3 "He himself was tempted" (Hebr 2:18)

The temptation of Jesus in the New Testament

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The temptation of Jesus is not exactly a central topic in New Testament writings. However, the mere fact that his 'temptation' or 'testing' through *God* (!) is considered to be possible and is being narrated, primarily by the Synoptics, has irritated recipients both then and now. The first (and maybe only) scene that comes to mind is Jesus' temptation in the wilderness (Mark 1:12f.; Matt 4:1–11; Luke 4:1–13). Right after his baptism in the Jordan and just before the beginning of his public ministry, the Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness, where he is tempted by Satan. To put it bluntly, Jesus, whom God had just proclaimed as his *beloved* Son (ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός), is now being *tested* on behalf of his Father.[1] We will later demonstrate that what seems like a harsh and paradoxical twist is actually part of evangelists' narrative strategies. Remarkably, the Fourth Evangelist neither narrates Jesus' baptism nor his temptation, just like other New Testament authors seem to find it theologically and Christologically impossible to imagine that God would test his own son. The Epistle of James (1:12–15) even completely refuses the concept of temptation by God:

> 12 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial (ὑπομένει πειρασμόν), for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. 13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God" (μηδεὶς πειραζόμενος λεγέτω ὅτι ἀπὸ θεοῦ πειράζομαι), for God cannot be tempted with evil (ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἀπείραστός ἐστιν κακῶν), and he himself tempts no one (πειράζει δὲ αὐτὸς οὐδένα). 14 But each person is tempted (ἕκαστος δὲ πειράζεται) when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. 15 Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.
>
> (ESV)

The idea that "God himself tempts no one" (James 1:13) stands in obvious contrast to the sixth plea of the Lord's Prayer, which asks God – who is addressed here as "Father" (!) – not to "lead us into temptation" (Matt 6:13; Luke 11:4). While James' notion seems to resonate with modern readers

(not least with Pope Francis), who find it hard to believe God would *wilfully* and *actively lead* his believers into temptation, this trait is undoubtedly part of the Synoptics' conception of God. They might not explicitly develop the idea, but they presuppose it and employ it in some crucial parts of their narratives – including the temptation of the Son of God himself. And they are not the only ones to do so: The Letter to the Hebrews is particularly concerned with the portrayal of Jesus as a "merciful and faithful high priest" (2:17) who, "because he himself has suffered when tempted (πειρασθείς), is able to help those who are being tempted (τοῖς πειραζομένοις)" (2:18; cf. 4:15).[2] That it is *God* who tempted Jesus becomes clear when looking at Hebr 5:7f. The passage hints at Jesus' prayer before his crucifixion when he "offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, *to him who was able to save him from death*." Jesus was eventually 'heard because of his reverence,' but 'although he was the Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.' The Letter to the Hebrews, thus, interprets Jesus' fearful prayer as a moment of temptation because God does not answer immediately, and Jesus has to learn to comply with his will.

This paper aims at analysing the different narrative accounts of Jesus' temptation in the New Testament. It will focus on two different but interrelated strands: The Synoptic temptation stories and the depiction of the topic in the Letter to the Hebrews. Section 1 will look into the narrative accounts of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, and the moments of weakness and agony in his Gethsemane prayer as well as in his outcry at the cross. Section 2 then investigates Jesus' temptation in his fear of death within the Christological framework of the Letter to the Hebrews. Section 3 serves as the conclusion.

1 Temptation of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels

> "If you are the Son of God…"
>
> – Temptation in the wilderness

We will start with the most prominent and the most obvious temptation story: Mark 1:12f. parr. Matt 4:1–11; Luke 4:1–13 is the only narrative account of *Jesus* explicitly being tempted *on behalf of God*.[3] It is true that Satan (or 'the devil', as in Luke's version) acts here as the 'tempting agent,'[4] but the whole enterprise is guided by the Spirit (τὸ πνεῦμα). One must, therefore, assume a heavenly source behind this scene, even though it may initially seem odd that the same Spirit who just descended onto Jesus in his baptism is now 'driving' him out into the wilderness, and the same God who just proclaimed him as his 'beloved Son' is now putting him to the test with the help of the devil. It is important though to realise that the Spirit, who is mentioned both in the baptism and the temptation narrative, connects the two passages into one literary unit. For the larger plots of the

Synoptic gospels, the baptism functions as the preface to the temptation account: God himself visually (descending dove) and audibly (heavenly voice) reveals *who* is going to be tested in the wilderness: ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός (Mark 1:11; Matt 3:17; Luke 3:22).

Before going into any further detail, we will first examine the term at issue – the Greek verb πειράζειν. The English translation 'to tempt' is slightly misleading, as it is usually associated with desires and pleasurable urges, also of a sexual nature.[5] 'Tempting' is often considered a manipulative act and 'being tempted' a weakness or even an inclination to sin. All these moral connotations can be illustrated through the famous quote from Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*:

> The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it. Resist it, and your soul grows sick with longing for the things it has forbidden to itself, with desire for what its monstrous laws have made monstrous and unlawful.

As opposed to this rather 'negative', (self-)restrictive meaning, the biblical texts ultimately intend a more 'positive,' assertive understanding of the term: "The positive sense of πειράζω is the action to test or discover the truth about something or someone by affliction (e.g., 2 Cor 13:5; 1 Pet 1:6)."[6] The verb is thus used to denote critical situations into which God leads his chosen people[7] in order to test their faith. After a lengthy discussion of its etymology and literary parallels, J.B. Gibson concludes "that it was basically the idea of being *probed and 'put to the proof'*, that is, 'tested' *to ascertain or to demonstrate trustworthiness*."[8] The most famous examples for this kind of 'testing' are Abraham (Gen 22:1–19) and Job. According to A. Herrmann, a key characteristic of πειράζειν in the New Testament is *danger*: It endangers the relationship between the tempted person and God, their trust in and confession of God, and their obedience to his will.[9] The 'temptation' this paper is looking into, thus, is the biblical motif of a 'testing' on behalf of God concerning the 'testee's' (here, Jesus') relationship to God himself.

All three Synoptic Gospels mention Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, and they all strategically place it between his baptism in the Jordan and the beginning of his public ministry. Mark's version is brief,[10] whilst Matthew and Luke elaborate on the event with a lengthy dialogue between Jesus and the devil. Despite the differences in detail, it is remarkable that they all narrate this scene that depicts the 'beloved Son' in a quite challenging, 'human' situation. It is important to note at the outset that, with the temptation story, the evangelists deploy a *universal motif*. Several extrabiblical heroic figures are said to have struggled with an adversary at the beginning of their 'careers,' e.g., Heracles, Buddha, or Zarathustra.[11] This should prompt us to regard the Synoptic temptation accounts as *literary works* and not (merely) as factual reports.

The Markan account. We will first examine the oldest adaptation of this motif to Jesus, i.e., the Markan account. Despite the brevity of his version, "Mark was hardly silent with regard to the question of the nature of Jesus' Wilderness temptation."[12] If one takes a closer look, the text does actually give a number of details: First of all, by mentioning the spirit (τὸ πνεῦμα) who literally *impels* (ἐκβάλλω[13]) Jesus into his temptation, it ultimately connects the event with God.[14] This makes the temptation "an experience both that Jesus was constrained to undergo and that occurred under the direction and agency of God."[15] However, it is *not* God himself who 'tempts,' or rather 'tests,' his Son. Satan is explicitly mentioned as the perpetrator of the temptation (πειραζόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ σατανᾶ). He is a personal figure commonly considered God's "Evil Adversary," "whose primary function was the proving of the faith and steadfastness […] of the pious."[16] That leaves the careful reader/listener of the gospel with twofold information regarding the figures involved: Satan is the tempter (i.e., acting subject), Jesus is the object of his temptation, and the Spirit (of God) is the initiating power in the background. It is noteworthy though that while the Spirit (i.e., God) forcefully drives Jesus into the desert, he then leaves him to his own devices.[17] The 'beloved Son' is confronted with Satan on his own, neither the 'Father' nor the Spirit assist him in his contest with the tempter. Therefore, E. Best rightly considers the temptation story "a conflict between the Son of God and the prince of evil."[18]

Mark's temptation narrative also provides information as to *where* the scene was set and *how long* it took. The event is located "in *the* wilderness" (ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ)[19] and extends over a period of 40 days (τεσσεράκοντα ἡμέρας).[20] This combination of the area in the lower Jordan valley and the highly symbolic number 'forty' almost certainly alludes to "Israel's post-Exodus wanderings."[21] By indicating the place and the duration of the temptation, the evangelist implicitly fills the participle (πειραζόμενος) with meaning. Jesus is 'being tempted/tested' in a place and for a period of time that are reminiscent of Israel's wilderness experience, so it seems likely that also the nature of his temptation is somewhat similar to theirs. Moreover, according to Gibson,

> Mark and his readers would not only have been acquainted with the word, they would have been familiar with the contexts in which it was used, its range of signification, and the associations that were attached to it and its derivates.[22]

If, then, the semantic weight of πειράζω can be assumed to be part of the contemporary cultural encyclopaedia and the verb occurs with well-known typological associations, the participle πειραζόμενος will evoke a clear conception even without further explanation: The temptation in Mark 1:12f. must be about Jesus' faithfulness and obedience to God, or, to put it as McKinley does, "[a]s with Israel's wilderness experience […], Jesus, as the messianic Son, is confronted primarily in his relationship to God as his Father."[23]

Nevertheless, one must acknowledge that these assumptions are based on a number of deductions and are not explicitly stated in the text. One has to be careful not to infer the devil's provocative question, "If you are the Son of God…" from the Matthean and Lukan versions and jump to a conclusion too quickly. The connection of the two pericopes, however, admittedly suggests that the temptation has been 'triggered' by Jesus' proclamation as the 'beloved Son' in the baptism. Given that, the OT context, and the literary motif of testing heroes embarking on their missions, it does seem likely that in Mark also Jesus has to prove himself *as the Son of God*, and that the πειράζειν is about *his (obedient/faithful) relationship to the Father.*[24] It is just not literarily unambiguous because Mark does not expand on the content of the temptation in any way.

The outcome or the consequences of the contest between Jesus and Satan, by contrast, seem to be more relevant for the Markan narrative and can be analysed with more certainty. While the temptation episode itself neither reports Jesus' struggle with his adversary nor his triumph over him, the following exorcisms can be considered a realisation of a victory that has already been achieved. The dispute between Jesus and the scribes about his exorcistic powers especially underlines this, for Jesus claims to have 'bound' Satan: When the scribes accuse him of casting out demons "by the prince of demons" and "being possessed by Beelzebul," Jesus counters with a parable, explaining that "no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house" (3:27). The peculiar answer shows that at the beginning of Jesus' ministry (πρῶτον) Satan was defeated and rendered powerless. He may be strong (ὁ ἰσχυρός), but Jesus has proven to be stronger by 'binding' him (δέω) and 'plundering his house,' i.e., casting out demons. In Mark 3:28–30, Jesus ultimately points out that he does not do all this ἐν τῷ ἄρχοντι τῶν δαιμονίων (as he was accused by the scribes in 3:22) but with the power of the Holy Spirit (3:29: τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον). According to E. Best, Mark 1:12f. and 3:22–30 "supplement one another."[25] This is because "[t]hey are the only incidents in which the Spirit is seen as active in the ministry of Jesus and both concern his warfare with the spiritual powers."[26] He therefore argues that 3:27 supplies the "conclusion" that had not been previously narrated in 1:12f., and that the temptation narrative is not "a preliminary to the ministry of Jesus" but "its decisive first act."[27] The exorcisms, which are so crucial for Mark's portrayal of Jesus, "are mopping-up operations of isolated units of Satan's hosts and are certain to be successful because the Captain of the hosts of evil is already bound and immobilised."[28] Again one needs to be cautious because nowhere does Mark 3:22–30 explicitly refer to the wilderness temptation. Jesus, for instance, does not claim to have bound Satan ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ. But it is true that both passages are intricately connected by Jesus' powers – gifted by the (Holy) Spirit – on the one hand, and Satan on the other. They are further linked with all the exorcisms by the use of the distinctive verb ἐκβάλλω.

Interestingly, the first thing Jesus does after calling the first disciples is healing a man with an unclean spirit (Mark 1:21–28). Again, he does not have to fight or invoke them, as is noted by eyewitnesses in the synagogue of Capernaum: "He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him" (1:27). This may add to Gibson's conclusion "that in the wilderness Jesus successfully resisted the efforts of Satan."[29] He bases this assumption on V. 13b, to which we will now turn.

Specifically Markan is the mentioning of the 'wild beasts' whom Jesus is with, as well as the 'angels' who serve him. Together with Satan they belong to the threefold group of non-human beings Jesus faces in this temptation account. They are all equally important for the narrative, even though Satan is responsible for the actual πειράζειν.[30] Furthermore, they qualify the wilderness as a non-human sphere, which, being the natural home of wild animals and demons, is beyond human control (cf. Dtn 8:15). But at the same time they are probably more than just "a pictorial description of the desolation and danger of the landscape in which Jesus found himself."[31] It has often been argued "that the statement is a *reminiscence of the friendly relations between Adam and the beasts in the Garden of Eden before the fall*,"[32] which is grounded in the expectation of peace prevailing between human beings and animals in the messianic kingdom (cf. Isa 11.5–9; 65:25; Hos 2:18).[33] All the in-depth studies of the Markan temptation account, however, point out that this messianic harmony is not clearly indicated and that "wild beasts normally suggest evil rather than good."[34] They view the θηρία as "congruent with Satan and the desert, all of them suggesting the evil with which Jesus must contend."[35] Rather than being harmless and peaceful, the wild beasts should therefore be considered dangerous. Nevertheless, they will not attack the Son of God because he has been given the power of the Spirit and, thereby, *tames* and *scares* them.[36]

Herrmann, Best, and Gibson unanimously point to several passages from the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* that closely resemble the 'Markan triad' of devil, beasts, and angels. They particularly quote *TestNaph* 8:4, where the devil is said to "flee from you, the wild animals will be afraid of you, and the angels will stand by you when you strive to do what is good."[37] While none of the authors assumes literal dependence, they all agree that Mark has been influenced by the general idea as stated in *TestPat*.[38] Yet again one needs to exercise caution, for Mark 1:13b does not speak of Jesus 'frightening' or 'taming' the θηρία. It is simply said that he *is with* them (εἶναι μετά). But at the same time the text does not indicate the motif of messianic harmony either, and the parallel with *TestNaph* 8:4 is admittedly striking. In the Gospel of Mark, 'being with' someone is often positively connotated, but the phrase is also used in contexts of conflict and tension (14:18.54).[39]

Best goes on to argue that the "angelic service" is to be interpreted along the lines of *TestNaph* as well. He admits that the verb διακονεῖν "retains its basic meaning in the New Testament, including Mark (i.31)," but also

argues that it "underwent considerable development and was given an important theological overtone."[40] To him, therefore, the angels' ministry is not necessarily restricted to feeding Jesus – in fact, Best reckons this interpretation is distorted by the Matthean/Lukan temptation narrative. It is true that the Markan account does not mention that Jesus is hungry (or even fasting, as in Matt 4:2), and in the light of *TestNaph* 8:4 one could indeed interpret the angels' ministry more generally as assistance in Jesus' contest with Satan.[41] This would oppose the widely acknowledged assumption that, with the angelic service, Mark wants to allude to "the bread of the angels" (Ps 78:25), i.e., the manna (Ex 16), and/or to the feeding of Elijah (1 Kgs 19:5–8). Once again, "Mark leaves us to make up our own minds on this point."[42] To a certain degree, his temptation account is like a newspaper article that remains on the surface of its subject matter. It addresses most relevant questions: *What* is going on (wilderness sojourn)? *How* does it look like, i.e., what features does it have (testing by Satan, being with wild beasts, and angelic service)? *Who* is it about (Jesus, last mentioned in 1:9)? *Where* does the event take place (wilderness) and *how long* does it take (40 days)? *When* does it happen (εὐθύς after Jesus' baptism)? The only question that is not properly answered is *why* all this happened. The Markan account lists all the (literary!) "facts" but does not give any cohesive background information.[43] At the same time it uses highly symbolic language, which makes its audience infer the details from several intertexts – be it Israel's wandering in the wilderness, Elijah's wilderness escape, and/or the exhortations in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. In this sense, Gibson is right in claiming that Mark is not "silent" as regards the nature, content, and outcome of Jesus' wilderness temptation.[44] He is just not *explicit* about it, which maybe once again emphasises the literary character of the account.

The Matthean account. Matthew and Luke, by contrast, explicitly fill the temptation account with meaning and elaborate on the *why* of the event with a threefold dialogue between Satan and Jesus. Acknowledging the recent debate among source-critical researchers,[45] we presume they probably both draw on Mark and the so-called Sayings Source (Q) independently of each other. Since they both have the devil question Jesus' divine sonship, their (hypothetical) second source seems to have connected the events of Jesus' baptism and his subsequent temptation in the wilderness as well. We will thoroughly consider the Matthean account[46] and take a brief look at Luke's version afterwards.

At the end of the "overture" to Jesus' public ministry (1:1–4:11), Matthew narrates three temptations as the 'prelude' to his subsequent teachings and actions. In addition to Mark, the evangelist had previously emphasised Jesus' *divine sonship* as well as his *obedience* to his heavenly Father. His infancy story presents Jesus as born of the virgin, conceived by the Holy Spirit (1:18–25) and part of a just and obedient family: Joseph (the "Just": 1:19) is unwilling to put his pregnant fiancé to shame and marries her after

an angel tells him to do so (1:20.24). When the family returns from their flight to Egypt (again directed by an angel, cf. 2:13.19f.), the prophecy of Hosea is fulfilled: "Out of Egypt I have called my Son" (Hos 11:1). The fulfilment quotation on the one hand declares Jesus as Son of God. Its contextualisation, on the other hand, shows that by 'answering' the 'call out of Egypt,' he has been obedient from the start. This combination of the title "Son of God" and his obedience recurs even more explicitly in Jesus' baptism. Here, God himself declares Jesus as his "beloved Son" by means of a heavenly voice (3:17). Just before that, Jesus had persuaded John to baptise him "for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (3:15). Righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) is a coined term in the Gospel of Matthew;[47] it is essentially characterised by *doing the will of God*. So when Jesus is inflicted in the temptation by the devil, which immediately follows his baptism, it is obvious that he is tested *as the obedient Son of God*.

Similar to the Markan account, in Matthew's retelling, it is the Spirit who leads Jesus into the desert. Matthew uses a less violent verb (ἀνάγω instead of ἐκβάλλω), but the passive formulation still shows that Jesus is 'externally driven.' In Matthew, the ἔρημος is a "place where some important truths about the nature of that sonship would become clear through the process of resisting temptation."[48] This is immediately indicated by the infinitive of purpose in V. 1.[49] Other than in Mark, the temptation is not only part of Jesus' wilderness sojourn but the whole point of it. Matthew's wilderness episode is explicitly about the πειρασθῆναι ὑπὸ τοῦ διαβόλου *and* how Jesus overcomes this temptation. In a threefold dialogue with the tempter, Jesus rejects each of the temptations by quoting scripture, or, more precisely, a passage of scripture referring to the temptations Israel was confronted with in the desert. Thus, in Matthew, the ἔρημος is clearly associated with the post-Exodus context we could only assume in Mark. The three tests take place in different locations, all of which Matthew associates with God's presence.[50] They are presented in a climactic order: from the wilderness to the "holy city" with the pinnacle of the temple to, finally, a "very high" mountain.[51]

The *first temptation* (4:2–4) is based on Jesus' hunger for food. Matthew explicitly states that he had been *fasting* (νηστεύσας) for 40 days and (!) 40 nights.[52] Other than Mark, who does not mention any hunger at all, and Luke, who merely claims Jesus "ate nothing during those days" (Luke 4:2), Matthew strongly emphasises this point by using the cultic term νηστεύειν and by highlighting that this fasting lasted day and night. By means of the temporal adverb ὕστερον, he presents Jesus' hunger as a reasonable consequence of the long period of food abstinence. It is *then*[53] that 'the tempter' (ὁ πειράζων) comes to him and challenges him to miraculously provide bread for himself. Jesus, therefore, is approached by the devil in the very moment of physical weakness. He is susceptible to temptation because he is a *true man* with bodily needs, and the question now is whether or not he will seek to satisfy those needs, i.e., still his hunger. By asking Jesus to "command these stones to become loaves of bread" (4:3), Satan obviously intends him

to react by using his divine power.[54] The reader/listener of the gospel will soon learn that Jesus is indeed able to perform such miracles: In 14:13–21 and 15:32–39 he multiplies loaves of bread and thereby uses his power to provide food for the multitudes. In the temptation narrative, however, he refuses to do so because it would mean using his power in his own way to serve his own ends. Thus, he resists the temptation to abuse his power in a "Satanic" way, i.e., against the will of God.[55] By quoting scripture (here Dtn 8:3), Jesus demonstrates unwavering fidelity to God and proves to be his obedient Son.[56] It is precisely this title that Satan questions in his temptations: "If you are the Son of God…" (4:3.6).[57] Thus, the focus of the tempting in Matthew is on *Jesus' identity and loyalty as Son of God*.[58] Satan's doubt is echoed in the passion narrative when spectators mock the crucified by saying: "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross" (27:40). Similarly, the chief priests, scribes, and elders scoff at him referring to his sonship: "He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God'" (27:43). The ones who realise, ironically, that "[t]ruly this was the Son of God" (27:54) are the centurion and the guards (i.e., Gentiles!). So the declaration and questioning of Jesus as Son of God is a literary *topos,* which connects the baptism/temptation with the passion narrative in Matthew.

For the *second temptation* (4:5–7), the devil takes Jesus along to the holy city and sets him on the wing of the temple (4:5). Again, he introduces his temptation by saying: εἰ υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ θεοῦ (4:6). This time he wants to test whether or not God would keep His promise to protect Jesus if he threw himself down from there. In essence, *he wants Jesus himself to test God* by provoking a life-threatening situation. It is remarkable that here the devil himself quotes scripture, too (Ps 91:11f.). Not only does he thereby adapt to Jesus' way of speaking, but he also grounds his bold demand in God's "written" promise.[59] The temple locale further emphasises the proximity of God's presence and suggests that Jesus should be safe in these surroundings. Jesus, however, counters with another passage from scripture (Dtn 6:16) and does not take a leap. The quote from Deuteronomy shows that the devil not only wants to challenge Jesus' divine powers but God Himself, and Jesus sees right through this plan: "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test (οὐκ ἐκπειράσεις)" (Matt 4:7). Again, literary parallels with the Passion narrative cannot be missed: Even when he actually *is* in danger, the Son of God remains obedient to the will of the Father and refuses to ask him to send "more than twelve legions of angels" to save him from being arrested by the chief priests and elders (26:53). Just like he does not feed himself but the multitudes, he does not save himself from death but gives his life "as a ransom for many" (20:28), "for the forgiveness of sins" (26:28). Another important scene connected to the second temptation is Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and the temple in 21:1–27. It is the second time within the narrative that he enters first the 'holy city' and then the temple. This time, however, is decidedly different, for he returns as the Davidic king.

In the *third and final temptation* (4:8–10), Jesus is asked to seize power to rule on his own. The devil takes him along to "a very high mountain" and shows him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour, i.e., he offers him the prospect of an empire that would span the whole world.[60] He offers to give Jesus "all these" if only he would fall down and worship him (4:9). This offer implies that the whole of humanity (i.e., the nations) is ruled by the devil, which does bear a certain irony, for all the world is under the rule of the Roman emperor (cf. Luke 2:1; 3:1). It also implies that by breaking with God and worshipping Satan, Jesus could have power, possessions, and honour without suffering on the cross. What sounds very tempting indeed basically boils down to: "Serve the devil and rule the world."[61] Morris rightly points out that "Jesus would obtain the mighty empire only by doing what Satan wanted,"[62] so the price to pay for 'all these things' is a very high one. This is especially true because Satan wants Jesus to *worship* him and he indicates that by using the verb προσκυνεῖν, which, in the Gospel of Matthew, is reserved for worship directed at God and Jesus.[63] Jesus, however, repels Satan and cites Dtn 6:13: "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve." Then, finally, the devil leaves him and angels come to minister him (4:11). It seems as though Jesus' repeated adherence to the will of God has eventually defeated his adversary. His appeal, "Be gone, Satan!" recurs in 16:23, where Jesus addresses Peter who rebukes him for the proclamation of his suffering (16:21). Even more striking is the connection with 28:16–20: While Satan offered Jesus sovereignty over all the earth if he would but worship him, Jesus worshipped God only and "all power in heaven and on earth" was given to him by God. He, thus, received even greater power and sovereignty than the devil could have ever promised him, but only after suffering, dying after being forsaken, and being resurrected. The προσκύνησις-motif recurs as well because the disciples *worship* Jesus when they see him (28:17) *on the mountain* (28:16) – the locale of the final temptation. One can therefore conclude, in line with U. Luz, that in 4:1–11 Matthew narrates a mythical story as a gateway to his Jesus story.[64] The temptation story anticipates *in nuce* the way that the Son of God obediently leads his disciples.[65]

The Lukan account. Luke's temptation account, finally, is very similar to that of Matthew. The most significant difference is that he presents the second and the third (Matthean) temptation in a reversed order. That means the devil first tempts Jesus "in the wilderness" (cf. Luke 4:1), then he "takes him up"[66] and challenges him a second time (4:5–8), and, finally, takes him to Jerusalem, sets him on the pinnacle of the temple, and tries his luck one last time (4:9–13). Thus, the Lukan temptation narrative culminates in the temple scene. For the third evangelist, Satan's attempt to make Jesus test God ranks higher (or is narratively more dramatic) than his wish to be worshipped by Jesus. Luke also directly links the wilderness account with his genealogy of Jesus (3:23–38), which ends with Adam (3:38). It is therefore likely that the Adamitic background[67] that scholars generally suppose

for the temptation narrative can be assumed for Luke. While the genealogy marks a narrative pause, the action commences again with Luke 4:1.[68] The narrative unit of 4:1–13 can be considered a "bridge scene," for it is "moving Jesus from his endowment with the Spirit to his public ministry."[69] Jesus is now more active than before and "becomes the deixic center, […] the one preparing to take the initiative (4:14–15)."[70] It is noted twice, however, that his activity is empowered by the Spirit: He is "full of the Holy Spirit" when he is led into the wilderness (4:1), and he returns to Galilee "in the power of the Spirit" (4:14). Just like in Matthew, the testing is conducted by the devil who "seeks specifically to controvert Jesus' role as Son of God."[71] The account makes it clear that behind the opposition Jesus faces from the beginning (cf. the "darkness and […] the shadow of death" in 1:79, or the hostility in 2:34; 3:19f.) stands the devil "who now steps out from behind the curtain for a direct confrontation."[72] Moreover, it is obvious that Israel's testing in the wilderness (Deut 6–8) provides the interpretative context for Luke 4:1–13, particularly the divine leading in the wilderness, the number "forty," Israel's role as God's son, and the nature of their testing.[73] While the Lukan account resembles the Matthean one in many respects, Matthew's linking with his Passion narrative is quite unique. Nevertheless, Luke also links several motifs, such as connecting God's promise to grant Jesus an everlasting kingdom (Luke 1:32f.) with Satan's offer to give him "all the authority and glory" of "all the kingdoms of the world" (4:5f.). The final remark that "when the devil had ended every temptation (πάντα πειρασμόν), he departed from him until an opportune time" (4:13), and Jesus' remark that his disciples had stood with him ἐν τοῖς πειρασμοῖς μου (22:28), are further specifically Lukan mentions of Jesus' temptation.

> "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation"
>
> Temptation in Gethsemane

Another episode commonly associated with the temptation of Jesus in the New Testament is his prayer in Gethsemane.[74] This is striking because the actual term πειράζειν is not applied to Jesus in this context but only to his disciples. Nevertheless, Best (and others) argue that "the conception of temptation is definitely present."[75] The Gethsemane scene differs from the wilderness temptation in terms of its literary character as well.[76] While the latter is a highly stylised, genre-conforming account of a hero embarking on his mission, the former depicts this hero in a crisis, which is quite adverse to his overall portrayal. The Gethsemane prayer is, therefore, much more likely to be a historical recollection of an event that might have actually taken place, one way or another.

The essence of the pericope can be deducted from Mark 14:38 (Matt 26:41 par.): "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation (ἵνα μὴ ἔλθητε εἰς πειρασμόν)."[77] Knowingly approaching his trial and death on the cross, Jesus finds himself in a moment of deep agony and struggles with the

will of God. The text is full of strong verbs like ἐκθαμβέομαι (to be greatly distressed) and ἀδημονέω (to be troubled).[78] With the words of Ps 42:6 Jesus claims that his "soul is very sorrowful, even to death" (Mark 14:34), and he prays that God may "remove this cup" from him (14:36).[79] He then goes on to pray that God's will be done instead of his will. It is remarkable that throughout the distressing process God remains silent. He does not respond to Jesus' prayer but leaves him to his own devices, so he must face his struggle alone. Jesus eventually wins over temptation because he does exactly what he asks his disciples to do: watch and pray in the face of a testing.

Mark and Matthew present the prayerful struggle in Gethsemane as an explicit account of temptation, for they ground the exhortation "to pray not to enter into temptation" in the weakness of the flesh (Mark 14:38 par. Matt 26:41). Best argues that "[d]espite the manner in which Mark has shown Jesus to be conscious of the necessity of his death, he now shows him afraid before it."[80] What might appear inconsistent at first is actually two lines of thought coming together in Gethsemane: On the one hand, Mark depicts Jesus' death as predetermined, and as engineered by sinful men, on the other. "Spirit and flesh are opposed; God and man are opposed; evil now comes as close to Jesus as it possibly can; it attacks from within."[81] Since Jesus considers his will as opposed to God's will, it is fair to say that "[t]he temptation now definitely comes from within Jesus himself."[82]

He initially prays for the Father to spare him from the vicarious punishment symbolised by the cup. Thus, Mark and Matthew depict Jesus as tempted to turn away from his Father's plan according to which "the Son of Man *must* suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again" (Mark 8:31). The aim of his petition, therefore, "*is nothing less than the elimination of the cross from the messiahship*."[83] By asking his disciples to watch and pray with him, Jesus also shows awareness that they "will be scandalized by him and will desert and deny him (14:27–37; cf. 14:50)."[84] In this moment of weakness Jesus hopes to avoid what apparently comes down to a complete failure of his ministry.[85] To accept God's will also means having his mission defeated, his calling and messianic task failed.[86] When his (human) will struggles with the divine will, Jesus for a moment doubts the path of suffering. This, by implication, means that his petition

> entails the desire to be allowed to implement a plan of action to accomplish the Messianic task which is the very opposite of God's will in this regard, one namely, that uses violence and domination, instead of suffering and service, to achieve this end.[87]

But by means of prayer, Jesus is able to overcome this temptation. Three times he withdraws from the three disciples[88] he had chosen to accompany him to be alone with God. His initial wish to have "the hour passed" (Mark 14:35) and "the cup removed" (14:36) from him is followed by a resolute

commitment to God's will. While Jesus does express his own desire, he at the same time subordinates his will to God's will: "Yet not what I will, but what you will" (14:36). However, it takes time until Jesus has fully come to terms with his Father's plan: Three times he returns to his disciples, and three times he withdraws to pray. One can therefore assume that he *'prays himself' into alignment with God's will*. Prayer, thus, is the appropriate *medium* to resist and overcome temptation according to the Gospels of Mark and Matthew.[89] This is also reflected in the crucifixion: When dying, forsaken, Jesus addresses his Father one last time with the words of Ps 22:2, i.e., with prayer language. His last words on the cross (Mark 15:34 par. Matt 27:46) display an inner conflict similar to that in Gethsemane. On the one hand, Jesus desperately asks: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" On the other, it is obvious that he must die this painful, lonely death on the cross for the judgment of the world's sin to which he has submitted obediently. Signs of hope and divine presence persist even in the hour of death: The curtain of the temple is torn in two (Mark 15:38), the Roman (i.e., Gentile!) centurion identifies Jesus as "Son of God" (15:39), and, last but not least, Psalm 22 – of which Jesus only utters the opening verse – will turn into a long line of confident praise (V. 22–31).

The Gospel of Matthew, in particular, emphasises the protective/supportive function of prayer in temptation. It employs the Lord's Prayer as "the authoritative prototype,"[90] which notably contains the petition "lead us not into temptation" (Matt 6:13). In the Matthean Gethsemane scene Jesus emphatically practises what he preaches: He taught his disciples to pray to God as their "Father in heaven" (6:9) that "your will be done" (6:10). Now that he himself is tempted to disobey, he prays with the words of his own model prayer: Twice he addresses God as πάτερ μου (26:39.42) and twice he prays that if there was no other way, God's will should take effect. While Mark 14:39 states that when Jesus returns to pray for the second time he is "saying the same words," Matt 26:42 gives another detailed account of his words: πάτερ μου, εἰ οὐ δύναται τοῦτο παρελθεῖν ἐὰν μὴ αὐτὸ πίω, γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου. Any careful reader/listener of the gospel will immediately note that Jesus' petition literally resembles the third petition in the Lord's Prayer. Matthew, thus, has adapted Mark's version of Jesus' Gethsemane prayer to match his teaching on prayer in the Sermon on the Mount. In the appeal to the disciples, the evangelist also slightly modifies the verb ἔλθητε (Mark 14:38) to εἰσέλθητε (Matt 26:41), which is closer to Matt 6:13 (καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν). The "doubling" of a verb with the prefix εἰσ- followed by the preposition εἰς is typically Matthean,[91] and, thus, Jesus' warning to "watch and pray not to enter into temptation" is reminiscent of the sixth petition in the Lord's Prayer. With these allusions to 6:9–13, Matthew depicts Jesus as praying along the lines of his own model. While he need not cite all the exact words in Gethsemane, he definitely prays that his Father's will be done – and given the context of 26:41, it is likely that he also asks to be kept from temptation.

The fact that he prays and eventually overcomes the temptation to depart from God's plan distinguishes Jesus from his disciples. They fail to "watch and pray," even though they have been instructed to do so three times (cf. Mark 14:41). Each time Jesus returns, he finds them sleeping and they all will soon leave him and flee (14:50). Peter, who had previously attempted to keep Jesus from his death (8:31–33) and, hence, had been called 'Satan,'[92] will even deny him (14:66–72). The contrast between Jesus and his disciples, therefore, is the point of the Gethsemane episode.[93] He struggles but regains obedience through prayer, while the weakness of their flesh (14:38) makes them fall asleep and eventually betray their master.

Some final remarks on Luke: Luke's account of Jesus' prayer on the Mount of Olives is decidedly different from the Markan/Matthean version. For one, he does not locate it in the "place called Gethsemane" (Mark 14:32; Matt 26:36) but in "the place" (Luke 22:40) on the Mount of Olives (22:39). The scene is shorter; Jesus only withdraws for prayer once and he does not single out three of his disciples but tells all of them in the beginning to pray not to enter into temptation (20:40 προσεύχεσθε μὴ εἰσελθεῖν εἰς πειρασμόν). This appeal is repeated literally in V. 46 and therefore frames the narrative unit as Jesus' first and last utterance. Other than in Mark and Matthew, the disciples have been instructed about the purpose of their prayer from the start. The emphasis is, thus, placed on *their* (possible) temptation, which is drawing near with Judas (V. 47), who is possessed by Satan (22:3). Judas has already entered into temptation and so will Peter – the only one who follows Jesus after he has been arrested (22:54) and who emphatically denies him three times.[94] Jesus, by contrast, is not really at risk of falling into temptation. While it is true that in Luke the opposing purposes of God and Satan also coalesce in the prayer scene, "Jesus embraces the cup in obedience to the divine purpose [… and] accept[s] the fate willed for him by Satan."[95] He is presented as an athlete wrestling heavily against the Satanic opposition (cf. 22:44: "agony," "praying more earnestly," "sweat like great drops of blood," etc.), but he is not alone. The most striking difference between the Lukan and the Markan/Matthean versions is Luke's addition of the appearance of an "angel from heaven" strengthening Jesus in his agony (22:43). In Luke, therefore, *God does respond* to Jesus' prayer – not by removing the cup but at least by providing strength for the ordeal. With this divine support, Jesus is *a priori* protected from temptation. Moreover, Luke does not present Jesus as 'greatly distressed and troubled' but as confidently fighting the 'spark' of disobedience. He does not really ask God to remove the cup from him (cf. the more urgent language in Mark 14:36 and Matt 26:39) but rather subordinates his will to his Father's from the start: His prayer begins with πάτερ, εἰ βούλει … and immediately transitions into the petition πλὴν μὴ τὸ θέλημά μου ἀλλὰ τὸ σὸν γινέσθω.[96] Thus, even though Jesus' will initially differs from that of God, he would not dare ask for anything other than what his Father wants. In the Lukan version, therefore, Jesus is considerably less

close to temptation (i.e., disobedience) than he is in Mark and Matthew – and he will explicitly reject the mere thought of it in the Gospel of John (cf. John 12:23.27f.).

2 Tempted by fear of death – temptation of Jesus in the Letter to the Hebrews

The Letter to the Hebrews explicitly mentions a temptation of Jesus during his earthly life, i.e., his time "in blood and flesh" (cf. Hebr 2:14). The verb πειράζειν occurs in relation to Jesus twice: in Hebr 2:18 and 4:15.[97] It does not, however, refer to a temptation by the devil/Satan at the beginning of his ministry (even though the devil is mentioned in 2:14; not as the 'tempter' but as 'the one who has the power of death'). Therefore, unlike in the wilderness temptation of the Synoptic gospels, Jesus is not (tentatively) tempted by power, greed, hunger, etc. He is instead tempted by his *fear of death*. Significantly, this is a feature he shares with "every one of us" (cf. Hebr 4:15) – it is part of the human condition.

Two sections need to be taken into account: Hebr 2:5–18 and 4:14–5:10 (esp. 4:15 and 5:7–10). Hebrews employs the temptation of Jesus as an important issue for his qualification as the perfect High Priest, who has compassion for us. Jesus is qualified as the perfect High Priest by means of his suffering and death, but also by means of his temptations (and ability to still remain without sin). P. Nyende is therefore right to claim that "Hebrews' commentary on Jesus' temptations are within the context of Jesus' mediatorial roles, and more specifically, as we shall see shortly, within the context of his priestly role."[98]

Hebrews 2:5–18 deals with Jesus' relation to the believers. In this section, the temptation, suffering, and death of the Son are presented as 'the path to glory' both for Jesus himself and for the believers. The focus is on Jesus' earthly life, since he "was made for a little while lower than the angels" (Ps 8:5–7).[99] Through his humiliation he gets to "taste death for everyone" (Hebr 2:9). Hebr 2:10 emphasises that by imposing suffering on Jesus, God is "bringing many sons (and daughters) to glory." This 'glory' (δόξα) is the same that the Son was crowned with at his exaltation (Hebr 2:7). It is closely related to salvation (σωτηρία) in Hebr 2:10: The founder (ἀρχηγός) of that salvation is perfected through suffering, for he must be totally identified with those he sanctifies. The condition of the 'children' (τὰ παιδία) is one in which they "share in blood and flesh" (2:14: κεκοινώνηκεν αἵματος καὶ σαρκός), i.e., human beings permanently share with one another a common human condition. One of the key claims of Hebr 2:5–18 is that Jesus fully shares this human 'nature' – he partook (μετέσχεν) of that human condition. According to Hebr 2:14, therefore, Jesus is a "true human being, a genuine partaker of flesh and blood."[100] His participation in blood and flesh resulted in his death, and through death he broke the power of the one who holds sway over death, i.e., the devil. This led to the release of those who the devil

held captive (2:15). Jesus' incarnation, suffering, and death have, on the one hand, enabled him to destroy the one who holds its power (2:14), and, on the other, to free those who have been held in bondage by the fear of death (φόβος θανάτου) (2:15).[101] It is important to note that this liberation, which results from Jesus' victory over death, is seen as a *release from the lifelong fear of death* (ὅσοι φόβῳ θανάτου διὰ παντὸς τοῦ ζῆν ἔνοχοι ἦσαν δουλείας).[102]

Verses 17 and 18 then "explicitly introduce for the first time the theme of Christ's high priesthood."[103] According to 2:17, Jesus has to be linked to his brothers and sisters in every respect so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in matters pertaining to God, in order to make expiation for the sins of the people. Verse 18 then adds that "he is able to help those who are being tempted" (τοῖς πειραζομένοις) *because* (γάρ) "he himself has suffered when tempted" (πέπονθεν αὐτὸς πειρασθείς). The participle πειρασθείς does not refer to the temptation stories of the gospels but to Jesus' suffering,[104] even though it is unclear whether it points to Gethsemane or to "the cross as being itself Christ's supreme πειρασμός."[105] Following the logic of Hebr 2:17f., Jesus was 'tested' in his suffering *because* his brothers and sisters too are being tested. This specific interpretation of Jesus' suffering (and, by implication, his death) as 'temptation' or 'testing' "recurs in 5:7, though without the use of πειράζω, so an implicit allusion to the final test of the cross is possible, as perhaps in 12:4 (cf. 12:2)."[106] Hebr 2:5–18, thus, presents a complex network of Jesus' function as merciful high priest and his relation to the believers, which is grounded in the shared experience of temptation. P. Ellingworth concludes that

> [b]y the end of the paragraph, it is clear that it is precisely through Christ's temptation, suffering, and death that he was and is able to help human beings, and so carry out the work for which God has exalted him.[107]

The "knitting together of the purpose of Jesus' temptations to his priestly role of intercession is more pronounced" in another context, namely Hebr 4:14–16.[108] The two verses need to be considered within the larger frame of 4:14–5:10, which forms one pericope.[109] While the motif of Jesus as high priest was only briefly touched upon in 2:17, it is "more fully developed"[110] here. "We" (i.e., the believers) "have a great high priest" (4:14). He entered into God's presence passing through the heavens. Importantly, he is able to sympathise with our human weakness. This is based on the fact that he was tried in every respect like every other human being, even if this likeness excludes sin (cf. 4:15).[111] Hebr 4:15 strongly emphasises the ὁμοιότης of the tempted human Jesus to the addressees; his mercies "are grounded in his intimate experience of their humanity and the temptations thereof."[112] The two perfect forms διεληλυθότα (V. 14) and πεπειρασμένον (V. 15) underline that both Jesus' exaltation and his temptations "are now viewed as *permanent aspects* of the Christ-event."[113] Thus, the temptations serve

the particular purpose of qualifying "him to be a priest by enabling him to sympathize with those whom he represents before God and then intercede for them accordingly."[114]

The question then arises: *what kind of temptation or testing* did the author of the letter have in mind? Hebr 2:10–18 prepares us for the answer that is ultimately provided in 5:7–10: Both texts refer to Jesus as "being perfected" (2:10: τελειῶσαι; 5:9: τελειωθείς). Since human beings who share in blood and flesh are subjected to slavery by fear of death (2:15), *fear of death is the ultimate temptation of Jesus*. This becomes obvious in 5:7–10. Jesus, the high priest, fully shared in the temptations of a life in blood and flesh, i.e., the temptation by the fear of death to which his followers are exposed. Even though there are almost no verbal connections to the story of his agony in Gethsemane, it seems likely that the author of Hebrews is alluding to it.[115] This is because Hebr 5:7 explicitly refers to Jesus' earthly ministry and claims that he had "offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death." The idea of Jesus both praying *and* crying is reminiscent of the crisis at the end of his ministry, as narrated by the Synoptics. Moreover, the predication of God as 'the one who was able to save him from death' suggests the content of Jesus' prayer, namely to be saved from death – or, in Markan terminology, that the 'cup be removed' from him. The phrase ἐκ θανάτου, however, is (deliberately) ambiguous: it can either mean "from [impending] death" or "out of death."[116] Hebr 5:7 then adds that Jesus' prayer was heard, but it was answered in his exaltation. What follows is another complex interlocking of Jesus' fleshly vulnerability and his priestly status. The condition of sharing in blood and flesh is the condition of realising the perfection of his priestly status. It is the condition of being tempted by the fear of death and suffering and dying.

While suffering and death are without doubt "an essential part of the Son's salvific work,"[117] it is his *temptation* that qualifies him to be the compassionate high priest.

> For the confidence of his audience, the author of Hebrews points out that this superior priestly intercessory role of Jesus was evident during his earthly ministry when he made prayers and supplications to God, which were heard (Heb. 5:7–10).[118]

Hebr 5:8f. then claims that Jesus "learned *obedience* from what he suffered, and being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who *obey* him." Jesus' sufferings – his fear of death as well as the painful death itself – had an educational effect[119] on him, which is stressed here to portray him as a salvific model for believers. *Because* Jesus shares in blood and flesh and *because* he shares in human temptation and suffering, he saves those who share in his obedience in that they obey him. The tempted and suffering Jesus in the Letter to the Hebrews, thus, is the *cause* of salvation as well as its *model*.

3 Summary and prospects

We have shown that the New Testament texts basically narrate two different stories of Jesus being 'tempted' or 'tested' by God, one at the beginning and one towards the end of his ministry.[120] While the so called 'wilderness temptation' occurs only in the Synoptic gospels, the critical experience (in Gethsemane) is – in one way or another – recounted in *all* canonical gospels *and* in the Letter to the Hebrews. The former is a genre-conforming, stylised account of a hero embarking on his mission, and the latter an interpretation of a multiply recollected event. The many different witnesses to the 'Gethsemane crisis' – which, as the downplaying approaches by Luke and John show, is quite adverse to the biblical portrayal of Jesus – speak in favour of its historicity. As opposed to this, the historical truth of the wilderness temptation – if there is any – is much harder to grasp. One should be aware that when dealing with Mark 1:12f. (parr.), methods of historical inquiry can only be applied to a certain extent due to literary stylisation.

'Temptation' is a *theological category* in the first place.[121] It is used by several New Testament authors to *interpret* and *describe* different moments in the life of Jesus. Since (historical) events are generally ambiguous and ambivalent, it is striking that different authors associate the 'Gethsemane event' with temptation. Mark uses Jesus' crisis to illustrate his threefold prayer for alignment with the will of the (silent) Father. The term 'temptation' is explicitly applied only to the disciples, but the reader/listener of the gospel learns that Jesus 'watches and prays' and ultimately triumphs over temptation, for he succumbs to the will of God. He has been tempted by *disobedience*, but he resists by means of prayer. Matthew goes even further by connecting the prayer scene with Jesus' teachings on prayer in Matt 6, particularly with the petition not to be led into temptation in Lord's Prayer. The Letter to the Hebrews, which does not specifically mention Gethsemane but refers to a testing closely resembling the Synoptics' account, emphasises that Jesus was tempted by the *fear of death*. He shares in this human experience because he 'partakes in blood and flesh' and thereby qualifies as a compassionate high priest. Fear of death is of course implied in the 'distress' and 'sorrow' of the Markan/Matthean Jesus as well, but the point of the gospel authors is that this fear might tempt him to disobey his Father. The Letter to the Hebrews, by contrast, uses the concept of obedience to highlight that Jesus is both the *cause* as well as the *model* of salvation.

The same end-of-life crisis is also echoed in Luke and John. This is strong evidence *ex negativo* for the historical plausibility of a crisis experience at the end of Jesus' life. These two authors, however, do not interpret his troubled mind in the light of temptation. Luke adapts the Markan Gethsemane prayer in such a way that the elements of crisis and temptation are softened and overshadowed by Jesus' athletic fight against the Satanic opposition, in which he is supported by an angel. The third evangelist also uses

the concept of temptation for the disciples in this context but, in contrast to Mark and Matthew, the reader is not compelled to draw inferences from their situation about Jesus'. The Johannine Jesus merely mentions that his "soul is troubled" (John 12:27). He then adds the rhetorical question: "And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'?" only to reaffirm Jesus knows full well that "for this purpose I have come to this hour." Nevertheless, it is striking that even John integrates Jesus' troubled mind into his Christology. And this is not the first time that Jesus was moved in the face of death: In John 11:33, Jesus is "deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled" when he sees Mary, Lazarus' sister, weeping over her brother's death. He then weeps himself as he visits Lazarus' tomb (11:35) and is "deeply moved again" on his second visit (11:38). The Jews therefore comment: "See how he loved him" (11:36). In a way that is semantically and conceptionally different from both the Synoptics as well as the Letter to the Hebrews, John also depicts Jesus as *compassionate* and *troubled* in the face of death. Nowhere, however, does John speak of Jesus as being 'tempted' or 'tested' by God.

The final question that should be addressed in the interest of this volume is: Could Jesus have failed in the face of testing? An exegetical answer, indebted to the text, can only be a short one. Several New Testament texts narrate different tests of Jesus, all of which he passes. From a narratological point of view, a 'failure' is, of course, impossible for the development of the story. The wilderness temptation, in particular, expects Jesus to resist all of Satan's temptations because this is the genre-specific outcome. His testing in Gethsemane, however, is different. It would not make much sense to interpret Jesus' prayerful struggle as temptation if failure was not at all an option (this is exactly the challenge of the Lukan account). But even though Jesus sincerely struggles in both Mark and Matthew, and needs to pray (!) in order to succeed (i.e., he cannot just divinely resist the desire for disobedience), he wins over temptation in the end. Nothing else can really be deduced from the text. Notably, and unlike Hebrews (!), the Synoptics reserve the category πειρασμός for the disciples in this context, even though Jesus himself experiences just the same. Maybe this reflects their caution in dealing with the concept that, in their view, best describes his crisis but that is a loaded term at the same time.

Notes

1 Cf. the title of the essay by Martin Hasitschka, "Der Sohn Gottes – geliebt und geprüft. Zusammenhang von Taufe und Versuchung Jesu bei den Synoptikern, in ed. Christoph Niemand, *Forschungen zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt: Festschrift für Albert Fuchs* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 2002), 71–80.

2 Cf. Heinrich Seesemann, Art. "πεῖρα", in: ThWNT VI (1965), 33: "Unter den Briefen des NT betont der Hebräerbrief mit ganz besonderer Eindringlichkeit die Tatsache, daß Jesus zu seinen Lebzeiten versucht wurde".

3 The temptation in the wilderness foreshadows the subsequent three temptations by the Pharisees (and the Herodians) in Mark (8:11; 10:2; 12:15). It indirectly qualifies them as "satanic". Cf. Jeffrey B. Gibson, *The Temptations of Jesus in Early Christianity*, JSNT.S 112 (Sheffield: Bloomsbury Academic, 1995), 119–237 and 256–317.

4 In Matt 4:3, the evangelist accurately labels him "the tempter" (ὁ πειράζων). The present active participle perfectly underlines his agency.

5 Cf. Arnd Herrmann, *Versuchung im Markusevangelium. Eine biblisch-hermeneutische Studie*, BWANT 197 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2011), 55f., who makes a similar point for the German language.

6 Cf. John E. McKinley, *Tempted for Us. Theological Models and the Practical Relevance of Christ's Impeccability and Temptation* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 15. According to him (ibid., 15f.),

> Determination of the sense depends on the context. Some New Testament occurrences of πειράζω contain both senses as two sides of the experience: God *tests* Jesus to prove his obedience while Satan simultaneously *tempts* Jesus to draw him into sin.
>
> (Emphases original)

7 Remarkably, God is never said to test non-believers, peoples other than Israel, or sinners. He is entirely concerned with the justice, faithfulness, and obedience of (mostly individual) pious Jews. His testing, therefore, is always a consequence of election, cf. Michael Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, HNT 5 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 178f.

8 Gibson, *Temptations* (cf. n. 3), 56 (emphases original).

9 Cf. Herrmann, *Versuchung* (cf. n. 5), 110.

10 It is widely acknowledged that Mark's version derives from an older pre-Markan tradition, cf. Gibson, *Temptations* (cf. n. 3), 42.

11 Cf. Ulrich Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus I*, EKK I/1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, ^{5}2002), 221, n. 12.

12 Gibson, *Temptations* (cf. n. 3), 64. Cf. also ibid., 57:

> On the contrary, since in Mark's time and among those schooled in the biblical tradition (as Mark and presumably his intended audience were) the notice's wording was extremely evocative and bore a specific set of associations, we should actually assume that […] this notice, even brief as it is, actually spoke volumes on the issue and signified that the temptation was a trial of Jesus' faithfulness.

13 The verb ἐκβάλλειν has a dynamic and violent character, cf. Herrmann, *Versuchung* (cf. n. 5), 157, n. 30, who points out that the term is frequently used in the Markan exorcisms (e.g., in 1:39), and for the expulsion of the merchants from the temple in 11:12. It emphasises that Jesus is *compelled* to go.

14 Cf. Gibson, *Temptations* (cf. n. 3), 64: "'The Spirit' […] is, of course, the Spirit of God. The activity in which it here engages (i.e., expulsion) is the exercise of a type of power used to bring divine purposes to fulfilment".

15 Gibson, *Temptations* (cf. n. 3), 64. Cf. also ibid.: "Mark in effect says that this temptation is willed by God, indeed, that God is its ultimate author".

16 Gibson, *Temptations* (cf. n. 3), 58.

17 Herrmann, *Versuchung* (cf. n. 5), 154, notes that Jesus is not mentioned by name in the Markan temptation account (but the pronoun αὐτόν in Mark 1:10.12 of course refers back to Ἰησοῦς who was last mentioned in V. 9).

18 Ernest Best, *The Temptation and the Passion. The Markan Soteriology*, SNTS Monograph Series 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, ^{2}1990), 7.

19 Gibson, *Temptations* (cf. n. 3), 62, rightly argues that the definite article, the temptation context, and the location of the wilderness in "the area which in contemporary thought was regarded as the setting of the latter half of the book of Exodus and of Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy" all help define the ἔρημος as "not just *any* wilderness" but as "*the* wilderness, the scene of Israel's post-Exodus wanderings".
20 Cf. Joachim Gnilka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, EKK 2 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlagshaus / Patmos: Düsseldorf, 2010), 57: "Die Versuchung durch Satan findet nicht am Schluß des Wüstenaufenthalts statt, sondern hält die ganze Zeit an". For a discussion of the syntax of Mark 1:13, cf. Herrmann, *Versuchung* (cf. n. 5), 155, who concludes: "Die Formulierungen ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ und τεσσεράκοντα ἡμέρας sind präzisierende Umstandsbeschreibungen des den gesamten Wüstenaufenthalt Jesu prägenden Versuchungsgeschehens".
21 Gibson, *Temptations* (cf. n. 3), 62. Like most scholars, McKinley, *Tempted for Us* (cf. n. 6), 23, argues for the biblical typology as well and sees a link between the wilderness temptation accounts and "Israel's forty years of wandering between Egypt and the conquest of Canaan".
22 Gibson, *Temptations* (cf. n. 3), 56.
23 McKinley, *Tempted for Us* (cf. n. 6), 23.
24 Gibson, *Temptations* (cf. n. 3), 48–80, elaborates that the wilderness temptation is all about the question of whether or not Jesus would live up to the expectations raised by the proclamation in Mark 1:11.
25 Best, *Temptation* (cf. n. 18), 15. He goes on to say that "i.12f. has no conclusion; the conclusion is supplied by iii.27".
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
29 Gibson, *Temptations* (cf. n. 3), 80. According to Gibson (ibid.), the "result" of the wilderness temptation is that Jesus "proved himself loyal and obedient to the commission he received at his Baptism".
30 This detail must not be overlooked. In fact, the Markan "temptation account" is more accurately described as an account of "Jesus' wilderness sojourn" that is, amongst other things, flanked by the temptation.
31 Gibson, *Temptations* (cf. n. 3), 65. Best, *Temptation* (cf. n. 18), 8, points out that "it is unlikely that Mark would have wished to emphasise human loneliness at this stage of the story, and in his conflict with Satan the Son of God could hardly have expected to find assistance from men".
32 Gibson, *Temptations* (cf. n. 3), 65 (emphases original), with reference to J. Jeremias, Art. Ἀδαμ, in: TDNT I, 141–3.
33 Cf., e.g., Gnilka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (cf. n. 20), 57.
34 Best, *Temptation* (cf. n. 18), 8. See also Herrmann, *Versuchung* (cf. n. 5), 163: "die These vom eschatologischen Tierfrieden überzeugt nicht".
35 Best, *Temptation* (cf. n. 18), 8. He goes on:

> The very fact that in the Messianic kingdom the beasts are at peace with man implies their normal fierceness and opposition, a fact which would have been much more obvious to those living in the Palestine of the first century than to citizens of the western world today.

36 Herrmann, *Versuchung* (cf. n. 5), 164:

> Die wilden Tiere stellen durchaus eine Bedrohung dar. Sie sind nicht friedlich und harmlos, können aber dem Gottessohn nichts anhaben. Sein gottgegebenes Charisma, seine Geisteskraft und Gerechtigkeit hält die Tiere dermaßen im Zaum, dass sie sich vor ihm *fürchten* (TestNaph 8,4).
>
> (Emphasis original)

37 Herrmann, *Versuchung* (cf. n. 5), 163f., who also points to *TestIss* 7:5–7 and *TestBenj* 5:2; Best, *Temptation* (cf. n. 18), 10; Gibson, *Temptations* (cf. n. 3), 68, who points to *TestBenj* 5:2 as well.
38 Cf., for instance, Herrmann, *Versuchung* (cf. n. 5), 163f.: "Sicher scheint mir, dass er sich von diesem Vorstellungsgut hat leiten lassen".
39 Cf. Herrmann, *Versuchung* (cf. n. 5), 163, who lists 2:19; 3:14; 5:18; 14:67 as positive counterexamples but also argues that they do not necessarily support the thesis of Jesus' harmonious coexistence with the "wild beasts".
40 Best, *Temptation* (cf. n. 18), 9.
41 Cf. Best, *Temptation* (cf. n. 18), 9f. He ibid., points out that the Matthean/Lukan accounts, which so often influence the reading of Mark 1:12f., also mention the angels' function of guarding Jesus (Matt 4:6; Luke 4:10f., quoting Ps 91:11f.).
42 Susan R. Garrett, *The Temptations of Jesus in Mark's Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 1998), 56.
43 Cf., for instance, Best, *Temptation* (cf. n. 18), 4: "The account of the Temptation in Mark is bare of details".
44 Gibson, *Temptations* (cf. n. 3), 80 (and more often).
45 See Stanley E. Porter & Bryan R. Dyer, eds., *The Synoptic Problem. Four Views* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016).
46 This is guided by our research interest in the Gospel of Matthew, cf. the forthcoming dissertation by Lena Lütticke, "Your Father who is in secret and sees in secret". Matthew's conception of God based on Matt 6:1–6.16–18 (translated working title). Cf. also, e.g., Hans-Ulrich Weidemann, "Being a Male Disciple of Jesus According to Matthew's Antitheses", in eds. Ovidiu Creanga & Peter-Ben Smit, *Biblical Masculinities Foregrounded*, Hebrew Bible Monographs 62 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press Ltd, 2013), 107–55.
47 Out of the wealth of literature on Matthew's concept of righteousness, we will only refer to one important English monograph and one paper that points out the major interpretative problem: Benno Przybylski, *Righteousness in Matthew and His World of Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Donald A. Hagner, "Righteousness in Matthew's Theology", in eds. MichaelJ. Wilkins & Terence Paige, *Worship, Theology and Ministry in the Early Church. Essays in Honor of Ralph P. Martin*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament (Sheffield: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1992; Supplement Series 87), 101–20.
48 Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew, The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1992), 71.
49 Cf. Morris, *Matt* (cf. n. 48), 71: "[T]he construction seems to signify purpose: this took place in the plan of God".
50 On the notion of God's presence in Matthew, cf. the forthcoming dissertation by Lena Lütticke.
51 William D. Davies & Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew*, vol. 1 (Matthew 1–7), ICC (London/New York: HardPress, 2004), 352, speak of "spatial progression, from a low place to a high place". They also note that "[t]his progression corresponds to the dramatic tension which comes to a climax with the third temptation".
52 Matthew thereby quite clearly alludes to Moses neither eating bread nor drinking water for 40 days and nights in Ex 34:28, and Elijah sustaining on the angelic food for 40 days and nights in 1 Kg 19:8.
53 The timing in Matthew differs from both the Markan and the Lukan version where the temptation is said to last for the whole duration of Jesus' stay in the wilderness. This is the most likely reading of Mark 1:13, and it is syntactically unambiguous for Luke 4:2: ἡμέρας τεσσεράκοντα πειραζόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ διαβόλου.

54 Cf. McKinley, *Tempted for Us* (cf. n. 6), 26: "Satan intended that Jesus respond first by a display of divine power, and then by a deed that would precipitate a powerful divine rescue".
55 Cf. Morris, *Matt* (cf. n. 48), 73: "His multiplication of loaves on those occasions was consistent with his God-ordained mission, just as was his refusal to do it here".
56 It is noteworthy that Jesus does not resort to inherent divine powers (such as the Holy Spirit). All of his resistance to temptation is fought within his limitations as a man, which makes him a model for all humankind, cf. McKinley, *Tempted for Us* (cf. n. 6), 27.
57 Morris, *Matt* (cf. n. 48), 73, adds that "the first-class conditional [n.b. εἰ + indicative] seems to assume the reality of the case".
58 On the structural parallels of Jesus' baptism and temptation in Matthew, see Hans-Christian Kammler, "Sohn Gottes und Kreuz. Die Versuchungsgeschichte Mt 4, 1–11 im Kontext des Matthäusevangeliums", *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 100 (2003), 163–86, esp. 170f.
59 God has already lived up to that promise multiple times within the narrative of Matt 1–2, so the reader of the gospel knows full well that God protects his Son.
60 Cf. Morris, *Matt* (cf. n. 48), 77.
61 Floyd V. Filson, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew, Black's New Testament Commentaries* (London: Moody Publ, ²1971), 71.
62 Morris, *Matt* (cf. n. 48), 77.
63 On that topic, cf. the dissertation by Joshua E. Leim, *Theological Grammar. The Father and the Son*, WUNT II/402 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015).
64 Cf. Luz, *Mt I* (cf. n. 11), 230.
65 Cf. ibid., 231.
66 Luke only uses the verb ἀνάγω and does not refer to a "very high mountain" (cf. Matt 4:8) or any other place.
67 The temptation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3).
68 Cf. Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1997), 191.
69 Ibid., 192 labels 4:1–13 "an episode of transition".
70 Ibid.
71 Green, *Luke* (cf. n. 68), 192.
72 Ibid. Green furthermore points out that with the Holy Spirit standing behind Jesus "4:1–13 presents a clash of cosmic proportions" and "thus exhibits the basic antithesis between the divine and the diabolic that will continue throughout Luke-Acts".
73 Cf. Green, *Luke* (cf. n. 68), 192f.
74 Mark 14:32–42; Matt 26:36–46; Luke 22:39–46.
75 Best, *Temptation* (cf. n. 18), 7.
76 Cf. Hans-Ulrich Weidemann, "Versuchung und Erprobung. Skizzen zum neutestamentlichen Umgang mit einem beunruhigenden Thema", *IKZ Communio* 47 (2019), 21: „Wendet man sich vom Beginn der erzählten Vita Jesu ihrem Ende zu, dann betritt man mit der Gethsemani-Geschichte (Mk 14,32–42 par) literarisch ganz anderen Boden."
77 The Matthean version differs from the Markan only by using the verb εἰσέρχομαι instead of ἔρχομαι. Luke, who has an angel strengthen Jesus and thereby alleviates the crisis and temptation, makes Jesus exhort his disciples twice by saying: προσεύχεσθε μὴ εἰσελθεῖν εἰς πειρασμόν (Luke 22:40.46).
78 It is unlikely that these emotions indicate Jesus is shrinking (only) from physical pain and death. They are rather caused by the kind of death he is about to die: a death on the cross, being forsaken by his Father, cf. McKinley, *Tempted for Us* (cf. n. 6), 30.

79 The cup is, of course, a cipher for the suffering and death ordained by God. But it is also more than that when given its full significance as the wrath of God (Ps 11:6; Isa 51:17; Ezek 23:33). Since it is God who can take the cup from Jesus, it must also be God who gives it. This is fully in line with the OT references to the cup as given by God to men to drink.
80 Best, *Temptation* (cf. n. 18), 93.
81 Ibid., 93f.
82 Best, *Temptation* (cf. n. 18), 30. In his chapter on "The Origin of Temptation", Best rightly emphasises that "Satan is not even mentioned" in Gethsemane (ibid.).
83 Gibson, *Temptations* (cf. n. 3), 248 (emphases original).
84 Ibid.
85 Cf. Gibson, *Temptations* (cf. n. 3), 250.
86 Cf. ibid., 251: "[O]bedience produces nothing but a literal dead end".
87 Ibid., 253.
88 Most of the disciples are supposed to sit in a distance (Mark 14:32) while Jesus tells the "inner Three", i.e., Peter, James, and John, to "remain here [closer] and watch" (14:34). The trio, who had previously witnessed the transfiguration, now witnesses Jesus' desolation.
89 Cf. Gibson, *Temptations* (cf. n. 3), 247: "Jesus further says that the πειρασμός is something that is to be resisted and overcome through prayer (cf. 14:38a)".
90 Hans D. Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, a Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount Including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3–7:27 and Luke 6:20–49) (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Paulist Press International, 1995), 350.
91 Cf., e.g., 2:21; 5:20; 6:6.13; 7:21. The construction is often (but not exclusively) used to designate the entry into the βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.
92 Jesus rebukes Peter and addresses him as "Satan" for he is not setting his mind on the things of God but on the things of man (Mark 8:33). Setting one's mind on the things (i.e., the will) of God, however, is exactly what Jesus' struggle and prayer in Gethsemane is about.
93 Cf. Walter Schmithals, *Das Evangelium nach Markus II,* ÖTK 2/2 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, ²1986), 636.
94 Unlike Mark and Matthew, Luke does not explicitly state that all the disciples leave Jesus and flee (Mark 14:50/Matt 26:56). But the fact that Peter is the only one "following at a distance" (Luke 22:54) implies that the others have given up on him at this point.
95 Green, *Luke* (cf. n. 68), 779. He ibid. rightly emphasises that "only as the story unfolds does it become clear that Jesus' death represents not the greatest of the devil's achievements but actually his demise".
96 Jesus' language in Luke 22:42 is quite stylised; however, Luke does not hint at the Lord's Prayer here for his version does not include the petition that God's "will be done" (cf. Luke 11:2–4).
97 Hebr 3:8f. quotes Ps 94:8f., a warning illustrated by the reference to the time of "your fathers" in the desert. Once again, the Exodus events are employed as a prototype of the situation of the church. Hebr 11:17 refers to Abraham (Πίστει προσενήνοχεν Ἀβραὰμ τὸν Ἰσαὰκ πειραζόμενος καὶ τὸν μονογενῆ προσέφερεν).
98 Peter Nyende, "Tested for Our Sake. The Temptations of Jesus in the Light of Hebrews", *The Expository Times*, 127 (2016), 525–33, here: 527.
99 In Hebr 2:9 Jesus is identified as the "man" the psalm refers to.
100 Frederick F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 1964), 48.
101 Cf. Nyende, *Tested* (cf. n. 98), 528.

102 Cf. Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia, PA: Paulist Press, 1989), 93.
103 P. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews. A Commentary on the Greek Text, NIGTC* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 1993), 143. Cf. also Attridge, *Hebr* (cf. n. 102), 95.
104 Cf. Attridge, *Hebr* (cf. n. 102), 96.
105 Ellingworth, *Hebr* (cf. n. 103), 191.
106 Ibid., 269.
107 Ibid., 144.
108 Nyende, *Tested* (cf. n. 98), 528f.
109 Cf. Attridge, *Hebr* (cf. n. 102), 137–8.
110 Ibid., 138.
111 Ibid., 140.
112 Nyende, *Tested* (cf. n. 98), 530.
113 Ellingworth, *Hebr* (cf. n. 103), 266 (our emphasis).
114 Nyende, *Tested* (cf. n. 98), 529. Cf. also ibid., 530: "[T]he purpose of Jesus' temptations was to enable fully his priestly role of intercession before God for those in temptation whom he represents before God".
115 See the discussion by Attridge, *Hebr* (cf. n. 102), 148–9. Cf. also Ellingworth, *Hebr* (cf. n. 103), 288.
116 Attridge, *Hebr* (cf. n. 102), 150. Cf. Ps 114:8; Hos 13:14 etc.
117 Attridge, *Hebr* (cf. n. 102), 152.
118 Nyende, *Tested* (cf. n. 98), 529.
119 Cf. Ellingworth, *Hebr* (cf. n. 103), 292. Attridge, *Hebr* (cf. n. 102), 153, points out that "Jesus can learn obedience only in the sense that he comes to appreciate fully what conformity to God's will means".
120 Several testings by the Pharisees take place in between these two poles, cf. n. 3.
121 It has a long tradition, and Jesus has some prominent precursors in the Old Testament, cf. n. 7.