ensures the forgiveness of sins, the coming and mission of the "more powerful one" are called into question, as what purpose would they serve? The ritual served by the Baptist is primarily assigned the meaning of preparation for what will come next, that is, for the mission of Jesus. Confession of sin goes hand in hand with the symbolic act of ablution which heralds the cleansing of sin in the future. It will be done in the end times by the Spirit brought by the Messiah.<sup>39</sup> Bultmann calls it an "eschatological sacrament."<sup>40</sup> According to Dunn, John takes place of the priests and replaces the temple ritual with his rite.<sup>41</sup> His baptism should be understood in a way suggested by the Gospel of Mark or by Flavius Josephus, who mentions John (*Ant.* 18.116-119), as the ablution accompanying conversion.<sup>42</sup> The conversion elicited by the ritual leads to the forgiveness of sins, which, however, will only be brought by the Messiah, baptizing with Spirit and fire, interpreted as symbols of purification and transformation.<sup>43</sup> Dunn does not conclude whether the erasing of sins is immediate or if it actually takes place during the Last Judgment.<sup>44</sup> The Old Testament parallel indicated by the author, in which John's ritual replaces the sacrifices of the Old Testament,

38 Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 54.

39 Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 55.

40 Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, 26.

41 Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 359.

42 The authenticity of the descriptions of the baptism by John in Flavius Josephus, accepted by most researchers, is questioned by C.K. Rothschild in "'Echo of a Whisper.' The Uncertain Authenticity of Josephus' Witness to John the Baptist," *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism. Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity* (eds. D. Hellholm et al.) (BZNW 176; Berlin – Boston, MA: De Gruyter 2011) 255–290. For the discussion on John in Flavius Josephus, see Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 56–62.

43 J.D.G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit. A Re-Examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster 1970) 22. See also Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 359–361. Nolland, "In such a manner it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness," 71, argues for two different, purifying and destructive, functions of the Spirit and fire.

44 Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 361.

seems to be too radical and detached from the reality of the 1st century AD.<sup>45</sup> As Malina points out, the Baptist is likely associated with Leviticus through the postponement of time which must pass between the confession of sins and the effective purification of a person. The baptism by John thus announces and prepares for the forgiveness of sins which comes in Jesus.<sup>46</sup> With His mission, we enter the end times and the fulfilment of God's plan of salvation (Mark 1:15). Let us now move on to two fundamental and most controversial issues regarding the baptism of Jesus and its relation to a Christian's baptism.

### 3. The Baptism of Jesus: Meaning, Character of the Description and Identity of the Son

At this point, we must answer two fundamental questions. First, why did Jesus enter the waters of the Jordan?<sup>47</sup> Second, how is Jesus' baptism related to the following theophany: the vision of the open or torn heaven, the Spirit, and the voice of the Father? John Paul Meier, examining the baptism of Jesus with the use of the historical-critical method, arrives at several aspects which define it.<sup>48</sup> *First*, it is a real turning point in the life of Jesus, which, according to the author, can be referred to as His "conversion" in the basic sense of the word. Jesus embarks on a public mission which nothing heralded before and turns completely to God from then on.<sup>49</sup> Did He make this decision earlier, or was He led to it by his baptism in the Jordan? According to Meier, this question cannot be resolved after removing theophany as an early Christian construction of the figure of the Messiah.<sup>50</sup> By the river Jordan, Jesus, together with all of Israel, simply declares that He will give up his old way of life.

*Second*, according to Meier, Jesus knew John's message and agreed with him on the following points: the end of Israel's history is approaching, the people have gone astray and are in danger, they need a conversion of their hearts, and John is an eschatological prophet sent by God. By the river Jordan, then, Jesus confirms John's authority and accepts his message. *Third*, Jesus accepts John's eschatological ritual as necessary for salvation. *Fourth*, the ritual is associated

<sup>45</sup> See also Chilton, "John the Baptist," 34–36.

<sup>46</sup> Nolland, "In such a manner it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness," 69.

<sup>47</sup> A comprehensive list of the reasons given by scholars can be found in: Davies – Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 321–323.

<sup>48</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew; Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 106–116, 129.

<sup>49</sup> Robert L. Webb ("Jesus' Baptism," 294–300, 305–307) fundamentally agrees with John P. Meier on this and other listed below aspects of the baptism of Jesus.

<sup>50</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew; Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 109.

with conversion and forgiveness of sins. Does Jesus need them? This is the opinion of Friedrich Strauss and Paul Hollenbach, according to whom Jesus received baptism from John because, like everyone else, He considered Himself a sinner.<sup>51</sup> As Meier rightly points out, this is not a problem to be resolved in *strictly* historical perspective, as Hollenbach postulates, because it concerns theological categories. In view of the decisive testimony of the entire New Testament and the Christian tradition about the sinlessness of Jesus, this position should also be considered as highly doubtful.<sup>52</sup>

*Fifth*, finally, the descent of Jesus into the waters of the Jordan, according to Meier, must have something to do with sin. Confession of sins was part of the public liturgy of ancient Israel in the post-exilic times. It did not have to signify a direct involvement in wrongdoing but a recognition that the believer was part of a nation of sinners, being in need of conversion. This is how Ezra prayed, after having discovered the sins of his people (Ezra 9:6-15; Neh 9:6-37). In this way, other great leaders of Israel, such as Daniel, prayed in solidarity with the people (Dan 3:29; 9:5,15). A similar prayer can also be found in the Qumran community, whose members profess (1QS 1.24-25): “We have acted sinfully, we have transgressed, we have sinned, we have committed evil, we and our fathers before us.”<sup>53</sup> Jesus could have shown similar solidarity with sinful Israel by immersing Himself in the waters of the Jordan and asking God to restore his chosen people.<sup>54</sup> Meier does not answer the question of whether He was confessing his sins at the same time. According to him, this issue is beyond the reach of a historian.<sup>55</sup> Dunn also sees a penitential rite in the baptism of Jesus, similar to the prophets identifying themselves with the sins of the people, adding to it also submission to God’s will and a commitment to fulfil the mission entrusted by God.<sup>56</sup> The idea of the solidarity of the Messiah entering the waters of the Jordan finds many sympathizers and takes many forms. Edward Burrows argues that Jesus by the Jordan likely represents a converting community, the first fruit of God’s new people. The Messiah reinterprets the rite by applying it to Himself; there is nothing He needs to be cleansed of, but He renews his dedication to

51 P. Hollenbach, “The Conversion of Jesus. Jesus the Baptizer to Jesus to Healer,” *ANRW. 11.25.1* (ed. W. Haase) (Berlin: De Gruyter 1982) 199–201. As a representative of the middle class, Jesus feels part of a system that persecutes and oppresses the poor. Quoted after Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 111–113.

52 C.R. Holladay, “Baptism in the New Testament and Its Cultural Milieu: A Response to Everett Ferguson, Baptism in the Early Church,” *J ECS* 20/3 (2012) 353.

53 After F. García Martínez – E.J.C. Tigchelaar (eds.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition (Translations)* (Leiden – New York: Brill 1997) 71.

54 Similarly, W.L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1974) 54; J.R. Donahue – D.J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark* (SP 2; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press 2002) 65; Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 132; Boring, *Mark*, 44.

55 Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 115.

56 Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 36.

God's will.<sup>57</sup> In turn, Jeffrey Gibbs, drawing on the Gospel of Matthew, argues that Jesus by the Jordan represents Israel but also the Gentiles, and as the Servant of the Lord He fulfils God's plan of salvation. He is the one on whose behalf the nations will be baptized.<sup>58</sup>

In the latter interpretation, history is closely intertwined with Matthew's theological message, which the historical-critical school tries to avoid. The austere reconstruction of the latter leads to the statement that Jesus, upon his baptism in the Jordan, severs ties with his former life, recognizes Himself as a member of the sinful chosen people, turns to God with all his heart, recognizes John as an eschatological prophet and probably stays with him for some time, becoming his disciple.<sup>59</sup> Where is the baptismal theology that the tradition of the Church derived from this scene? It remained behind the door of historical-critical analysis as unreliable because we find it in the theophany occurring immediately after the baptism.<sup>60</sup> According to researchers such as Meier and Dunn, it is naive to look for Jesus' understanding of baptism in the theophany that follows.<sup>61</sup> Why? Firstly, because penetrating the psychology of Jesus alone recalls the spirit of old liberal biographies and has nothing to do with the scientificity, whose measure the historical criterion is.<sup>62</sup> Second, in theophany we are dealing with a Christian midrash, not a description of a historical fact. Meier notices here allusions to Isa 11:2 and 61:1 (the Spirit resting upon the Messiah), a reference to Ps 2:7 (divine filiation), to the story of Abraham from Genesis 22 (beloved son), to the Servant's Song from Isa 42:1 (the theme of God's will and the gift of the Spirit for the Servant), to Ezek 1:1 (location of the vision by the river) and to Isa 63:19 (the tearing of the heavens).<sup>63</sup> The theophany does not reflect the experience of Christ, but what the early Church knew and thought about Him on the basis of his entire

57 E.W. Burrows, "Baptism in Mark and Luke," *Baptism, the New Testament and the Church. Historical and Contemporary Studies in Honour of R.E.O. White* (eds. S.E. Porter – R.E.O. White) (JSNT-Sup 171; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1999) 101–103. With regard to the Gospel of Matthew, similar views are held by D.L. Turner, *Matthew* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 2008) 119, who also claims that Jesus identifies with the rest of Israel, being repentant and righteous.

58 J.A. Gibbs, "Israel Standing with Israel. The Baptism of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel (Matt 3:13-17)," *CBQ* 64/3 (2002) 511–526.

59 Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 129; Webb, "Jesus' Baptism," 261, 301–305.

60 On the historicity of theophany, see Webb, "Jesus' Baptism," 274–278. The author ultimately decides to analyze it separately from the historical meaning of the ritual of baptism itself, treating it as a foreign entity.

61 Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 106; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 374–377.

62 Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 106; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 374–375. See also similar skepticism towards the psychological analyses of Jesus in D.H. Juel, *Mark* (ACNT; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg 1990) 37; Stein, *Mark*, 60.

63 Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 106–107. Similarly, Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 374, and virtually all commentators analyzing the Jordan baptism scene in the synoptic Gospels.

mission.<sup>64</sup> It reveals the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies in Jesus, the true Son of God, the messianic descendant of David, the eschatological prophet and Servant of the Lord, who surpasses John in power and dignity. The description of the theophany arose out of the need to cover the confusion that resulted from the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan and to emphasize the greatness of the Messiah's figure in relation to the Baptist.<sup>65</sup> In Meier's opinion, qualifying the story of theophany as a later Christian composition denies its value for a historian.<sup>66</sup>

Meier is essentially supported here by Dunn, whose stance evolved somewhat in subsequent monographs. In *Jesus and the Spirit*, the author draws attention to the gradual development of the tradition visible in the baptismal pericope. First, from a private scene, which is how the baptism is portrayed in Mark, we move on to a public, verifiable event in Matthew and later Christian authors like Justin, who writes about fire being ignited in the Jordan (*Dial.* 88.3).<sup>67</sup> Second, the form of the story in which the actual events are retold from the perspective of the narrator, not Jesus, indicates that we deal with an early Christian creation here, not a record of the Messiah's experience.<sup>68</sup> There is no doubt that Jesus' activity is marked by his awareness of the gift of the Spirit and special sonship. According to Dunn, if the early Christian tradition linked these two elements to the baptism in the Jordan, it must have had good reasons for it. Baptism may have been the moment when Jesus' identity was crystallized, providing Him with a meaningful experience of the Spirit and sonship.<sup>69</sup>

According to the author, Jesus did not share this personal experience with his disciples, but He could have alluded to it, on the basis of which the story of the theophany by the Jordan was created.<sup>70</sup> The very fact that Christian communities practiced baptism could have also originated from Christ's stress on the importance of this ritual for his life.<sup>71</sup> The author allows here linking the baptism in the Jordan with the experience of the historical Jesus and emphasizes its "epochal significance" for the Master along with the two most significant elements, which

64 Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 107; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 374. Juel, *Mark*, 36: "There are hints that the story of Jesus has 'been written'."

65 Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 107.

66 Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 108.

67 Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 63; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 375–376. J. Marcus, *Mark 1–8. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB; New Haven – London: Yale University Press 2008) 164, recognizes that the public form may have arisen from the apologetic purposes of later Gospels. On the other hand, the private form may have also been a Markan invention, related to the so-called "Messianic secret." Similar views are held by Boring, *Mark*, 45.

68 J.D.G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit. A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (NTL; London: SCM 1975) 63; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 374–375.

69 Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 63.

70 Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 64–65.

71 Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 65.

the Spirit and sonship are.<sup>72</sup> Jesus experienced an increase in spiritual power by the Jordan, was anointed with God's eschatological Spirit and was chosen by God to fulfil a special mission. In his next book, *Jesus Remembered*, Dunn, based on what was said above, emphasizes much more strongly, however, that the theophany reflects the disciples' reflection on the identity and work of the Master. It can be said that the Jordan scene contains a reference to the filial consciousness of Jesus and his special gift of the Spirit (historical element), but ultimately everything is a construct of the tradition.<sup>73</sup> Dunn no longer repeats his observations on the importance of the baptism event for Jesus' understanding of his mission.<sup>74</sup> Ultimately, the author clearly separates the fact of baptism in the Jordan from its later interpretation which we find in the theophany.<sup>75</sup>

Is this an operation justified from the point of view of the character of the Gospel text? No, and several reasons may be adduced here. The first one is the nature of the ancient texts, which never present themselves as bare descriptions of facts. This feature of ancient historiography was emphasized by biblical scholars polemicizing with the historical-critical methodology during consecutive stages of research on the historical Jesus.<sup>76</sup> It is illegitimate to separate the text from the interpretation as they are integrally linked in ancient works.

Second, the syntactic and lexical markers that describe these two scenes also prevent the separation of baptism from the theophany. In Mark (1:10), theophany occurs the moment Jesus comes out of the water (*ἀναβαίνων ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος*).<sup>77</sup> In Matt 3:16, the vision takes place right after Jesus comes ashore, which is emphasized by the construction *καὶ ἰδοὺ*. In Luke, the theophany occurs while Jesus is still praying in the Jordan. Participles in genitive (*βαπτισθέντος καὶ προσευχομένου*) describe baptism and prayer as successive and at the same time as introducing the scene in which heaven opens, the Spirit descends, and Jesus hears the voice (all these activities are described with the infinitive aorist: *ἀνεωχθῆναι τὸν οὐρανὸν, καὶ καταβῆναι τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, καὶ φωνῆν ἐξ*

<sup>72</sup> Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 65.

<sup>73</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 376.

<sup>74</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 377. Similar views are held by Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 108.

<sup>75</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 371–374.

<sup>76</sup> See especially C.H. Dodd, *The Founder of Christianity* (New York: Macmillan 1970). See also J.M. Robinson, *A New Quest for the Historical Jesus* (SBT 25; London: SCM Press 1959); Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth*; E. Fuchs, *Zur Frage nach dem historischen Jesus*, 2 ed. (Gesammelte Aufsätze. Ernst Fuchs 2; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1965). Keith ("The Narratives of the Gospels and the Historical Jesus," 441–448) draws attention to the historical value of the event description, into which the interpretation of Evangelists and their communities is integrated.

<sup>77</sup> According to R.A. Guelich (*Mark 1–8: 26* [WBC 34A; Dallas, TX: Word 1989] 31) *εὐθύς* emphasizes the connection between baptism and theophany. Similarly, on the unity of the two scenes and *καὶ εὐθύς* functioning as a frequent conjunction in Mark, see Malina, *Chrzest Jezusa w czterech Ewangeljach*, 158–159; Stein, *Mark*, 56.

οὐρανοῦ γενέσθαι) (Luke 3,21-22).<sup>78</sup> In all of these cases, baptism and theophany are closely related.

Third, the separation of baptism and theophany ignores the thematic unity between the two scenes of the same event. In Mark (1:5), all those who come to John confess their sins, stating that they are a community of sinners whose relationship with God requires healing. The answer to this dramatic departure from God is Jesus, to whom the Father confesses: “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11). The one who is the cure stands against the community of sinners who seek a remedy for their departure from God. The connecting theme here is the sin that drives a person away from God, which is overcome in the new relationship of closeness that sinners receive in the Son.<sup>79</sup> In Matthew, in turn, the Baptist, resisting and stating that it is he who needs baptism from Jesus, hears from Him: “Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness” (Matt 3:15). “All righteousness” here means the will of the Father, God’s plan of salvation and the Scriptures which are fulfilled in the mission and person of Jesus.<sup>80</sup> The pleasure of the Father, announced by the voice by the Jordan (Matt 3:17), is related precisely to the fulfilment of God’s redeeming justice in the Son.<sup>81</sup> Finally, in Luke, Jesus, being baptized and praying in the Jordan, is shown in solidarity with people who also seek God’s will, coming to John (Luke 3:21).

The baptism scene is not only closely related to the theophany. It can be said bluntly that baptism is clearly subordinate to and serves the theophany.<sup>82</sup> Without theophany, the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan makes no sense. It is captured the most distinctly by John, who eliminates the description of the event itself, quoting only the testimony of the Baptist: “I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason that He might be revealed to Israel” (John 1:31). The baptism by John clearly serves to reveal the identity of Jesus, whom he calls the Lamb taking away the sins of the world (1:29), one of higher dignity than himself (1:30), one on whom the Spirit rests, and who will baptize with the Spirit (1:32-33). He is the Son of God (John 1:34). The revelation

78 I. Howard Marshall (*The Gospel of Luke. Commentary on the Greek Text* [NIGTC; Exeter: Paternoster 1978] 152) rightly notes that the baptism scene is only an introduction to the theophany, which is the real object of Luke’s interest.

79 Malina, *Chrzest Jezusa w czterech Ewangeliach*, 205–218, 230–237.

80 D.A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13* (WBC 33A; Dallas, TX: Word 1993) 56–57; Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 142–143; Malina, *Chrzest Jezusa w czterech Ewangeliach*, 108–116. For possible interpretations of the formula, see Davies – Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 325–327.

81 For the relationship between righteousness (*dik-*) and God’s pleasure in the Old Testament, see Ps 5:13; 50:21; Sir 9:12; Hab 2:4; Mal 2:17 (LXX).

82 Guelich, *Mark 1–8*: 26, 31: „Thus, John’s baptism was the occasion rather than the means of the Spirit’s coming to Jesus and the voice speaking from heaven.”

of the filial dignity of Jesus, endowed with the Spirit, stands also at the centre of the baptismal pericope in the Synoptics (Mark 1:10-11; Matt 3:16-17; Luke 3:22). It can be concluded that the baptism by John is only a time-space frame for this event.

Jesus comes to the Jordan to begin his mission as the Messiah, the one who will cleanse and transform Israel with the Holy Spirit. At this point, one can also face the question of whether Jesus gains any special awareness of sonship by the Jordan.<sup>83</sup> The scholars of the historical-critical school consider such reflections to be pointless, unscientific, and missing the interests of the Evangelists. Biblical scholars open to a synchronic reading of the New Testament, such as Beasley-Murray, argue, however, that this question is to be faced by those who study the early Christian tradition sooner or later.<sup>84</sup> The quoted author claims that the pericopes describing the baptism in the Jordan do not indicate the new filial identity that Jesus gains there. Rather, they depict Him as certain of His identity which motivates Him to act.<sup>85</sup> Beasley-Murray's statement can be supported by the following observations:

First, although Jesus is baptized by John, we never hear Him confess his sins or those of Israel anywhere. In Mark, He is not at all the recipient of a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins and comes out of the water immediately without a confession of sins (Mark 1:9; cf. also Matt 3:16). This would confirm not only his sinlessness implied by the entire New Testament tradition, but also the fact that He does not come to the Jordan to sympathize with Israel's sins, asking for their forgiveness. The Evangelists portray Jesus separately, unrelated to people receiving baptism by John. Mark and Matthew describe Him as being away from the crowd and coming from Galilee (Mark 1:9; Matt 3:13).<sup>86</sup>

<sup>83</sup> On the various theories related to the new consciousness and status that Jesus gains by the Jordan, see E. van Eck, "The Baptism of Jesus in Mark. A Status Transformation Ritual," *Neot* 30/1 (1996) 187–188. The author himself, using sociological tools (the patron-client model), argues that by the Jordan Jesus experiences a status reversal, becoming a broker of God's kingdom and enabling clients from the fringes of religious and social structures to access God, the Patron (pp. 201–211). See also J.R. Edwards, "The Baptism of Jesus according to the Gospel of Mark," *JETS* 34/1 (1991) 55–57, who, opposing various "adoptionist" theories, refers to the canonical reading of the New Testament (Pauline texts) and the testimony of the Church Fathers. Dunn (*Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 28) claims that discussing baptism in the Jordan through the lens of Jesus' experience, adoption, divine or messianic consciousness goes outside the scope and interests of the Gospel authors.

<sup>84</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 45.

<sup>85</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 60. Dunn (*Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 29) claims that Jesus was led to the baptism in the Jordan by his messianic consciousness, although this is difficult to prove, according to the author.

<sup>86</sup> R.T. France, *The Gospel of Mark. A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans – Carlisle: Paternoster 2002) 75; Malina, *Chryst Jezusa w czterech Ewangeliach*, 200–201.

Luke also distinguishes the baptism of Jesus from the crowd, treating the latter as the background for the former (Luke 3:21).<sup>87</sup>

Secondly, Jesus arrives at the banks of the Jordan confident of not only having committed no sin but also of his unique relationship with the Father. This relationship is also confirmed by the title *ὁ ἀγαπητός* (Matt 3:17, Mark 1:11, Luke 3:22) which, apart from “beloved,” can also mean “the only” Son. It communicates the unique relationship which is the foundation of Jesus’ mission.<sup>88</sup> The Father’s voice does not make the Son such one but it confirms and proclaims this truth.<sup>89</sup> In turn, *εὐδόκησα* in the aorist may suggest that God’s divine favour was granted to Jesus much earlier and lasted his entire life.<sup>90</sup> This is especially evident in Luke, where the identity of Jesus as the Son of God and the expected descendant of David is already revealed at his conception (Luke 1:31-35).<sup>91</sup>

Moreover, Mark 1:10, in contrast with Luke 3:21 and Matt 3:16, does not describe the open heaven (*ἀνοίγω*), which Jesus sees, but the torn heaven (*σχιζομένους τοὺς οὐρανούς*). The same verb *σχιζώ* appears again in Mark 15:38 as part of the description of Jesus’ death, when the temple curtain was torn in two, from top to bottom. It is commonly interpreted as overcoming the gulf that separated God and humankind, and signifies the full access to the Father that was ensured by the Son’s sacrifice.<sup>92</sup> Edwards, noting references to Jewish traditions (Isa 64:1; T. Levi 18.6-8; T. Jud. 24.1-3), discerns in Mark 1:10 the inauguration of God’s kingdom and the revelation of the Son’s dignity.<sup>93</sup> These would be confirmed by the descent of the Spirit, which is interpreted by the prophets as a gift of the eschatological times (Ezek 36–37; Joel 3:1) and a special attribute of the Messiah (Isa 11:2; 42:1; 61:1). William Lane emphasizes the cosmic significance of the baptism event as reflected in the heaven “being torn apart.”<sup>94</sup> On the other hand, Malina proposes that this vision be interpreted as a union of the Father and Son’s hearts in love for sinners.<sup>95</sup> By the river Jordan, Jesus,

<sup>87</sup> Malina, *Chrzest Jezusa w czterech Ewangeliach*, 307–308.

<sup>88</sup> Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 57; Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26, 34*; J. Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20* (WBC 35A; Dallas, TX: Word 1989) 164–165; L.T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (SP 3; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press 1991) 69; Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 59; France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 82; Stein, *Mark*, 59; Boring, *Mark*, 45.

<sup>89</sup> France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 83; Boring, *Mark*, 46 with reference to Mark 9:7: if “this is my beloved Son” is a performative language which enacts adoption, then Jesus was adopted twice in the Gospel of Mark.

<sup>90</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 160.

<sup>91</sup> Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20*, 165; D.L. Bock, *Luke. I. 1:1–9:50* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 1994) 344.

<sup>92</sup> France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 77; Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 165–166; Boring, *Mark*, 45.

<sup>93</sup> Edwards, “The Baptism of Jesus according to the Gospel of Mark,” 44–45. The general association is correct, although the texts referred to by the author contain the verb *ἀνοίγω*.

<sup>94</sup> Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 55.

<sup>95</sup> Malina, *Chrzest Jezusa w czterech Ewangeliach*, 252–258.

spreading his Gospel among sinners, shows solidarity with the Father's broken heart which suffers because of human sin. The final redemptive tearing of God's heart takes place on the cross, where also the Son's heart is torn apart.

Dwelling further on Jesus' filial consciousness, it should be noted that in Matthew it is expressed in the fact that the Son comes to fulfil "all righteousness," which means that already prior to the baptism He was in complete union with the Father's will and his plan for the salvation of humanity (Matt 3:15). The Father in turn affirms that the Son (in the third person) is his "beloved one" (Matt 3:17). This word, as Luz terms it, is a statement "aimed at objectivization," addressed not to Jesus but to the witnesses. It proclaims the identity of which the Son Himself is certain.<sup>96</sup> Finally, in Luke, Jesus' prayer reveals his special bond with the Father, as testified by the descending Spirit (Luke 3:21). The prayer in the Gospel of Luke is not only one of the leading themes but also an issue related to the revelation of God the Father and divine filiation of the believers. The prayer and the presence of the Spirit by the Jordan emphasise Jesus' special relationship with the Father.<sup>97</sup>

Third, Jesus comes to the banks of the Jordan aware not only of his sinless consciousness and special relationship with the Father but also of his mission. According to Mark, the Jordan is part of Jesus' opening towards sinners, which will achieve completion in Jerusalem. The same verb ἀναβαίνω, with which Mark describes Jesus' ascent onto the bank of the river Jordan, will also describe his entry into Jerusalem (Mark 10:32-33).<sup>98</sup> To sinners, separated from God by their sin, Jesus offers a new filial relationship modelled on his relationship with the Father. The River Jordan is only the first stop on his journey to preach the Good News. In Matthew, similarly, Jesus comes to begin his mission and fulfil God's redemptive righteousness, one element of which is baptism (Matt 3:15). His response to John's objections also suggests that the baptism plays an important role in fulfilling Jesus' greater mission.<sup>99</sup>

Finally, what is the Spirit's role by the Jordan River? It is not described as an intermediary in the bestowment of the filial gift to Jesus but as a participant and one who confirms this experience. Dunn also considers the Spirit the one who anoints Jesus for his future mission.<sup>100</sup> The Spirit, of course, may herald Jesus' mission full of divine might, but it is still not enough. Jesus is the beloved Son of God. The Spirit, having descended upon Him, confirms his special relationship and union with the Father. It will accompany not only the powerful

<sup>96</sup> Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 143. Similarly, Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 134; Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 165 (in Luke the author does not postulate the public nature of the event).

<sup>97</sup> Malina, *Chryst Jezusa w czterech Ewangeliach*, 309-313.

<sup>98</sup> Malina, *Chryst Jezusa w czterech Ewangeliach*, 159, 238-241.

<sup>99</sup> R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2007) 119-120.

<sup>100</sup> Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 24, 26, 29, 32, 33; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 371-374, 377.

words and deeds of Jesus, but also the gradual revelation of his sonship. The Spirit accompanying the Son can be seen in the Synoptics in the scene of the temptation (Matt 4:1; Mark 1:12; Luke 4:1), in the inauguration of Jesus' public activity in Nazareth (Luke 4:18-19) and in his proclamation of the kingdom by miracles and casting out demons (Matt 12:28, 31–32; Mark 3:29; Luke 12:10-12).<sup>101</sup> Similarly, in the Gospel of John, Jesus depicts Himself as the one sent by God, one to whom the Father gave the Spirit without measure (John 3:34). He points at his words which are Spirit and life (John 6:63), mentions the Spirit who will flow from within Him (John 7:37-39) and the Paraclete who will remind of his words and lead the disciples to the fullness of the truth in the Son (John 14:17,26, 15:26-27, 16:13-15). The Gospels illustrate the historical rather than psychological development of Jesus' identity which overlaps with the successive stages of the salvation history. The Son, entering them, shapes them and allows Himself to be shaped by them, experiencing an ever deeper filial relationship with the Father.<sup>102</sup> The connection between the Spirit and the gift of sonship is also addressed by Paul in whose thought we may find a link between the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan and the baptism of a Christian.

#### 4. The Relationship between the Baptism of Jesus and the Baptism of a Christian

The historical-critical exegesis denies, as we have seen, any *historical* connection between the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan and the baptism of a Christian.<sup>103</sup> Bultmann finds the connection to be derivative and fabricated by the Christian tradition which created a "legend" describing a scene which took place by

<sup>101</sup> According to Dunn (*Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 29–31), the descent of the Spirit makes Jesus the new Adam. This is evident in Mark and Matthew, where Jesus – the new Adam is tempted immediately after receiving the Spirit and, unlike the first Adam, emerges victorious from this trial (pp. 29–30). Similar typology can be found in Luke, who begins his genealogy of Jesus with Adam in (p. 31). This analogy only to a limited extent reflects the function of the Spirit in the baptism by the Jordan and in the further public activity of Jesus.

<sup>102</sup> Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 28–29. Dunn understands the development of Jesus' filial relationship also as a qualitative one: at each stage Jesus, being the Son and the Messiah, enters an ever deeper state of his sonship and messianic identity. In his later *Jesus and the Spirit*, Dunn maintains his statement on the Spirit anointing Jesus, but he refrains from determining whether the event by the Jordan was the summit or the catalyst of the experience of Jesus. He does not link it causatively with the gift of sonship, treating the Spirit and sonship as two separate dimensions of God's experience. See Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 66–67.

<sup>103</sup> See Stein, *Mark*, 56 and other authors who deny this link in: H. Kvalbein, "The Baptism of Jesus as a Model for Christian Baptism. Can the Idea be Traced Back to New Testament Times?," *ST* 50/1 (1996) 80, n. 5–6.

the Jordan. It is nothing but a record of the post-paschal baptismal practice placed in a pre-paschal context. Christ's messianic identity is linked here with the gift of the Spirit, which, as Bultmann argues, exhibits later Hellenistic influences.<sup>104</sup> Dunn, in turn, traces the origins of the practice of early Christian baptism in Jesus' command to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt 28:18-20).<sup>105</sup> Moreover, he states that what Jesus experienced was not, in the strict sense, baptism and cannot be compared to the baptism of a Christian.<sup>106</sup> First of all, by the Jordan we deal not so much with Christ's personal experience but the beginning of a new era of salvation. While John still belongs to the old *aeon*, the Spirit's descent upon the Messiah inaugurates the new, long-awaited time of the fulfilment of the eschatological promises.<sup>107</sup> Jesus is the first one to enter it, bringing others with him.<sup>108</sup>

Second, as Dunn asserts, the Spirit descends upon Jesus in the Jordan not as a consequence of the rite of baptism, which serves as a backdrop here, but as a result of the act of surrendering Himself completely to the Father's will. The only thing that connects baptism with the descent of the Spirit is the conversion and submission to God's will.<sup>109</sup> Dunn is again right in his emphasizing the strict connection between the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus and the moment of his turning to God. A similar connection appears in Acts 2:38: "Repent," says Peter to those who convert on the Day of Pentecost, "and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."<sup>110</sup> One may agree with Dunn that in the baptismal scene the water rite itself does not hold any central position; however, there is no reason to separate it from the descent of the Spirit or to put it in opposition towards it, as the author does.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>104</sup> R. Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, 5 ed. (FRLANT 12; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1979) 263–265. Likewise, H.D. Betz, "Jesus' Baptism and the Origins of the Christian Ritual," *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism. Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity* (eds. D. Hellholm et al.) (BZNW 176; Berlin – Boston, MA: De Gruyter 2011) 392–393, who suggests Mark's Christology as the reason for placing Jesus' baptism at the beginning of the Gospel. Mark, in turn, is influenced by Paul, when he describes the inauguration of Jesus' messianic mission as the Son of God according to the Spirit (Rom 1:3-4).

<sup>105</sup> J.D.G. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem* (Christianity in the Making 2; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2009) 186. Similarly, Nolland, "In such a manner it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness," 70, 76–80.

<sup>106</sup> Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 32–34.

<sup>107</sup> Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 24–28, 31.

<sup>108</sup> Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 32.

<sup>109</sup> Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 36–37.

<sup>110</sup> See also 1 Cor 6:11 (ablution, sanctification, justification and the Spirit).

<sup>111</sup> Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 34–35.

Meier and other scholars, e.g., Beasley-Murray, point to classic texts such as Romans 6 to indicate that the inspiration for New Testament baptismal theology is Jesus' Passover, his death and resurrection. Paul in Rom 6:3-4 indeed speaks of the baptism by which believers were submerged in the death of the Son in order to rise with Him to a new life. Immersion in the death signifies the union of a Christian with Christ and participation in resurrection similar to that of the Son (Rom 6:5). This implies the destruction of the body of sin and liberation from its slavery (Rom 6:6-7) but also participation in the life of Christ and his resurrection (Rom 6:8-9). The connection between Christian baptism and Jesus' Passover is obvious and fundamental in Paul. Through baptism, the believers experience the effects of the saving work of Christ, through which their sin is erased and the prospect of resurrection opens before them. The immersion in the paschal mystery of the Son of God also motivates them to break away from sin in the present life (Rom 6:1,14).

According to Beasley-Murray, there is no reference to death and resurrection in the scene by the Jordan, upon which the later Christian baptismal theology is founded. The author, however, is inclined to recognize that the baptism of Jesus and the baptism of a Christian bring about the same effects: the gift of community, the Spirit and divine filiation. So why do the New Testament authors not draw a parallel between the experience of Christ and the experience of a Christian? According to Beasley-Murray, with whom Dunn agrees as we saw earlier, the reason is the uniqueness of the baptism of the Messiah. However, since the baptism of Jesus marks the beginning of all his salvific activity, from prophesying to Parousia, it is here, as the author believes, where the roots of Christian baptism also lie. Moreover, the Messiah, as a representative figure, presages the baptism of all believers.<sup>112</sup> Beasley-Murray thus identifies an integral link between the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan and the baptism of a Christian, but he does not see it in the New Testament authors, as they present the baptism of the Messiah as unique in all respects.

Michael Labahn, like Beasley-Murray, perceives both continuation and discontinuity between the baptism of Jesus and the experience of a Christian.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>112</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 62–66.

<sup>113</sup> On the origins of early Christian baptismal practices, continuity and discontinuity between the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan and the baptism of a Christian, see M. Labahn, "Kreative Erinnerung als nachösterliche Nachschöpfung. Der Ursprung der christlichen Taufe," *Abtution, Initiation, and Baptism. Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity* (eds. D. Hellholm et al.) (BZNW 176; Berlin – Boston, MA: De Gruyter 2011) 337–376. Among those who find a continuity between the early Christian practice of baptism and the baptism of Jesus, see Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 62–67; K. Aland, *Neutestamentliche Entwürfe* (TB 63; München: Kaiser 1979) 187–196; G. Lohfink, *Studien zum Neuen Testament* (SBAB 5; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk 1989) 173–198; L. Schenke, *Die Urgemeinde. Geschichtliche und theologische Entwicklung* (Stuttgart – Berlin – Köln: Kohlhammer 1990) 115; K. Backhaus, *Die "Jüngerkreise" des Täufers Jo-*

According to the author, the foundations of early Christian baptism are underlain by the historic event of Jesus' baptism, transformed into the rite of entering a new community. The reinterpreted rite of John and the baptism of Jesus become a model for the Christian rite, as evidenced by the factual and structural parallels, while the fundamental difference between them is, of course, determined by the uniqueness of the Messiah's experience. The starting point for early Christian baptism are eventually the words of the Risen One, establishing the institution of baptism (Matt 28:16-19). This ritual introduces one into a new community and into the space of new life in Christ. The old baptism by John, the baptism of repentance, is transformed here into a ritual of turning to God and to his life, grounded in the Lord's death and resurrection (1 Cor 6:9-11).<sup>114</sup>

One can agree on the formal contiguity between the baptism of John and the baptism of a Christian mentioned by the author, as well as on its function of introducing into the community and the space of new life in Christ. It is also absolutely necessary to emphasize the uniqueness of the Messiah's baptism, in which the Spirit, affirming his dignity as the beloved Son, accompanies and anoints Him for his saving mission. Contrary to Jesus, a Christian receives through baptism the gifts of divine filiation and the Spirit, which we are not entitled to by nature. Having recognised these differences, however, what strikes in most researchers is linking baptism only to Jesus' death and resurrection. Thus, baptismal references in Paul are discontinued at Romans 6, without taking into consideration Romans 8.<sup>115</sup> Should we not, however, interpret baptismal immersion into the Lord's Pass-

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*hannes* (Paderborner theologische Studien 19; Paderborn *et al.*: Schöningh 1991) 332–333; A. Benoit – C. Munier, *Die Taufe in der alten Kirche. (1.-3. Jahrhundert)* (Traditio Christiana 9; Bern: Lang 1994) (Introduction); J. Marcus, "Jesus' Baptismal Vision," *NTS* 41/4 (1995) 513 (admits the possibility of linking the baptism of Jesus with the baptism of a Christian through the theme of sonship in Gal 4:5-6 and Rom 8:15); Kvalbein, "The Baptism of Jesus as a Model for Christian Baptism," 67–83 plus others mentioned by the author on p. 80, n. 8; Hartman, *Into the Name of the Lord Jesus*, 9, 31–35; Burrows, "Baptism in Mark and Luke," 102–103, 113–115 (the author indicates three baptismal themes which gain special significance for a Christian: devotion to God, purification and a new beginning); B. Oestreich, "Die Taufe als Symbol für das eschatologische Gericht," *Die Taufe. Theologie und Praxis* (ed. R. Badenas) (Studien zur adventistischen Ekklesiologie 3; Lüneburg: Advent 2002) 49–51; Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 100 (the gift of the Spirit, sonship and the obedience of Jesus to be imitated by a Christian – p. 102 – Matt 3:14-15). Similarly Holladay, "Baptism in the New Testament and Its Cultural Milieu," 351, 353.

<sup>114</sup> Labahn, "Kreative Erinnerung als nachösterliche Nachschöpfung," 367–368.

<sup>115</sup> References to Romans 8 are also missing in: R.P. Carlson, "The Role of Baptism in Paul's Thought," *Int* 47/3 (1993) 255–266; Hartman, *Into the Name of the Lord Jesus*, 51–81 (cf. only modest scattered references to baptism and the gift of sonship [pp. 55, 81]); Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 146–165 (the author spots a connection between the gift of the Christian filiation and the baptism of Jesus [p. 101], but does not elaborate on this theme in Paul); D. Hellholm, "Vorgeformte Tauftraditionen und deren Benutzung in den Paulusbriefen," *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism. Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity* (eds. D. Hellholm *et al.*) (BZNW 176; Berlin – Boston, MA: De Gruyter 2011) 415–495; B.J. Lietaert Peerbolte, "Paul, Baptism, and Religious Experience," *Experientia. II. Linking Text and Experience* (eds. C. Shantz – R.A. Werline) (EJL 35; At-

over more broadly, as an immersion into the whole life of Christ enlightened by the paschal events? We are allowed to hold such understanding by the authors of the Gospels, who link the baptism of Jesus and subsequent theophany with his death (see the torn heaven theme in Mark 1:10; 15:38) and with the entire saving mission which begins by the Jordan (cf. the fulfilment of all God's righteousness in Matt 3:15). Taking this perspective, it is worth looking at Romans 8, which opens up a whole range of parallels between the baptism of the Lord in the Jordan and the baptism of a Christian.<sup>116</sup>

In this chapter, Paul describes the new life in Christ, which the believers have come to partake in.<sup>117</sup> It implies the gift of God's Spirit, which appears in this chapter as many as 20 times. It is the Spirit whose law liberates believers from the law of sin and death (Rom 8:2) and makes possible the fulfilment of the righteous requirement of the Law in them (Rom 8:4).<sup>118</sup> The Spirit teaches the baptized its way of thinking which consists in imitating Christ in his attitude of humility, love and service toward others (Rom 8:5-6).<sup>119</sup> The same Spirit dwells in us to guarantee our belonging to Christ and resurrection similar to his resurrection (Rom 8:9-11). The Spirit, leading the believers, enables them to call themselves children of God (Rom 8:14). Paul states that Christians have received the Spirit of God's adoption in which they can call out to God "Abba! Father!" (Rom 8:15). The Spirit's testimony supports our spirit, reminding us that we are God's children (Rom 8:16) and introducing us ever more intensively into

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lanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature 2012) 190–199. The only one who truly ponders on linking Romans 8 to the baptism of Jesus is Kvalbein, "The Baptism of Jesus as a Model for Christian Baptism," 76–78. Modest references to baptismal elements in Romans 8 can be found in: N.R. Petersen, "Pauline Baptism and 'Secondary Burial,'" *HTR* 79/1–3 (1986) 218–220; Burrows, "Baptism in Mark and Luke," 114 (the author thinks of the tension between the already and not yet in the life of Jesus and the Christian in Luke 12:50 and Rom 8:23 – reference to baptismal metaphor rather than event); O. Wischmeyer, "Hermeneutische Aspekte der Taufe im Neuen Testament," *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism. Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity* (eds. D. Hellholm et al.) (BZNW 176; Berlin – Boston, MA: De Gruyter 2011) 745: "Zugleich tritt die kommunitive Qualität der Taufe in Erscheinung. Erst in Röm 6 findet Paulus zu einer thematisch eigenen Taufdeutung, und zwar im literarischen Zusammenhang seiner christologisch-soteriologischen Ausführungen in Röm 5–8. Hier liegen die hermeneutisch entscheidenden Deutungspotentiale der paulinischen Taufinterpretation."

116 The mentioned authors of course refer to Gal 3:26-27, where a direct reference to baptism and the gift of filiation appears, but they still omit Rom 8:14-17, where allusions to baptism are connected with the Spirit, sonship, participation in the cross and glory of Christ.

117 See M. Kowalski, "Nowe życie jak ziarno gorczycy. Spójność argumentacji retorycznej Pawła w Rz 5–8," *BibAn* 7/4 (2017) 459–485.

118 For possible interpretations of this phrase, see R. Penna, "Come interpretare la «giustizia della legge» in Rom 8:4," *Atti del VI Simposio di Tarso su S. Paolo apostolo* (ed. L. Padovese) (Turchia. La Chiesa e la Sua Storia 14; Roma: Istituto Francescano di Spiritualità. Pontificio Ateneo Antoniano 2000) 25–30.

119 See M. Kowalski, "The Cognitive Spirit and the Novelty of Paul's Thought in Rom 8:5-6," *Bib* 101/1 (2020) 47–68.

the mystery of divine filiation.<sup>120</sup> By linking our life to that of Christ, the Spirit also leads us to the inheritance of future glory in the Son (Rom 8:17). Its first gifts foreshadow the fulfilment that we will experience on the day of the resurrection, which the apostle calls the redemption of our bodies (Rom 8:23).

It is hard not to notice how many parallels run between the picture of new life in Romans 8 and Jesus' baptism in the Jordan. Let us list them synthetically:

1) *The Spirit*. In the description of each of the Evangelists, by the Jordan, the Spirit descends upon Jesus (Mark 1:10; Matt 3:16; Luke 3:22). In Paul (Rom 8:4), as in Matt 3:15, the presence of the Spirit is closely related to the fulfilment of God's righteousness. Just as it descended upon Jesus, filling Him, anointing for his mission, and allowing its fulfilment, so by coming to the Christians it helps them to fulfil the saving plan of God in their lives. As in Christ the prophecies are fulfilled according to Matthew, so they are fulfilled in the baptized who become partakers of the New Covenant, in which the Law becomes interiorized and written in their hearts (Jer 31:33; Ezek 36:26-28).<sup>121</sup> Fulfilling the righteous requirement of the Law in the life of believers in Rom 8:4 means living in accordance with the Spirit (Rom 8:4-5,12-13), submitting to God's will expressed in his Law (Rom 8:7) and pleasing God (Rom 8:8), which strongly connects the perspectives of Matthew and Paul.

Additionally, the preposition εἰς in Mark and ἐπί in Matthew and Luke suggest the Spirit remains with Jesus, which is also confirmed by John, speaking about the descent of the Spirit (καταβαίνω) and its remaining (μένω) on Jesus (John 1:32).<sup>122</sup> What the Evangelists write about coincides with Rom 8:9-11, where Paul, using the terms οἰκέω and ἐνοικέω, describes the permanent dwelling of the Spirit in a Christian.<sup>123</sup> The constant and dynamic presence of the Spirit in Christ and in a Christian connects the scene of the baptism in the Jordan and the description of the new life acquired from the baptism in Rom 8:9-11. Finally, just as Jesus experiences the guidance of the Spirit after his baptism in the Jordan (Matt 4:1; Luke 4:1), so do believers experience it after baptism. The Spirit allows them to follow God's will (Rom 8:5) and resist the desires of the flesh (Rom 8:13). This makes a Christian's trail similar to the struggle of Jesus led by

<sup>120</sup> On the relational aspect of the Spirit's workings, see V. Rabens, *The Holy Spirit and Ethics in Paul. Transformation and Empowering for Religious-Ethical Life* (WUNT 2/283; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2010) 228–237.

<sup>121</sup> S. Lyonnet, "Rom 8,2-4 à la lumière de Jérémie 31 et d'Ézéchiel 35–39," *Etudes sur l'Épître aux Romains* (AnBib 120; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico 1990) 231–241.

<sup>122</sup> France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 78: "It is indeed possible that Mark's choice of this preposition was more theologically determined: just as other NT writers will speak of the Spirit 'dwelling in' believers, so he comes to Jesus not just as a temporary equipment for a specific task, but as a permanent presence in his life."

<sup>123</sup> On the verbs expressing the idea of permanent habitation, see LSJ, "οἰκέω," 1203; O. Michel, "οἰκέω," *TDNT* V, 135–136; BDAG, "ἐνοικέω," 338.

the Spirit and tempted in the wilderness after baptism (Matt 4:1; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-2).<sup>124</sup> The relationship between 8:12-13 and 8:14 (γάρα) also suggests that the gift of divine filiation to believers remains an essential tool in their struggle against sin, just as was for Jesus his awareness of God's love and sonship (Matt 3:17; 4:3; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22; 4:3).<sup>125</sup>

2) *Divine filiation and prayer.* The Spirit is closely related to Jesus' divine sonship and appears accompanied by vocabulary which confirms it. Immediately after the descent of the Spirit upon the Messiah, the Father's voice is heard, stating that He is the beloved Son in whom God is well pleased (Mark 1:11; Matt 3:17; Luke 3:22). The Spirit resting on Jesus confirms his special filial relationship with God. Likewise, in Rom 8:15, Paul describes the Spirit of adoption in which Christians cry out "Abba! Father!"<sup>126</sup> In Luke 3:21-22, the Spirit descends during Jesus' prayer, thus testifying to his special relationship with the Father. In Rom 8:15, the Spirit also accompanies the prayer "Abba! Father!" which is uttered by the baptized. Prayer, coupled with experiencing the Spirit, expresses, as in the case of Jesus, their dignity as God's children.<sup>127</sup>

There is also a fundamental difference between Christ who is the Son of God and believers who become adopted children of God (cf. *υιοθεσία* in Rom 8:15).<sup>128</sup> In their case, the Spirit *makes them* part of God's family, introducing them into community with the Father and the Son. Still, the same Spirit, like in the case of Christ, accompanies the development and maturation of the identity of believers who are sons and daughters of God, through their ever-deeper union with the Father. The Spirit not only conveys to the baptized that they are children of God (Rom 8:16) but also conforms them to Christ (Rom 8:5-6). It is a process

<sup>124</sup> D. Wenham, *Paul. Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans 1995) 348–350; J. Coulson, "Jesus and the Spirit in Paul's Theology. The Earthly Jesus," *CBQ* 79/1 (2017) 86.

<sup>125</sup> On the relationship between the identity of believers and their struggle against sin in Rom 8:12-13 and 14, see J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8* (WBC 38A; Dallas, TX: Word 1988) 462; T.J. Burke, *Adopted into God's Family. Exploring a Pauline Metaphor* (New Studies in Biblical Theology 22; Nottingham: Apollos – Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity 2006) 143–147; Rabens, *The Holy Spirit and Ethics in Paul*, 213–215; D.J. Venter, "The Implicit Obligations of Brothers, Debtors and Sons (Romans 8:12-17)," *Neot* 48/2 (2014) 294–298.

<sup>126</sup> Wenham, *Paul*, 346–348; Coulson, "Jesus and the Spirit in Paul's Theology," 86.

<sup>127</sup> On the "Abba" prayer in Rom 8:15 and imitating Christ in his relationship with the Father, see Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 22; Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 453–454; L. Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Leicester: Apollos – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1988) 316; B. Byrne, *Romans* (SP 6; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press 1996) 253; C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. I. Introduction and Commentary on Romans I–VIII* (ICC; Edinburgh: Clark 2004) 400; C.G. Kruse, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Cambridge, U.K.– Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans – Nottingham, U.K.: Apollos 2012) 337.

<sup>128</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 65; France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 82.

that continues and will come to an end during resurrection, in the future glory of the baptized (Rom 8:23).

3) *Open heaven*. In the scene of baptism, the Spirit descends from the open heaven, testifying to the identity of Jesus as the Son to whom the Father's glory belongs. Similarly, the Spirit, by introducing the baptized ever deeper into the mystery of divine filiation, assures them of the glory that awaits them, which they will share with Christ (Rom 8:17). The way to this glory leads through immersion in the entirety of Jesus' life, following Him in his attitudes (Rom 8:5-6) and suffering with Him (Rom 8:17).<sup>129</sup> The inheritance will culminate in the full conformation of believers to the Firstborn, which awaits them at the moment of resurrection (Romans 8:29). The title of "Firstborn" (*πρωτότοκος*), which Paul uses here, is synonymous with the "beloved one," which occurs in the baptism scene (Matt 3:17; Mark 1:11 and Luke 3:22).<sup>130</sup> The baptism of Jesus thus reveals not only his dignity but also the future communion with Him in the glory of the heavens, awaiting the baptized. Christ will not become "the Firstborn among many brethren" until He gathers many who, by following Him in their baptismal life, become similar to Him.

One can object that while there is a clear reference to baptism in Romans 6, it is not explicitly mentioned in Romans 8.<sup>131</sup> This chapter essentially describes the workings of the Spirit who introduces Christians into their new life in Christ. This is true, although two things are worth noting here. First, Romans 6 and 8 form an argumentative whole, describing the new life of the baptized, with chapter 7 being a kind of *interlude*.<sup>132</sup> In Rom 7:7-25, Paul illustrates the torn lives of those who do not belong to Christ, both Jews and Gentiles. What a contrast is depicted here between them and the believers led by the Spirit in chapter 8! The gift of the Spirit stems from the baptism described in chapter 6, although it is not limited to baptism. The Spirit works in believers through baptism, association with the work of Christ, and as a result of their conversion. In any case, the Christian's life described in Romans 8 flows from the baptism and immersion in Christ's death and resurrection as described in Romans 6, and it is also a baptismal life.

129 Kowalski, "The Cognitive Spirit and the Novelty of Paul's Thought in Rom 8,5-6," 53–56.

130 Malina, *Chrzest Jezusa w czterech Ewangeliach*, 131, n. 301.

131 Among those who connect Rom 8:14-17,23 with baptism, see e.g. T. Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the apostle Paul. The Material Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2010) 52–53, 69, 138; F.S. Tappenden, *Resurrection in Paul. Cognition, Metaphor, and Transformation* (Early Christianity and Its Literature 19; Atlanta, GA: SBL 2016) 155, 160–162, 231.

132 On the flow of Pauline arguments in Romans 5–8, see A. Gieniusz, *Romans 8,18-30. Suffering Does Not Thwart the Future Glory* (USFSJH 9; Atlanta, GA: Scholars 1999) 40–49; J.-N. Aletti, "The Rhetoric of Romans 5–8," *The Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture. Essays from the 1995 London Conference* (eds. S.E. Porter – T.H. Olbricht) (JSNTSup 146; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1997) 294–308.

Second, in Romans 8 itself, several possible allusions to baptism are discernible. In Rom 8:15, Paul speaks of the Spirit of adoption that believers received, using the aorist ἐλάβετε, which may indicate baptism as a specific point at which the Christian received the Spirit.<sup>133</sup> The very invocation “Abba!” is placed by many in a liturgical context, as a eucharistic or baptismal formula.<sup>134</sup> The first gifts of the Spirit (ἀπαρχή), mentioned by the apostle in Rom 8:23, may also refer to the sacrament of initiation. Baptism is the moment in which these gifts are placed within us. Just as the baptism in the Jordan reveals Christ’s filial identity, so the baptism of the Christian, by integrating him or her into the life of the Trinity, reveals their dignity as the children of God. In Romans 8, Paul presents an amazingly rich phenomenology of the Spirit, and his description obviously draws on the experience of the Church, which is also the apostle’s own experience. However, considering how much Christology shapes Paul’s thought at every level, an explanation for the phenomenon of the Spirit working in the baptized should be sought also in Christ.

How else could one understand the configuration of the three essential elements (Spirit, filiation, heritage of glory) that we find in Rom 8:14-17,23, if not by reference to what happened in the story of Jesus by the Jordan? The scene recorded in the Gospels is not a description of the Christian sacrament of initiation, and what the Lord experienced there remains unique to Him in many respects. However, on the basis of Romans 6 and 8, it can be argued that Jesus’ Passover, in conjunction with what happened in his life by the Jordan, could have served as a reference point for the Christian understanding of baptism

<sup>133</sup> J.M. Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God. An Exegetical Investigation into the Background of Huiothesia in the Pauline Corpus* (WUNT 2/48; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1992) 262–263; T.R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT 6; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker 1998) 423–424. The expression “to receive the Spirit” also appears in the context of baptism in Acts 2:38 and 10:47.

<sup>134</sup> On the liturgical context of “Abba” in the first century AD, see T.M. Taylor, “‘Abba, Father’ and Baptism,” *SJT* 11/1 (1958) 62–71; G. Braumann, *Vorpaulinische christliche Taufverkündigung bei Paulus* (BWANT 82; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 1962) 62–74; H. Paulsen, *Überlieferung und Auslegung in Römer 8* (WMANT 43; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag 1974) 88–93; U. Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer* (EKKNT; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag – Zurich: Benziger 1978) II, 137; W.A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians. The Social World of the apostle Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1983) 87–88; W. Bindemann, *Die Hoffnung der Schöpfung. Römer 8, 18–27 und die Frage einer Theologie der Befreiung von Mensch und Natur* (Neukirchener Studienbücher 14; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener 1983) 35; Petersen, “Pauline Baptism and ‘Secondary Burial,’” 219; E.A. Obeng, “Abba, Father. The Prayer of the Sons of God,” *ExpTim* 99/12 (1988) 363–366; C.K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 ed. (BNTC 6; London: Hendrickson 1991) 153; J.A. Fitzmyer, *Romans. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 33; New York: Doubleday 1993) 501; P.W. Meyer, *Word in This World. Essays in New Testament Exegesis and Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox 2004) 190; L.T. Johnson, *Reading Romans. A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys 2001) 133–134; R. Jewett – R.D. Kotansky, *Romans. A Commentary on the Book of Romans* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress 2007) 499; R.N. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans. A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2016) 705.

in Paul.<sup>135</sup> The baptismal command was formulated by the Resurrected Jesus (Matt 28:19). Even if, as Dunn suggests, it reflects the pre-paschal experience of the Son, that is, what happened with Him by the Jordan, baptism as a rite of Christian initiation is constituted in the light and under the influence of Christ's Passover.<sup>136</sup> No wonder then that for Paul it is the Lord's Passover that will be the main point of reference for the baptism of the Christian. It can be argued, however, that it is not the only point of reference for the apostle. Baptizing and introducing baptism as the rite of initiation in Corinth, the apostle drew on the complex traditions and baptismal practice that had been present in Christian communities for over a decade.<sup>137</sup> It is impossible to prove a simple flow of ideas between Paul and the Synoptics, or in this case Mark, being the closest to Paul. We can by no means convincingly argue that Paul's baptismal theology could have inspired Mark, or vice versa. In contemporary studies on the correspondences between Mark and Paul, this subject does not appear as such, anyway.<sup>138</sup> It is reasonable to assume, following Gerd Theissen, that Mark and Paul drew on the common and earlier oral and written Jesus traditions, supplemented by the liturgical tradition of the Church.<sup>139</sup> Thus, it can be argued, that Paul in Rom 8:1-17 does not refer to the Jordan baptism directly, but he alludes to it, which, according to John Coulson, is comprehensible to his audience.<sup>140</sup>

Ultimately, as seen in Romans 6–8, the apostle, like the Evangelists, reads the Saviour's entire life, including his baptism, in the light of his death and resur-

<sup>135</sup> Kvalbein, "The Baptism of Jesus as a Model for Christian Baptism," 79.

<sup>136</sup> Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 65.

<sup>137</sup> Paul was probably the one who introduced baptismal practices to the Corinthian community. The fact that he did not baptize many believers was dictated by the specific situation of the community which treated baptizers as patrons, thus contributing to even greater divisions. Cf. R.E. DeMaris, "Backing Away from Baptism: Early Christian Ambivalence about Its Ritual," *JRitSt* 27/1 (2013) 11–19. Abstaining from baptizing may have been dictated by the freedom that Paul wanted to maintain from the various groups and community members in Corinth. A similar strategy is seen in Paul's decision to preach the Gospel without payment (2 Cor 11:7-15; 12:11-18). Brigidda Bell ("The Cost of Baptism?: The Case for Paul's Ritual Compensation," *JSNT* 42/4 [2020] 431–452) claims that the apostle and others who performed baptismal ministries could have received a payment. Abstaining from it would have well befitted Paul's behavior in Corinth, although the author suggests that the apostle may have eventually collected his wages.

<sup>138</sup> See O. Wischmeyer – D.C. Sim – I.J. Elmer (eds.), *Paul and Mark. Comparative Essays. I. Two Authors at the Beginnings of Christianity* (BZNW 198; Berlin – Boston, MA: De Gruyter 2014); E.-M. Becker – T. Engberg-Pedersen – M. Müller (eds.), *Mark and Paul. Comparative Essays. II. For and Against Pauline Influence on Mark* (BZNW 199; Berlin – Boston, MA: De Gruyter 2014); M. Pérez i Díaz, *Mark, a Pauline Theologian. A Re-Reading of the Traditions of Jesus in the Light of Paul's Theology* (WUNT 2/521; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2020).

<sup>139</sup> G. Theissen, "«Evangelium» im Markusevangelium. Zum traditionsgeschichtlichen Ort des ältesten Evangeliums," *Mark and Paul. Comparative Essays. II. For and Against Pauline Influence on Mark* (eds. E.-M. Becker – T. Engberg-Pedersen – M. Müller) (BZNW 199; Berlin – Boston, MA: De Gruyter 2014) 63–86.

<sup>140</sup> Coulson, "Jesus and the Spirit in Paul's Theology," 86.

rection. David Wenham spots in Rom 8:1-17 a connection between Gethsemane, Jesus' passion, death and resurrection, and his experience by the Jordan, which believers have access to through baptism.<sup>141</sup> For Paul, the whole life of Jesus is a paschal life and the model of the Christian's life, which can be also seen in 1 Thess 1:6; Phil 2:5-8; 1 Cor 11:1 and Rom 15:2-3,7. The call to "act according to the Spirit" in Rom 8:5-6 and to rely on the identity of God's children in the fight against the desires of the flesh in Rom 8:12-13,14-17 should be read in the Christological perspective as the imitation of the Son in his attitudes of service, love and fighting temptations. In this light, the baptism of Jesus can be perceived as a point of reference for the Christian baptism, through which we die for sin and rise with Christ, so that He, being our model, may at the end become the Firstborn among many brethren (Rom 8:29).

## Conclusions

In conclusion, the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan is one of those New Testament facts whose historicity we can be confident of. It corresponds above all to the criterion of embarrassment that the early Christians faced when interpreting the scene in which the Messiah submits Himself to John. The baptism by John presents features that make it unique among similar practices of the 1st century Judaism and can only be applied to a certain extent to the Book of Leviticus in the Old Testament. First of all, it heralds the baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire which is to be performed by the Messiah.

When analysing the motivation for which Jesus immersed Himself in the waters of the Jordan, we rejected the simple outline proposed by the historical-critical scholars. It describes baptism as a turning point in Jesus' life, recognition of John's teaching and authority, and a gesture of solidarity with sinful Israel. The researchers of the historical Jesus arrive at this limited vision after cutting off the theophany in the Jordan, which is supposed to belong to an early Christian myth/legend, a fictional story explaining the baptismal scene. There are no grounds for such a procedure due to the nature of ancient texts, in which history is always intertwined with interpretation. It is also excluded by the consistent character of the evangelical narratives that do not allow the separation of baptism and theophany and by the theological motifs, which unite them: the sonship of Jesus as a gift for sinners who have a broken relationship with God (Mark);

<sup>141</sup> Coulson, "Jesus and the Spirit in Paul's Theology," 275–280, 346–350. Similarly C.F.D. Moule, *The Holy Spirit* (Mowbrays Library of Theology; London: Mowbrays 1978) 33–34; Coulson, "Jesus and the Spirit in Paul's Theology," 86–87.

the fulfilment of God's saving plan and righteousness (Matthew); solidarity with humanity in search of God's will (Luke).

Baptism only makes sense if it is read in conjunction with the theophany by the Jordan, to which it leads. Jesus arrives there aware of his sinlessness (He does not confess his sins) and of his unique relationship with the Father: He joins God in his love for sinners (Mark), He comes to fulfil God's saving righteousness (Matthew), and his filial identity is confirmed by the prayer and descent of the Spirit (Luke). Jesus also comes to the Jordan aware of his mission, of which baptism is only one of the elements. The Spirit accompanying Him does not bestow sonship upon Him, but it participates in its revelation, also introducing the Son into an ever-deeper relationship with the Father. What connects the baptism of Jesus with that of a Christian is the gift of the Spirit, the experience of divine filiation, and the promised inheritance of glory with the Father. These elements are found in Rom 8:14-17,23, where Paul describes the new life of the baptized with possible allusions to the event of Jesus' baptism in the Jordan. The baptismal theology of the apostle is fundamentally influenced by Jesus' paschal event – his death and resurrection (Rom 6). The Passover, however, sheds light on the whole life of the Son including his baptism, making all of it a model for the baptismal life of believers.

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