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EDITED BY
WAYNE COPPINS & JACOB N. CERONE



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Editors' Preface

Each issue of *Accessible German New Testament Scholarship (AGNTS)* is a curated collection of significant contributions to New Testament scholarship from the German-speaking world. The contributions have been translated and presented here as an attempt to continue bridging the continental divide, which is at times separated by more than language but also methodological and exegetical traditions. It is our hope that this issue and future issues will continue to close that divide. More generally, we seek to make German New Testament scholarship accessible not only by making it available in English translation but also by publishing it in a form that can be read by people who do not have access to a research library.

This inaugural issue of *AGNTS* contains a number of features that will also characterize future issues of the journal. While the main focus of the journal will be on contemporary German New Testament scholarship, the two publications by William Wrede signal our desire to include at least some older works. Sometimes this will mean reaching back to much earlier phases of New Testament scholarship, as with Wrede, but at other times it will mean including a work from the more recent past, such as from the 1950s or 1990s. In the case of Wrede, we hope that his “Self-Review of *The Messianic Secret*” (1901) will be widely used as a concise and effective way to introduce a new generation of students to his landmark work and that his “Letter to Adolf von Harnack on Jesus as Messiah and Paul as a New Beginning” (1905) will both provide insight into the shape of his thinking about Paul and show how he subsequently reconsidered the influential viewpoint that he developed in *The Messianic Secret* with respect to the question of whether Jesus regarded himself as designated to be the Messiah.

While the shape of each issue will vary, our selection of articles for the first issue intentionally signals our interest in including works by both senior and junior scholars. Thus, alongside Matthias Konradt’s study of love for enemies in Matt 5.43–48 and its early Jewish context, Peter Stuhlmacher’s retrospective on the Tübingen biblical theology, and Oda Wischmeyer’s article on canon and hermeneutics in the times of deconstruction, we have also included the conclusion to Christoph Heilig’s book *Paulus als Erzähler? Eine narratologische Perspektive auf die Paulusbriefe*, which began as a doctoral dissertation, and Christine Jacobi’s chapter on Irenaeus from her book *Leiblich vermitteltes Leben. Vorstellungen vom Überwinden des Todes und vom Auferstehen im frühen Christentum*, which is a revised version of her habilitation.

Wayne Coppins (University of Georgia)

Jacob Cerone (Friedrich-Alexander Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg)

Self-Review of *The Messianic Secret*

William Wrede¹

Translated by
Wayne Coppins

Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien. Zugleich ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Markusevangeliums. By Dr. W. Wrede. Professor in Breslau. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901. 291 pages.

I cannot publish a self-review of this book in *Die Christliche Welt* in a way that it would be homogeneous with the ways of thinking that are predominant in this magazine. This, however, is also not, after all, the expectation for the self-reviews published here. The only requirement is that the book discussed have “some sort of interest” for the circle of readers (vol. 1899, col. 957). This I may believe to be the case for my book. To be sure, it is aimed not at the general public but rather at scholarly circles. However, its arguments touch upon such important questions of New Testament research and distance themselves so strongly from the dominant views that I may nevertheless count on interest from the theologically engaged readers of this journal. Under these circumstances, I gladly take the opportunity to indicate what my writing aims to accomplish.

I start from the question of when Jesus became known as Messiah according to the Gospels. The investigation is devoted in the first place to the Gospel of Mark, which, as I assume along with most contemporary critics, underlies the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. The result is as follows. Despite certain contradictory indications, the Gospel of Mark is dominated by the view that *Jesus wanted to keep his messianic dignity secret during his whole earthly life*; it is the resurrection that first brings the revelation of the secret. The main proof lies in Jesus’ commands that no one should speak of his messiahship (or also of his miracles as its distinguishing mark). The messianic dignity is thought of here as a matter of absolutely supernatural knowledge, as only God or the demons could have it and human beings only on the basis of special revelation. Alongside this series of thoughts stands a second, closely related one, which is specifically related to

¹Wrede published this self-review (*Selbstanzeige*) of *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien* in *Die Christliche Welt*, Nr. 34, Aug. 22, 1901, 805–806. I have translated it from the German text published in H. Rollmann and W. Zager, eds, “Unveröffentlichte Briefe William Wredes zur Problematisierung des messianischen Selbstverständnisses Jesu,” *ZNTbG/JHMTb* 8 (2001): 274–322, here 303–305. For the English translation, I have provided it with a descriptive title. Hans Rollmann and Werner Zager give it the title “[William Wrede, *Selbstanzeige: Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien*].” The German term *Selbstanzeige* could also be translated with “self-announcement.”

the disciples. They continually receive from Jesus the highest revelations, but they remain completely obtuse and blind toward them. Their understanding of Jesus – it is implied – likewise begins only with the resurrection. These views cannot be regarded as historical pieces of information. Rather, they are later ideas about the life of Jesus that arose in the Christian community. I claim this not merely in general, but I seek to prove in every individual point I investigate that the relevant pieces of information are not trustworthy. This demonstration has its own value. It is, however, not an end in itself but only support and supplement for the demonstration that Mark really has the view ascribed to him. My leading interest is indeed defined by this positive aspect. This is roughly the first fundamental section.

The second section shows how Mark's view is blurred or modified by his successors Matthew and Luke, and yet especially how in the Gospel that is farthest from the life of Jesus, i.e., in John, a view is present that has close points of contact to that of Mark: here too the knowledge of the disciples has its starting point in the resurrection.

The third section asks about the emergence of the two ideas found in Mark. The idea that Jesus hides his messiahship until the resurrection is derived from the demonstrably available old view that the resurrection first *makes* Jesus the Messiah. The idea that the disciples were completely without understanding during the earthly life of Jesus is a reflection of the historical fact that the real disciples were conscious of having come to an entirely new understanding of Jesus through the appearances of the risen one. While the question of whether Jesus himself wanted to be the Messiah is touched upon, it is not brought to a conclusion.

The whole book stands in sharp opposition to the method followed by the majority of contemporary critics. I hope, however, that I have not transgressed the limits of a polemic that is interested purely in the subject matter. A special subsidiary aim is to unsettle the dominant view of Mark. The plan that people find in his presentation and in which people perceive a good knowledge of the course of Jesus' life does not exist. And although no judgment is made about the value of the material that is not touched upon in the investigation, it nevertheless follows that in his *overall* presentation the evangelist already no longer possesses a real view of the actual conditions of the life of Jesus.

Breslau

W. Wrede

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Letter to Adolf von Harnack on Jesus as Messiah and Paul as a New Beginning

William Wrede¹

Translated by
Wayne Coppins

Breslau XIII Goethestr. 12
Jan 2, 1905

Esteemed friend!

I wanted to answer your third card – for which I am sincerely thankful – immediately, but I could not find the time. I feel, however, compelled now to reply to it with a few words.

As a matter of fact, I am not at all far from the formulations in your *Dogmengeschichte*, vol. 1,² pp. 89–90 [ET = 93–94].³ However, on p. 88 [ET = 92], I would make

¹The original copy of this letter from William Wrede to Adolf von Harnack can be found in the Nachlass of Adolf von Harnack, which is held in the Berlin State Library – Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz). I have translated this letter from the excellent German edition published in H. Rollmann and W. Zager, eds., “Unveröffentlichte Briefe William Wredes zur Problematisierung des messianischen Selbstverständnisses Jesu,” *ZNTbG/JHMTb* 8 (2001), 274–322, here 315–17. I have also incorporated (and sometimes supplemented) the information that Rollmann and Zager provide in their footnotes. Rollmann and Zager assign this letter the title [Brief William Wredes an Adolf Harnack, Berlin]. I have given the English translation a title that highlights two of the most noteworthy features of its content – namely, what Wrede says about Jesus as the Messiah and what he says about Paul as a new beginning. For two contrasting appraisals of the nature and significance of Wrede’s messianic reconsideration in this letter, see Rollmann and Zager, “Unveröffentlichte Briefe,” 274–82, esp. 279–80, and M. Hengel and A. M. Schwemer, *Jesus and Judaism*, ed. W. Coppins and S. Gathercole, trans. W. Coppins, BMSEC 7 (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2019), 196–97, 527, 537. Cf. also M. Hengel, “Zur historische Rückfrage nach Jesus von Nazareth: Überlegungen nach der Fertigstellung eines Jesusbuch,” in *Gespräch über Jesus: Papst Benedikt XVI. im Dialog mit Martin Hengel, Peter Stuhlmann und seinen Schüler in Castelgandolfo 2008*, ed. P. Kuhn (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 1–29, here 23; J. Schröter, *From Jesus to the New Testament: Early Christian Theology and the Origin of the New Testament Canon*, ed. W. Coppins and S. Gathercole, trans. W. Coppins, BMSEC 1 (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2013), 104.

²A. von Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, vol. 1: *Die Entstehung der kirchlichen Dogmas* (Freiburg am Breisgau: Mohr, 1894); ET = A. von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. 1, translated from the third German edition by N. Buchanan (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1901).

³Cf., e.g., Harnack, *Dogmengeschichte*, 89 (cf. Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 93): “The crucified and risen Christ became the midpoint of his [sc. Paul’s] theology, and yet not only the midpoint, but also the only source and ruling principle. For him this Christ was not Jesus of Nazareth, the exalted, but the mighty personal spiritual being in divine form who had lowered himself for a time, and who as Spirit has broken up

a new sectional division with Paul after the first significant transition from Jesus to the community of Christ-believers. I find the difference vis-à-vis your presentation in *Wesen des Christentums* (Lecture X) to be stronger and to some extent strong.⁴

By the way, I understand very well that from a certain point of view one can and may say that all differences as they enter history are husks and clothes. What ultimately matters are a few simple truths and sentiments, and vis-à-vis philosophy, materialism, pantheism, Buddhism, etc., Paul and Jesus also belong together. This, however, appears to me as a final value judgment about things in which the historical *connections* are actually completely unimportant to us, in which the thought of continuity and development recedes. From this standpoint, Luther and Thomas or Bernhard as well as Augustine and Schleiermacher also belong together. If, however, we ask about the historical relationship between two such entities, then I think the differences become significant, and vis-à-vis Jesus Paul will then appear to me not as interpreter and continuator but as a fundamentally new beginning, only hidden through the fact that the second believes himself to be the proclaimer and interpreter of the first.

The Christianity of history appears to me like a great conglomerate formation in which something new always begins and transitions to transitions can be observed from all sides. The foothills that are most distant from the core of the original bedrock hardly still show a similarity (I am thinking, for example, of rationalism and Greek monasticism) and show no greater similarity – apart from the purely external bond of the veneration of the same person – than that shows, in terms of chemical composition, with certain component parts of other buildings that emerged in a similar way (such as Islam). They are as far from one another as two different religions of roughly the same level or, alternatively, as a religion from a form of philosophy. The metaphor breaks down, for in the world of rocks these *organic* transitions do not exist as they can be seen in historical formations. But one can indeed imagine for a moment a conglomerate as an animate and organically growing thing. I am convinced that you will not reject this perspective. To me, our difference appears to lie in the fact that in Paul I already find an approach that is characterized by a predominantly deviating chemical composition and that this approach then introduces an abundance of formations that, despite all distinctives and deviations, are, nevertheless, related to this approach and not to the original bedrock.

I am more inclined than earlier to believe that Jesus regarded himself as designated to be the Messiah. To be sure, it necessarily came along with this that those who venerated him as such incorporated an aspect into their religion that did not belong to his religion or had an entirely different meaning there. (For my part, however, I doubt that Jesus was “Son of God” in the specific sense suggested by you.) Certainly, existing

the world of the law, sin, and death, and from now on overcomes them in believers.” On this, see W. Wrede, *Paulus*, RV 1/5–6 (Halle an der Saale: Gebauer-Schwetschke Verlag, 1904), 53–68, 89–97, 103–106; ET = W. Wrede, *Paul*, trans. E. Lummis (London: Philip Green, 1907), 85–115, 155–69, 176–82.

⁴See A. von Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums. Sechzehn Vorlesungen von Studierenden aller Fakultäten im Wintersemester 1899/1900 an der Universität Berlin gehalten von Adolf Harnack* (Leipzig: Heinrichs, 1900); ET = A. von Harnack, *What is Christianity? Lectures Delivered in the University of Berlin during the Winter Term 1899/1900*, trans. T. B. Saunders, 2nd revised ed. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1902).

ideas about the Messiah also now joined themselves easily with the impression of the person. But that would nevertheless be a displacement, even if it adapted itself in the most natural manner. Even if they should be nothing more than the simple reflex of the impression of the person of Jesus, they would still introduce a new aspect that made its own impact and drew new ideas to itself. Thus, the primitive community surely already represents a new formation with respect to Jesus, even if it has also grown up so naturally. To me, however, Paul, in turn, appears to represent a powerful step beyond the primitive community (which you do not in general deny) in the fact that he detaches faith from the human person of Jesus, is not decisively shaped by its distinctive piety, takes up ideas of a different origin to a very different degree than the primitive community, and uses them to grasp the person. Since these ideas predominate in him and fill what is shared with the primitive community with a new spirit, I cannot acknowledge him as an interpreter and continuator of Jesus in the sense that one is otherwise accustomed to use these predicates in history. However, I vividly feel what a poor thing paper is, at least for me, and how much easier it would be to come, if not to an agreement, then indeed to a clarification of the differences if I could sit next to you for a few minutes and the counter-speech could be sparked off by the speech!

I wish you all the best for the new year! May your work bear rich fruit!

Warmly Yours,

W. Wrede

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The Commandment of Love for Enemies in Matt 5.43–48 and Its Early Jewish Context

Matthias Konradt

Translated by
Wayne Coppins¹

The commandment of love for enemies handed down in Matt 5.44 and Luke 6.27–28, 35 is undoubtedly one of the most striking forms that the commandment of love for neighbor took in ancient Judaism. There is a *magnus consensus* that we are dealing with authentic Jesus material here.² More than that, the commandment of love for enemies is generally regarded as the peak statement of the ethics of Jesus.³ Its history of interpretation is characterized to a not insignificant degree by Christian claims to superiority vis-à-vis Judaism. Here, the ethical claim is said to soar to something outrageously new, which is foreign to both Judaism and the rest of Greco-Roman antiquity.⁴ Howe-

¹For the German version of the present essay, see M. Konradt, “Das Gebot der Feindesliebe in Mt 5.43–48 und sein frühjüdische Kontext,” in *Ahavah: Die Liebe Gottes im Alten Testament*, ed. M. Oeming, ABIG 55 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2018), 349–89. See also note 8 below. Cf. now also M. Konradt, *Ethik im Neuen Testament*, GNT 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2022), 42–45, 270–85, 534.

²Cf., e.g., D. Lührmann, “Liebet eure Feinde,” *ZThK* (1972): 412–38, here 412 (“with the greatest certainty that exegetical scholarship is able to claim”); J. Piper, “‘Love your Enemies’: Jesus’ Love Command in the Synoptic Gospels and in the Early Christian Paraenesis: A History of the Tradition and Interpretation of its Uses,” *MSSNTS* 38 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 1 (“‘Love your enemies’ is one of the few sayings of Jesus, the authenticity of which is not seriously questioned by anyone”); H. Merkley, *Die Gottesberrschaft als Handlungsprinzip. Untersuchung zur Ethik Jesu*, 3rd ed., FzB 34 (Würzburg: Echter, 1984), 230; H.-W. Kuhn, “Das Liebesgebot Jesu als Tora und als Evangelium. Zur Feindesliebe und zur christlichen und jüdischen Auslegung der Bergpredigt,” in *Vom Urchristentum zu Jesus (Festschrift für J. Gnllka)*, ed. H. Frankemölle and K. Kertelge (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1989), 194–240, here 222–24; as well as G. Theißen and A. Merz, *Der historische Jesus: eine Einführung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 347; G. Theißen and A. Merz, *Wer war Jesus? Der erinnerte Jesus in historischer Sicht* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2023), 358 (“The Q-tradition on love for enemies reworked in Matt 5.38–48 and Luke 6.27–36 [is] generally [regarded] in its core as authentic”); cf. G. Theißen and A. Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide*, trans. J. Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 391. Contrast, however, J. Sauer, “Traditionsgeschichtliche Erwägungen zu den synoptischen und paulinischen Aussagen über Feindesliebe und Wiedervergeltungsverzicht,” *ZNW* 76 (1985): 1–28.

³See, e.g., T. Söding, *Nächstenliebe. Gottes Gebot als Verheißung und Anspruch* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2015), 186: “The level of notoriety is not deceptive: love for enemies is the peak statement of the ethics of Jesus (*der Spitzensatz der Ethik Jesu*).”

⁴For an example from the recent history of interpretation, see M. Reiser, “Love of Enemies in the Context of Antiquity,” *NTS* 47 (2001): 411–27, here 423, who states with respect to Jesus’ commandment of love for enemies and the renunciation of retaliation: “By these recommendations Jesus unmistakably positions himself as an opponent of all accepted tradition and social teaching of both Jewish and Greek provenance.”

ver, in the wake of Christian theology's reconsideration of its relationship to Judaism, the opposite phenomenon can also be observed in the literature – namely, the effort to deny any specific emphasis to Jesus' commandment of love for enemies. Here, it is not regarded as sufficient to place the commandment of love for enemies in its Old Testament-early Jewish context and carefully sketch out its contours against this background; rather, it is flattened out into this context.⁵

Thus, in the analysis of the commandment of love for enemies, the exegete or historian of ancient Judaism and emerging Christianity walks upon a charged terrain. This, of course, should spur historical critical scholarship even more to analyze the findings, as far as possible, *sine ira et studio*, especially since it must be kept in mind that even if a specific profile of Jesus' commandment of love for enemies were to emerge, this would by no means determine *eo ipso* whether or to what extent an ethical advance would be given with the radical understanding of agape as love *for enemies*.⁶

In what follows, I will first survey the tradition-historical findings and focus especially on the early Jewish exegesis of Exod 23.4–5 and the reception of the love commandment in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. Due to limitations of space, I will bracket out non-Jewish Greco-Roman ethical traditions, even though there would also be some interesting texts to discuss from this broader context, such as Epictetus' statement about the Cynic philosopher, who lets himself be beaten like a donkey and must still love (δᾶι . . . φίλεῖν) those who beat him, as a father of all, as a brother (*Diatr.* 3.22.54),⁷ or Plutarch's short tractate on the question of how a person can profit from their enemies (*De capienda ex inimicis utilitate*, *Mor.* 86B–92F). Following the survey of the early Jewish traditions of love for enemies, I will turn to Jesus' commandment of

⁵For example, according to A. Strotmann, *Der historische Jesus: eine Einführung*, 3rd ed. (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2019), 156, “the Jesuanic commandment of love for enemies and the renunciation of retaliation (Matt 5.38–48 par Luke 6.27–36) are already contained in Lev 19.18, 33–34, only with the difference that the term ‘enemy’ is lacking. . . . The usual claim that Jesus expanded, radicalized, and universalized the commandment of love for neighbor through the commandment of love for foreigners and love for enemies is therefore by no means justified.” Similarly, W. Stegemann, *Jesus und seine Zeit*, BE[S] 10 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2010), 291 notes that “The exhortation to love one’s enemy adds, as it were, only the explicit term ‘enemy’ to the commandment of love for neighbor from the Torah, but not the subject matter itself.” See further, e.g., the criticism of the “Christian compulsion to make claims of superiority” in W. Stegemann, “Kontingenz und Kontextualität der moralischen Aussagen Jesu. Plädoyer für eine Neubestimmung auf die so genannte Ethik Jesu,” in *Jesus in neuen Kontexten*, ed. W. Stegemann, B.J. Maline, and G. Theißen (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2002), 167–84: 173–76.

⁶For the psychological, political, and theological reservations that would need to be discussed here, see the concise overview in Söding, *Nächstenliebe*, 20–27.

⁷In Epictetus, the basis of this instruction is the sovereign autarchy of the wise person, who does not let himself be touched by external things (cf. M. Billerbeck, *Epiktet. Vom Kynismus*, PhAnt 34 [Leiden: Brill, 1978], 119) and correspondingly cannot be affected by any insult or the like (cf. Epictetus, *Diatr.* 3.22.100). On Epictetus and the thematically relevant texts of Seneca, see the concise overview in Piper, *Love your Enemies*, 21–27; see further, e.g., Cicero, *Off.* 1.25.88: “Neither must we listen to those who think that one should indulge in violent anger against one’s political enemies and imagine that such is the attitude of a great-spirited, brave man. For nothing is more commendable, nothing more becoming in a pre-eminently great man than courtesy and forbearance”; trans. W. Miller, LCL 30, 89).

love for enemies – more specifically, to its reception in Matt 5.43–48.⁸

1. Early Jewish Traditions of Love for Enemies

1.1 *The Reception and Interpretation of Exod 23.4–5 in Early Judaism*

If we inquire into the Old Testament and early Jewish backgrounds of the commandment of love for enemies, then it must, as is well known, first be noted that while the syntagma “love your enemies” is not attested prior to the Jesus tradition, it is possible, with Exod 23.4–5 and Prov 25.21, to adduce two Old Testament texts in which good conduct toward the enemy is called for in a concrete way. According to Exod 23.4–5, one is to bring back the enemy’s stray ox or donkey and to assist the adversary in helping up his donkey that is lying under its burden. Proverbs 25.21–22 exhorts one to give the hungry or thirsty enemy bread to eat or water to drink (cf., further, Prov 24.17–18).⁹

Proverbs 25.21 is not only quoted by Paul in Rom 12.20 but also finds an early Jewish echo in T. Job 7.11.¹⁰ More important, however, is the reception of Exod 23.4–5, which is attested multiple times in early Jewish writings. Fourth Maccabees 2.14 explains that “reason, through the law, can prevail even over enmity” and, in addition to not cutting down the cultivated trees of enemies in war (cf. Deut 20.19–20¹¹), it mentions, as another example, “rescuing the (stray) animal of the personal enemy from ruin and

⁸With the following remarks, I develop further considerations that I first presented in a lecture in the context of a lecture series organized by the theological faculty of the university of Bern on April 29, 2003: “(K)ein Ende der Gewalt? – Theologische Perspektiven” (published under the title “... damit ihr Söhne eures Vaters im Himmel werdet: Erwägungen zur ‘Logik’ von Gewaltverzicht und Feindesliebe in Mt 5,38–48,” in *Gewalt wahrnehmen – von Gewalt teilen. Theologische und religionswissenschaftliche Perspektiven*, ed. W. Dietrich and W. Lienemann [Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2004], 70–92, and in an expanded and revised version in M. Konradt, *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium*, ed. A. Euler, WUNT 358 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016], 348–80). Individual dependencies on the remarks there or borrowings will not be specified in detail in what follows.

⁹See, however, the different sapiential advice in Sir 12.5a^{LXX}: “Treat the humble well, and do not give to an impious person; hold back loaves of bread, and do not give to him, lest by them he prevail over you; for you will get twice as many bad things for all the good things you might do for him” (trans. B. G. Wright in NETS). For Sir 12, see also note 107 below.

¹⁰Josephus, in the framework of his epitome of the law in *Ag. Ap.* 2.190–218, in the section on obligations to foreigners (2.209–212), explains that “We must furnish fire, water, food to all who ask for them” (211; trans. H. S. T. Thackeray, LCL 186, 379). It cannot, however, be discerned that Prov 25.21 specifically stands in the background here, especially since the explicit concretization to the enemy is lacking (conduct toward *enemies* is first thematized at the end of *Ag. Ap.* 2.211 and unpacked further in 2.212, though there specifically with reference to the enemies in war [211: πρὸς τοὺς πολεμίους]). Furthermore, quite similar specifications to those in Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.211 are also found in Philo, *Hypoth.* 7.6 – namely, as an explication of ἀγράφα ἐθῆ καὶ νόμιμα. What stands in the background here is the common Greek ethic, which was traditionally combined with Buzzygian imprecations (cf. Philo, *Hypoth.* 7.8); cf. M. Küchler, *Frühjüdische Weisheitstraditionen: zum Fortgang weisheitlichen Denkens im Bereich des frühjüdischen Jahuwaglaubens*, OBO 26 (Freiburg, Switzerland: Universitätsverlag, 1979), 229–30.

¹¹On the early Jewish reception of Deut 20.19–20, cf. Philo, *Spec.* 4.226–229, *Virt.* 150–154; Josephus, *Ant.* 4.299; *Ag. Ap.* 2.212.

helping it to get back on its feet if it collapses (under its burden).¹² The interpretation of Exod 23.4–5 in Ps.-Phoc. 140–142 is rendered difficult by the problem that the Greek text in line 141 is “hopelessly corrupt.”¹³ Line 140, “But if a beast of (your) enemy falls on the way, help it to rise,”¹⁴ clearly makes recourse to Exod 23.5. If one follows the conjecture of Bernays for line 141,¹⁵ an allusion to Exod 23.4 would be present there: an animal that has gone astray is not to be left to itself. In this case, line 142 would follow in a sensible way, and 140–142 would result in a thematically coherent unit,¹⁶ for line 142 would then furnish the recourse to Exod 23.4–5 with a look to a social effect of the good conduct toward the animal of an enemy: “It is better to make a gracious friend instead of an enemy.”

Exodus 23.4–5 experienced an in-depth reception in the exegetical works of Philo.¹⁷ In *De virtutibus* 116–120, i.e., toward the end of his commentary work called *Expositio legis*,¹⁸ Philo adduces Exod 23.5 and 23.4 (in this order; cf. Ps.-Phoc. 140–141!) as additional examples for commandments that aim at gentleness (ἡμερότης) in interaction with one another (*Virt.* 116).¹⁹ The overarching context is the detailed discussion of philanthropy as a defining basic value of the Mosaic legislation (*Virt.* 51–174). In this context, Philo thematizes, among other things, the benevolent conduct toward enemies that is commanded by the Torah (109–120). Here, the commandments in Exod 23.4–5 serve as one attestation for this. From Exod 23.5 Philo draws the teaching – which is ini-

¹² English translation of the German translation of H.-J. Klauck, 4. *Makkabäerbuch*, JSRZ III/6 (Gütersoh: Mohn, 1989), 697–98.

¹³ P. W. van der Horst, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides*, SVTP 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 207.

¹⁴ Trans. P. W. van der Horst, OTP 2, 579. Subsequent translations of Ps.-Phoc. are also taken from van der Horst's translation in OTP 2, 565–82.

¹⁵ See J. Bernays, *Ueber das Phokylideische Gedicht. Ein Beitrag zur hellenistischen Litteratur* (Berlin: W. Hertz, 1856), 32–33. The change of βροτόν to βοτόν and the replacement of the verb ἐλέγξεις with ἀλύξεις at the end are significant (on this, cf. the critical review in J. Thomas, *Der jüdische Phokylides. Formgeschichtliche Zugänge zu Pseudo-Phokylides und Vergleich mit der neutestamentlichen Paränese*, NTOA 23 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992], 172; for additional proposed conjectures, see van der Horst, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides*, 207–208).

¹⁶ This could, conversely, be regarded as an indication that the text in line 141 is corrupt and must be corrected. Cf. Thomas, *Der jüdische Phokylides*, 177: “The saying about the help for the fallen beast (of burden) of the hostile neighbor is, down to the wording πέση/πεπτωκός, συνέγειρε/συνεγείρει, a (sapientially compressed) reproduction of Exod 23.5 (cf. Deut 22.4, there without *hostile*). Evaluated from this perspective, the hope for the transformation of an enemy into a friend in v. 142 is such a fitting addition that it would have been difficult to leave the verse between in v. 141 without a connection to this.” In this vein, see also already Bernays, *Ueber das Phokylideische Gedicht*, 33; see further G. M. Zerbe, *Non-Retaliatio in Early Jewish and New Testament Texts. Ethical Themes in Social Contexts*, JSPES 13 (Sheffield: JSOT Press), 1993, 70–71.

¹⁷ Josephus, in his paraphrase of the Torah in *Ant.* 4.275, refers back to Exod 23.4–5 in connection with the related passage in Deut 22.4 and in the course of doing so deletes the reference to the enemy.

¹⁸ On the *Expositio Legis*, cf. M. Böhm, *Rezeption und Funktion der Vätererzählungen bei Philo von Alexandrien. Zur Zusammenhang von Kontext, Hermeneutik und Exegese im frühen Judentum*, BZNW 128 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), 116–22; P. Borgen, “Philo of Alexandria,” in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus*, ed. M. E. Stone, CRINT 2.2 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 233–41. See further M. Konradt, “Tora und Naturgesetz. Interpretatio graeca und universaler Geltungsanspruch der Mosetora bei Philo von Alexandrien,” in *Juden in ihrer Umwelt. Akkulturation des Judentums in Antike und Mittelalter*, ed. M. Konradt and R. C. Schwingen (Basel: Schwabe, 2009), 90–109.

¹⁹ Cf. previously *Virt.* (84.) 109 and subsequently in the tractate on the virtues also 121, 134, 188.

tially formulated negatively – “that we should not rejoice over the misfortune of those who hate us,” since *schadenfreude* (*ἐπιχαιρεκακία*²⁰) is said to be “a feeling of implacable wrath” (*βαρύμητι πάθος*). Philo is thus concerned to reject a vice that is incompatible with a virtuous character. Put differently, also in relation to the enemy, virtuous conduct cannot be suspended. Commenting on the commandment in Exod 23.4, that one must return the stray animal of the enemy, Philo then points out the positive consequences of a benevolent conduct toward the enemy. On the one hand, he seeks to motivate the action with the benefit to oneself that the virtuous person draws from his good conduct, for the one who takes care of the animal of his enemy gains “the greatest and most valuable thing in the whole world, a noble deed” – and thus far more than the “enemy,” who receives back only an “irrational animal” (117). On the other hand, analogous to Ps.-Phoc. 140–142, Philo also considers a possible interpersonal gain, since “a dissolution of the enmity” follows such a deed “quite necessarily” (118).²¹ With this intention, thus Philo continues, Exod 23.4–5 stands exemplarily for the whole Torah, for it aims in general at “unanimity, community spirit, like-mindedness, and harmony of character” (119). In the organization of the tractate *De virtutibus*, the interpretation of Exod 23.4–5 in *Virt.* 116–120 is assigned, as noted above, to the explication of the virtue of philanthropy (*φιλανθρωπία*). It fits this observation that in the following subsection on the commandments on slaves, *εἰς ἡμερότητα* (*Virt.* 116) is expanded to *εἰς ἡμερότητα καὶ φιλανθρωπίαν* (*Virt.* 121), which underscores the closeness of *ἡμερότης* to philanthropy.²²

There is also an interpretation of Exod 23.4–5 in Philo’s commentary work *Quaestiones et Solutiones* (QE 2.11–12). As justification for the commandment of Exod 23.4,

²⁰This vice occurs in Philo also in the long vice catalogue in *Sacr.* 32 (cf. further *Agr.* 93). On *ἐπιχαιρεκακία* (*schadenfreude*), cf. Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 2.6.18 (1107a9–18) in the framework of his comments on *μεσότης*: “Not every action or emotion however admits of the observance of a due mean. Indeed the very names of some directly imply evil, for instance malice (*ἐπιχαιρεκακία*), shamelessness, envy, and, of actions, adultery, theft, murder. All these and similar actions and feelings are blamed as being bad in themselves; it is not the excess or deficiency of them that we blame. It is impossible therefore ever to go right in regard to them – one must always be wrong...” (trans. H. Rackham, LCL 73, 97). As in Philo, *schadenfreude* (*ἐπιχαιρεκακία*) and envy (*φθόνος*) appear alongside each other (on the connection between envy and *schadenfreude*, see further Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 2.7.15 [1108b1–6]; Plutarch, *Cobib. ira* 15 [*Mor.* 463a]; *Curios.* 6 [*Mor.* 518c]). On this, cf. W. T. Wilson, *Philo of Alexandria, On Virtues*, Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 276–77.

²¹On this motif of *Entfeindung* (de-enemization) in early Jewish texts, see, in addition to Ps.-Phoc. 142, also Let. Aris. 227. This motif also occurs elsewhere in Hellenistic ethics. For example, Diogenes Laertius, *Vit. Phil.* 8.23 attributes to Pythagoras the view that interpersonal interactions should be configured in such a way that “one does not make friends into enemies but rather enemies into friends” (*ἄλλήλους θ’ ὀμιλεῖν, ὡς τοὺς μὲν φίλους ἐχθροὺς μὴ ποιῆσαι, τοὺς δ’ ἐχθροὺς φίλους ἐργάσασθαι*). In Plutarch’s *Apophthegmata Laconica*, the following saying is attributed to the Spartan king Ariston: “When someone praised the maxim of Cleomenes, who, when he was asked what a good king must do, said, ‘To do good to the friends, but evil to the enemies,’ he (Ariston) said, ‘How much better it is, friend, to do good to our friends, but to make enemies into friends’” (*Apophthegmata Laconica* Ariston 1 [*Mor.* 218a]). See also Seneca, *Ep.* 95.63 (trans. R. M. Gummere, LCL 77, 97), “Furthermore, when we advise a man to regard his friends as highly as himself, to reflect that an enemy may become a friend, to stimulate love in the friend, and to check hatred in the enemy, we add: ‘This is just and honorable.’”

²²For this combination, cf. Philo, *Cher.* 199; *Spec.* 2.79; 4.18, 24; *Virt.* 188; as well as Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.213.

Philo points again to the virtue of gentleness (ἡμερότης), which finds expression in this commandment (2.11). Second, the vice of greed is fended off through the commandment. Third, Philo makes recourse again to the positive social consequences of the action. The return of the animal removes quarrels, paves the way for reconciliation, and serves peace. The recipient will, “if he is not completely ungrateful, set aside the malice that seeks vengeance” (2.11).²³ In the line of questioning that is pursued here, special attention should be given to the fact that Philo characterizes the return of the animal in 2.11 as a “work of love.” If we consider further that his exposition also includes the motif of the removal of “the anger that seeks vengeance” and thus addresses the thematic nexus in which the love commandment is embedded in Lev 19.17–18, then it does indeed appear plausible to regard Philo’s exposition as inspired by Lev 19.17–18.²⁴ The previously presented finding that the interpretation of Exod 23.4–5 in *Virt.* 116–120 explicates the virtue of philanthropy fits this harmoniously.

1.2 The Interpretation of Lev 19.17–18 in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs

With respect to the early Jewish reception of the love commandment from Lev 19.18, the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs is the most important reference text for the line of inquiry pursued here. In their extant form, the Testaments are a Christian writing. Nevertheless, against the Netherland school formed around Martinus de Jonge,²⁵ it is necessary to uphold the older majority position that it is an originally Jewish writing that has merely undergone a Christian revision²⁶ and that its content can be drawn

²³The insertion “if he is not completely ungrateful” points, however, to the fact that there is no guarantee of this for the person who does good. Sir 12.1–7 draws from this the consequence and admonishes with sapiential caution that the evildoer should not be considered as a recipient of good deeds (on this, see note 107 below).

²⁴Thus Zerbe, *Non-Retaliatio*, 63–64. Analogous to this, in the compound word βαρύμηνι in Philo, *Virt.* 116, it may be possible to hear an allusion to Lev 19.18, to the prohibition against bearing a grudge (ὁ μνηστὶς τοῖς υἱοῖς τοῦ λαοῦ σου).

²⁵See, e.g., M. de Jonge, *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament as Part of Christian Literature: The Case of the Twelve Patriarchs and the Greek Life of Adam and Eve* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 69–177 and on the paraenesis, in particular, e.g., p. 153: “To do full justice to the *Testaments*, it seems to me, we have to treat the paraenesis found in them as early Christian.” Cf. the conclusion of M. de Jonge, “The Paränese in den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und in den Testamenten der Zwölf Patriarchen. Einige Überlegungen,” in *Neues Testament und Ethik (Festschrift für R. Schnackenburg)*, ed. H. Merklein (Freiburg: Herder, 1989), 538–50, here 550: “We can never rule out the possibility that a certain ethical passage has been adjusted to the Christian views of the author of the writing in its final form.” In this connection, see also the study of J. R. Davila, *The Provenance of the Pseudepigrapha: Jewish, Christian, or Other?*, JSJ.S 105 (Leiden: Brill), 2005.

²⁶On this, see M. Konradt, “Testamente der zwölf Patriarchen,” *RAC* 31 (2023): 1166–1181 and D. A. De-Silva, “The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs as Witnesses to Pre-Christian Judaism: A Re-Assessment,” *JSPe* (2013), 21–68, who, as the result of his detailed discussion affirms that “there are sufficient text-critical and literary-critical grounds to certify the fact of Christian glossing and expanding, if not the precise extent. There are also sufficient traditional-critical grounds for affirming that the *Testaments* is better explained as a Jewish text that was later adapted to Christian interests than an original Christian composition” (67). The question of whether the Testaments are Diaspora-Jewish or Palestinian-Jewish in origin is likewise controversial. On this, see the concise overview in J. J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 176–77.

upon for early Jewish ethical instruction. In his dissertation on Lev 19.18, Hans-Peter Mathys advanced the pointed thesis that the Old Testament commandment in its original context is *in substance* already a “commandment of love for enemies”²⁷ insofar as it is related to the thematization of the “interaction with the brother who has become guilty” in its immediate context in 19.17–18.²⁸ In the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs this reference point of the love commandment in Lev 19.17–18, which Mathys emphasizes, is taken up in detail and developed further. The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs provide fabricated farewell discourses for the twelve sons of Jacob, in which they, starting from their own life experiences, teach their descendants proper conduct in the vein of the commandments or warn them against morally corrupt conduct and its consequences.²⁹ Corresponding to the narrative of Genesis, the action of the brothers toward Joseph and Joseph’s conduct toward his brothers receives a lot of attention. For the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, it is characteristic that Joseph’s conduct toward his brothers is interpreted in the light of the love commandment. Joseph appears as a model of forgiving love. The Joseph story is, so to speak, configured into a narrative exegesis of the love commandment.

The point of connection is especially the dialogue between Joseph and his brothers after the death of their father Jacob in Genesis 50.15–21. Due to the brothers’ fear that Joseph could now bear a grudge (μνησικακήση) against them and repay all the evil that they did to him, they say that their father instructed them before his death to admonish Joseph to forgive them. Joseph, however, has not even thought of taking revenge. They had meant it for evil, but God made something good out of it, “namely, to let a great people be kept alive” (50.20). Joseph ends his words with the encouragement and promise: “Therefore, have no fear; I will provide for you and your children” (50.21). The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs take up this aspect of the narrative and develop it.³⁰

Let us begin with Joseph’s own testament. While the first part of the Testament of Joseph – after the initial scenic framework and the introductory song of thanksgiving

²⁷H.-P. Mathys, *Liebe deinen Nächsten wie dich selbst. Untersuchungen zum alttestamentlichen Gebot der Nächstenliebe (Lev 19,18)*, OBO 71 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 81. In this vein, see already Piper, ‘Love your Enemies,’ 32. See further M. Köckert, “Nächstenliebe – Fremdenliebe – Feindesliebe,” in Mazel Tov. *Interdisziplinäre Beiträge zum Verhältnis von Christentum und Judentum. Festschrift anlässlich des 50. Geburtstages des Instituts Kirche und Judentum*, ed. M. Witte and T. Pilger, SKI Neue Folge 1 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2012), 31–53, here 39–41; Söding, *Nächstenliebe*, 66–68.

²⁸Mathys, *Liebe deinen Nächsten*, 67. A different position is taken by F. Crüsemann, *Die Tora. Theologie und Sozialgeschichte des alttestamentlichen Gesetzes* (Munich: Kaiser, 1992), 376. In vv. 11–12 the concern is with property crimes. Vv. 13–14 deal with the protection of the socially weak and physically disabled. Vv. 15–16 thematizes conduct in court.

²⁹On the ethical instruction in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs and the underlying anthropological premises, see now S. Opferkuch, *Der handelnde Mensch. Untersuchungen zum Verhältnis von Ethik und Anthropologie in den Testamenten der Zwölf Patriarchen*, BZNW 232 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2018). Cf. also Konradt, *Ethik im Neuen Testament*, 37–38.

³⁰See Zerbe, *Non-Retaliatio*, 143–44.

(1.4–2.6) – elaborates in various ways the attempt of Potiphar’s wife to seduce Joseph (cf. Gen 39.7–20) and emphasizes Joseph’s unshakeable virtuousness *in sexualibus* (2.7–10.4),³¹ the second main part is devoted to the solidarity that Joseph demonstrated toward his brothers, despite their wicked conduct (10.5–18.4). The short note in Genesis about the event of the selling of Joseph in Gen 37.28(, 36); 39.1 is greatly expanded by developing the aspect of Joseph’s conduct when he was being sold, which receives no illumination in Genesis. Joseph does not place his interests in the foreground but remains persistently silent about his origin (10.6)³² or insists – in light of the fact that the traders recognize from his appearance³³ that he cannot be a slave – that he is indeed the slave of the brothers who sold him (11.2–3).³⁴ Love is not yet explicitly spoken of here. Rather, as Joseph’s motivation for action it states that he honored his brothers (ἐτίμων τοὺς ἀδελφούς μου, 10.6), acted out of reverence for them (διὰ τὸ φόβον αὐτῶν, 10.6), and, correspondingly, did not want to shame them (ἵνα μὴ αἰσχύνω τοὺς ἀδελφούς μου, 11.2). The connection to love soon becomes clear, however, when one considers the fact that for the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs a significant manifestation of love consists in not making misdeeds public in relation to a third party (T. Gad 4.2–3; cf. Prov 10.12; 17.9; 1 Pet 4.8) but in settling them solely with the person affected (cf. T. Gad 6.3–7).³⁵ With Joseph, the observance of the behavioral maxim to protect the brothers from the exposure of their sin extends so far that he even accepts his enslavement, for he does not make use of the presented opportunities to clarify the nature of the event and his true identity.³⁶ Thus, T. Jos. 11.4–16.6 recounts that Joseph initially remained more than three months with the merchant who handled the goods of the Ishmaelites, whose household affairs flourished in this time under Joseph’s management, and that

³¹On this, see in detail M. Braun, *History and Romance in Greco-Roman Oriental Literature* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1938), 44–95.

³²On Joseph’s silence about his origin or the conduct of his brothers, see also Philo, *Ios.* 2.47–2.48 (on this, see notes 36 and 38 below).

³³Building on Gen 39.6, there is talk of Joseph’s beauty and aura also elsewhere in the early Jewish reception of the Genesis story. See, e.g., Jos. As. 6.1–4; Josephus, *Ant.* 2.9, 41, and, in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs themselves, in T. Sim. 5.1; T. Jos. 18.4.

³⁴While in Gen 37.26–28 Judas’ plan to sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites is thwarted by the fact that the Midianite traders pass by, draw Joseph out of the cistern, and sell him (see J. Ebach, *Genesis 37–50*, HThKAT [Freiburg: Herder, 2007], 101), which fits with Joseph’s statement that he was stolen from the land of the Hebrews in Gen 40.15, according to T. Gad 2.3 Joseph is sold to the Ishmaelites by Judah and Gad (Josephus, *Ant.* 2.32–33 also says that the brothers sold Joseph). Correspondingly, Joseph’s statement in T. Jos. 11.2, 3, that he is “their slave (δοῦλος αὐτῶν)” refers to the brothers.

³⁵On this, see Konradt, *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium*, 381–412, here 398–99; Opferkuch, *Der handelnde Mensch*, 2.41: Joseph’s “conduct is the opposite of the behavior of one who hates, as it is described in T. Gad 4.3: The hater recounts to others the misconduct of the one who is hated, whereas Joseph keeps silent about the misdeeds of the brothers.” In the Gospel of Matthew, a comparison can be made to Matt 18.15(–17), where Lev 19.17–18 likewise stands in the background. On this, see Konradt, *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium*, 396–99.

³⁶The motif that Joseph keeps silent about the misdeed of his brothers is also found in Philo, *Ios.* 2.47–48, 250. There are, however, also significant differences between Philo and the Testament of Joseph in the development of the motif. On this, see D. T. Roth, “Shared Interpretive Traditions of Joseph’s ‘σωφροσύνη’ and ‘Silence’ in *De Iosepho* and the *Testament of Joseph*,” *Journal of the Jesus Movement in its Jewish Setting* 1 (2014): 54–68, here 65–68.

during this time the rumor that Joseph was stolen from the land of Canaan came up and reached to the wife of Potiphar/Petephres,³⁷ who already cast an eye on Joseph here (12.1–3). The trader is confronted, but Joseph himself, under beatings, still claims to be a slave and is therefore imprisoned until the Ishmaelites return and can be questioned (13.1–14.6). The Ishmaelites have in the meantime heard of Jacob's grief and learned that Joseph is "the son of a great man in the land of Canaan" (15.1–2), so that they confront Joseph – again – upon their return. Even now, however, Joseph continues to stick to his version of the story so as not – as it says again – to shame his brothers (ἵνα μὴ αἰσχύνω τοὺς ἀδελφούς μου, 15.3), after which the Ishmaelites finally sell Joseph (15.4–16.6). The Joseph novella of Genesis knows nothing of any of these events.³⁸ Rather, it has Joseph tell the cupbearer that he was stolen from the land of the Hebrews (Gen 40.15).³⁹ The latter underscores even more the fact that the reshaping of the portrayal of Joseph in T. Jos. 10.5–18.4 is inspired by the aim of presenting Joseph as a paradigm of forgiving love in the sense of Lev 19.17–18.

After the biographical retrospect, the paraenesis in T. Jos. 17 initially takes up Joseph's forbearance in a summarizing manner ("See, children, how much I have endured [ὑπέμεινα⁴⁰] in order not to shame my brothers!") and then, immediately building on this in v. 2, exhorts them to love one another, which is interpreted, in correspondence to the preceding biographical retrospect, in relation to their interaction with misdeeds: "And you, then, love one another and in forbearance conceal one another's misdeeds (καὶ ὑμεῖς οὖν ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους καὶ ἐν μακροθυμίᾳ συγκρύπτετε ἀλλήλων τὰ ἐλαττώματα)!" In the flow of T. Jos. it is thereby made explicit that Joseph's silence about his origin must be understood as an expression of his *love* for the brothers.⁴¹ The

³⁷T. Jos. follows the rendering of the name in the LXX: Πετέφρης (see Gen 37.36; 39.1; T. Jos. 13.1, 4).

³⁸The haggadic embellishment of the Genesis narrative in T. Jos. 11–16 finds a counterpart neither in Jubilees nor in Josephus' retelling in *Ant.* 2. Jub 34.11; 39.2 and Josephus, *Ant.* 2.39 note the selling of Joseph only briefly (cf. also L.A.B. 8.9). Philo, *Ios.* 247–248, by contrast, at least provides a short reflection on the fact that Joseph, during the time of his tribulation, was never tempted to disclose his real origin and thematize the misconduct of his brothers before others (cf. H. W. Hollander, "The Ethical Character of the Patriarch Joseph: A Study in the Ethics of *The Testaments of the XII Patriarchs*," in *Studies on the Testament of Joseph*, ed. G. W. E. Nickelsburg [Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975], 47–104, here 70 and H. W. Hollander, *Joseph as an Ethical Model in the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, SVTP 6 [Leiden: Brill] 1981, 45).

³⁹However, the wrongdoing of the brothers is also not explicitly mentioned in Gen 40.15.

⁴⁰The use of the verb ὑπομένειν connects the second main part of the Testament of Joseph with the first. More specifically, 17.1 ('Ὁράτε, τέκνα, πόσα ὑπέμεινα, ἵνα μὴ καταισχύνω τοὺς ἀδελφούς μου) is on the whole analogous to the introduction of the paraenesis after the first biographical retrospect (3.1–9.5) in 10.1: 'Ὁράτε οὖν, τέκνα μου, πόσα κατεργάζεται ἡ ὑπομονή καὶ προσευχή μετὰ νηστείας. Moreover, the endurance (ὑπομονή) of Joseph was already spoken of in the prologue to 3.1–9.5 in 2.7 (trans. H. C. Kee, *OTP* 1:819): "In ten testings he showed that I was approved, and in all of them I persevered, because perseverance is a powerful medicine and endurance brings many good things (ἐν δέκα πειρασμοῖς δοκιμὸν με ἀνέδειξε, καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτοῖς ἐμακροθύμησα· ὅτι μέγα φάρμακόν ἐστιν ἡ μακροθυμία, καὶ πολλὰ ἀγαθὰ δίδωσιν ἡ ὑπομονή)."

⁴¹Cf. D. J. Harrington, "Joseph in the Testament of Joseph, Pseudo-Philo and Philo," in *Studies on the Testament of Joseph*, ed. G. W. E. Nickelsburg, SCSt 5 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975), 127–131, here 128; Hollander, "The Ethical Character of the Patriarch Joseph," 71; Hollander, *Joseph as an Ethical Model*, 46; Roth, "Shared Interpretive Traditions," 67 ("T. Jos. views Joseph's silence as a demonstration of a kind and good heart that exhibits love for others by concealing their misdeeds."); Opferkuch, *Der handelnde Mensch*, 239–41.

admonition to conceal the misdeeds of one another in forbearance in 17.2b is a concretization of the call to love one another.

Beyond this, the continuation of the instruction in the Testament of Joseph indicates that love, alongside the interaction with the misdeeds of others carried by the readiness to forgive, also includes the caritative dimension of acting for the well-being of others and caring for them. Thus, Joseph appeals to the fact that he loved his brothers to an even greater degree (*περισσότερως ἡγάπησα αὐτούς*) after the death of their father and abundantly supplied them – to their amazement – with everything that their father had commanded him⁴² (17.5, cf. Gen 50.21). Concretely, this means not only help in hardships (T. Jos. 17.6a) but also that Joseph gave them everything that was in his hand (v. 6b) and that his land was also their land (v. 7). In short, love, according to T. Jos. 10.4–18.4, is manifested not only in Joseph’s selfless interaction with the misdeeds of his brothers, which takes adversity in stride and is ready to forgive, but also shows itself after the reconciliation in the generous engagement with which Joseph made the well-being of his brothers his own business. Moreover, with a view to Matt 5.44, it must also be noted that the motif of praying for one’s enemies also appears in the concluding paraenesis in T. Jos. 18.2: “And if someone wishes to do evil against you, *you* pray through doing good for him (*καὶ ἐὰν θέλῃ τις κακοποιῆσαι ὑμᾶς, ὑμεῖς τῇ ἀγαθοποιῷ εὐχεσθε ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ*)!”

In addition to the extensive elucidation in the Testament of Joseph, recourse to Joseph’s exemplary love is also found in more concise form in other testaments. This applies to the first testament in the sequence of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, the Testament of Simeon, where with envy a vice that is illustrated through the misconduct of the brothers against Joseph stands at the center, i.e., concretely through the action of Simeon against his brother, which is determined by envy. Thus, Joseph’s attitude shines more brightly here against the dark foil of the misconduct of Simeon, who was jealous of Joseph because the father’s love applied to him in a special way (T. Sim. 2.6) and therefore sought to kill him (2.7–12). Despite this specific prehistory and guilt of Simeon (cf. T. Sim. 3.2), Joseph also did not hold this evil that Simeon committed against him, as T. Sim. 4.4 explains: “But Joseph was a good man and had God’s Spirit in him;⁴³ [he was] compassionate and merciful, he did not hold the evil against me, but loved also me – as the other brothers (*εὐσπλαγχνος καὶ ἐλεήμων, οὐκ ἐμνησικακήσέ μοι, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡγάπησέ με, ὡς τοὺς ἄλλους ἀδελφούς*).”

In the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, the positive counterpart to Simeon – as well as to Dan and Gad who likewise come off especially badly in their misconduct

⁴²T. Jos. 17.5 modifies the biblical *Vorlage* here, for in Gen 50.16–17 it is the brothers who bring the commandment of the father – here related solely to the forgiveness – into play, of which there is no mention in T. Jos. 17. In Gen 50 it remains open whether we are dealing here with a kind of emergency lie (thus in Jewish interpretation, e.g., b. Yebam. 65b; Gen. Rab. 100 on 50.16) or whether the brothers speak the truth (on this gap in the text, see Ebach, *Genesis* 37–50, 653). The modifying interpretation of Gen 50.16 in T. Jos. 17.5 apparently presupposes the latter.

⁴³The statement that Joseph had God’s Spirit in him is probably dependent on Gen 41.38^{LXX} (... ὃς ἔχει πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ); cf. H. W. Hollander and M. de Jonge, *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary*, SVTP 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 118.

toward Joseph in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs – is Zebulon, whose testament is devoted to the virtue of compassion and mercy. Zebulon demonstrated this compassion, first, toward Joseph, who was oppressed by the brothers (T. Zeb. 2.4–7; 4.2). Second, compassion and mercy then characterize Zebulon’s caritative conduct toward the needy (T. Zeb. 5.1–8.3). Finally, the recourse to Joseph’s conduct toward the brothers appears as a third field of application of compassion and mercy, so that a threefold concretion of compassion and mercy that encompasses different problem situations emerges in the Testament of Zebulon: as turning to the persecuted/oppressed, to those who are in need from a socio-economic perspective, and to sinners.⁴⁴ With respect to the latter, Zebulon, as noted, presents Joseph as a model to his descendants: “When we came down to Egypt, Joseph did not hold a grudge against us (οὐκ ἐμνησικάκησεν εἰς ἡμᾶς). When he saw me, he had mercy (ἐσπλαγχνίσθη). Paying attention to him, do not hold a grudge (ἀμνησικάκοι γίνεσθε), my children, and love one another (ἀγαπάτε ἀλλήλους), and, do not reckon, each of you, the evil of his brother (μὴ λογίσεσθε ἕκαστος τὴν κακίαν τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ)” (T. Zeb 8.4–5). It is easy to recognize that T. Sim. and T. Zeb. 8.4–5 are connected by a common word field: love stands in the closest connection to mercy and compassion and appears as a positive counterpart to not bearing a grudge or not holding a suffered injustice against the one who committed it.⁴⁵

In T. Zeb 8.4 the change from the first-person plural in the first part of the sentence – the non-reckoning of evil applies to all the brothers (οὐκ ἐμνησικάκησεν εἰς ἡμᾶς) – to the following narrowing to Zebulon is conspicuous: ἐμὲ δὲ ἰδὼν ἐσπλαγχνίσθη. It is questionable, however, whether the narrowing to Zebulon refers only to the participle or to the whole sentence.⁴⁶ In the second case, the special position of Zebulon could be connected with the fact that, according to T. Zeb 2.4–7, it was previously Zebulon in particular who had, for his part, compassion with Joseph, when Simeon and Gad sought to kill him (2.1), so that Joseph, in the Testament of Zebulon, had mercy specifically on the brother who had shown mercy to him. However, a consistent distinction is not only opposed by T. Sim 4.4, where in Simeon’s (!) recourse to Joseph’s conduct the non-reckoning of evil is – as presented above – directly connected to the fact that he is εὐσπλαγχνος καὶ ἐλεήμων, but also by the fundamental statement in T. Zeb 8.6fin.: ὁ ... μνησικάκος σπλάγχνα ἐλέους οὐκ ἔχει. For T. Zeb 8.4 these

⁴⁴On this, cf. F. Mirguet, “Emotional Responses to the Pain of Others in Josephus’ Rewritten Scriptures and the Testament of Zebulon: Between Power and Vulnerability,” *JBL* 133 (2014): 838–57, here 852–55; S. Wandel, *Gottesbild und Barmherzigkeit. Lukanische Ethik im Chor hellenistischer Ethikkonzeptionen*, WUNT 2/548 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 290–300; Konradt, *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium*, 413–41, here 415n9.

⁴⁵On this, see M. Konradt, “Menschen- und Bruderliebe? Beobachtungen zum Liebesgebot in den Testamenten der Zwölf Patriarchen,” *ZNW* 88 (1997): 296–310, here 302. On the specified word field, cf. also Zech 7.9–10^{LXX}; 1 Clem 2.4–5; Herm. *Mand.* 9.2–3 (cf. Hollander, “The Ethical Character of the Patriarch Joseph,” 75; Hollander, *Joseph as an Ethical Model*, 123n33).

⁴⁶For the second option see Opferkuch, *Der handelnde Mensch*, 224.

overall findings suggest that ἐμὲ δὲ ἰδὼν (v. 4c) designates merely the trigger or starting point of the mercy of Joseph, which nevertheless applied to all the brothers. Put differently, here too Joseph's mercy encompasses the brothers who acted in a hostile manner toward him.

Finally, Joseph's example also finds an echo in the presentation of the ἀγαθὸς ἄνθρωπος (T. Benj. 4.2) or ἀγαθὸς ἀνὴρ (T. Benj. 3.1; 4.1; 6.1) in the Testament of Benjamin, where mercy appears as an essential characteristic of the "good person" in T. Benj. 4. Testament of Benjamin 4.2–3 relates mercy concretely to the interaction with sinners: "The good person does not have a dark eye. He has mercy on all, even if they are sinners (ἐλεᾷ γὰρ πάντας, καὶ ὅσιν ἁμαρτωλοί). Even if they plot against him for evil, he conquers evil by doing good (cf. Rom 12.21!), since he is sheltered by the good." While this is formulated in a general way, Joseph is the main model.⁴⁷

While Lev 19.17–18 finds its positive explication in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs in the example of Joseph, Gad serves as a negative example. The Testament of Gad, with its discussion of the vice of hate, forms, together with the Testament of Simeon on envy (see above) and the Testament of Dan on anger, a triad of testaments in which the misconduct of the brothers toward Joseph is thematized.⁴⁸ Within this triad, the Testament of Gad displays a distinctive feature that is connected with the fact that Lev 19.17–18 presents the biblical basis for the ethical reflections in the Testament of Gad. Simeon's envy and Dan's anger are triggered by the love that the father Jacob showed toward Joseph (T. Sim 2.6–7; T. Dan 1.5–8), whereas Gad's hatred is triggered by a misdeed of Joseph. For Joseph told the father that the sons of Zilpah and Bilhah slaughtered the good animals and ate them against the objection of Judah and Ruben, whereas it was actually a lamb torn by a bear that Gad had rescued from the mouth of the bear (T. Gad 1.6–7, 9). A small shadow falls upon Joseph, the "figure of light," only here in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs.⁴⁹ This special case can be explained precisely through the fact that Lev 19.17–18 serves as a biblical reference text for the thematization of hate, for hate is here the inadequate reaction to the misdeed of another. Instead of correcting Joseph because of his misdeed, as Lev 19.17 requires, Gad hated him for it in his heart. The warning against hate in T. Gad 4.1–7 lets Gad's misconduct against Joseph in v. 6 be heard again⁵⁰ and emphasizes in this way the disproportion between the cause of the hate and its behavioral consequence. Hate, i.e., the person who hates, does not want to let even the person who sinned "in little" (ἐν ὀλίγῳ) live. Joseph's misdeed was only such a small one; nevertheless, hate had driven Gad to want to kill him.

In T. Gad 6.1–7, Gad elucidates to his descendants how one should rightly act in the sense of Lev 19.17–18. For the line of inquiry pursued here, v. 3 is central: "Love one another from the heart! And if someone sins against you, speak to him in peace (εἰπὲ αὐτῷ ἐν εἰρήνῃ), after you have removed the poison of hate (ἐξορίσας τὸν ἰὸν τοῦ

⁴⁷ See the explicit reference to Joseph in T. Benj. 3.1, 3, 6, 7; 5.5.

⁴⁸ On the belonging together of these three testaments, see Opferkuch, *Der handelnde Mensch*, 112–15.

⁴⁹ See Opferkuch, *Der handelnde Mensch*, 161–63.

⁵⁰ See Opferkuch, *Der handelnde Mensch*, 168.

μίσους)!” The connection to Lev 19.17–18 is evident.⁵¹ Εἰπὲ αὐτῷ ἐν εἰρήνῃ takes up in an interpretive way Lev 19.17b’s admonition to reprove or correct the neighbor (LXX: ἐλεγμῷ ἐλέγξεις τὸν πλησίον σου),⁵² and ἐξορίσας τὸν ἰδὸν τοῦ μίσους (cf. also T. Gad 6.1b) takes up Lev 19.17a’s instruction not to hate one’s brother in the heart. Thus, the misconduct of the other should not lead to the disturbance of the relationship becoming permanent let alone to its escalation through one’s own hatred. Rather, the love commandment is explicitly related to the interaction with a fellow human from whom one has suffered wrong.

In grounding the demand for love, T. Jos. 17.3 makes explicit reference to the harmony of the brothers, in which God takes delight (τέρπεται γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ἐπὶ ὁμονοίᾳ ἀδελφῶν). The fact that this motif also appears in the recourse to Joseph’s conduct toward the brothers in T. Zeb. 8.6–9.3 underscores its significance. If one holds a grudge because of the evil suffered, this destroys the unity (8.6: τοῦτο χωρίζει ἐνότητά), which 9.1–3 clothes in a vivid picture: Water that flows in the same direction carries stones, etc., along with it; water that divides itself is soaked up by the earth. Overcoming disruptions of social harmony and care for one another in the sense of the love commandment are elementary presuppositions for the cohesion of the fellowship. If the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs are a diaspora writing,⁵³ then the profile is sharpened against the background of the minority situation of the Jewish diaspora communities.⁵⁴ Beyond this, with the casuistic explication of the admonition pronounced in 6.3 in 6.4–7, T. Gad 6 includes the personal or private sphere. The one who has sinned against someone should also be forgiven if he persistently denies it. In the background stand sapiential deliberations about how one can best obtain a peaceful climate in one’s environment. The one who denies wrongdoing out of shame will repent “so that he no longer offends against you, but he will even honor and fear you and keep peace with you” (6.6). In the sense of the love commandment, peaceful interaction must be the goal of the conduct. If, however, one has to deal with a shameless person who does not refrain from his evil, then one should simply let the matter rest and leave vengeance to God (6.7); thus, in this case, the concern is at least with not letting the situation escalate.

In sum, the embellishment of the narrative of Genesis in the Testament of Joseph and in other passages in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs serve to stylize Joseph as a prototype of the ideal – which proceeds from Lev 19.17–18 – of not meeting inimical conduct with one’s own hate and rancor but rather of overcoming evil through love. The development of the love commandment in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs thereby includes the aspect of love for enemies and renunciation of retaliation. If we ask about the social horizon of the love-ethical reflection, then we must

⁵¹On this, see the synopsis in Opferkuch, *Der handelnde Mensch*, 172–73. See further J. L. Kugel, “On Hidden Hatred and Open Reproach: Early Exegesis of Leviticus 19:17,” *HTR* 80: 43–61, here 50–51.

⁵²On this, see the interpretation of the admonition to reproof or correction in 1QS 5.24–25: “Each one is to reprove his fellow in tru[th] and humility and merciful love for one another.”

⁵³On this question, see note 26 above.

⁵⁴See T. Söding, “Solidarität in der Diaspora. Das Liebesgebot nach den Testamenten der Zwölf Patriarchen im Vergleich mit dem Neuen Testament,” *Kairos* 36/37 (1994/1995): 1–19, here 4: The exhortations to love “are meant to strengthen the cohesion of Jewish life in the diaspora.”

note that this is primarily related to the personal enemy within the fellowship – the concern is with the “brother” – and that, on the one hand, the care for the flourishing of the minority group, which would be endangered in its survival by escalating hostile conduct, appears as a major motivating factor and, on the other hand, sapientially informed prudential considerations about how one can live in peace with his neighbors play a role. However, with respect to the reach of the demand for love it is necessary to specify that the conduct toward the “brother” is inculcated positively and not exclusively,⁵⁵ i.e., it is not said that different behavioral maxims apply to outsiders. On the contrary, not only do we find the generally formulated admonition “be merciful to *all*, even if they are sinners,” in T. Benj. 4.2, but with T. Jos. 16.6 we also have a concrete individual case in which the conduct practiced by Joseph toward his brothers also applies *mutatis mutandis* to someone who is an outsider for Joseph: Joseph did not make public the embezzlement of an Egyptian eunuch when he was sold in order to protect him.⁵⁶ Moreover, in the overall context of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, it must be noted that with the mercy toward the socially weak we encounter a second important field of application of the love commandment alongside the interaction with the “brother” who has become guilty, and the instruction in this case has a universal dimension.⁵⁷ The different social reach in the two fields of application of the love commandment in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs probably reflects the de facto horizons of meaning.⁵⁸ While the removal of disruptions of life together is of fundamental importance chiefly in one’s immediate social environment, the removal of social hardships is also a peremptory obligation in relation to those with whom one does not have a closer relationship.

Notably, in Philo, Joseph’s reconciliatory attitude toward his brothers is explicitly understood as a manifestation of his virtuousness that is fundamentally practiced in relation to all people. For according to Philo, Joseph follows “two counselors: piety toward the father, to whom I chiefly attribute my grace, and natural philanthropy, which I practice toward all, but especially toward those of my blood (τῇ φυσικῇ φιланθρωπία, ἣ πρὸς ἅπαντας διαφέρόντως δὲ πρὸς τοὺς ἀφ’ αἵματος χρώμαι)” (Jos. 240; cf. 263–264).

If the thematic circle is extended further (and the theme of Matt 5:38–41 is included), it must be added that alternatives to the *talio* are also rather widespread in Early Judaism.

⁵⁵Cf. Söding, “Solidarität in der Diaspora,” 6. See further Konradt, “Menschen- und Bruderliebe?,” 309 as well as M. de Jonge, “The Two Great Commandments in the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs,” *NT* 44 (2002): 271–92, here 386n28.

⁵⁶On this, cf. T. Gad 4.2–3, where the opposite behavior is linked to hatred: the hater, who does not want to hear the words of the commandments of God about love for neighbor, wants to make known the misdeed of another to all immediately and urges that he should be condemned.

⁵⁷See T. Iss. 5.2 (“Love the Lord and the neighbor, have mercy on the weak and the poor!”) together with T. Iss. 7.6 (“Every person”). See, further, the universal orientation of the call for mercy in T. Zeb. 5.1.

⁵⁸On this, see, in further detail, Konradt “Menschen- und Bruderliebe?,” esp. 307–309.

The saying of Prov 24.29 – “Do not say, ‘Just as he has done to me, shall I do to him; to each I will repay as his deeds deserve’” – has some parallels in early Judaism, especially in the romantic novel *Joseph and Aseneth*,⁵⁹ where the center of the ethics is occupied by the maxim that it is not fitting for human beings who revere God to return evil for evil (Jos. As. 23.9; 29.3; cf. 28.10, 14; see further Sir 10.6; T. Benj. 4.3; Ps.-Phoc. 77; 2 En. 50.4); this cannot, however, be elucidated in detail here.⁶⁰ Instead, our task in what follows will be to examine the Matthean commandment of love for enemies and to embed it in the context that we have sketched in this section.

2. The Commandment of Love for Enemies in Matt 5.43–48

2.1 Preliminary Observations

The commandment “love your enemies” stands alone neither in Matt 5.44 nor in Luke 6.27, but there are more differences than shared features in the following context in the two versions. In Luke 6.27–28, the commandment of love for enemies is the headpiece of a four-membered series of imperatives: “Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; bless those who curse you; pray for those who abuse you!” In Matt 5.44, the series has only two members, and already at this point there is no consensus about which scope must be presupposed for the version of the Sayings Source, i.e., whether Luke (or a pre-Lukan Q-redaction) expanded it⁶¹ or whether Matthew (or a pre-Matthean Q-redaction⁶²) shortened it.⁶³ In the first case, one can explain Luke 6.28a as an influence from community tradition, as it is illustrated by Rom 12.14; 1 Pet 3.9, and consider further the possibility that “do good to those who hate you” is to be categorized as an “explanatory paraphrase for Greek listeners.”⁶⁴ Against this view, it can, however, be

⁵⁹On *Joseph and Aseneth* as a romantic novel, see R. Bloch, “Joseph und Aseneth: ein früher jüdischer Liebesroman,” in *Jüdische Drehbühnen. Biblische Variationen im antiken Judentum*, Tria Corda 7 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 1–28.

⁶⁰For an overview, see Zerbe, *Non-Retaliation*, 34–173; J. F. Davis, *Lex Talionis in Early Judaism and the Exhortation of Jesus in Matthew 5.38–42*, JSNTS 281 (London: T&T Clark, 2005), esp. 55–72; and very concisely – with a focus on *Joseph and Aseneth* – Konradt, *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium*, 356–58.

⁶¹Thus, e.g., W. C. van Unnik, “Die Motivierung der Feindesliebe in Lukas VI 32–35,” *NT* 8 (1966): 284–300, here 298; Lührmann, “Liebet eure Feinde,” 416–17; P. Hoffmann, “Tradition und Situation. Zur ‘Verbindlichkeit’ des Gebots der Feindesliebe in der synoptischen Überlieferung und in der gegenwärtigen Friedensdiskussion,” in *Ethik im Neuen Testament*, ed. K. Kertelge, QD 102 (Freiburg: Herder, 1984), 50–118, here 52–53.

⁶²On the assumption of pre-Synoptic redaction, cf., e.g., H. 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)*, ed. A. Yarbro Collins, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1995), 300.

⁶³Scholars who suggest that Matthew shortened it include Merklein, *Gottesheerrschaft als Handlungsprinzip*, 225; U. Luz, *Matthew 1–7: A Commentary*, ed. H. Koester, trans. J. E. Couch, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 284 (GV = U. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus [Mt 1–7]*, 5th ed., EKK I/1 [Zürich: Benzinger Verlag, 2002], 402); J. Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20*, WBC 35A (Dallas, Word 1989), 292, 294.

⁶⁴F. Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1–9:50*, ed. H. Koester, trans. C. M. Thomas, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 236; GV = F. Bovon, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas (Lk 1,1–9,50)*, EKKNT III/1 (Zürich: Benzinger, 1989), 316.

objected that in 6.33, 35, Luke himself uses the verb ἀγαθοποιεῖν rather than καλῶς ποιεῖν. As basic content, one can at least observe that the interpersonal act of concrete help for the enemy in the sense of love is supplemented in each case by the admonition *to pray* for the enemy.⁶⁵

In Luke, a second four-membered series on the renunciation of retaliation follows in 6.29–30. In Matthew this material, which again differs in scope, appears *before* the commandment of love for enemies. Once again, we can only speculate about the sequence of the logia in Q.⁶⁶ What is certain is only that the commandment of love for enemies stood directly together with the saying about the renunciation of retaliation. The basic content of the tradition in Q also included the fact that love of enemies was negatively demarcated from an ethical practice based on the idea of reciprocity (Matt 5.46–47; Luke 6.32–34) and positively connected to the motif of divine sonship (Matt 5.45; Luke 6.35) and, at the end, to the idea of the *imitatio Dei* (Matt 5.48; Luke 6.36).

Thus, it is indeed possible to discern the basic contours of the Q-version, which was respectively taken up and developed in Matt 5 and Luke 6. However, the details of the textual reconstruction of Q are fraught with manifold problems.⁶⁷ A discussion of these problems would not only take us beyond the framework of this study but would also not lead to clear results. Moreover, even with the hypothetical reconstruction of Q, we would not yet have found a sound basis for the context of the commandment of love for enemies in the life of the “historical Jesus” but would only have in view the application of the demands in the group of Q-tradents on the basis of their social context. In light of this constellation, it is advisable to make a virtue out of necessity and focus on the configurations of the commandment of love for enemies in the preserved New Testament texts. In this essay, I will restrict my attention to the configuration that Jesus’ commandment of love for enemies has received in Matt 5.43–48.⁶⁸

2.2 *The Commandment of Love for Enemies in the Framework of the Matthean Series of Antitheses*

The most conspicuous characteristic of the commandment of love for enemies in the Gospel of Matthew is the fact that the material presented in Q 6.27–36 appears in the form of antitheses in Matthew. There is a broad consensus that the antitheses form in Matt 5.38–48 (as in 5.31–32) is secondary and can be attributed to the shaping hand of the First Evangelist.⁶⁹ The instructions on the renunciation of retaliation and love for

⁶⁵It is, however, disputed whether, in addition to Matt 5.44b par. Luke 6.27a, the exhortation to prayer in Matt 5.44c par. Luke 6.28b, is to be traced back, reaching beyond Q, to the historical Jesus (cf. Hoffmann, “Tradition und Situation,” 72).

⁶⁶On this, see, by way of example, the detailed discussion in Hoffmann, “Tradition und Situation,” 64–72.

⁶⁷According to Söding, *Nächstenliebe*, 148, the differences are “so grave that a reconstruction of the common tradition must appear audacious (*waghalsig*).”

⁶⁸On the Lukan reception of the commandment of love for enemies, see Konradt, *Ethik im Neuen Testament*, 337–40.

⁶⁹This thesis is not, however, completely unchallenged. The traditional character of *all* the antitheses is advocated – in connection with the rejection of the Q hypothesis – by, e.g., H.-J. Wrege, *Die Überlieferungs-*

enemies were allocated to two antitheses and placed as the conclusion of the series of antitheses (5.21–48).⁷⁰ In vv. 38–42, Matthew first thematizes the reaction to hostile conduct from the other and then transitions with the commandment of love for enemies (vv. 43–48) to the aspect of active conduct for the sake of the enemy.

It is fundamental for the understanding of this text that the instructions of Jesus in the antitheses are not set in opposition to the Torah commandments themselves.⁷¹ In the Matthean composition of the Sermon on the Mount, the antitheses are preceded by a programmatic passage in which Matthew assigns to Jesus the task of fulfilling (πληρῶσαι) the Torah and the Prophets and categorically rejects the opposing view that Jesus came to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. The other active use of the verb πληροῦν in Matt 3.15 and the stereotypical use of the passive verb in the formula that introduces the reflection quotations⁷² clearly indicate that Matthew seeks to set a specific christologi-

geschichte der Bergpredigt, WUNT 9 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1968), 57; J. Jeremias, *Neutestamentliche Theologie*, 3rd ed. (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1979), 240–41 (ET = J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus*, trans. J. Bowden [New York: Scribner, 1970], 252); on Matt 5.38–48, see further Piper, *Love your Enemies*, 51–55. A. Sand regards it as probable that the reshaping of the Q-material already took place prior to Matthew in the case of the third, fifth, and sixth antitheses. See A. Sand, *Das Gesetz und die Propheten. Untersuchungen zur Theologie des Evangeliums nach Matthäus*, BU 11 (Regensburg: Pustet, 1994), 48.

⁷⁰The question of whether Matthew found the antithesis form in his sources in the case of the rest of the antitheses or at least the first two and was inspired by these to rework the material taken up in 5.31–32 (33–37), 38–48 (on this, see, e.g., Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 227–28; GV = Luz, *Mt 1–7*, 326–27) or, alternatively, whether all six antitheses were first constructed by Matthew (thus, e.g., I. Broer, “Die Antithesen und der Evangelist Matthäus. Versuch, eine alte These zu revidieren,” *BZ NF* [1975], 50–63) cannot be answered with certainty (on this, see M. Konradt, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, trans. M. E. Boring [Waco: Baylor University Press, 2020], 78–79; GV = M. Konradt, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, NTD 1, 2nd ed. [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2023], 80–81; Konradt, *Ethik im Neuen Testament*, 272). While there is no Synoptic parallel to the fourth antithesis on swearing, reference can be made here to Jas 5.12, where the antithetical form is likewise lacking. Since Jas 5.12 presents the older version in terms of tradition history (on this, see G. Dautzenberg, “Ist das Schwurverbot Mt 5.33–37; Jak 5.12 ein Beispiel für die Torakritik Jesu?” *BZ NF* 25 [1981]: 44–66; B. Kollmann, “Das Schwurverbot Mt 5.33–37/Jak 5.12 im Spiegel antiker Eidkritik,” *BZ NF* 40 [1996]: 179–93), the antithetical form is also probably secondary here. There is no comparable material for the first two theses. As an argument for the assumption that Matthew inherited the antithetical form in the case of the first two antitheses, it is claimed that the antitheses stand in tension to the basic statement in 5.17–20. Thus, against the view of a redactional origin of all the antitheses, Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 227 (GV = Luz, *Mt 1–7*, 327) argues that “it must interpret 5.17–20 in such a way that all the antitheses fit the interpretation,” which Luz does not think is the case. This objection falls away, however, when it is recognized that Matthew viewed the theses not as Torah commandments but rather as interpretations of the Torah, i.e., with the insight that the antitheses are to be read not as statements that are critical of the Torah but rather as statements that are critical of Torah interpretation (on this, see below). The argument that the counter-theses in 5.22, 28 could not have existed independently of the theses in 5.21, 27 also carries little weight. Conversely, this opens up nothing more than the possibility of a redactional origin of all the antitheses.

⁷¹For the understanding of the antitheses in the context of 5.17–20 sketched below, see, in greater detail, M. Konradt, *Christology, Torah, and Ethics in the Gospel of Matthew*, ed. W. Coppins and S. Gathercole, trans. W. Coppins, BMSEC 10 (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2022), 75–100, here 76–89 (GV = Konradt, *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium*, 288–315, here 289–303). See also Konradt, *Ethik im Neuen Testament*, 270–75, and the compact summary of Matthew’s Torah hermeneutic in Konradt, *Christology, Torah, and Ethics*, 102–104 (GV = Konradt, *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium*, 317–19).

⁷²See Matt 1.22; 2.15, 17, 23; 4.14; 8.17; 12.17; 13.35; 21.4; 27.9; cf., further, 26.54, 66.

cal emphasis with the linguistically conspicuous talk of the *fulfillment* of the Torah.⁷³ For Matthew, it belongs to the tasks of the Messiah to disclose the will of God laid down in the Torah and the Prophets in its full sense. The instructions of Jesus in the series of antitheses serve to unpack this in an exemplary way, i.e., to show how exactly the Torah commandments are to be understood and what life practice they correspondingly aim at. The kingdom of heaven stands open to the one who walks according to them (5.20; cf. 7.13–27).

As a counterpart, 5.20 highlights the “righteousness” of the scribes and Pharisees, of whom the evangelist paints an entirely bleak picture in a sharply polemical way.⁷⁴ The conflict between the Matthean communities and the Pharisees at the time of the composition of the Gospel is reflected in the emphatic prominence of the Pharisees as opponents of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew.⁷⁵ Matthew has placed the instructions of Jesus in 5.21–48 within this horizon. Matthew presents Jesus here as the one (cf. 23.8–12) true interpreter of the will of God presented in the Torah and the Prophets in opposition to the – according to Matthew – inadequate teaching of the scribes and Pharisees, i.e., Matthew did not view the theses as statements of the Torah; instead, the theses, according to the Matthean understanding, were meant to reproduce what the scribes and Pharisees presented as Torah.

In the phrasing that introduces the theses, ἐπρέθη is a *passivum divinum*; by τοῖς ἀρχαίοις the Sinai generation is meant. The point of reference is thus the proclamation of the will of God at Sinai set down in the Torah. However, with the introductory ἡκούσατε – which is lacking only in v. 31, which can be explained by the direct thematic connection between the second and third antithesis – the (interpretive) mediation of the Torah comes into view.⁷⁶ If one inquires further into the relationship of the wording of the theses to Old Testament commandments, one finds that a word-for-word agreement with Old Testament commandments can be observed only for v. 27 and v. 38; the rest of the theses do not appear in the

⁷³Parallels are rare. In addition to the New Testament attestations in Rom 8.4; 13.8; Gal 5.14; and (with ἀναπληροῦν) 6.2, reference can be made in early Jewish texts to T. Naph. 8.7 (καὶ γὰρ αἱ ἐντολαὶ τοῦ νόμου διπλαῖ εἰσι καὶ μετὰ τέχνης πληροῦνται); Sib. Or. 3.246; Philo, *Praem.* 83.

⁷⁴On the negative presentation of the scribes and Pharisees in the Gospel of Matthew, see M. Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew*, ed. W. Coppins and S. Gathercole, trans. K. Ess, BMSEC 2 (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014), 101–39, 219–39, and elsewhere, and the literature cited there (GV = M. Konradt, *Israel, Kirche und die Völker im Matthäusevangelium*, WUNT 215 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007], 108–50, 236–57, and elsewhere).

⁷⁵On this, see, fundamentally, J. A. Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 35–38, 68–70, 79–90, 115–16; A. J. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 44–67. See also Konradt, *Christology, Torah, and Ethics*, 1–36 (GV = Konradt, *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium*, 3–42).

⁷⁶On this, cf. Kuhn, “Das Liebesgebot Jesu,” 213–14; Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 208, 217; J. Gnllka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, vol. 1, HThKNT 1.1, 2nd ed. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1988), 153; Konradt, *Christology, Torah, and Ethics*, 84–85 (GV = Konradt, *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium*, 298–99); Konradt, *Ethik im Neuen Testament*, 273–74.

Torah in this form.⁷⁷ In light of 5.17–20, these mixed findings can most plausibly be interpreted in such a way that Matthew imputes to the scribes and Pharisees that they either take the Torah commandments literally in a way that is only superficial, without penetrating more deeply to the intention of the commandment – such as in the case of the prohibition against adultery in v. 27⁷⁸ – or they explicitly restrict what is commanded in its sphere of validity through their interpretation.⁷⁹ The thesis in v. 43 is an especially clear example of this, for it is clear that Matthew could not have thought that he was reproducing a Torah commandment here verbatim. Matthew goes on to quote the commandment of the love for neighbor two more times with the correct wording in 19.19 and 22.39 and even honors it as a main commandment, which is even explicitly placed on par with the commandment of love for God and with the latter summarizes the Torah and the Prophets (22.39–40). He could not have done this if the addition καὶ μισήσεις τὸν ἐχθρόν σου in 5.43 could have been regarded by him in any way as an authentic expression of the meaning of Lev 19.18.

Thus, 5.21–48 is, in *thesis* and *counter-thesis*, the unfolding of the statement in 5.20, namely that the righteousness expected from the disciples must far surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees if they wish to enter the kingdom of heaven. Put differently, whoever acts according to the Torah interpretation of the scribes and Pharisees as this is presented in the theses reaches a level of righteousness that is not sufficient to gain access to the kingdom of heaven.⁸⁰ If one also draws upon 5.19, then the profile of this statement is sharpened further, for according to v. 19, the relaxation of the smallest commandments – which, in the light of 23.23, includes, for example, tithing⁸¹ – leads to less prestige in the kingdom of heaven but not to exclusion.⁸² The deficiency of the scribes and Pharisees must therefore be greater: Matthew charges them with failing with respect to the great commandments (cf. 12.7; 23.23!). The commandment of love for neighbor is one of these.

For the thesis in v. 43 this means that Matthew presents here the commandment

⁷⁷On this, cf. C. Burchard, “Versuch, das Thema der Bergpredigt zu finden,” in C. Burchard, *Studien zur Theologie, Sprache und Umwelt des Neuen Testaments*, ed. D. Sänger, WUNT 107 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 27–50: 40–41; Konradt, *Christology, Torah, and Ethics*, 82–83 (GV = Konradt, *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium*, 296–297); Konradt, *Ethik im Neuen Testament*, 273.

⁷⁸On this, cf. Kuhn, “Das Liebesgebot Jesu,” 213, who regards it as “almost typical for Jewish biblical exegesis” that the interpretive practice, as this applies “especially in the case of the second thesis,” “is only heard as an undertone (nur mitzuhören ist).”

⁷⁹On this, see, in detail, Konradt, *Christology, Torah, and Ethics*, 85–87 (GV = Konradt, *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium*, 299–301).

⁸⁰For critical engagement with K. Wengst on the interpretation of Matt 5.21–48 as antitheses, see the appendix at the end of this article.

⁸¹On the aspect of the hierarchy of commandments in the Matthean understanding of the law, see Konradt, *Christology, Torah, and Ethics*, 78–80 (GV = Konradt, *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium*, 292–94). See also Konradt, *Ethik im Neuen Testament*, 271–72.

⁸²For the interpretation of 5.19, see Konradt, *Christology, Torah, and Ethics*, 79–80 (GV = Konradt, *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium*, 293); Konradt, *Ethik im Neuen Testament*, 271–72.

of love for neighbor *as the scribes and Pharisees, according to him, interpret it*. This is connected to the fact that the opposition of neighbor and enemy is not contained in the Torah commandment itself for Matthew.⁸³ This means that Matthew does not understand Lev 19.18 in such a way that through the talk of “neighbor” certain circles of people would be denied in principle as possible recipients of the love that is to be practiced. Instead, the opposition of neighbor and enemy, as it appears in the thesis in Matt 5.43, is inserted into Lev 19.18, according to Matthew, only through the lack of understanding of the scribes and Pharisees, who are presented in a notoriously negative way by the evangelist, and is thus taken up in Matt 5.43–44 only in this sense as a consequence of the citation of this faulty interpretation.⁸⁴ The commandment of love for enemies is, correspondingly, not understood as a criticism of the reach of the Old Testament commandment but rather helps Matthew to elucidate *its* full significance. Put differently, Matthew does not present love of enemy as a surpassing of the Old Testament commandment⁸⁵ but as a tool for its interpretation.⁸⁶

⁸³ Contrast, e.g., W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol. 1, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 550: “In our estimation, what Matthew has done is take the key words ‘hate’ and ‘enemy’ ... and turn them into a negative qualification in order to bring home the limitation of an OT directive in contrast with the all-encompassing nature of a word of Jesus.”

⁸⁴ As Old Testament background, texts such as Deut 23.4–7 (e.g., R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007], 225) or Ps 139.19–22 (e.g., R. H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994], 96–97) have been mentioned, but no fundamental commandment (!) to hate one’s enemy can be derived from these texts or related texts. A text that comes close to Matt 5.43 is 1QS 1.3–4, 9–11 (cf. e.g., Gnlika, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 190–91): “3 ... to love everything 4 which he selects and to hate everything that he rejects; ... 9 ...; to love all the sons of light, each one 10 according to his lot in God’s plan, and to detest all the sons of darkness, each one in accordance with his guilt 11 in God’s vindication ...” (trans. F. García Martínez and E. J. C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, vol. 1 [Leiden: Brill, 1997], 71; cf. Josephus’ statement on the Essenes in *J. W.* 2.139: Among other things, the oaths that must be sworn include *μῆσθαι δ’ αἱ τοὺς ἀδίκους καὶ συναγωνίσθαι τοῖς δίκαις*). In the same writing, however, we can also read in 10.17–18: “17 ... I shall not repay anyone with an evil reward; 18 with goodness I shall pursue man” (trans. García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 95). T. Söding, “Feindeshass und Bruderliebe. Beobachtungen zur essenischen Ethik,” *RdQ* 16 (1993): 616 concludes from the interplay of these (and other) texts that here “a pronounced nonviolent hatred of enemies is preached. ... The hatred toward the wicked is ... to be expressed exclusively in the radical separation from them (1QS 9.20 and elsewhere).” The difficulty of producing convincing attestations for the virulence of the interpretation of the commandment adduced in Matt 5.43 underscores the polemical anti-Pharisaic character of the attribution (for an urgent warning against hatred in early Jewish paraenesis, see the Testament of Gad). On the further context of tradition of Matt 5.43, see below. See also Konradt, *Ethik im Neuen Testament*, 275.

⁸⁵ A different position is taken by Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 230 (GV = Luz, *Mt 1–7*, 331), who states in relation to the antitheses as a whole: “The antitheses do not interpret the Bible; they extend and surpass it.”

⁸⁶ There is a tension in the statements of O. Wischmeyer on this question. See O. Wischmeyer, *Love as Agape: The Early Christian Concept and Modern Discourse*, ed. W. Coppins and S. Gathercole, trans. W. Coppins, BMSEC 4 (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2021), 45–46 (GV = O. Wischmeyer, *Liebe als Agape. Das frühe Konzept und der moderne Diskurs* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015], 45). On the one hand, Wischmeyer postulates that “the sixth antithesis of the Sermon of the Mount ... presents Jesus not in continuity but in discontinuity with Lev 19.18” (45) and that with the commandment of love for enemies “Lev 19.18 itself becomes obsolete without this being made explicit” (46). On the other hand, she affirms only a few lines later that “according to Matthew, however, the continuity of the two commandments is preserved: Jesus does not abolish the old commandment but newly and authoritatively interprets it” (46).

2.3 *The Criticized Understanding of the Love Commandment and Its Expansive Interpretation as Love for Enemies*

The restrictive understanding of the neighbor that the love commandment receives through the interpretation presented in v. 43 is often interpreted in the sense of an inner-Jewish limitation of the demand for love.⁸⁷ In support of this view it can be pointed out that the terms that are parallel to “neighbor” in Lev 19.17–18 do, in fact, refer to the Jewish community as the horizon of application for the love commandment. Furthermore, a purely inner-Jewish orientation of the love commandment is attested in some early Jewish texts (e.g., Tob 4.13; Jub. 36.4, 8; 46.1;⁸⁸ CD 6.20–21). However, it by no means represents *the* early Jewish understanding of the demand for love.⁸⁹ The Matthean context gives no indication that Matthew seeks to accuse the scribes and Pharisees here of restricting the sphere of validity of the love commandment to the people of God, Israel.⁹⁰ According to v. 46, the concern is instead with the restriction of love to those who love you,⁹¹ i.e., with the restriction of love to the circle of friends and acquaintances.⁹² It must be noted further that according to v. 44b, for Matthew the enemies include those who persecute you (plural). Since the conflict with the Pharisees and the synagogue dominated by them stands at the center of the conflict to which the Matthean communities see themselves exposed,⁹³ the explicit inclusion of the enemies in the love commandment primarily has other Jews in view, which evidently permits the inverse conclusion that the restrictive interpretation of the love commandment that Matthew attributes to the scribes and Pharisees does not consist in

⁸⁷See, e.g., D. A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, WBC 33A (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 134; France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 224; C. N. Chandler, “Love Your Neighbor as Yourself (Leviticus 19:18b) in Early Jewish-Christian Exegetical Practice and Missional Formulation,” in *What Does the Scripture Say? Studies in the Function of Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity*, vol. 1: *The Synoptic Gospels*, ed. C. A. Evans and H. D. Zacharias, LNTS 469 (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 12–56, here 26–27; as well as D. L. Turner, *Matthew*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 176 and Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 288; GV = Luz, *Mt 1–7*, 407–408 (as an option alongside the vulgar-ethical interpretation [on this, see below]).

⁸⁸On the love commandment in the book of Jubilees, in which, alongside the focus on “love for brothers” in 20.2, a universalizing of the sphere of validity of the demand for love is intimated, see Söding, “Feindeshass und Bruderliebe,” 602–10 and, specifically on 20.2, 607.

⁸⁹On this, see Konradt, *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium*, 369n69.

⁹⁰For this reason alone, the thesis that Matt 5.43 was inspired by the accusation of misanthropy that was made against the Jews in antiquity (G. Dautzenberg, “Mt 5.43c und die antike Tradition von der jüdischen Misanthropie,” in *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium [Festschrift für W. Pesch]*, ed. L. Schenke [Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1988], 47–77) must be regarded as entirely improbable, for Jewish tendencies toward demarcation from non-Jews (cf., by way of example, Let. Aris. 139–142) are not visible as the background of 5.43.

⁹¹Cf. as an expression of everyday morality, Hesiod, *Op.* 352: “Love the one who loves (you); and go to the one who goes (to you) (τὸν φιλέοντα φιλεῖν καὶ τῷ προσιόντι προσεῖναι).” According to Xenophon, *Mem.* 4.4.24, it is a universally valid law to return benefits to the benefactor. And according to Ps.-Aristotle, *Rhet. Alex.* 1.1421b37ff., the principle of doing good to friends and showing thankfulness to benefactors belong to the unwritten laws.

⁹²Cf., e.g., J. Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 265: “the neighbor has become one’s friend.”

⁹³See note 75 above.

the restriction of those who are to be loved to their compatriots.⁹⁴ Rather, the understanding of the love commandment that is criticized here boils down to its reduction to a vulgar-ethical “common sense.”

The fact that this restrictive interpretation of the love commandment is further flanked by the admonition that the enemy is to be hated makes it clear that an emotional dimension is just as little in the foreground as with the verb “love.” “Hate the enemy” means to give him no support or even to harm him in an extreme case. The thesis in v. 43 is thus *de facto* nothing other than a variant, in biblical language, of the vulgar-ethical maxim – which was widespread in the ancient world (and also often criticized by philosophers) – that one should support the friends and harm the enemies.⁹⁵

Jesus’ counter-thesis makes an antithetical connection to *the interpretive second part* of the thesis. Even the enemy is to be *loved* and not hated. This de-limitation of love for neighbor is fundamental and comprehensive. Not only personal enemies are in view but, as the talk of “persecutors” shows, also those who oppose the adherents of Jesus

⁹⁴On this aspect, see, in detail, Konradt, *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium*, 369–71.

⁹⁵In Sosiades’ collection of the sayings of the Seven Wise Men, which John Stobaeus III 1.173 hands down, the conduct toward the friends and the conduct toward the enemies is concisely juxtaposed with the words “Be well-disposed to the friends, fend off the enemies (φίλοις εὐνοῖαι, ἐχθροὺς ἀμύνου)” (text in J. Althoff and D. Zeller, eds., *Die Worte der Sieben Weisen*, TzF 89 [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006], 64). In the *Theognidea* we find the passage, “May the great wide bronze sky fall upon me from above, the fear of earth-born men, if I do not aid those who are my friends (οἱ με φίλευσιν) and cause my enemies (τοῖς δ’ ἐχθροῖς) pain and great misery” (*Theognidea* 1.869–872; trans. D. E. Gerber, LCL 258, 299). In Pindar, *Pyth.* 2.83–84 we read, “Let me befriend a friend, but against an enemy, I shall, as his enemy, run him down as a wolf does” (trans. W. H. Race, LCL 56, 247). Plato, *Meno* 71c has Meno list as a virtue of the man “that he be competent to manage the affairs of his city, and to manage them so as to benefit his friends and harm his enemies” (trans. W. R. M. Lamb, LCL 165, 269). See further, e.g., Euripides, *Med.* 809–810 (“Let no one think me weak, contemptible, untroublesome. No, quite the opposite, hurtful to foes, to friends kindly. Such persons live a life of greatest glory”; trans. D. Kovacs, LCL 12, 357); Heracleitus, 585–586; Xenophon, *Mem.* 2.3.14; 2.6.35; 4.2.16; Plato, *Resp.* 332e; 336a (“‘But do you know,’ I said, ‘whose saying I think it is: the one which says that it is just to benefit friends, and to harm enemies?’”; trans. C. Emlyn-Jones and W. Preddy, LCL 237, 41); Isocrates, *Or.* 1.29; Dionysius Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 8.29.1 (... ὥς οὐτε φίλους εὖ ποιεῖν δυνάμενον ἔτι οὐτ’ ἐχθροὺς κακῶς ...); Cicero, *Off.* 1.25.88 (see note 7 above); Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.14.18 (“when a man has done you either good or harm you know how to pay him back in kind”; trans. W. A. Oldfather, LCL 131, 303); as well as the passage from Plutarch, *Apophthegmata Laconica* 218 (*Mor.* 218a), which is quoted in note 21. Cf. M. W. Blundel, *Helping Friends and Harming Enemies: A Study in Sophocles and Greek Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) for an overview (26–59) and a detailed investigation of the findings in the tragedies of Sophocles (60–259). On the understanding of Matt 5.43 in the presented sense, cf. W. Klassen, *Love of Enemies: The Way to Peace* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 84; Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 305–306; Zerbe, *Non-Retaliation*, 206; M. Ebner, “Feindesliebe – ein Ratschlag zum Überleben? Sozial- und religionsgeschichtliche Überlegungen zu Mt 5,38–47 par. Lk 6,27–35,” in *From Quest to Q (Festschrift für J.M. Robinson)*, ed. J. M. Asgeirson, K. de Troyer, and M. M. Meyer, BETL 146 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2000), 119–42, here 135–36; Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 265; Reiser, “Love of Enemies in the Context of Antiquity,” 422; E. Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount: New Approaches to a Classical Text*, WUNT 351 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 272. The affinity of Matt 5.43 to the aforementioned vulgar-ethical maxim does not, however, mean that for Matthew the concern in Matt 5.43 is not with an (inadequate) interpretation of Lev 19.18 (contrast Baasland, *Parables and Rhetoric*, 271).

as a *group*. Thus, the opponents of the community are also included here.⁹⁶ If the preceding admonitions on the renunciation of retaliation – which are, as we have seen, thematically related – are also consulted, this dimension that reaches beyond the personal enemy is reinforced. Verses 39–41 present different examples of the humiliation of “little people” through those who are socially stronger. The little people are struck, confronted with court procedures involving the seizure of their property, and forced into service by Roman soldiers.⁹⁷ Through intentional counter-provocations – they also hold out the other cheek; they also surrender the cloak and are thus naked; they go the second mile – they regain the sovereignty of action; they are no longer mere objects and victims of the actions of the more powerful.⁹⁸ In the flow of Matt 5, the definition of the neighbor who is to be loved, which includes the enemy, also encompasses the wrongdoers in the examples in vv. 39–41. Thus, Roman soldiers are, for example, included. This underscores the fact that v. 44 is aimed not only at personal enemies. At the same time, it must also be noted that – as also in vv. 39–41 – it does not become clear that more than a local horizon of the experience of “little people” is in view.

If one enquires into the relationship between the two admonitions in vv. 44b, c, then ὑμᾶς προσεύχεσθε ὑπὲρ τῶν διωκόντων in v. 44c is not to be read expegetically as a comprehensive definition of the preceding imperative ἀγαπάτε τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ὑμῶν nor is v. 47 a sufficient exegesis of v. 46. Instead, v. 44c presents *one* exemplary concretization. Love of enemies *also* includes praying for them, as this was also identified as one element of the conduct of the person who loves in T. Jos. 18.2. Love for enemies is not, however, exhausted in prayer,⁹⁹ but rather includes – as Luke 6.27, 35 makes explicit through καλῶς ποιεῖτε τοῖς μισοῦσιν ὑμᾶς or ἀγαθοποιεῖτε – the concrete doing of good to the enemy. Conversely, the exhortation to pray for the persecutors makes clear that the admonition to love one’s enemies aims not “merely” at external good conduct but has in view an attitude that proceeds from the “heart” (cf. Matt 5.28). Here, the content of the prayer remains open. It could include the aspect of the petition for the repentance or behavioral change of the enemy as well as the petition that nothing bad may happen to the enemy. The longer Lukan version makes the latter explicit when it exhorts the addressees to bless the enemy (cf. Rom 12.14; 1 Pet 3.9; cf. also 1 Cor 4.12).

⁹⁶Cf. Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 287 (GV = Luz, *Mt 1–7*, 405); Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 1:551; C. S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 203; France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 225; and others.

⁹⁷Cf. Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 273 (GV = Luz, *Mt 1–7*, 386), “In their Matthean version all three sayings reflect the experience of ‘little people’ who are beaten, who are threatened by debtor’s trials, and who suffer under foreign occupations.”

⁹⁸On the interpretation of Matt 5.38–42, see Konradt, *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium*, 360–68; Konradt, *Ethik im Neuen Testament*, 278–80.

⁹⁹The minimalistic interpretation of the commandment of love for enemies in Ebner, “Feindesliebe,” esp. 136–40 is already questionable for this reason, for Ebner reduces the required reaction to the behavior of the hostile counterpart in the sense of the love commandment to the spiritual aspect of prayer. Ebner also ties the situational context of enmity to the experience of the rejection of the message, which he seeks to embed in a history-of-religions way through a reference to a passage in Epictetus’ Cynic diatribe cited at the beginning of this article (see note 7), which is sometimes presented as an analogy to the commandment of love for enemies. However, this tying of the commandment of love for enemies to the challenge of needing to process failures in the proclamation does not emerge from Matt 5.43–48.

At the same time, prayer is “the last thing that someone can do when one’s hands otherwise remain tied.”¹⁰⁰

2.4 Love for Enemies as *Imitatio Dei*: The Theological Grounding of Love for Enemies

The Matthean Jesus motivates the addressees to love for enemies by connecting it with the promise – which is to be understood eschatologically – that those who love their enemies will become sons of the Father in heaven (v. 45a). The son of God terminology used here builds on sapiential traditions in which divine sonship is joined to the motif of following the will of God.¹⁰¹ Matthew is concerned more specifically with the correspondence to the action of the Father, as the continuation of the text in v. 45 makes clear. For God himself “makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and he sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”¹⁰² Thus, as God, in his philanthropy, lets his life-preserving benefits come to all human beings without distinction, humans should likewise encounter all human beings, even the “evil enemy,” in the spirit of love.

The motif of correspondence to the action of God, which underlines the promise of becoming children – or, more literally, sons – of God,¹⁰³ is taken up and strengthened through the direct exhortation to *imitatio Dei* in 5.48.¹⁰⁴ Differently from Luke, who – probably on the basis of Q – speaks concretely of the imitation of the mercy of God (cf. Let. Aris. 208), Matthew calls for perfection. Thus, in Matthew, the *imitatio Dei* motif is not only understood more fundamentally than in Luke (and Q), but it is also more strongly weighted.¹⁰⁵ The motif of perfection returns in Matthew in the pericope of the rich young man in 19.21. There too it is connected to the interpretation

¹⁰⁰Söding, *Nächstenliebe*, 157.

¹⁰¹See Sir 4.10; Wis. Sol. 2.18; 5.5. On this, see G. Theißen, “Gewaltverzicht und Feindesliebe (Mt 5,38–48/Lk 6,27–38) und deren sozialgeschichtlicher Hintergrund,” in *Studien zur Soziologie des Urchristentums*, WUNT 19, 3rd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989), 160–97, here 161–62.

¹⁰²Here, the formulation in Matthew is more detailed than in Luke, where it merely says that God “is generous toward the ungrateful and the bad” (αὐτὸς χρηστός ἐστιν ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀχαρίστους καὶ πονηρούς) (6.35). Whereas Matthew has a concrete reference to God’s action as Creator (sun, rain), the Lukan passage has only the mere characterization of God as χρηστός. Furthermore, with respect to Matthew’s double members πονηρούς καὶ ἀγαθούς καὶ δίκαιους καὶ ἀδίκους, the Lukan version only provides parallels to the two negative members. In this case, the Q version is probably better preserved by Luke, for the Matthean juxtaposition of “evil and good,” “righteous and unrighteous” corresponds to the opposition of neighbor and friend in 5.43, which was introduced through the secondary formation of antitheses, whereas Luke’s “one-sided” formulation ἀχαρίστους καὶ πονηρούς corresponds to the – originally not antithetically formulated – commandment to love the enemy.

¹⁰³One can discover a connection to the christological use of the Son of God title in the Gospel of Matthew insofar as in this the aspect of the obedience to the will of the Father has fundamental importance (on this, see U. Luz, *Studies in Matthew* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005], 83–96, here 93–96; GV = U. Luz, “Eine thetische Skizze der matthäischen Christologie,” in *Anfänge der Christologie. Festschrift für F. Hahn*, ed. C. Breytenbach and H. Paulsen [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991], 221–35, here 231–34]).

¹⁰⁴This motif is frequent. It appears with special density in the Letter of Aristeas (see, e.g., Let. Aris. 188, 190, 192, 205, 208, 209, 210, 211).

¹⁰⁵See Theißen, “Gewaltverzicht und Feindesliebe,” 162–63.

of the love commandment.¹⁰⁶ This shows that perfection is understood by Matthew in relation to the Torah. It is based on the perfect fulfillment of the Torah, which is hermeneutically centered in the love commandment according to the interpretation of Jesus. In short, whoever (also) loves his enemy practices the commandment of love perfectly and thus imitates God.¹⁰⁷

The message of the *basileia*,¹⁰⁸ which is characteristic for Jesus, is often specified as the overarching theological context for the commandment of love for enemies on the level of the historical Jesus¹⁰⁹ – more specifically, the consistent understanding of the demand for love in the sense of love for enemies is connected to the boundless goodness of God, which he, in light of the inbreaking of his kingly reign, demonstrates and which is manifested above all in Jesus' turning to sinners. However, there is no talk of the *basileia* in Matt 5.43–48 (or in Luke 6.27–36), at least not explicitly. Instead, Matthew makes recourse, as we have seen, to a creation-theological argument. Here, as a related text, we can refer, first, to the talk of God's *ἀγαπᾶν τὰ ὄντα πάντα* in Wis. 11.24, even though there is no explicit talk of God's *love* in Matt 5, and we also find, at least at first glance, a strikingly similar statement in Seneca's *De Beneficiis*: “‘If you are imitating the gods,’ you say, ‘then bestow benefits also upon the ungrateful; for the sun rises also

¹⁰⁶In Matt 19.16–22 perfection does not designate a second stage after the keeping of the commandments thematized in vv. 17–20. Instead, Jesus' demand that the rich man sell his possessions and give the proceeds to the poor (v. 21) interprets what the love commandment – which has been added in 19.19 vis-à-vis the Markan *Vorlage* (Mark 10.19) by Matthew – means in the case of the rich man and in light of his encounter with Jesus. For justification of this understanding of the text, see Konradt, *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium*, 95–112, here 98–100. Cf. also Konradt, *Christology, Torah, and Ethics*, 123–26 (GV = Konradt, *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium*, 340–43); Konradt, *Ethik im Neuen Testament*, 271, 294.

¹⁰⁷The motif of correspondence to the action of God also underlies Sir 12.1–7^{LXX}, though in comparison to Matt 5.43–48, under the exact opposite banner. Sirach admonishes the reader not to assist the sinner and not to give to the godless, “because the Most High also hates sinners and he will render punishment on the godless” (12.6^{LXX}). In v. 5, the aspect of sapiential caution is present. The enemy must not be fed with bread “lest he gain mastery over you through it.” The wise man must therefore consider that “there are cases in which through doing the good one can bring about the opposite” (G. Sauer, *Jesus Sirach / Ben Sira*, ATD.A 1 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000], 115). In the Hebrew version, this aspect is more strongly emphasized insofar as v. 5 contains there the concrete admonition not to give weapons to the evildoer, lest he use them against the giver at the next opportunity. This concretization is deleted in the Greek translation in v. 5.

¹⁰⁸On this, cf., e.g., H. Merkley, *Jesu Botschaft von der Gottesheerrschaft. Eine Skizze*, SBS 111, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1989); M. Konradt, “Das Verständnis der Königsherrschaft Gottes bei Jesus von Nazareth,” in *Theokratie und theokratischer Diskurs. Die Rede von der Gottesheerrschaft und ihre politisch-sozialem Auswirkungen im interkulturellen Vergleich*, ed. K. Trampedach and A. Pečar, *Colloquia historica et theologica* 1 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 101–15; Konradt, *Ethik im Neuen Testament*, 41–43.

¹⁰⁹See P. J. Du Plessis, “Love and Perfection in Matt. 5:43–48,” *Neotest.* 1 (1967): 28–34, here 28; V. P. Furnish, *The Love Commandment in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1973), 67–69; Piper, *Love your Enemies*, 80–88; J. Becker, “Nächstenliebe – Brüderliebe. Exegetische Beobachtungen als Anfrage an ein ethisches Problemfeld,” *ZEE* 25 (1981): 5–18, here 7–8; U. Luz, “Jesu Gebot der Feindesliebe und die kirchliche Verantwortung für den Frieden,” in *Christen im Streit um den Frieden. Beiträge zu einer neuen Friedensethik*, ed. W. Brinkel, B. Scheffler, and M. Wächter (Freiburg: Dreisam, 1982), 119–34, here 125–27 (cf. Luz, *Matthew* 1–7, 274–75, 287; GV = Luz, *Mt* 1–7, 389, 405; on this see note 114 below); Hoffmann, “Tradition und Situation,” 108–109; Gnllka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 197; Merkley, *Jesu Botschaft von der Gottesheerrschaft*, 119–20, 122–23.

upon the wicked, and the sea lies open also to pirates.”¹¹⁰ However, on the level of the Gospel of Matthew, the embedding of the love commandment in the proclamation of the *basileia* is clear if 5.43–48 is placed in the larger context. Matthew opens the public activity of Jesus in 4.17 programmatically with the notice that Jesus began to proclaim: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” In the summary presentation of the activity of Jesus in 4.23 (cf. 9.35), the talk of the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom (κηρύσσω τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας) takes up 4.17. More specifically, what is quoted in 4.17 in direct speech as the content of the κηρύσσειν is now taken up in the expression εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας.¹¹¹ The teaching of Jesus presented in the Sermon on the Mount¹¹² serves to unfold exemplarily what it means to repent in light of the nearness of the kingdom of God. It is directed at those who have let themselves be addressed by the proclamation of the “gospel of the kingdom.”¹¹³ In this context, special attention must be given to the fact that the message of the inbreaking reign of God goes hand in hand with the fact that sinners are not tied to their past but the door of repentance is opened precisely for them insofar as Jesus turns also and specifically to them (cf. Matt 9.12–13!). Against this background, love for enemies can be understood as corresponding to the loving turning of God to human beings that grants a new beginning and is not tied to conditions.¹¹⁴ The disciples should, as it were, join in the movement of the loving turning of God to human beings and thus correspond to the inbreaking kingdom of God by likewise not tying their turning to human beings to conditions that are defined by the previous behavior of the other. Relating the love demonstrated by God in light of the dawning of his kingly reign to the demand of love that is issued to the disciples in this way corresponds to the fundamental significance of the *imitatio* idea in 5.43–48.

In vv. 46–47 a motif of demarcation stands alongside the motif of correspondence to God and becoming children of God. Here, the restrictive definition of the love com-

¹¹⁰ Ben. 4.26.1; trans. J. W. Basore, LCL 310, 257. Cf. further Marcus Aurelius, *Med.* 9.11, 27.

¹¹¹ Cf. Burchard, “Versuch,” 31: ‘The gospel of the kingdom’ is a “substantivization of 4.17.”

¹¹² Cf. ἐδίδασκεν in 5.2 as well as the corresponding note in 7.28–29.

¹¹³ The audience of the Sermon of the Mount is formed more specifically by the disciples as a narrower circle (5.1–2) as well as the crowds from all Israel who follow Jesus according to 4.25 (on the place specifications in 4.25, see Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 50–52) as a wider circle (cf. 7.28–29), whom Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 163 (GV = Luz, *Mt 1–7*, 242) fittingly designates as “potential church” (cf. Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 167, 389; GV = Luz, *Mt 1–7*, 247, 540).

¹¹⁴ Cf. Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 287 (GV = *Mt 1–7*, 405): “The extreme demand to love one’s enemy corresponds to God’s extreme love toward sinners and outcasts.” The further-reaching interpretation that the disciples with the love for their enemies correspond to the fact that God granted them his loving care when they were still enemies of God (cf. Rom 5.10) (cf. W. Huber, “Feindschaft und Feindesliebe. Notizen zum Problem des ‘Feindes’ in der Theologie,” *ZEE* 26 (1982): 128–58, here 155; Becker, “Nächstenliebe,” 7–8; Merklein, *Jesu Botschaft von der Gottes Herrschaft*, 119–20; as well as Merklein, *Gottes Herrschaft als Handlungsprinzip*, 234–37) overloads the Matthean context. What comes to expression here is more likely a theological thinking that is nourished by the Pauline doctrine of justification. In terms of tradition history, one can, however, point out that a connection between “love for enemies” and knowledge of one’s own sinfulness is in view in Sir 28.1–7 (on this, see Theißen, “Gewaltverzicht und Feindesliebe,” 171) and Matthew himself, in the parable of the unmerciful servant in Matt 18.23–35, emphasizes the motif that the mercy received from God is to be passed on to the fellow human beings. It is, however, not recognizable that Matthew had an analogous connection in mind in the case of the commandment of love for enemies in 5.44.

mandment through the scribes and Pharisees is, as indicated above, equated with the vulgar-ethical principle of turning only to those from whom one experiences something good. But mutual love is a behavior that even tax collectors and “gentiles,”¹¹⁵ who are far from God, manage to produce. More is expected from the disciples – namely, a life that is nourished from their relation to God and corresponds precisely to the conduct of the heavenly Father. Here, it is instructive to incorporate the connection of the series of antitheses to v. 16, for the instructions of Jesus in the antitheses unpack the works that the disciples should allow to be seen before people, so that they may glorify the heavenly Father. The fact that the works of the *disciples* should inspire those who see them to praise *God* implies that the way of life of the disciples is an expression of their relationship to God, that their action grows out of their bond with the heavenly Father, and that, putting it concisely, the loving God lets them live in such a way that the praise for these works comes to God.

2.5 Overcoming Enmity?

While the commandment of love for enemies in Matt 5.43–48, as presented in the preceding section, is grounded theologically, we must at the same time inquire into the extent to which Matthew also connects socio-pragmatic aspects with love for enemies. The motif of the reinforcement of the internal cohesion of one’s own group, which appears in the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, does not play a discernable role in 5.43–48, but one can point to the fact that the regulation for the practice of correction in Matt 18.15 stands in the tradition of the love commandment. If a community member sins, this is not to be made public but should first be discussed privately, which is meant to protect the sinner from exposure in the fellowship.¹¹⁶ Unlike what we find

¹¹⁵Instead of tax collectors and “gentiles,” the term “sinners” consistently appears in Luke 6.32–34. The difference could be interpreted in such a way that Matthew has preserved here the Jewish coloration of the tradition (cf., e.g., Merklein, *Gottesheerrschaft als Handlungsprinzip*, 226). Against this view, it could be objected that in Matthew the designation “gentiles” with the substantivized adjective *ἔθνικός* also occurs in 6.7; 18.17, and in 18.17, analogous to 5.46–47, it appears together with “tax collectors,” whereas outside the Gospel of Matthew, it does not appear in the Synoptic tradition. However, a conclusion for 5.47 does necessarily follow from the fact that *ἔθνικός* is, in the Synoptic comparison, a linguistic peculiarity of Matthew or of the Matthean special material. At any rate, an impressive example of the phenomenon that Matthew made a word found in his sources into one of his “favorite words” appears, in the Matthean use of *ὀλιγόπιστος* (Matt 6.30; 8.26; 14.31; 16.8; as well as 17.20), which was inspired by Q 12.28. Alongside the explicit demarcation from sinners and “gentiles,” we find, through the variation – which probably goes back to Matthew – of the question *τίνα μισθὸν ἔχετε*; (v. 46) to *τί περισσὸν ποιείτε*; in v. 47 (in Luke 6.32–34 the question appears three times with the wording *ποία ὑμῶν χάρις ἐστίν*); the demarcation from the scribes and Pharisees, for with *περισσὸν* Matthew refers back to 5.20 (*ἐὰν μὴ περισσέυσῃ ὑμῶν ἡ δικαιοσύνη πλεῖον τῶν γραμματέων καὶ Φαρισαίων*). Cf., for many, Hoffmann, “Tradition und Situation,” 83: “The redactional keyword connection of *περισσὸν* (5.47) to *περισσέειν* (5.20) makes clear that in the love for neighbor opened up to love for enemies Matthean redaction sees the ‘more’ of the righteousness of the disciples that distinguishes them from the Pharisees and scribes.”

¹¹⁶On Matt 18.15–17 and on the tradition-historical background, see Konradt, *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium*, 394–401 and T. Jabbarian, *Die Niedrigkeit Jesu und seiner Jüngerschaft. Eine Studie zur Korrelation von Ethik und Christologie in Mt 16,21–20,34*, WUNT 2/549 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 112–24. Cf.

in the *Didache*, where the exhortation to love for enemies is followed by the promise “and you will have no enemy” (*Did.* 1.3), Matt 5.43–48 also contains no explicit statement on a social perspective of hope connected to love for enemies that would provide an analogy to the motif of the removal of enmity, which occurs in the interpretation of Exod 23.4–5 in Philo and in Ps.-Phoc. 140–142.¹¹⁷ Again, however, the context brings us further, for in context the commandment of love for enemies causes one to think back upon the beatitude on the peacemakers in 5.9, not only with respect to *content* but also because the commandment of love for enemies and the beatitude on the peacemakers are connected through the promises that are respectively attached to them. In both cases, the concern is with becoming children of God. Moreover, 5.9 and 5.45 are the only texts in the Gospel of Matthew in which the term son of God is related to the followers of Jesus. This is no accident but rather points to the consciously shaping hand of the First Evangelist, who sought to establish a connection here.¹¹⁸ If the diachronic profile of the text is incorporated, then it is probably possible to go one step further. The commandment of love for enemies comes from the Sayings Source; the beatitude on the peacemakers is Matthean special material or Matthean redaction. This suggests that the formation of the beatitude on the peacemakers in the Matthean community was inspired by the commandment of love for enemies.¹¹⁹ The promise of becoming children of God is taken from the commandment of love for enemies and love for enemies is interpreted as peacemaking. This means that Matt 5.9 probably presents a direct reflection of the understanding of love for enemies in the Matthean community: love for enemies is an act of peacemaking.

If v. 16 is drawn upon again, then it must be added that Matthew presupposes here that the works of the disciples will have a positive impact on outsiders. More than that, the exhortation in v. 16 – namely, that the disciples should let their light shine before human beings – expresses in imperative form what was previously announced to them in v. 13 and v. 14: they are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. This means that for Matthew, “salt of the earth” and “light of the world” are, among other things, indeed fundamentally, those persons who love their enemies. For the impulse that goes out from them for the renewal of social relationships toward peace form the necessary counterweight to failed configurations of the social climate in which life is not

also Konradt, *Christology, Torah, and Ethics*, 146–48 (GV = Konradt, *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium*, 429–30); Konradt, *Ethik im Neuen Testament*, 307–310.

¹¹⁷ Against the presence of an intention of removing enmity in the commandment of love for enemies, see, e.g., Furnish, *The Love Commandment*, 1973, 67; W. Schrage, *Ethik des Neuen Testament*, GNT 4, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 83 (no equivalent in W. Schrage, *Ethics of the New Testament*, trans. D. E. Green [Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1990], 78). See also Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 1:552, 556 (“Jesus does not promise that love will turn enemies into friends” [552]).

¹¹⁸ Reference must be made further to the interlinking of the commandment of love for enemies and the beatitudes through the back-reference of 5.44b to the beatitude on the persecuted disciples in 5.10, 11–12. On the connection to the beatitudes, see Lührmann, “Liebet eure Feinde,” 414–15; as well as R. Schnackenburg, “Die Seligpreisung der Friedenstifter (Mt 5,9) im matthäischen Kontext,” *BZ NF* 26 (1982): 161–78, here 167–70.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Lührmann, “Liebet eure Feinde,” 425, with a view to the aspect of the promise of becoming children of God.

able to flourish. Such impulses can, as v. 47 illustrates, assume a quite banal everyday form: whoever greets his enemy begins the communication anew and opens thereby the chance for a process that overcomes enmity.¹²⁰

It does not follow from what has just been said that love for enemies is fundamentally a social strategy and thus a *calculating* action. Love for enemies is not *based* on the weighing of its social chances. However, in Matt 5 we find a behavior *founded* in the *imitatio Dei* and presupposing a certain image of God that with the renewal of interpersonal relationships toward peace *also* includes a social perspective of hope,¹²¹ as this also appears in a similar way in early Jewish texts: doing good toward the enemy bears the chance of reconciliation in itself.¹²²

2.6 The Commandment of Love for Enemies and the Golden Rule

In Luke 6 the Golden Rule – probably in the sequence of Q – appears in the middle of the composition that circles around love for enemies in vv. 27–35: “As you wish that human beings do to you, do likewise to them!” (v. 31).¹²³ This compositional bringing together of an extraordinary demand such as love for enemies, on the one side, and an ethical maxim that is usually regarded as an ethical commonplace of the ancient world,¹²⁴ on the other hand, has often provoked astonishment or led interpreters to diagnose a tension.¹²⁵ However, the composition does indeed make good sense. Here, it is fundamentally necessary to note that contrary to the claim of Albrecht Dihle,¹²⁶ the Golden Rule as it appears in Luke 6.31 (and Matt 7.12) neither arises from the idea of requital nor is it bound to it. For not what one has *de facto* experienced from others is made the standard of one’s own action but rather what one wishes to experience from others – irrespective of how the other person has, in fact, acted.¹²⁷ From a material-ethical per-

¹²⁰Naturally, there is no guarantee that the greeting will be returned, but it is hardly to be denied that a greeting is an opening act to the *overcoming* of enmity.

¹²¹Put differently, even though it is correct that “utilitarian considerations” are remote here (thus Luz, “Jesu Gebot der Feindesliebe,” 124), this does not mean that Matthew does not at all have in view the possibility of a positive change of the social situation. Worlds lie between the latter and a utilitarian calculation.

¹²²See above on Philo, *Virt.* 116–119; Philo, *QE* 2.11; Ps.-Phoc. 140–142; as well as Jos. Asen. 29.3–4. See further T. Gad 6.6; T. Benj. 5.4.

¹²³On the following, cf. M. Konradt, “Liebesgebot und Christusmimesis. Eine Skizze zur Pluralität neutestamentlicher Agapeethik,” *JBTh* 29 (2014): 65–98, here 72–73. Cf. also Konradt, *Ethik im Neuen Testament*, 295–96.

¹²⁴This is based, in part, on the fact that statements that must be carefully distinguished from the version presented in the Jesus tradition (Matt 7.12; Luke 6.31) are also evaluated as attestations of the Golden Rule. For a differentiating view, see M. Konradt, “The Golden Rule,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Law*, ed. B. A. Strawn, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 350–56.

¹²⁵See, e.g., A. Dihle, *Die Goldene Regel*, SAW 7 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), 113–14; F. W. Horn, *Glaube und Handeln in der Theologie des Lukas*, GTA 26, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 105–107.

¹²⁶See Dihle, *Die Goldene Regel*, *passim*.

¹²⁷See P. Borgen, “The Golden Rule: With Emphasis on its Usage in the Gospels,” in *Paul Preaches Circumcision and Pleases Men and Other Essays on Christian Origins* (Trondheim: Tapir, 1983), 99–114, here 109, 111; L. J. Topel, “The Tarnished Golden Rule (Luke 6:31),” *TS* 59 (1988): 475–85, here 477–78; B. Kollmann,

spective, the Golden Rule is basically empty. It does not contain any material specification of what behavior is to be expected or hoped for from others but rather presupposes such a specification. This means that the material-ethically empty maxim obtains the specification of its content from the respective context in which it is used. For Luke 6.31, it follows from this that the Golden Rule receives here its material concretization through the surrounding exhortations, i.e., its content is defined by the commandment of love for enemies. Conversely, the placement of the Golden Rule in the middle of the composition on love for enemies (6.27–35) implies that the commandment of love for enemies merely unpacks what follows from the Golden Rule – when it is consistently thought through – as a behavioral orientation, i.e., love for enemies is nothing other than the consistent application of the Golden Rule. For one hopes for help in situations of distress even from someone with whom the social relationship is disrupted. Thus, conversely, if one applies the Golden Rule consistently, one must turn also to the enemy.

Matthew has removed the Golden Rule from the direct context of love for enemies and placed it at the end of the body of the Sermon on the Mount in 7.12. The connection to love for enemies is not, however, eliminated with this rearrangement. For Matthew has connected the placement of the Golden Rule as the conclusion of the body of the Sermon on the Mount with the fact that it functions as a summary of the Law and the Prophets, which Jesus has come to fulfill according to 5.17 and whose fully valid understanding is exemplarily unfolded in the antitheses. This means that in Matthew the Golden Rule, in terms of content, is no longer related *solely* to the renunciation of retaliation and love for enemies but rather to the whole series of antitheses, including love for enemies, and, conversely, the series of antitheses as a whole are rationalized and made understandable through the Golden Rule. Here, we find a description of conduct that one hopes to receive for oneself from others. Let us begin with the first antithesis, the radical interpretation of the prohibition of murder:¹²⁸ no person, who is in their right mind, can wish to be beaten down by another person – even if it is only verbally. Thus, one should not act aggressively toward others. Likewise, however, one hopes even from their enemy that they will not refuse to help him or her in a situation of distress. Accordingly, one must also love the enemy in this way.

Notably, the connection between the love commandment and the Golden Rule also appears in (other) Jewish sources – namely, in Sir 31.15 and in Targum Ps.-Jonathan on Lev 19.18. Its reception in the Synoptic Jesus tradition exhibits a special profile insofar as the linking of the Golden Rule to the love commandment is deepened there

¹²⁸“Die Goldene Regel (Mt 7,12/Lk 6,31). Triviale Maxime der Selbstbezogenheit oder Grundprinzip ethischen Handelns?,” in *Er stieg auf den Berg und lehrte sie (Mt 5,1f.). Exegetische und rezeptionsgeschichtliche Studien zur Bergpredigt*, ed. H.-U. Weidemann, SBS 226 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2012), 97–113, here 102–104, 112; as well as M. Wolter, *The Gospel According to Luke – Volume I (Luke 1–9:50)*, ed. W. Coppins and S. Gathercole, trans. W. Coppins and C. Heilig, BMSEC 4 (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016), 281 (GV = M. Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, HNT 5 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008], 258), who fittingly states that “This phrasing of the Golden Rule has nothing to do with the principle of retribution.”

¹²⁸On the understanding of Matt 5.21–22, see Konradt, *Christology, Torah, and Ethics*, 105–108 (GV = Konradt, *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium*, 320–24); Konradt, *Ethik im Neuen Testament*, 286–88.

through the radical understanding of love as love for enemies. And it is by no means unimportant here that the Golden Rule in Luke 6.31 and Matt 7.12 appears in its positive rather than negative version.¹²⁹ The concern is not merely with refraining from harming the other but rather with the positive demand that one help them actively and that one concern oneself with his or her well-being in the same way as one is interested in one's own well-being.

3. Summary

Through the formation of the antitheses, Matthew explicitly emphasizes the commandment of love for enemies as an interpretation of the commandment of love for neighbor in Lev 19.18. He advocates here a de-limitation *in principle* of the benevolent conduct toward fellow human beings that is demanded in the love commandment, though without – if one considers the social context – transcending the sphere of everyday behavior. The loving care for all human beings without distinction is, for Matthew, an essential demonstration of the relationship to God, for responding to experienced love with love is a behavior that even tax collectors and “gentiles,” who are far from God, manage to produce. There are several points that correspond to this. First, the fact that the enemy is also incorporated into the loving care for others means imitating God in his philanthropy and corresponding to him in his loving care for human beings, which characterizes the inbreaking of his kingly rule. Second, the promise of becoming children of God is connected to love for enemies. Finally, there are also undertones of a social-pragmatic dimension in the commandment of love for enemies. Love for enemies bears within it chances for the reshaping of social life together. A social-pragmatic perspective also appears with different aspects in the early Jewish texts presented in the first part of this article. However, unlike what we find in Lev 19.17–18 and in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, Matt 5.43–48 does not specifically reflect on the shaping of inner-community relationships, which is connected to the de-limitation of the demand for love in principle. However, the aspect of internal cohesion also plays no role in Philo's interpretation of Exod 23.4–5. Rather, the goal that Moses pursues with his legislation and that is paradigmatically reflected in the commandment of Exod 23.4–5 is assigned a universal dimension. For where harmony, community spirit, and the like

¹²⁹For the difference between the two versions, see Theißen, “Die Goldene Regel (Matthäus 7:12/Lukas 6:31). Über den Sitz im Leben ihrer positiven und negativen Form,” *BiblInt* 11 (2003): 386–99. As Theißen has shown, the positive form usually occurs with reference to specific spheres of life: in the ethos of family (Isocrates, *Or.* 1.14; Diogenes Laertius, *Vit. phil.* 1.37), in the ethos of friendship (Xenophon, *Cyr.* 6.1.47; Diogenes Laertius, *Vit. phil.* 5.21); and in the ethos of rulership (Isocrates, *Or.* 2.24; 3.49; 4.81; for related maxims, cf. Herodotus, *Hist.* 3.142.3; Cassius Dio, *Hist. rom.* 52.34.1); only the negative form also occurs as a fundamentally formulated maxim (Isocrates, *Or.* 3.61; b. Šabb. 31a). In relation to this, Matt 7.12 and Luke 6.31 display the distinctive characteristic that an extraordinary expansion of its sphere of application is connected to the positive formulation of the Golden Rule. A direct connection between the commandment of love for enemies and the golden Rule appears – though only in its negative form – in *Epistula Apostolorum* 18 (trans. J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993], 567): “Love your enemies, and what you do not want done to you, that do to no one else.”

are encountered, “the whole human race may attain to the highest happiness” (Philo, *Virt.* 119).

From a tradition-historical perspective, we can conclude on the whole that on the map of early Jewish ethics, the commandment of love for enemies does not appear as a solitary point but rather as a peak in a mountain range. Expressed non-metaphorically, the fact that the commandment of love for enemies is clothed in an antithesis in Matt 5 should not cause us to lose sight of the fact that the commandment of love for neighbor positively takes up early Jewish traditions and develops them further. At the same time, in the overall panorama of early Jewish ethics, it is also recognizable as an independent expression of the basic motif of the helping care for other human beings. Its explosive power lies not only in the fundamental de-limitation, in the universalization of the demand in principle, but also in its theological grounding. For with this grounding, love for enemies appears as a direct manifestation of the action dimension of faith, which cannot be suspended from case to case. It is a direct and consistent expression of faith in the one God, who, as Creator, lets his benevolent deeds also come to the unrighteous and who, in light of the inbreaking of his kingly reign, does not tie any sinner to his or her past but clears away the earlier deeds and offers a new chance to obtain salvation. The Johannine peak statement “God is love” (1 John 4.8, 16) compresses this thematic nexus into a concise saying. Matthew 5.43–48 signals how consequential such a theological statement is from an ethical perspective.

Appendix: Klaus Wengst and the Interpretation of Matt 5.21–48 as Antitheses

Klaus Wengst has challenged the understanding of Matt 5.21–48 as antitheses and in doing so also engaged critically with my interpretation.¹³⁰ Wengst and I agree that Jesus’ instructions in 5.21–48 should be understood as interpretations of the Torah. Wengst, however, also seeks to keep 5.21–48 free from a criticism of other Jewish interpretations of the Torah. He reaches this goal by viewing the theses as reproductions of words of the Torah (“The introductions of the six units characterize what is quoted as authoritative quotations from the Torah” [13]), while calling into question every adversative emphasis with respect to the words that introduce Jesus’ instructions. In his view, ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν can be sufficiently explained against the background of rabbinic terminology, and he concludes from this that the particle δέ – which is, in itself, possible, of course – is not to be understood as adversative and that the personal pronoun ἐγὼ – against the usual Greek linguistic usage – is not emphatic. In his view, the expression means something like: “I now say to you,” or, more freely, “I interpret this in this way” (15). The inadequate plausibility of this interpretive attempt is easy to see, however, already with reference the last antithesis, which is the focus of the present article. It would be necessary to translate: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You should love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ I interpret this in this way: ‘You should love your enemies . . .’” How the exhortation to love one’s enemies can be understood as an interpretation of

¹³⁰ K. Wengst, “Keine ‘Antithesen,’ sondern Auslegung der Tora. Zu Mt 5,17–48,” *ZNT* 36 (2015): 12–21.

the statement “you should hate your enemy” remains incomprehensible. Instead, here it becomes visible with exemplary clarity that there is no way to get around the view that two instructions are respectively *set over against each other* in 5.21–48. To this extent and in this sense, it also continues to be appropriate to speak of “antitheses,” though, as we have shown, the entities that are set over against each other are not Torah commandments and instructions of Jesus but rather *interpretations* of the Torah that Matthew ascribes to the scribes and Pharisees and Torah *interpretations* of the Matthean Jesus.

In this context, it appears extremely bizarre when Wengst opposes my interpretation with the accusation that I remain – with regard to determining the relationship between Judaism and Christianity – “in the old schema of surpassing.”¹³¹ First, this ignores the fact that I understand the conflict between the Matthean community and the Pharisees to be a conflict that is still intra-Jewish in principle¹³² and, correspondingly, also read 5.21–48, from a history-of-religions perspective, as an *intra-Jewish* discourse. Second, this goes hand in hand with the fact that I have sought to support this view with respect to the side of Jesus’ instructions by embedding them in early Jewish traditions.¹³³ Third, I have explicitly pointed out that the positions that are ascribed to the scribes and Pharisees in 5.20–48 cannot be used as historical evidence for the reconstruction of their views but must be regarded as part of the anti-Pharisaic polemic that runs through the entire Gospel of Matthew – and is just as little affirmed by me as by other exegetes who soberly identify it.¹³⁴ While Wengst notes my reference to the fact that the theses cannot be used as historical evidence for the Pharisees’ understanding of the law, he criticizes me for not carrying this out and for the fact that “no attestations are produced ... for the claimed theses.”¹³⁵ The language of “claimed theses” is peculiar insofar as the concern is with the Matthean theses. What is meant is apparently the thesis that Matthew viewed these – in the words of Burchard¹³⁶ – as “statements of the ‘righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.’” The reference to the fact that no attestations were produced for this is by no means a convincing objection against this thesis. On the contrary, if one overlooks for a moment the fact that the extra-New Testament source situation is full of gaps to a great degree, the criticism made by Wengst is, in fact, an implication of the statement that the ascription of positions in Matt 5.21–48 *must be attributed to Matthean polemic* (on this, the position that Matthew imputes to

¹³¹Wengst, “Keine ‘Antithesen,’ sondern Auslegung der Tora,” 14: “im alten Schema der Überbietung.”

¹³²See Konradt, *Christology, Torah, and Ethics*, 98–100 (GV = Konradt, *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium*, 313–15); for a more detailed discussion of the relationship of the Matthean community/communities to Judaism, see Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 355–67 and especially Konradt, *Christology, Torah, and Ethics*, 1–36 (GV = Konradt, *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium*, 3–42).

¹³³See Konradt, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 79–98 (GV = Konradt, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 81–100); for the reception of the decalogue in Matt 5, in particular, see Konradt, *Christology, Torah, and Ethics*, 101–30, esp. 108–12, 116–19, 122–23 (GV = Konradt, *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium*, 316–47, esp. 324–28, 332–35, 339–40).

¹³⁴On this, see the critical comments in Konradt, *Christology, Torah, and Ethics*, 99–100 (GV = Konradt, *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium*, 314–15).

¹³⁵Wengst, “Keine ‘Antithesen,’ sondern Auslegung der Tora,” 13.

¹³⁶Burchard, “Versuch,” 40.

the scribes and Pharisees in 15.4–6 is also instructive).¹³⁷ Conversely, when looking at the side of Jesus' instructions, one cannot convincingly dismiss the view that Matthew, with the talk of the *fulfillment* of Torah and Prophets in 5.17, aims to set a christological emphasis¹³⁸ and claims that the will of God expressed in the Torah and the Prophets is first "brought to light in a fully valid way" by Jesus¹³⁹ as "bubbles of words"¹⁴⁰ by pointing out that one can find passages in (other) early Jewish texts that are related to the statements of Jesus. Here, the simple but fundamental distinction between text and reality is neglected. Every author (including Matthew) can make statements and claims that cannot be brought into harmony with the extra-textual "reality" without further ado. This applies especially to polemical texts (such as the Gospel of Matthew). Correspondingly, the fact – which must be experienced exegetically – that the Gospel of Matthew makes the claim that Jesus is not merely an interpreter of the law alongside others (cf. Matt 23.8, 10) must, first, be distinguished from the question of how "original" the Matthean Jesus' interpretations of the commandments are in detail, to the extent that this can be sufficiently reconstructed through the history-of-religions findings. With respect to the accusation made by Wengst, a fourth point is connected to this. According to the rules of the art, the most noble task of the exegete who works historically is to work out which statements are made in a text *sine ira et studio*.¹⁴¹ The statements that Wengst labels as "bubbles of words" must naturally be read in this sense. This also says nothing about how I appraise the claim made by Matthew or what it means for me theologically. While an exegete who also understands him or herself to be a theologian, will, in the exegesis of biblical texts, also be challenged to take a position in relation to the statements of the texts that have been worked out in individual cases, this is a second step. Finally, an exegete must be especially suspicious of his/her exegesis if the position that he/she works out for a biblical text appears too similar to his or her own theology and then reflect upon the fact that biases are not held only by others.

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¹³⁷On this, see, e.g., U. Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, ed. H. Koester, trans. J.E. Couch, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 330–31; GV = U. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (Mt 8–17)*, EKK 1/2 (Zürich: Benzinger, 1990), 422–23; Konradt, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 234–35 (GV = Konradt, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 243–44).

¹³⁸On this, see, e.g., Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 217 (GV = Luz, *Mt 1–7*, 314).

¹³⁹Konradt, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 76; cf. Konradt, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 74.

¹⁴⁰Thus Wengst, "Keine 'Antithesen,' sondern Auslegung der Tora," 15 ("Wortblasen"), with reference to the passages quoted above.

¹⁴¹On this, see Konradt, *Christology, Torah, and Ethics*, 15 (GV = Konradt, *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium*, 18–19).

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The Tübingen Biblical Theology of the New Testament – A Retrospective

Peter Stuhlmacher (1932–2025)

In Memory of Gert Jeremias (1936–2016) and Daniel P. Bailey (1957–2024)

Translated by
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It is time for a retrospective on the origin and main emphases of the biblical theology of the New Testament as it was taught in Tübingen. For what Hartmut Gese, Otto Betz (1917–2005), Martin Hengel (1926–2009), and I, together with Gert Jeremias (1936–2016) and Otfried Hofius, advocated is being forgotten. This is, to be sure, not that surprising, for in theological faculties the next generation of (exegetical) professors usually teach differently from their predecessors. This can constitute an advance. It is, however, regrettable that with the respectively new teaching the insights of the earlier perspectives are covered up and problems that appeared to be resolved are debated anew. This applies in Tübingen for the renewed appreciation for the hermeneutics and exegesis of the great Marburg theologian Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976). We old ones met him personally and his theology was well known to us. The work of Eberhard Jüngel (1934–2021) was fundamentally shaped by Bultmann, Ernst Fuchs (1903–1983), and Karl Barth (1886–1968). And my academic teacher Ernst Käsemann (1906–1998) was also a prominent student of Bultmann, though also his sharpest critic. As Käsemann's assistant, I studied Bultmann's work intensively and attempted for some time to travel with him along his way. Sensitized by Käsemann, however, I struck, in the course of time, upon exegetical errors and hermeneutical deficiencies in Bultmann that required correction. They are now again being discussed anew.

¹For the German version of this article, see P. Stuhlmacher, "Die Tübinger Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments. Ein Rückblick," *Theologische Beiträge* 48 (2017): 76–91. The following English summary was provided for the original German publication (p. 91): "The Biblical Theology, developed in Tübingen, follows the 'history of tradition' and 'history of revelation' approach by Hartmut Gese, who argues for the unity of the Old and New Testament, and is based on Martin Hengel's refutation of the historical premises of the exegesis of Rudolf Bultmann. Hermeneutically, it tries to interpret the biblical texts as they themselves want to be interpreted. In the process it becomes apparent that all the canonical books of the New Testament are based on the Old Testament and have a common theological center: the gospel of God's reconciliation with Jews and gentiles alike through the sacrifice of Jesus and his resurrection from the dead." Readers of this article will also want to consult P. Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, ed. and trans. D. P. Bailey, with the collaboration of J. Ådna (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018). Cf. also P. Stuhlmacher, "Reconciled Diversity," trans. W. Coppins, in *The Crucified Apostle: Essays on Peter and Paul*, ed. P. R. House and T. Wilson, WUNT 2/450 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 5–19.

I

In Tübingen, the decisive impulse for our biblical theology originated from the Old Testament scholar Hartmut Gese. The subtle, learned man was and has remained teacher, counsellor, and friend to us all. He knew the ancient Near Eastern history of religions down to its details. His lectures were famous, and his theological interest extended to the understanding of the Bible as a whole. Gese had already advised me in the writing of my dissertation,² and since then he has remained my mentor. Instead of emphasizing the so-called double exit of the Old Testament, Gese, in the footsteps of Gerhard von Rad, pointed to the complex tradition process. In this process, God's revelation unfolds itself. In his 1970 essay "Erwägungen zur Einheit der biblischen Theologie" (Considerations on the Unity of Biblical Theology), Gese wrote:

The New Testament by itself is incomprehensible (*unverständlich*), the Old Testament by itself is given to misunderstanding (*missverständlich*). The New Testament event necessarily concluded the Old Testament tradition formation But this conclusion does not mean replacement Rather, the New Testament contains the Old. What matters is only how this 'containing' is understood. It does not mean that one could subtract it.³

Gese received much criticism for his thesis that the two testaments belong together in a revelation-historical way. Dogmatic theologians took offence at the idea that revelation successively unfolded itself historically. Moreover, he was accused of wanting to deprive Israel of its Bible. The criticism was unfortunately very influential. But it falls short of the mark, for Gese was praised by Jewish scholars for his interaction with the Old Testament and because his approach stimulated new reflection on the relationship between revelation and history. Gese enabled us New Testament scholars in Tübingen to see more clearly that and why the New Testament must be interpreted primarily on the basis of the Old Testament and the faith tradition of ancient Judaism. In the first century, the Hebrew Old Testament and its translation into Greek, the Septuagint, were, after all, not only the Holy Scripture of the Jews but also the Bible of all those who were called Christians because of their Christ confession (cf. Acts 11.26).

Gese gave us two fundamental aids for understanding. First, he taught us anew to see what the Bible meant by atonement. In an essay titled "The Atonement,"⁴ he demonstrated that the atonement that climaxes in the blood ritual on the great Day of Atonement and was performed in the Jerusalem temple until 70 CE is not a primitive attempt to appease God's wrath with the help of a bloody sacrifice. Rather, the con-

²P. Stuhlmacher, *Gerechtigkeit Gottes bei Paulus*, 2nd ed., FRLANT 87 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966).

³H. Gese, "Erwägungen zur Einheit der biblischen Theologie," in idem, *Vom Sinai zum Zion: alttestamentliche Beiträge zur biblischen Theologie*, EvTh 64 (Münich: Kaiser, 1974), 11-30, here 30

⁴H. Gese, "The Atonement," in idem, *Essays on Biblical Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1981), 93-116; GV = H. Gese, "Die Sühne," in idem, *Zur biblischen Theologie: alttestamentliche Vorträge*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983), 85-106.

cern is with carrying out a cultic ritual established by the one and only God: “Cultic, sanctifying atonement is by no means only a negative procedure of the simple removal of sins or of mere penance. It is a coming to God by passing through the judgment of death.”⁵ Thanks to the cultic atonement, Israel may daily encounter its God anew and experience the forgiveness of its sins. Gese’s student Bernd Janowski traced out the view of his teacher in his dissertation *Sühne als Heilsgeschehen* and subsequently refined it in a helpful way in a number of studies.⁶ Gese’s and Janowski’s analysis of the atonement have opened up for us a new understanding of Jesus’ death on the cross.

The second pointer of Gese concerns *textual understanding*. During my time as a student, we were taught that a scholarly understanding of the biblical texts and traditions can be obtained only with the help of radical historical criticism. This principle was highly regarded in the Bultmann school. However, it blended out not only Adolf Schlatter’s experience that the Christian faith was not a hindrance but rather a help to him in the interpretation of the Bible.⁷ It also stands in contradiction to the insight of Luther and Pietism that the fundamental “inner truth” of the Spirit-filled biblical text can be grasped only by interpreters who, thanks to their faith, are likewise Spirit-filled. Ulrich Wilckens (1928–2021) reinforced and impressively practiced this hermeneutical insight in his *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*.⁸ While Gese participated only indirectly in the dispute over the historical-critical method that was active in his day, in the exegesis of the Bible he advised – once again wholly in the vein of Gerhard von Rad – that one “start from the simple fundamental hermeneutical principle: a text is to be understood as it wants to be understood, that is, as it understands itself.”⁹ We, Tübingen scholars, attempted to hold fast to this fundamental principle.

For Bultmann’s students, the exegesis focused on ancient Judaism and the Old Testament was equally suspicious from a methodological and from a history-of-religions perspective. At the same time, leading pietists also energetically warned people against

⁵Gese, “Die Sühne,” 104. Cf. Gese, “The Atonement,” 114.

⁶B. Janowski, *Sühne als Heilsgeschehen*, WMANT 55 (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 2000); B. Janowski, *Stellvertretung. Alttestamentliche Studien zu einem theologischen Grundbegriff*, SBS 165 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1997); B. Janowski, “Das Geschenk der Versöhnung. Lev 16 als Schlussstein der priesterlichen Kulttheologie,” in *The Day of Atonement: Its Interpretation in Early Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. T. Hieke and T. Nicklas, Themes in Biblical Narrative 15 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 3–31. Cf. now also B. Janowski, “Schuld und Versöhnung,” in *Die Welt der Hebräischen Bibel. Umfeld – Inhalt – Grundthemen* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2017), 355–69.

⁷A. Schlatter, *Der Glaube im Neuen Testament*, Studienausgabe der 6. Auflage (Stuttgart: Calver, 1982). In the preface to the first edition of the work of 1885, which is reprinted again here, Schlatter (1852–1938) writes: “... I do not, however, (wish) to leave it unspoken that whatever I may possess in insight into the New Testament stance of faith appears to have become accessible only in the closest connection to what I myself have received in faith through the grace of God and Christ In one’s own experience of faith in Jesus lies ... the possibility, the impetus, and the equipping for truly historically faithful understanding of the New Testament” (XXII). For guiding me into Schlatter’s work, I thank my fatherly friend church councillor Hans Stroh (1908–1989).

⁸U. Wilckens, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, vols. 1–3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002–2017). On the inspiration of Scripture and hermeneutics, cf. vol. 3/1, 60ff. and vol. 3, 375ff. as well as U. Wilckens, *Kritik der Bibelkritik*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 148ff.

⁹H. Gese, “Hermeneutische Grundsätze der Exegese biblischer Texte,” in *Alttestamentliche Studien* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), 249–65, here 249.

our biblical interpretation at the beginning. For them it was too critical and not pious enough. This changed after Friedrich Lang,¹⁰ Martin Hengel, and I gave exegetical presentations at the Reichenau colloquy of the Protestant regional synod in 1967,¹¹ which found approval with the pietists who were present.¹² Despite their approval, orthodox Lutherans interrogated me about my orthodoxy on multiple occasions when I was called to one of the two vacant professorships for New Testament at the theological faculty in Erlangen in 1968. To my great joy, the second was obtained by my friend Martin Hengel.

II

Ernst Käsemann was of the opinion – which he expressed repeatedly in oral communication – that the New Testament falls apart into positions that conflict with each other to such an extent that it is impossible to write a unified theology of the New Testament. Moreover, knowledgeable colleagues such as Otto Merk have advised that we refrain from efforts – which run crosswise to the history of scholarship – to set forth a biblical theology of the New Testament that comes from the Old Testament and is open to it.¹³ Nevertheless, Brevard S. Childs (1923–2007) in the USA,¹⁴ C. H. H. Scobie in Canada,¹⁵ Gisela Kittel in Bielefeld,¹⁶ and Hans Hübner (1930–2013)¹⁷ in Göttingen have taken the risk of producing biblical-theological work.¹⁸

Here in Tübingen, the impulse for such work came not only from Hartmut Gese but also from Martin Hengel. He was a great historian, and I had the good fortune to be close friends with him. When Hengel was *Repetent* (tutor) in the *Evangelische Stift*, he was struck by how uncritically the teaching staff who were fascinated by Bultmann criticized the New Testament. Because this criticism contradicted his knowledge of and regard for the Bible, he then set out to scrutinize the historical premises of the exegeses of Bultmann. In a lifetime of scholarship, Hengel showed them all to be erroneous and opposed them with historically accurate premises. His work has met with international

¹⁰Friedrich Lang (1913–2004) was ephor (supervisor) of the *Evangelische Stift* (a school and home for Protestant theological students in Tübingen) from 1956–1970 and Professor of New Testament in Tübingen from 1962–1979.

¹¹German: Reichenau-Gespräch der Evangelischen Landessynod.

¹²Evangelische Landessynode in Württemberg, ed., *Theologie und Kirche. Reichenau-Gespräch* (Stuttgart: Calver, 1967).

¹³O. Merk, “Biblische Theologie II. Neues Testament,” in *TRE* 6 (1980): 455–77; O. Merk, “Gesamtbiblische Theologie,” in *Eine Bibel – zwei Testamente*, ed. C. Dohmen and T. Söding (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1995), 225–36.

¹⁴B. S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (London: SCM Press, 1992). For the German translation, see B. S. Childs, *Die Theologie der einen Bibel*, trans. C. Oeming and M. Oeming, 2 vols. (Freiburg: Herder, 1994).

¹⁵C. H. H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

¹⁶G. Kittel, *Der Name über alle Namen*, 2 vols. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989/1990).

¹⁷H. Hübner, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 3 vols. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990–1995).

¹⁸Cf. now also Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, 6–7, 37–44, and 808–23.

attention and affirmation.

According to Bultmann, there was a significant difference between *the Palestinian and Hellenistic communities*.¹⁹ Hengel, however, had already shown in his habilitation thesis²⁰ that Jewish and Hellenistic culture had overlapped in Palestine long before the birth of Christ and that this extended into Jerusalem. This makes Bultmann's distinction obsolete. The primitive community was already bilingual. It was made up of the Ἑβραῖοι, who predominantly spoke Aramaic, and the Ἑλληνισταί, who chiefly spoke Greek. The two groups were close to each other and already developed their teaching in Jerusalem. In Bultmann, one can read that the earthly *Jesus* was only a Jewish prophet and rabbi and that he was then elevated to Lord and Messiah by the community only after Easter. By contrast, Hengel showed that Jesus was active as the messianic teacher of wisdom, called disciples, performed charismatic signs and wonders, and claimed to be God's Son. This is why he was arrested by the Jewish authorities, condemned, and handed over to Pilate as a pseudo-messiah. This accusation forced the Roman prefect to make an example and arrange for Jesus' crucifixion. According to Hengel, the passion story of the Gospels was not a construction of faith spun out of Ps 22 only after the fact but rather a historically accurate retelling of the events in its core.²¹ For Bultmann, Gnosticism was a pre-Christian movement that developed its own myth of redemption that resonated at multiple points in the New Testament. Hengel, by contrast, maintained that there were no historical attestations for pre-Christian Gnosticism. According to sources that have been handed down, Gnosticism did not arise until the end of the first century CE. Its anti-creation views build on Jewish and Christian foundations.²² According to Hengel, the Synoptic Gospels are – in contrast to Bultmann and his students – not largely post-Easter creations of the community. Rather,

¹⁹On what follows, cf. R. Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, ed. O. Merk, 9th ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1984 [1948–1953]); ET = R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. K. Grobel, vols. 1–2 (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007); R. Bultmann, *Jesus*, 3rd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1951); ET = R. Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, trans. L. P. Smith and E. H. Lantero (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962); R. Bultmann, *Das Urchristentum im Rahmen der antiken Religionen* (Zürich: Artemis, 1954); ET = R. Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity in Its Contemporary Setting*, trans. R. Fuller (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1956).

²⁰M. Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus*, 2nd ed., WUNT 10 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1973); ET = M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*, trans. J. Bowden (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2003).

²¹On the whole complex, cf. M. Hengel, and A. M. Schwemer, *Jesus und das Judentum. Geschichte des frühen Christentums 1* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007); ET = M. Hengel and A. M. Schwemer, *Jesus and Judaism*, ed. W. Coppins and S. Gathercole, trans. W. Coppins, BMSEC 7 (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2019). Cf. also M. Hengel, "Zur historische Rückfrage nach Jesus von Nazareth: Überlegungen nach der Fertigstellung eines Jesusbuch," in *Gespräch über Jesus: Papst Benedikt XVI. im Dialog mit Martin Hengel, Peter Stuhlmacher und seinen Schüler in Castelgandolfo 2008*, ed. P. Kuhn (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 1–29.

²²M. Hengel, "Die Ursprünge der Gnosis und das Urchristentum," in *Studien zum Urchristentum: Kleine Schriften VI*, ed. C.-J. Thornton, WUNT 234 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 549–93; ET = M. Hengel, "The Earliest Roots of Gnosticism and Early Christianity," trans. T. H. Trapp, in *Earliest Christian History: History, Literature, and Theology. Essays from the Tyndale Fellowship in Honor of Martin Hengel*, ed. M. F. Bird and J. Maston, WUNT 2/320 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 473–521.

they are works of tradition that draw from traditions of disciples.²³ Hengel gave back to scholarship the *Lukan historical work* (composed of Gospel and Acts), which was subjected to destructive criticism by the Bultmann school. For he, together with his students, worked out the fact that it was written by the physician Luke (cf. Col 4.14) with the help of all the traditions that he had adopted from Jerusalem, Antioch, and Paul.²⁴ According to Hengel, the insights and formulations that were fundamental for *Christology* were also not developed for the first time in Hellenistic primitive Christianity but already in Jerusalem.²⁵ Bultmann had regarded the Old Testament above all as the witness to the foundering of Israel on the revelation of the will of God. Hengel did not read the Old Testament so one-sidedly and affirmed the idea of a divinely guided salvation history.²⁶ Last but not least, Hengel insisted *methodologically* that in the analysis of biblical texts it is necessary to proceed with chronological and historical precision. Criticism of them cannot be supported merely with references to unknown primitive Christian groups (e.g., Galilean Christians who only knew Q [Schmithals] or to “countless” primitive Christian prophets who spoke in the name of Jesus [Käsemann]). Rather, they must have historically demonstrable bases. According to Hengel, it is better to develop hypotheses – which are indispensable for interpretation – in the

²³M. Hengel, *Jesus und die Evangelien. Kleine Schriften V*, WUNT 211 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007). See also M. Hengel, *Die vier Evangelien und das eine Evangelium von Jesus Christus*, WUNT 224 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); ET = *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Collection and Origin of the Canonical Gospels*, trans. J. Bowden (London: SCM, 2000).

²⁴M. Hengel, “Zur urchristlichen Geschichtsschreibung,” in *Studien zum Urchristentum. Kleine Schriften VI*, WUNT 234 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 1–104; ET = M. Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity*, trans. J. Bowden, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1980); M. Hengel, “Der Historiker Lukas und die Geographie Palästinas in der Apostelgeschichte,” in *Studien zum Urchristentum: Kleine Schriften VI*, ed. C.-J. Thornton (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 140–90; ET = M. Hengel, “Luke the Historian and the Geography of Palestine in the Acts of the Apostles,” in *Between Jesus and Paul*, trans. J. Bowden (London: SCM, 1983), 97–128; M. Hengel, “Der Lukasprolog und seine Augenzeugen,” in *Studien zum Urchristentum: Kleine Schriften VI*, ed. C.-J. Thornton (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 242–97; ET = M. Hengel, “The Lukan Prologue and Its Eyewitnesses: The Apostles, Peter, and the Women,” trans. N. Moore,” in *Earliest Christian History: History, Literature, and Theology. Essays from the Tyndale Fellowship in Honor of Martin Hengel*, ed. M. F. Bird and J. Maston, WUNT 2/320 (Tübingen: Mohr, 2012), 533–87. Cf. also the work of Hengel’s student C.-J. Thornton, *Der Zeuge des Zeugen. Lukas als Historiker der Paulusreisen*, WUNT 56 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991). Cf. now also M. Hengel, and A. M. Schweimer, *Die Urgemeinde und das Judenchristentum*, Geschichte des frühen Christentum 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019).

²⁵M. Hengel, *Studien zur Christologie. Kleine Schriften IV*, WUNT 201 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006); idem, *Studies in Early Christology*, trans. R. Kearns, P. A. Cathey, G. Schmidt, and L. T. Stuckenbruck (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995). Cf. also R. Deines, “Martin Hengel: Christology in Service of the Church,” in *Earliest Christian History: History, Literature, and Theology. Essays from the Tyndale Fellowship in Honor of Martin Hengel*, ed. M. F. Bird and J. Maston, WUNT 2/320 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 33–72.

²⁶M. Hengel, “Heilsgeschichte,” in *Heil und Geschichte. Die Geschichtsbezogenheit des Heils und das Problem der Heilsgeschichte in der biblischen Tradition und in der theologischen Deutung*, ed. J. Frey, S. Krauter, and H. Lichtenberger (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 3–34; ET = “‘Salvation History’: The Truth of Scripture and Modern Theology,” in *Reading Texts, Seeking Wisdom*, ed. D. F. Ford and G. N. Stanton (London: SCM, 2003), 229–44.

vein of the texts that have been handed down rather than in contradiction to them.²⁷

Since I was there to experience the emergence of the works of Hengel, it was not difficult for me to draw from them the necessary conclusions. My professional colleague Otto Betz also strengthened me in this distancing from the maxims of the Bultmann school and in the effort to work in a biblical-theological manner. He knew with equal exactness the texts from Qumran and the rabbinic literature, and he was especially engaged in Jesus research.²⁸ I could seek exegetical counsel with my learned New Testament colleagues and friends Gert Jeremias and Otfried Hofius, and when hermeneutical and dogmatic questions arose, Friedrich Mildenberger (1929–2012) and Oswald Bayer gave me good advice. Nor can I forget my assistants and coworkers, to whose works and critical questions I owe just as much.

III

In a seminar on 1 Cor 15, Ernst Käsemann advised us to take the wording of the text more seriously than the skeptical judgments of the exegetes. I had also already trained in biblical-theological thinking through my dissertation and studies on the origin of the Pauline gospel.²⁹ In addition, it was necessary to come to terms with the hermeneutical insight of Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005) that Bultmann's existential interpretation and the demythologizing program compel one to continue speaking of the divine acts of salvation that constitute the gospel only in their anthropological reflections. This blocks the possibility of encountering the biblical historical witnesses with understanding.³⁰ Bultmann's interpretation is an impressive attempt to adjust the biblical statements to modern western European thinking. But it usurps the texts and does not follow the way in which the texts themselves want to be interpreted (see above). They want to place their readers and hearers before the living God and his Son Jesus. We only do justice to this claim when we encounter the biblical witnesses *with humble mutual understanding* (*Einverständnis*). If I see correctly, the interpretation that is appropriate to the texts is primarily concerned with the *recollection* of what the one and only God did for Israel and the gentile world long before our time. The first hermeneutical question is therefore not what we can still begin to do with the old biblical texts today but how we can place ourselves in the salvific work of God attested by them. Only when we are truly mindful (*eingedenk*) of the salvific work can the perspective be directed to the present. Every year at Passover, Israel places itself anew into the event of the exodus and gives us

²⁷Cf. M. Hengel, "Christologie und neutestamentliche Chronologie," in *Studien zur Christologie. Kleine Schriften IV*, WUNT 201 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck), 27–51; ET = M. Hengel, "Christology and New Testament Chronology," in *Between Jesus and Paul*, trans. J. Bowden (London: SCM, 1983), 30–47.

²⁸Cf. O. Betz, *Jesus der Messias Israel*, WUNT 42 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987); O. Betz, *Jesus, der Herr der Kirche*, WUNT 52 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990).

²⁹Stuhlmacher, *Gerechtigkeit Gottes bei Paulus*; P. Stuhlmacher, *Das paulinische Evangelium*, FRLANT 95 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968).

³⁰P. Stuhlmacher, *Vom Verstehen des Neuen Testament*, NTD Ergänzungsheft 6 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986); P. Stuhlmacher, *Historical Criticism and Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Towards a Hermeneutic of Consent*, trans. R. A. Harrisville (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977).

thereby an important model. According to 1 Cor 11.24–25 and Luke 22.19, the Lord's Supper should be celebrated in remembrance of Jesus and his farewell meal with the twelve on the night of his arrest. The religious wishes and needs of today's participants in the meal play only a subordinate role in the scriptural celebration.

In the composition of my *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*,³¹ I was accompanied by an expectation that has unfortunately remained unfulfilled. A biblical theology that is open to the Old Testament, as I designed it, should find its counterpart in a theology of the Old Testament that leads to the Christ event as high point and goal of the salvation-historical action of God. Gerhard von Rad and Hartmut Gese mapped out this way. But instead of writing a theology in their sense, Old Testament scholars today usually insist that the Old Testament stands over against the New Testament as an independent entity. At the same time, they prefer to remain silent about Jesus Christ in their work. The highly renowned Old Testament scholar Brevard Childs (see above) once conceded to me that he had to be considerate of his Jewish students in his lectures and seminars and therefore could not argue biblically-theologically in the way that he had done in his publications. In his work and that of his professional colleagues, the canonical process that continued until the end of the first century CE and the role of the Septuagint received almost no attention. Today, the primitive Christian witnesses' conviction that Jesus is the Messiah and servant of God promised by the prophets is regarded, in an almost automatic manner, as academically superseded or obsolete. In light of this front, Ulrich Wilckens has dared to sketch out a detailed picture of the Old Testament tradition in his theology of the New Testament, and he has even expanded this picture into a separate study guide.³² There was still no cause for me to proceed similarly in Tübingen.

In a textbook, which my *Biblical Theology of the New Testament* seeks to be, the concern is not only to present one's own views. The goal is to provide information that is historically accurate and beneficial for the ecclesial engagement with Holy Scripture. For this reason, I have made the *canon* consisting of the Old and New Testament, which was established and limited by the early church, the basis of my presentation. In the exegesis of the New Testament, however, it is necessary not only to consider the Hebrew Bible but also to value the Septuagint, for it was read as Holy Scripture in the Jewish diaspora and in the Greek speaking-Christian communities and accorded (almost) equal respect as the Hebrew Bible.

Two exegetical discoveries shaped me in the composition of the two volumes of my biblical theology. For these, alongside the works of Gese and Janowski (see above), the studies of my friend Otfried Hofius on the topic of atonement were also of fundamental help to me.³³ According to Bultmann, we cannot know how Jesus understood his death; he thinks that Jesus could indeed have despaired of God and his mission on

³¹Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*; GV = P. Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, vol. 1, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005); P. Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, vol. 2, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012).

³²U. Wilckens, *Studienführer Altes Testament* (Basel: Fontis, 2015).

³³Cf. O. Hofius, *Paulusstudien*, WUNT 51 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989).

the cross.³⁴ The authentic Jesus saying in Mark 10.45 and the Lord's Supper tradition, however, demonstrate that Jesus consciously took his death upon himself for Israel (and the gentiles) in order, through this path of sacrifice, to make atonement for the "many" who were hopelessly entangled in sins (cf. Mark 8.36–37 and Isa 53.11–12). Jesus' filial obedience climaxes in his place-taking death. The dissertation of my student and friend Jostein Ådna on the temple action³⁵ has strengthened me in this view. The atonement-theological "for our sins" (ὕπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν) from the Lord's Supper paradosis has entered into the gospel that is proclaimed by all the apostles, which Paul quotes in 1 Cor 15.3–5.

Ernst Käsemann, by contrast, resisted, also in his influential commentary on Romans, the view that Paul grounded justification with the atoning death of Jesus. The talk of the blood of Christ shed for atonement was for Käsemann a Jewish Christian tradition that was only still dragged along by Paul. Käsemann thought that the basis of justification was Jesus' obedience until death on the cross, i.e., his exemplary and place-taking fulfillment of the first commandment (cf. Phil 2.8).³⁶ But this is only half the truth. For according to 2 Cor 5.21 and Rom 3.25–26; 4.25; 8.3, justification by faith alone is to be obtained only on the basis of the atoning death of Jesus, which God willed and Jesus obediently took upon himself. Thus, the atoning death on the cross cannot be bracketed out. *Rather, there is a tradition-historical connection between Jesus' understanding of his death, the apostolic gospel of 1 Cor 15.3–5, and the Pauline doctrine of justification that is based on pre-Pauline statements of faith.*

IV

When one writes a theology of the New Testament,³⁷ the first fundamental question is whether it should begin with the proclamation of Jesus or only with the events that begin with Easter. There is no doubt that these events provided the decisive impulse for the formation and preservation of the New Testament faith tradition. The decisive sources for the presentation of Jesus are the four canonical Gospels, and they could be composed only on the basis of the Easter events. There are only a small number of

³⁴R. Bultmann, "Das Verhältnis der urchristlichen Christusbotschaft zum historischen Jesus," in *Exegetica. Aufsätze zur Erforschung des Neuen Testaments*, ed. E. Dinkler (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1967), 445–61, here 453; ET = R. Bultmann, "The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus," in *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ: Essays on the New Quest for the Historical Jesus*, trans. C. E. Braaten and R. A. Harrisville (Nashville: Abingdon, 1964), 15–53, here 24.

³⁵J. Ådna, *Jesu Stellung zum Tempel*, WUNT 2/119 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000); J. Ådna, "Jesus and the Temple," in *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, vol. 3, ed. T. Holmén and S. E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 2635–75; J. Ådna, "Temple Act," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. J. Green, J. K. Brown, and N. Perrin, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2013), 947–52.

³⁶E. Käsemann, *Paulinische Perspektiven* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1969), 61–139; ET = E. Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul*, trans. M. Kohl (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 32–59. See also P. F. M. Zahl, *Die Rechtfertigungslehre Ernst Käsemanns* (Stuttgart: Calver, 1996).

³⁷The following remarks are based on Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*; GV = Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*.

extra-biblical attestations for Jesus' activity. The oldest witnesses to the gospel of Christ are the formula of faith from 1 Cor 15,3–5 and the sketch of the "sermon of Peter" in Acts 10,34–43. Both texts point to Jesus and his activity, and this is even more true for the Gospels. A theology of the New Testament cannot bypass this pointer. At the same time, the decision to begin with Jesus is also supported by a (salvation-)historical reason. With John the Baptist's question, "Are you the one who is to come or should we wait for another?," the early Jewish messianic expectation is brought to Jesus. The question was posed *before* Easter and was answered by Jesus with a reference to the salvific deeds performed by him. Through them the Baptist should recognize who Jesus is, namely, the "coming one" announced by the prophets (Matt 11,2–6). The one who approaches the New Testament from the Old Testament in a biblical-theological way is led by the question of the Baptist to inquire first into Jesus and only thereafter to reflect upon the witness that was given to him after Easter.

The view of Jesus is, however, unfortunately more obscured than illuminated through the conventional criticism of the Gospels. Many scholars think that they only encounter the real Jesus when they critically call the texts into question. They reconstruct their pictures of Jesus behind the biblical witnesses according to their own imaginings. Therefore, all these presentations remain only subjective hypotheses. At the same time, they diverge so much that they provide no solid basis for the New Testament witness to the gospel.

The Gospel tradition leads us, however, historically further! Joachim Jeremias (1900–1979), Martin Hengel (1926–2009), Birger Gerhardson (1926–2013), and Rainer Riesner have worked out that with this tradition we are dealing with largely pre-Easter reports and sayings. Jesus was a teacher of the Twelve (Matt 23,10).³⁸ They memorized his teaching, remembered his works, and shared the experience of his last journey to Jerusalem. They passed on their carefully cultivated memories to the primitive community in Jerusalem. These were held in high regard there and supplemented with the legacy of Jesus' family. When we rely on this old material, we obtain a picture of Jesus that is more than a subjective construction. The Jesus attested by the Gospels called YHWH, the one and only God, his Father (ἰσθῆς). In his name he forgave sins, performed healings, taught in parables and sayings, newly interpreted the Torah, and formulated the Lord's Prayer for his disciples. He was concerned with the reign of God and the gathering of the end-time twelve-tribe people. The disciples were meant to help him in this work. Jesus saw himself in the role of the messianic Son of Man. After the provocative temple action, the Jewish leaders had him arrested, condemned as a religious deceiver of the people, and transferred to Pilate with the accusation that Jesus wanted to be king of the Jews. The Roman prefect must have condemned Jesus to

³⁸Cf. P. Stuhlmacher, "Zum Thema: Das Evangelium und die Evangelien," in *Das Evangelium und die Evangelien*, ed. P. Stuhlmacher, WUNT 28 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983), 1–16; ET = P. Stuhlmacher, "The Theme: The Gospel and the Gospels," in *The Gospel and the Gospels*, ed. P. Stuhlmacher, trans. J. Vriend (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 1–25; R. Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer. Eine Untersuchung zum Ursprung der Evangelienüberlieferung*, 3rd ed., WUNT 2/7 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998); R. Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer. Frühjüdische Volksbildung und Evangelien-Überlieferung*, 4th ed., WUNT 504 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2023).

death on the cross for the sake of this messianic claim. Jesus took the gruesome death by crucifixion upon himself with open eyes in order to make atonement for his friends and enemies (see above). The gospel common to all apostles in 1 Cor 15.3–5 therefore speaks of the Christ (Χριστός) who died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried (in Jerusalem), was raised from the dead on the third day according to the Scriptures, and appeared first to Cephas and then to the twelve. In parallel to this, Luke 24.34 says, “The Lord (ὁ Κύριος) has truly risen and has appeared to Simon (i.e., Peter).” *The earthly Jesus was none other than the Χριστός attested by the Gospels. He stands at the center of salvation history.*

V

The significance of the *Easter events* can scarcely be overestimated. There are, to be sure, ever new attempts to interpret them psychologically as mere imaginations of the disciples disappointed by Jesus’ failure. But the events cannot be discussed away in this manner. For without them the astonishing historical development of Christianity cannot be explained. From the Gospels we learn that Jesus was placed in a Jerusalem rock tomb after his death on the cross. Three days later, women and men from Jesus’ environment found this very tomb empty. At the same time, Jesus appeared in new vitality and authority not only to these people but also to critics and opponents such as his brother James and Paul. From the discovery of the empty tomb and the appearances of Jesus, the disciples of Jesus drew the sovereign conclusion that the one God who makes the dead alive raised Jesus from the dead already today and here (cf. Rom 4.17, 24). And even more, God, in accordance with Ps 110.1, exalted him to his right hand and – as it says in Acts 2.36 – “made him Lord and Christ.” Since then, the Christian confession says: the one and only God is the God who raised Jesus from the dead; his crucified Son who rose on the third day is the Κύριος, who is to completely establish God’s reign in heaven and on earth (cf. Rom 10.9; 1 Cor 15.1–11). For the community of Jesus Christ the expanded version of the “Shema Yisrael” from Deut 6.4–5 is therefore in force: “We have only one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we to him. And one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and we through him” (1 Cor 8.6).

On the basis of the Easter experiences, the disciples of Jesus, the family of Jesus, and other men and women in Jerusalem joined together to form the *primitive community*. For it was necessary to hold fast to the memory of Jesus and the confessing of him at the entryway of salvation history until the end events that one expected in the near future on Zion. The leadership of the primitive community was held first by Peter and after his flight (cf. Acts 12.17) by James, the brother of the Lord. To the Jerusalemites, we owe, in addition to the first collection of Jesus tradition and the first confessing of Christ, the liturgy for baptism and for the Lord’s Supper, the founding of house communities, and fundamental impulses toward community *diakonia*. Pentecost brought the outbreak into mission. It was initially directed only to Jews, but it soon extended also to gentiles. Its main representatives were Peter, Barnabas, and Paul. The Pharisee educated at the

feet of Rabbi Gamaliel I (cf. Acts 22.3) was converted by the risen Christ on the road to Damascus and called to be the missionary to the gentiles. James, the brother of the Lord, endorsed the mission to Jews and the mission to gentiles (cf. Acts 15.13–21). Since the primitive community was bilingual, texts such as 1 Cor 15.1–3; Rom 3.25–26; 4.25 can likewise be traced back to Jerusalem. This is also the case for the Lukan birth stories, which are based on memories of the mother of Jesus (cf. Luke 2.19, 51). They round out the picture of the Christian teaching that was already highly regarded in Jerusalem.

VI

The dominant position of the Pauline letters in the New Testament should not blind us to the fact that Peter is just as significant as Paul in terms of mission history. He did not persecute the Christian community but was appointed by Jesus himself to lead and teach the church of Jesus Christ (cf. Matt 16.18–20; John 21.15–23). Peter did this also in Jerusalem, on his missionary journeys, and in Rome. While Paul constantly had to fight for recognition as an apostle, the position of Peter was scarcely disputed. He was the man of episcopal compromise, while Paul stood up for the gospel that he had received from Christ with consistent sharpness. Precisely for this reason, he has special importance for a theology of the New Testament.

In England and in the USA, Pauline interpretation is dominated at present by the “New Perspective” developed by Krister Stendahl (1921–2008), Ed Parish Sanders, James D. G. Dunn (1939–2020), and N. T. Wright.³⁹ It seeks to displace the understanding of Paul determined by Luther and the Reformation, to oppose the antisemitism that is inherent in it, and, ultimately, to open up a historically accurate view of the apostle. According to the New Perspective, the Pauline doctrine of justification is to be understood in the light of Eph 2.11–20. The apostle is said to have been concerned above all with the participation of the gentiles in the election to salvation that was opened up for Israel in the making of the covenant on Sinai and confirmed in the sending of Christ. I continue to regard this view as much too one-sided. When the apostle speaks of the *δικαίωσις ζωῆς*, he means the eternal life opening salvation of gentiles *and* Jews from God’s judgment of wrath. Both are subject to it – the Jews because they have, in terms of the majority, rejected the Christ Jesus and instead of him clung in their own power to the Torah (cf. Rom 10.1–4), and the gentiles, because they have fallen into idolatry (cf. Rom 1.18–25). The sending and atoning death of Jesus on the cross are the basis of justification. The means and way of justification are faith and sanctification. Their end goal is the establishment of the *βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ* through Jesus, whom God has installed as *Κύριος* in the heavens. In the *βασιλεία* the justified are to experience eternal fellowship with God, peace, and joy. When one pays attention to the traditional elements upon which Paul builds in the doctrine of justification (cf. 1 Cor 1.30; 2 Cor 5.21;

³⁹Cf. my presentation and criticism in P. Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie und Evangelium*, WUNT 146 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 38–52 as well as J. D. G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

Rom 3.25–26; 4.25; and others) and dates the letter to the communities in Galatia (as is suggested from a mission-historical perspective) a fairly long time before Romans, it becomes clear that with the statements of the apostle on justification we are not dealing merely with an “anti-Jewish polemical doctrine” (W. Wrede). The apostle is concerned with the salvific work of God as a whole. The one and only God does not want to abandon his creation to the curse of nothingness, under which it stands since the fall. Christ should and will establish his salvation and good order creating righteousness (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ) in the whole cosmos and thus bring an end to unbelief, sin, and evil (cf. 1 Cor 15.23–28; Rom 11.32). The origin of the apostle’s teaching on justification lies in Jesus’ reception of tax collectors and sinners (cf. Luke 18.9–14) and in his way of sacrifice in accordance with Isa 53.10–12 (cf. Mark 14.24).

In the letters of the Pauline school (to which, in my view, only Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles belong), the doctrine of justification belongs to the established stock of the faith tradition. Since one continued to read the main letters of Paul in the communities, it was sufficient to occasionally recall his doctrine (cf. Eph 2.8; 1 Tim 1.15–16; Titus 3.5–7).

VII

Among the Catholic Epistles, 1 Peter, Hebrews, and James have special weight. James – which was written, in my view, by James, the brother of the Lord, himself – criticizes in chapter 2 the Pauline *sola fide* from Rom 3.28. It shows two things thereby. The faith witnesses who were active after Easter, including James, had a shared high regard for the εὐαγγέλιον quoted by Paul in 1 Cor 15.3–5. But they set different soteriological accents. James, the evangelist Matthew, Hebrews, and Revelation assign much greater significance to sanctification than Paul. While the apostle also energetically promotes ἀγιασμός, he stresses that before God’s throne of judgment only faith and the intercession of Christ are decisive. Second, James shows that Paulinists were already tempted to neglect sanctification from the first century onward. But with this they have abandoned the Pauline view of faith. For in Paul πίστις encompasses both – namely, trust in God’s grace (*fiducia*) and energetic obedience in relation to God’s will (*nova oboedientia*). According to Gal 5.6, it is “faith that is active through love.”

First Peter documents the fact that Peter and his tradents taught in a similar way as Paul both christologically and ethically. Otherwise, the activity of Peter not only in the mission to Jews but also in the mission to gentiles (see above) would be comprehensible only with difficulty. With respect to ecclesiology, 1 Peter emphasizes the tradition of the people of God, while Paul views the community from the perspective of the Lord’s Supper as the body of Christ.

The significance of Hebrews lies above all in the high Christology, which has been developed on the basis of Ps 110. Christ is not only the pre-existent mediator of creation (Heb 1.2–3). Due to his way of sacrifice and his resurrection, he is also the heavenly mediator of salvation who has been installed by God as high priest according to the order

of Melchizedek. With his blood he effected in the heavenly sanctuary a once-for-all atonement for all those who follow him on earth. With this Christology Hebrews continues the teaching – which was probably already shaped by Stephen and the Jerusalem Hellenists and was taken up by Paul in Rom 3.25–26 – that the one and only God installed his own son on Golgotha as the *ἱλαστήριον* (i.e., as the *kappōret*, cf. Exod 25.17; Lev 16.13–15) and made an end of the cultic atonement in the temple of Jerusalem.

The teaching on the atonement in Hebrews has caused formidable problems in the history of the church. The author relates it – namely, on the basis of Lev 5.14–26 – only to unintentionally committed sins. Therefore, he sees no chance of redemption anymore for Christians who willingly fall away from the faith (cf. Heb 6.4–6; 10.26; 12.17). This “hard knot” (Luther) in his teaching appeared to exclude the possibility of a second repentance by Christians who had denied their faith in times of persecution by Roman officials. With reference to Jesus’ atoning death for friends and enemies, to Paul and John (cf. 1 John 2.2), the early church ultimately decided against Hebrews and declared the second repentance to be possible.

VIII

The three Synoptic Gospels are post-Easter compilation works that have been carefully redacted theologically. They set down the Jesus tradition in writing and preserved it for the church (see above). While the Synoptics set their own distinct christological emphases, they want to place us jointly before the Christ Jesus, who became human and was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan. He called disciples, taught with authority, performed saving deeds, and suffered death by crucifixion in Jerusalem. On the third day, however, he rose from the dead and appeared to women and men who were known by name (to the primitive community). For all three Gospels, this Jesus is not only a pious Jew from Nazareth who first experienced the calling to be Son of God at the baptism. Jesus is already from eternity the Son of God. In him, in his teaching, deeds, way of sacrifice, and resurrection, God is present. Therefore, faith in Jesus and following him lead to salvation and eternal life. Because and in the fact that they guide people to salvation-creating remembrance of Jesus, the Synoptics stand at the beginning of the New Testament canon and continue to be of inestimable value to the church.

The evangelist *John* probably had the Gospel of Mark and the Gospel of Luke before him. Despite that, he dared once more to present anew the nature, way, and work of Jesus. He wants to show not only who Jesus was historically but also who he remains for the church – the *λόγος*, i.e., the creative Word of God in person, who reveals the Father (John 1.18), is one with him (10.30), and leads to him (14.6). The Johannine presentation of the activity and teaching of Jesus rests just as much as the Synoptic presentation on authentic knowledge. But in the earthly Jesus it also already has the risen *Christus praesens* in view. He is the resurrection and the life, and, according to John 11.25, the one who believes in him obtains eternal life already today, without the future

expectation being excluded thereby. Like the Synoptics, the Fourth Gospel is based on historically authentic tradition. But its presentation deviates repeatedly and in such an irritating way from the other Gospels that scholarship stands until this day before unresolved questions.

Let us mention only three of them. Is the founding of the Lord's Supper replaced or only supplemented by the report of the footwashing in John 13? Did all the disciples abandon Jesus on the night in which he was handed over, as Mark 14.50 states? Or did the one disciple who was beloved by him remain faithful even under the cross, so that Jesus entrusted his mother Mary to him and with her the church's tradition and continued existence (John 19.26–27)? And did Jesus on Good Friday suffer death on the cross at the same time as the Israelites slaughtered the Passover lambs in the Jerusalem temple (John 19.14, 30)? Or was he crucified on a Friday after the Passover night, as the Synoptics hand down? We do not know, but we must nevertheless guard ourselves against regarding the Fourth Gospel as a critical replacement for the Synoptic witness.

According to John 21.24, the only faithful disciple who is beloved by Jesus is the author of the Gospel. According to Jesus' will, he is to remain, beyond Peter, until the parousia (21.22). This statement appears to point to the fact that the Gospel of John wanted to permanently supplement and spiritually interpret the teaching authorized by Peter. The early church then also viewed the Gospel of John as the spiritual Gospel that was composed with knowledge of the Synoptics.

According to most exegetes, the Revelation of John, which is likewise enigmatic in many respects, is the work of a primitive Christian prophet named John. He had great authority and at the end of the first century wanted to encourage the communities in Asia Minor to remain faithful to their Christ confession. With the help of prophetic school tradition, he shows the Christians threatened by the religious claims of Rome that the one and only God and his Christ are in power and remain so. Christ is for them the slaughtered lamb of God who has risen from the dead and lives in throne fellowship with God. At the same time, he is, however, also the messianic lion of Judah, the militant Word of God in person, who casts down Rome and the satanic powers, holds the last judgment, and brings about the day on which the eternal city stands open to all who bear the sign of the cross. Before his victory, many of his faithful must admittedly become martyrs. But raised from the dead and received by Christ, they will live forever, will no longer need to suffer, and will be very close to God and the Christ lamb in the heavenly Jerusalem. The early church attributed Revelation to the evangelist John. This is supported by a number of linguistic and contentual parallels to the Fourth Gospel. But there are also such close points of contact to the Synoptic apocalypses (Mark 13 par.) and Pauline eschatology (cf. 1 Cor 15.23–28 with Rev 20) that one may regard Revelation as a kind of compendium of primitive Christian end-time expectations. As such a didactic work this book concludes the New Testament canon and stimulates one to read it ever anew.

IX

Looking back, we see that the view of the New Testament witnesses presented here is not only biblical because it constantly strikes upon Old Testament ways of thinking and scriptural quotations. *It is above all biblical because the Christology of the New Testament is shaped by the Old Testament.* The one and only God and Jesus are inextricably connected. Jesus is the only begotten Son of the God who revealed himself to Israel on Sinai. The incarnate Christ is Son and representative of God upon earth. When he speaks of the Father, whom he trustingly calls $\alpha\beta\beta\alpha$ and whom he teaches us to worship in the Lord's prayer, YHWH is meant. He raised Jesus after his way of sacrifice, exalted him to his right hand, and gave him the divine name Κύριος (Phil 2.9). As bearer of this name Jesus is not meant to replace God. Rather, he is meant to establish God's will in heaven and on earth. When this has taken place, the Son will subordinate himself again to the Father, so that God will be all in all (1 Cor 15.27–28; Phil 2.11; Rev 20.22).

The *center of Scripture* emerges from the line that can be drawn from Jesus' atoning death to the gospel that is common to all the apostles, from there to the Pauline doctrine of justification and further to the Johannine view of the crucifixion, the Christology of 1 Peter and of Hebrews through to the Revelation of John's talk of the lamb of God. The concern is constantly with *atonement and reconciliation through Jesus' death and resurrection*. In all these writings the salvific benefit stands and falls with the confessing of the Christ Jesus who entered into death for "the many," in order for their sake to be raised by God and installed as the Κύριος . The one who follows him may be certain of his protection and his intercession in the last judgment. The New Testament teaching on sanctification is oriented to the decalogue, the Sermon on the Mount, and Jesus' double commandment of love for God and love for neighbor, which is based on Deut 6.5 and Lev 19.18. The end expectation, which fills the New Testament, stands under the banner of apocalyptic prophecy, the so-called covenant formula, and the hope for the city of God, Jerusalem (cf. Rev 21.1–27 with 2 Sam 7.14; Deut 26.17–19; Zech 8.8; Isa 65.17–25). Without the Old Testament, the New Testament cannot be explained, and interpreting it in that way results in complete misinterpretations.

Many individual questions require further clarification. But the biblical theology developed in Tübingen is not therefore out-of-date in terms of content. It has proved itself in scholarship, in the proclamation of the church, and in the mission. It has even met with ecumenical interest.⁴⁰ Ulrich Wilckens' multi-volume theology of the New Testament is an impressive counterpart to it, which leads further in many respects.⁴¹ The pietistic criticism of our theology has faded away and inquisitions of faith are also no longer made. This shows that we, Tübingen scholars, have succeeded to a certain degree in bridging the chasm between university theology and community piety, which was gaping back then, and which is unfortunately breaking open anew at present. Despite this fact, the distanced adjudicating exegesis of religious studies has remained just

⁴⁰Cf. P. Kuhn, ed. *Gespräch über Jesus. Papst Benedikt XVI. im Dialog mit Martin Hengel, Peter Stuhlmacher und seinen Schülern in Castelgandolfo 2008* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

⁴¹See note 8.

as skeptical toward the Tübingen biblical theology as the exegetes who regard as academically out of place the witness of faith that underlies our work, the humility in relation to the texts, and the evaluation of the Old Testament as promise.

Looking back at the work that has been accomplished, what remains for me is only to thank again the old friends. At the same time, I confess that the path that we tread and were led upon still seems *right* to me. The church connection was and remains significant, especially for biblical theology. For according to the elegant word of Benedict XVI (in a speech in the Collège des Bernardins, Paris 2008), “there are dimensions of the meaning of the word and the words that are disclosed only in the lived fellowship of this history-establishing word.” The reformation principle *sola scriptura* leads us to make the historically exact interpretation of the Holy Scripture the foundation and criterion of theology and proclamation. Only when it holds fast to this foundation does theology and church remain protected against the suction effect of the religion-critical *Zeitgeist*.

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Canon and Hermeneutics in Times of Deconstruction. What New Testament Scholarship Can Achieve Hermeneutically in the Present

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Translated by
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1. Canonization – Hermeneutics – Decanonization

The Christian *Bible*,² together with the *Quran*,³ belongs to the canonical collections of *Scriptures* of late antiquity⁴ that rest upon the older Hebrew and Greek versions of the Scriptures of Israel⁵ (*Tanak* and *Septuaginta*) and thus reach back far into pre-Christian times, while also retaining religious authority in the present and laying claim

¹For the German version of this article, see O. Wischmeyer, “Kanon und Hermeneutik in Zeiten der Dekonstruktion. Was die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft gegenwärtig leisten kann,” in *Kanon in Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion. Kanonisierungsprozesse religiöser Texte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart. Ein Handbuch*, ed. E.-M. Becker and S. Schulz (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 623–78; O. Wischmeyer, “Kanon und Hermeneutik in Zeiten der Dekonstruktion. Was die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft gegenwärtig leisten kann,” in *Auf dem Weg zur neutestamentlichen Hermeneutik. Oda Wischmeyer zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. E.-M. Becker and S. Schulz (Tübingen: Francke, 2014), 13–68.

²In what follows *Bible* consistently designates the two-part Christian canon. On questions of terminology, cf., in general, S. Scholz, “Die Bibel: Texte – Kanones – Übersetzungen,” in *LBH* (2009): XXX–XLI.

³On the *Quran* as a late antique textual collection, cf. N. Sinai, *Fortschreibung und Auslegung. Studien zur frühen Koraninterpretation* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009); A. Neuwirth, *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike. Ein europäischer Zugang* (Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2010); A. Neuwirth, N. Sinai, and M. Marx, eds., *The Qur'an in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur'anic Milieu* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

⁴The Holy Scriptures of Israel, the *Biblia Hebraica* or the *Tanak*, are consistently called *Scriptures* here. They are older and do not belong to late antiquity. In a larger framework, it would, however, also be necessary to consider the late antique legal corpora here, Codex Theodosianus (cf., by way of introduction, P. E. Pieler, “Codex Theodosianus,” in *LexMA* 2 [1983]: 2208–9) and the collections of Justinian (cf., by way of introduction, P. Weimar, “Corpus iuris civilis,” in *LexMA* 3 [1986]: 270–78).

⁵On the terminological questions of Scripture/Scriptures, canon, and Bible from the perspective of ancient Judaism, cf. E. J. C. Tigchelaar, “Wie haben die Qumrantexte unsere Sicht des kanonischen Prozesses verändert?” in *Qumran und der biblische Kanon*, ed. M. Becker and J. Frey, BThSt 92 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2009), 65–88; E. Ulrich, “The Jewish Scriptures: Texts, Versions, Canons,” in *EDEJ* (2010): 97–120; E. Schuller, “The Dead Sea Scrolls and Canon and Canonization,” in *Kanon in Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion. Kanonisierungsprozesse religiöser Texte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart. Ein Handbuch*, ed. E.-M. Becker and S. Scholz (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 293–314.

to respectively distinct hermeneutics for themselves, which keep alive older hermeneutical approaches⁶ and continue to generate new ones. For *Tanakh*, *Septuaginta*, *Bible*, and *Quran*, canon and hermeneutics are related to each other. The canonical Scriptures develop their own doctrine of understanding (hermeneutic) and corresponding methods of textual interpretation (methodology). At the same time, these canonical collections of Scriptures equally lay claim to the following argument: “*Canonical Scriptures need and develop their own doctrine of interpretation and understanding.*”⁷ Canonical Scriptures are without their own hermeneutic unimaginable. For this reason, to speak about canons is always also to speak about hermeneutics. In Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, this argument, in different forms, also plays a leading role in the respectively current theological hermeneutics.⁸ Biblical hermeneutics is its own hermeneutical field of work within Christian theology.⁹

The conviction that canonical textual corpora need a hermeneutic of their own is not, however, based on a genuinely religious – let alone theological – premise. It does not have its origin in the religious textual collections of antiquity and is not restricted to religious textual corpora. Rather, the connection between distinct processes of canonization and interpretation is already a phenomenon of Greek culture – more specifically, of the early reception history of the Homeric epics, which united in themselves the religious, cultural, literary, and pedagogical standard-setting functions (κακὼν¹⁰) for Greco-Roman antiquity.¹¹ The first methodological and hermeneutical rules were developed for the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.¹² In Hellenistic Alexandria, the basic rules of

⁶Hebrew Bible: contemporary Judaism; Septuaginta: contemporary Orthodox churches.

⁷This claim is, to my knowledge, only clearly formulated in G. G. Stroumsa, “The Christian Hermeneutical Revolution and its Double Helix,” in *The Use of Sacred Books in the Ancient World*, ed. L. V. Rutgers, P. W. van der Horst, H. W. Havelaar, and L. Teugels, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 22 (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 10: “Indeed, there can be no Scriptures without hermeneutics, which seek to overcome the constantly threatening cognitive distance, the distance and tension between conceptions reflected in the Scriptures of old and in present perceptions.”

⁸Cf., by way of introduction, U. H. J. Körtner, *Einführung in die theologische Hermeneutik* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006); A. C. Thiselton, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); A. C. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

⁹On this, cf. O. Wischmeyer, “Einführung,” in *LBH* (2009): IX–XXIX.

¹⁰For canon as “yardstick” or “standard,” see H. Ohme, “Kanon,” in *RAC* 20 (2000): 1–28. Ohme develops the interpretation of the term from the “expression of the striving for exactness” (2) in art, music, and philosophy and, further, from the “model” in the “context of the *Horas*-conception,” i.e., the “standard of righteousness” (4). As Latin equivalents Ohme mentions *regula* and *norma*. See also Ohme’s discussion of the legal dimension of the term and on canon as table (date of Easter, list of bishops, etc.). Cf. also J. A. Loader, H. von Lips, W. Wischmeyer, C. Danz, J. Maier, N. Sinai, and S. Winko, “Kanon,” in *LBH* (2009): 310–16.

¹¹On the pedagogical function of Homer in pre-Christian and Christian antiquity, see C. Römer, *Das Phänomen Homer in Papyri, Handschriften und Drucken*, Nilus 16 (Vienna: Phoibos Verlag, 2009). The catalogue of the exhibition of the Austrian National Library documents, among other things, examples of student transcriptions from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, essays on themes of the epics, and small school lexicons on Homeric vocabulary.

¹²On Homer philology and Homer hermeneutics, cf. R. Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian: Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); G. J. M. Bartelink, “Homer,” *RAG* 15 (1991): 116–47 (with literature); J. I. Porter, “Lines and Circles: Aristarchus and Crates on Homeric Exegesis,” in *Homer’s Ancient Readers. The Hermeneutic of Greek Epic’s Earliest Ex-*

Homer hermeneutics were applied to the *Septuaginta* by Jewish exegetes. Christian exegetes took over this hermeneutic and applied it not only to the first part of their canon but above all to the relationship between the two canon parts of their *Bible*. Vergil's writings had a similarly general canonical status.¹³ This was based – beyond the ways that it functioned as a literary model – on a certain cultural and political ideology of Rome, which was then taken over via the church fathers into the Middle Ages in a Christianized form.¹⁴ The status of Vergil's epic distinguishes itself thereby from other literary canons of antiquity, which were subject to the literary *aemulatio* and were accordingly open.¹⁵ While the religious canons in late antiquity came to a certain conclusion, in the course of the Middle Ages and the modern period, alongside Vergil, new

exegeses, ed. R. Lamberton and J. J. Keaney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 67–114; A. A. Long, "Stoic Readings of Homer," in *Homer's Ancient Readers: The Hermeneutik of Greek Epic's Earliest Exegetes*, ed. R. Lamberton and J. J. Keaney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 41–66; P. S. Alexander, "Homer the Prophet of All' and 'Moses our Teacher': Late Antique Exegesis of the Homeric Epics and the Torah of Moses," in *The Use of Sacred Books in the Ancient World*, ed. L. V. Rutgers, P. W. van der Horst, H. W. Havelaar, and L. Teugels, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 22 (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 127–42 (an instructive comparison of late antique Homer hermeneutics and Mishnah hermeneutics); M. Finkelberg, "Homer as a Foundation Text," in *Homer, the Bible and Beyond: Literary and Religious Canons in the Ancient World*, ed. M. Finkelberg and G. G. Stroumsa (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 75–96; S. Honigman, *The Septuagint and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria: A Study in the Narrative of the Letter of Aristeas* (London: Routledge, 2003); O. Wischmeyer, "Überlegungen zu den Entstehungsbedingungen der Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments," in *Rondo. Beiträge für Peter Diemer zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. W. Augustyn and I. Lauterbach (Munich: Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, 2010), 7–17; M. Finkelberg, "The Canonicity of Homer," in *Kanon in Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion. Kanonisierungsprozesse religiöser Texte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart. Ein Handbuch*, ed. E.-M. Becker and S. Scholz (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 137–52. The parallelism between Homer and the Jewish *Scriptures* as foundational texts is especially emphasized by Stroumsa, "The Christian Hermeneutical Revolution and its Double Helix." Cf. also M. R. Niehoff, "Philon's Beitrag zur Kanonisierung der griechischen Bibel," in *Kanon in Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion. Kanonisierungsprozesse religiöser Texte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart. Ein Handbuch*, ed. E.-M. Becker and S. Scholz (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 329–44.

¹³On this, see W. Suerbaum, "Der Anfangsprozess der 'Kanonisierung' Vergils," in *Kanon in Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion. Kanonisierungsprozesse religiöser Texte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart. Ein Handbuch*, ed. E.-M. Becker and S. Scholz (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 171–220.

¹⁴On Vergil in the church fathers, cf. J. den Boeft, "Nullius disciplinae expers: Virgil's Authority in (Late) Antiquity," in *The Use of Sacred Books in the Ancient World*, ed. L. V. Rutgers, P. W. van der Horst, H. W. Havelaar, and L. Teugels, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 22 (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 175–86. In his *Oratio ad sanctorum coetus*, Emperor Constantine the Great appeals to Vergil's Fourth Eclogue and gives the text of Vergil an allegorical interpretation: Vergil is said to have spoken φανερώς τε ἡμᾶ καὶ ἀποκρυφῶς δι' ἁλλήγοριῶν (I. A. Heikel, ed., *Eusebius Werke*, vol. 1: *Über das Leben Constantins. Constantins Rede an die Heilige Versammlung. Tricennatsrede an Constantin*, GSC Eusebius 1 [Leipzig: Heinrichs, 1902], 182). See further S. Freund, *Vergil im frühen Christentum: Untersuchungen zu den Vergilziten bei Tertullian, Minucius Felix, Novatian, Cyprian und Arnobius* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2003). On Vergil in the Middle Ages, cf., by way of introduction, L. Rossi, "Vergil im MA," in *LMA* 8 (1997): 1522–30.

¹⁵On this, see P. von Moellendorff, "Canon as Pharmakón: Inside and Outside Discursive Sanity in Imperial Greek Literature," in *Invention, Rewriting. Usurpation: Discursive Fights over Religious Traditions in Antiquity*, ed. J. Ulrich, A.-C. Jacobsen, and D. Brakke, ECCA 11 (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2012), 89–101. On the literary canon, cf. A. Vardi, "Canons of Literary Texts in Rome," in *Homer, the Bible and Beyond: Literary and Religious Canons in the Ancient World*, ed. M. Finkelberg and G. Stroumsa (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 131–52. On the question of whether there was a canon of historiographical writings in antiquity, cf. D. Mendels, *Memory in Jewish, Pagan, and Christian Societies in the Greco-Roman World* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004); D. Mendels, "The Formation of an Historical Canon of the Greco-Roman Pe-

literary canons were formed that to a considerable degree owed their *raison d'être* to the long, complicated process of nation building, which proceeded in very different ways in individual cases.¹⁶ Alongside and prior to the national literary canons, the great national-language translations of the Bible with their confessional connections, such as the Luther translation and the King James Bible, played a canon-like role of their own. In summary, the connection between literary and religious canons is a component of Greco-Roman culture, to which the culture of ancient Judaism also belongs; another component is the development of corresponding canon hermeneutics. Both components were passed on through the Middle Ages and received new valences in modernity in the sphere of literature. The close relation between canons and hermeneutics is not restricted to religious canons and therefore also not exclusively or primarily a theological theme. Rather, it must be placed in the larger cultural context of exemplary textual collections and their interpretation.

In the times of deconstruction, both entities have been contested and weakened in different ways. Religious and foundational classical and national literary canons are questioned with respect to their limited, exclusive, normative, and authoritative position. Or they are deconstructed as normative and formative textual collections¹⁷ (decanonization). Or they are subjected as collections of exemplary literature¹⁸ to a constant process of new formation (recanonicalization). At the same time, deconstruction often understands itself as an anti-hermeneutical discourse that is meant to oppose every kind of normative doctrine of understanding.¹⁹ The two entities of canon and hermeneutics are thereby called into question. At the same time, the originally close structure of canon and hermeneutics is disturbed in principle. This disturbance surfaces especially clearly in scholarship on the Bible. The historical contextualization of the two parts of the *Bible* (the two-part Bible of the Christian churches) and their individual writings has led to a constantly increasing awareness of the heterogeneity of

riod: From the Beginnings to Josephus," in *Josephus and Jewish History*, ed. J. Sievers and G. Lembi, SupplJ 104 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 3–20.

¹⁶Cf. R. Rosenberg, "Kanon," in *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft*, vol. 2, ed. K. Weimar, H. Fricke, and J. Müller, 3rd ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 224–27. The tendencies to develop canons of "world literature" (Goethe), as we find them in Harold Bloom, are also based on the national canons. See H. Bloom, *Genius: A Mosaic of One Hundred Exemplary Creative Minds* (New York: Warner Books, 2002); GV = H. Bloom, *Genius. Die hundert bedeutendsten Autoren der Weltliteratur*, trans. Y. Badal (Munich: Albrecht Knaus Verlag, 2004). Cf. C. Grube, "Die Entstehung des Literaturkanons aus dem Zeitgeist der Nationalliteratur-Geschichtsschreibung," in *Kanon in Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion. Kanonisierungsprozesse religiöser Texte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart. Ein Handbuch*, ed. E.-M. Becker and S. Scholz (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 71–108.

¹⁷Calling into question the semi-canonical national and confessional translations of the Bible, such as the Lutherbibel, also belongs in this context. The many new translations present a very distinct deconstructive potential.

¹⁸On this, cf. Grube, "Die Entstehung des Literaturkanons."

¹⁹Cf. E. Angehrn, J. A. Loader, O. Wischmeyer, W. Wischmeyer, U. H. J. Körtner, G. Stemberger, H. Bobzin, K. Pollmann, C. Lubkoll, M. Habermann, "Hermeneutik," in *LBH* (2009): 245–54 and S. Kreuzer, O. Wischmeyer, M. Häiler, L. Fladerer, G. Kurz, and J. Greisch, "Interpretation/Interpretieren/Interpret," in *LBH* (2009): 289–96. For criticism of an interpretation that has hermeneutical ambitions, cf., in general, Susan Sontag's manifesto *Against Interpretation* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1966). See also note 157.

the biblical canon. From this perspective, the canon-supported conception of a “biblical scholarship,” which underlies, for example, the structure of the German-language Roman Catholic University exegesis,²⁰ does not reflect the different linguistic, cultural, religious, and historical conditions under which the Old and New Testament textual collections emerged. Here, the ecclesiastical understanding of the canon continues to be presupposed, which leaves unconsidered the general tendencies toward decanonization and the rejection of canonical hermeneutics associated with it. In the last century, the division of biblical scholarship into Old and New Testament scholarship has taken place in German Protestant theology.²¹ With this development, the historical differences are structurally prioritized over the canonical principle of unity, though without completely abandoning the canonical paradigm, which is given with the terms *Old Testament* and *New Testament*. Accordingly, the question of the relationship between canon, hermeneutics, and historical deconstruction likewise continues to be virulent in the sphere of Protestant theology. How can *New Testament scholarship* – which is programmatically related to the formative canonical textual corpus of the emerging Christian religion, *the New Testament*, and guided by canon-hermeneutical lines of questioning, on the one hand, and yet operates at the same time in the paradigm of historical scholarship, on the other hand – react to this challenge and what role does it play in this situation?²²

In my 2004 book *Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments* I described the aforementioned challenge as follows: “Decanonization leads the New Testament texts to a new understanding that no longer presupposes the holiness and normativity of the texts and thus their singular character and significance as a given but discloses the specific literary character and material significance of the texts in the interpretation and in this framework also makes plausible and discusses the canonization of the interpreted texts from a reception historical perspective.”²³ With this a new specification of the relationship between canon and hermeneutics in the times of deconstruction is opened up. The *Lexikon der Bibelhermeneutik*²⁴ shows that within the framework of decanonization, answers cannot be given by *one* discipline or by *one* hermeneutical concept – neither by theology nor by literary studies – but rather that philology, literary studies, and cultural studies as well as philosophy and theology are all occupied with the specification of this relationship. The question of responsibility or jurisdiction depends on the respective

²⁰Cf., however, also the Anglo-American model of Biblical Studies.

²¹Cf. the founding of the *Zeitschrift für Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* in 1900. On the whole context, cf. M. Ohst, “Aus den Kanondebatten in der Evangelischen Theologie des 19. Jahrhunderts,” in *Kanon in Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion. Kanonisierungsprozesse religiöser Texte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart. Ein Handbuch*, ed. E.-M. Becker and S. Scholz (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 39–70.

²²On the post-canonical academic concept of investigating the literature and history of early Christianity instead of the New Testament, cf., for example, the editorial in the first issue of the journal *Early Christianity* (2010). Cf. also the editorial of *Acta Patristica et Byzantina* 20 (2009), 1: “We regarded the New Testament as part of Patristic Studies.” It would also be possible to regard it as part of Jewish Studies.

²³O. Wischmeyer, *Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments. Ein Lehrbuch*, NET 8 (Tübingen: Francke, 2004), 205.

²⁴O. Wischmeyer, ed., *Lexikon der Bibelhermeneutik. Begriffe – Methoden – Theorien – Konzepte* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009).

underlying understanding of canon, which can be conceptualized in a normative or deconstructive way.²⁵ In my publications on this topic I started from the model of a historical stratification of methodological and hermeneutical textual interpretations.

In this essay I continue this approach with a concentration on the perspective of New Testament scholarship. *I advocate the thesis that New Testament scholarship in the context of present-day textual studies is the instrument that discloses the understanding of the texts of the New Testament.* Ever since its emergence as a distinct discipline, New Testament scholarship has been a child of historical deconstruction – more precisely, of decanonization – and thus obligated to historical reconstruction as well as historical deconstruction and construction. At the same time, through its embedding in the canon of disciplines of theology, it is always a participant in the discussions of the current Christian biblical-hermeneutical landscape,²⁶ which, alongside the textual academic disciplines of Old and New Testament scholarship, also encompasses normative theology as well as practical-theological, ecclesiastical, and devotional application. New Testament scholarship *has a distinct voice of its own*²⁷ in the broad discourse of biblical hermeneutics, which reaches from general hermeneutics within the framework of classical and modern doctrines of understanding²⁸ via methodologically grounded hermeneutics of Old Testament scholarship²⁹ through to the extremely lively and creative scene of “engaged approaches”³⁰ and postmodern *readings*³¹ as well as new theological-systematic approaches that start from the doctrine of Scripture, whether these be grounded with reference to the early church, the Middle Ages, the Reformation, pietism, or rationalism.³² Canonical approaches, approaches obligated to decan-

²⁵Cf. J. A. Loader, H. von Lips, W. Wischmeyer, C. Danz, J. Maier, N. Sinai, and S. Winko, “Kanon,” in *LBH* (2009): 310–16.

²⁶It is so extensive that a single person can scarcely gain an overview of it. The different approaches and discussions in the English-language and German-language literature, which have largely been developed independently of each other, presents difficulties. The *Lexikon der Bibelhermeneutik* brings the different approaches together. See O. Wischmeyer, ed., *Lexikon der Bibelhermeneutik*.

²⁷O. Wischmeyer, *Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments*.

²⁸On this, see again Stroumsa, “The Christian Hermeneutical Revolution and its Double Helix,” 10 and J. A. Loader, O. Wischmeyer, W. Wischmeyer, and C. Schwöbel, “Biblische Hermeneutik,” in *LBH* (2009): 90–95.

²⁹C. Dohmen, and G. Stemmerger, eds., *Hermeneutik der Jüdischen Bibel und des Alten Testaments* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1996); C. Dohmen, and G. Stemmerger, eds., *Hermeneutik der Jüdischen Bibel und des Alten Testaments*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2019).

³⁰For an introduction, see U. H. J. Körtner, “Kontextuelle Bibelhermeneutiken,” in *LBH* (2009), 344–45.

³¹For an introduction, see A. Runesson, “Reading,” in *LBH* (2009): 481; M. F. Foskett and J. Kah-Jin Kuan, eds., *Ways of Being, Ways of Reading: Asian American Biblical Interpretation* (St. Louis: Missouri Chalice Press, 2006). The term “readings” has the advantage of being less loaded, on the one hand, and of representing the basic approach of reception aesthetics, on the other hand. I have therefore selected it for my comments that follow: *New Testament readings* (note 44).

³²For an introduction, cf. J. A. Loader, A. Christophersen, U. Wiggermann, U. H. J. Körtner, G. Stemmerger, and M. Scholler, “Schrift/Schriftprinzip,” in *LBH* (2009): 521–27. Among recent contributions from the side of a “theological” or “ecclesial” hermeneutic, renowned New Testament scholar Ulrich Luz, *Theologische Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2014) deserves special interest. Cf. O. Wischmeyer, “Ulrich Luz, *Theologische Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments*. Neukirchen-Vluyn 2014,” in *Hermeneutik oder Versionen der biblischen Interpretation von Texten*, ed. G. Benyik (Szeged: JATEPress, 2023), 603–9.

onization, approaches that take up pre-modern hermeneutics, modern approaches, and postmodern approaches stand alongside and against one another. The diversity and openness of present-day biblical hermeneutics also includes its transparency for Jewish and Islamic hermeneutics,³³ which, for their part – sometimes on the basis of post-modernism – make their own creative recourse to ancient, late ancient, and medieval hermeneutics.

In this field, the intention of my essay is to sound out the perspective that New Testament scholarship itself offers and presents its central role for the task of a hermeneutic of canonical texts that is grounded in textual scholarship within the context of ongoing decanonization and criticism of hermeneutics. Accordingly, from the perspective of a New Testament scholar, I will discuss how the argument “*canonical Scriptures need and develop their own doctrine of understanding*” came into being, the extent to which it can bear weight, and the further-reaching thesis that in times of deconstruction this argument must be reformulated as follows: “*What the Scriptures of the New Testament need is not their own doctrine of understanding but rather a reflection on their reception history.*”

2. New Testament Readings

Decanonization affects first and with special severity the canon itself. Accordingly, I ask first the following question: “Into what perspective does the term *canon* place the *Bible* as a whole and the *New Testament* in particular?”

³³Jewish and Islamic scriptural hermeneutics are important and adjacent areas for New Testament exegeses. For the Jewish *Scriptures*, see, by way of introduction, M. Halbertal, *People of the Book: Canon, Meaning, and Authority* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997) (charity as hermeneutical term); Dohmen and Stemberger, *Hermeneutik der Jüdischen Bibel und des Alten Testaments*; H. Liss, “Jüdische Bibelhermeneutik,” in *LBH* (2009): 3081; J. L. Kugel, “Early Jewish Interpretation,” in *EDEJ* (2010): 121–41; N. B. Dohrmann and D. Stern, eds., *Jewish Biblical Interpretation and Cultural Exchange: Comparative Exegesis in Context* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), esp. D. Stern, “On Comparative Biblical Exegesis – Interpretation, Influence, Appropriation,” in *Jewish Biblical Interpretation and Cultural Exchange: Comparative Exegesis in Context*, 1–19. For the Quran, see, e.g., I. Goldziher, *Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung* (Leiden: Brill, 1920); P. Heath, “Creative Hermeneutics: A Comparative Analysis of Three Islamic Approaches,” *Arabica* 36 (1989): 173–210; J. Waardenburg, “Gibt es im Islam hermeneutische Prinzipien?” in *Hermeneutik in Christentum und Islam*, ed. H.-M. Barth and C. Elsas (Hamburg: E.B-Verlag, 1997), 51–74; U. Madigan, *The Qur'an's Self-image: Writing and Authority in Islam's Scripture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); N. Sinai, “Die klassische islamische Koranexegese. Eine Annäherung,” *TbLZ* 163 (2011): 123–36. Cf. also the meetings of the Institute for Advanced Studies in Berlin: “Jewish and Islamic Hermeneutics as Cultural Critique” (especially the Report of the Summer Academy: “The Hermeneutics of Border. Canon and Community in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam” [<http://www.wiko-berlin.de>]. See also the new *Handbook of Qur'anic Hermeneutics*, ed. G. Tamer, 5 vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2024–). Already published: G. Tamer, ed., *Handbook of Qur'anic Hermeneutics*, vol. 4: *Qur'anic Hermeneutics in the 19th and 20th Century* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2024). A more general perspective can be found in C. Cornille and C. Conway, eds., *Interreligious Hermeneutics*, Interreligious Dialogue Series 2 (Eugene: Cascade, 2010).

2.1 Reception History: The Canon as a Reception Phenomenon

From the perspective of New Testament scholarship, the New Testament canon belongs to the *reception history* of individual early Christian writings.

On the one hand, this historical perspective connects the early Christian writings to the history of the Hebrew *Scriptures* of Israel and their Greek translation, i.e., to the *past*. In this way, the historical depth dimension of the texts becomes clear. For the collection of writings that became the *New Testament* is formally only a smaller second part of the Christian *Bible*, as it is first handed down in a materially visible way with the large majuscule manuscripts of the fourth century. The large first part of the *Bible* is an expanded Greek version of the Hebrew *Scriptures* of Israel, which, in turn, contain small Aramaic textual parts. Whether and to what extent the version called *Septuaginta*, which we have before us in the large Christian *Bibles*, can be designated in its canonical final form as a closed and normative Jewish Greek scriptural canon, which the Christian church then claimed for itself and after whose model the second part of the Christian biblical canon was created, is – despite the Septuagint legend³⁴ of the Letter of Aristeas, which Aristobulus, Philo, and Josephus take up – controversial.³⁵ In any case, the individual New Testament writings were related from the beginning to their Greek Jewish pre-text, and this means that they were not without *Scripture* and not without a pre-history. The second, smaller part of the *Bible*, which in the course of time became the *New Testament* in the Christian communities and which the late ancient Jewish community, for its part, did not receive, was originally composed in Greek³⁶ and contains literary genres that differ clearly from the genres of the *Septuaginta*:³⁷ such as the two central early Christian literary genres of Gospels and letters, which early ecclesiastical writers called “the *Kyrios* and the *Apostolos*,” i.e., Jesus and Paul,³⁸ a designation that has fundamental significance for the hermeneutic of the later *New Testament*.³⁹

³⁴On this, cf. K. Brodersen, ed., *Aristeas. Der König und die Bibel. Griechisch/Deutsch*, trans. K. Brodersen (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2008), 166–223. All Jewish and Christian ancient sources can be found in bilingual format there. At any rate, the translation legend and the origin legend of a closed, textually unchangeable and inspired collection of Greek Jewish *Scriptures* comes from a pre-Christian time! On its interpretation, see T. Rajak, *Translation and Survival: The Greek Bible of the Ancient Jewish Diaspora* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 24–63.

³⁵Cf. the doubt expressed with respect to this in L. J. Greenspoon, “Septuagint,” in *EDEJ* (2010), 1219: “The very fact that these three translators [Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotian] were active well into the Common Era casts doubt on the often-cited assertion that Christian adoption (or cooption) of the Septuagint led to its speedy and complete rejection by Jews.”

³⁶Note, however, the traditions about the Gospel of Matthew being originally composed in Hebrew: Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.

³⁷On this, cf. now G. Theißen, *Die Entstehung des Neuen Testaments als literaturgeschichtliches Problem*, Sch.Phil.-Hist.Kl.HAW 40 (Heidelberg: Winter, 2007). The thesis that the Gospel genre can be derived from the biographies of the prophets (cf. H. Koester and M. Beintker, “Evangelium,” in *RGG*⁴ 2 [1999]: 1735–42; ET = H. Koester and M. Beintker, “Gospel,” in *RPP* 5 [2009]: 528–33) has not established itself.

³⁸Cf. the collection manuscript Papyrus 45 and 46.

³⁹Acts is attached to the Gospels and has no weight of its own. The Revelation of John was hotly disputed. On the Revelation of John, cf. the differentiated remarks in Dionysius of Alexandria in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.25: “But for my part I should not dare to reject the book, since many brethren hold it in estimation; but, reckoning that my perception is inadequate to form an opinion concerning it, I hold that the interpretation

On the other hand, canonization simultaneously integrates the early Christian writings into the history of the emerging Christian church. Thus, alongside the category of the past stand the categories of the *present* and *future*. The communities who let certain early Christian writings be read out in their gatherings made clear in this way that they regarded these writings not only as reliable documents of their foundational phase but also as decisive for their own time and for the future.

In summary, from a historical perspective the *Bible* in its canonical form is a product of Christian late antiquity with a syncretistic religious dimension⁴⁰ and a long prehistory.⁴¹ It is composed in the Greek language, which was very soon translated into other major languages of the *imperium Romanum* and its neighboring cultures. The *Vulgata* of Jerome⁴² marks out something like a formal endpoint for the formative phase of the Christian biblical canon, for here, there emerged, for the first time, a unified Christian “Bible book” from a single mold.⁴³ The canonical *New Testament* is a document of the early church. The collection expresses the absolute high estimation and conviction of enduring normativity that the early church assigned to a certain portion of their initial writings. This also applies – this has been given less attention – to the two-part Christian *Bible*.

The *Bible* has come down to us in this historical double form. New Testament scholarship consciously and programmatically decanonizes this historical and ecclesiastical inheritance when it isolates the second part of the *Bible* – the *New Testament* – from the first part and when it reads⁴⁴ and interprets the writings of the *New Testament* not as canonical Scriptures but as texts of their time, i.e., in their pre-canonical or, more precisely, non-canonical situation. It also does so when it assigns the New Testament canon to the *reception history* of the individual early Christian writings and thus to the history of the early church,⁴⁵ while New Testament scholarship itself is devoted to the *history of emergence* of the individual writings and their interdependencies. From this perspective, the canon is a thoroughly historical and processual phenomenon, which brings together after the fact certain texts of the heterogeneous early Christian literature and thereby changes the individual writings fundamentally. The enormous dy-

of each several passage is in some way hidden and more wonderful. For even though I do not understand it, yet I suspect that some deeper meaning underlie the words” (trans. J. E. L. Oulton, LCL 265, 197). Dionysius clearly uses the program of the Jewish hermeneutic here (cf. note 33).

⁴⁰In the language of cultural studies one can speak of a “hybrid.”

⁴¹The first applies also to the Quran, as A. Neuwirth shows. See Neuwirth, *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike*; A. Neuwirth, N. Sinai, and M. Marx, eds., *The Qur'an in Context*.

⁴²Cf. F. Brunnhölzl et al., “Bibelübersetzungen” in *LexMA* 2 (1983): 88–106; for the Vulgate, see pp. 91–92.

⁴³This statement is not meant normatively but refers equally to the material aspect and to the linguistic and cultural aspect. With the Latin Vulgate there emerged one “Christian Bible” in one place from one hand at one time. By contrast, the Septuagint and the New Testament as well as the Greek Bible were, as indicated, linguistically and culturally heterogeneous collections.

⁴⁴The term “readings” transports a “flat” hermeneutic and is suitable for designating the hermeneutical potencies of New Testament scholarship, which are present but seldom brought into exegetical consciousness and worked out clearly. Cf. note 31.

⁴⁵This is presented and justified in O. Wischmeyer, “Texte, Text und Rezeption. Das Paradigma der Text-Rezeptions-Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments,” in *Die Bibel als Text. Beiträge zu einer textbezogenen Bibelhermeneutik*, ed. O. Wischmeyer and S. Scholz, NET 24 (Tübingen: Francke, 2008), 155–92.

namism and the great scholarly success of New Testament scholarship since J. S. Semler and F. C. Baur lies, by contrast, in the decanonization and historicization of the New Testament writings, which were now read for the first time in the reception history as “themselves” and in their simultaneous fundamental separation from the Old Testament canon, which in the course of recent scholarship has again become what it originally was – the scriptural collection of ancient Israel.⁴⁶

Both processes of separation had far-reaching hermeneutical consequences. The separation of the early Christian writings from their reception history calls into question not only their normative significance but also their significance as such. What makes the letter of James *materially* – and this means in our context *theologically* – “significant” and distinguishes it from so-called apocryphal texts if it is *not* read *canonically* from the outset? The other separation may have had even more far-reaching consequences for canon hermeneutics. The separation from the *Old Testament* implies both an interruption of the intertext of Jewish *Scriptures* and *New Testament* – which was a given for the New Testament authors themselves and for the early church writers⁴⁷ – and the renunciation of both the hermeneutical concept of salvation history⁴⁸ – which connects the two canons – and the methods of typology and allegoresis.⁴⁹ In this way, historical interpretation distanced itself from the self-understanding of the New Testament writings – in favor of the self-understanding of the *Scriptures* of Israel – and in the long run subjected the position and significance of the *Old Testament* in the Christian religion to renewed debate.

2.2 History of Emergence: The Individual Writings and their Pre-History as a Starting Point

The choice to start with the early Christian writings themselves is self-evident for New Testament scholarship. In the context of the discussion of canon and hermeneutics, the question of the status and authority of these writings therefore initially arises from their self-understanding, i.e., *before* their canonization. The early Christians were not “Scriptureless,” let alone an illiterate group, nor did they need to create canonical literature for the first time. They had the *Scripture*, which they used richly and employed as an interpretive – and newly interpreted – foundation for their own religion. They joined their own literature to this *Scripture* from the beginning. To be sure, Jesus himself did not leave behind anything written, Paul placed his preaching far above his letters, and the Christ-believing communities esteemed the orality of the tradition of the sayings of the Lord and the gospel proclamation more highly than what was committed to writ-

⁴⁶The further deconstruction of the “Scriptures” of Israel through Old Testament scholarship, which ran parallel to the work of New Testament scholarship, cannot be presented here.

⁴⁷On this, cf., as an exemplary starting point, the classic study of P. Wendland, “Zur ältesten Geschichte der Bibel in der Kirche,” *ZNW* 1 (1900): 267–90.

⁴⁸On this, cf. the essays in J. Frey, S. Krauter, and H. Lichtenberger, eds., *Heil und Geschichte*, WUNT 248 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).

⁴⁹On this, see note 146.

ing. Nevertheless, Paul did already compose his own writings. The first early Christian writings emerged as situational (letters of Paul) and commemorative (Gospels) literature with kerygmatic and paraenetic functions without an open canonical claim. This scenario is reminiscent of the Qumran community, which likewise did not understand its own literature as canonical.⁵⁰ The differentiating interpretation of the early Christian texts as independent individual writings does justice to this self-understanding.

Since F. C. Baur efforts have been made to present the historical and thematic profile of the individual writings of the New Testament along with their partly oral and partly written prehistory and to reconstruct their processes of emergence as well as their effects and mutual relationships. This differentiating analysis has made the *New Testament* a rich source for the history of the first three generations of emerging Christianity and has shed light on the different profiles, tendencies, and powers of this formative epoch. It is not necessary for me to present this process. It largely coincides with the discipline of New Testament scholarship. I will refer only very briefly to the fundamental thematic spheres that structure the discipline. New Testament *literary history* placed the New Testament genres – Gospels, letters, *diegesis* (acts), and apocalypse – in the Jewish and Greek literature, described the different functions of the *genre*, and worked out the profile of the author. The individual writings can be presented in their mutual dependence and situated historically. The great themes of New Testament *theology* – Christology, ethics, eschatology, Israel, law, gospel, faith – can analogously be analyzed as a historically developing discourse,⁵¹ in which the first generations of the Christ-believing Jews and gentiles participated. In the *history of primitive Christianity*, the central historical figures at the beginning of Christianity – Jesus, Paul, Peter – are historically reconstructed and respectively constructed anew. The *religion of the first Christians*⁵² can be described as a deviant Judaism in the Hellenistic-Roman cultural context, which quickly developed its own religious, social, and ethical identity⁵³ and, as already described, built its own new library. From the perspective of New Testament scholarship, the *New Testament* presents itself as a library of the incipient Christian religion and its institutions, whose individual books each require individual analysis. This individual analysis is the heart of New Testament scholarship. The discipline continues to understand its scholarly work as predominantly analytical and critical – textual analysis and tradition-historical analysis are the leading methodological terms.

From this perspective, the canonical *New Testament* can appear to be a collection that is violently and secondarily imposed upon the individual writings after the fact, which partly even destroys the intentions of the individual writings. The example of the letter of James, which takes a position against a central element of the Pauline letters can serve as an illustration. The persistent exegetical efforts to reach a reconciliation

⁵⁰On the Qumran literature, see note 5.

⁵¹In part, this discourse is conducted polemically. On this, cf. O. Wischmeyer and L. Scornaiench, eds., *Polemik in der frühchristlichen Literatur: Texte, Themen, Kontexte*, BZNW 170 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011).

⁵²Cf. the title of G. Theißen, *Die Religion der ersten Christen. Eine Theorie des Urchristentums* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 2000); ET = G. Theißen, *The Religion of the Earliest Churches: Creating a Symbolic World*, trans. J. Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999).

⁵³The question of how one can describe this process temporally is controversial in scholarship.

between the position of Paul and that of James have no basis in substance but can be traced back to the fact that the Pauline letters and the letter of James are included in the canon and therefore appear to require a certain harmonization. The phenomenon is well known and discussed time and again under the key phrase *unity and diversity of the canon*.⁵⁴

2.3 *Processes of Authorization: Pre-Canonical Characteristics of the Individual Writings of the New Testament*

The perspective of the situational and commemorative individual writings remains decisive for New Testament scholarship. But precisely the exegetical analyses of the individual writings have identified clear tendencies to close relationships of the writings to one another and to latent canonizing claims: (1) in the figure of “apostolic” origin, (2) in the latent canonical claim of the letters of Paul (“self-authorization”) and of the originally anonymous Gospels (“self-canonization”), (3) in the emergence of earlier proto-canonical collections, and (4) in the reading out of these writings in the communities (“reading fellowships”). These tendencies surface in the texts in different connections and mixtures. I therefore inquire first into motifs that are connected to the *authority of the origin from the Kyrios and from the apostles* (1 and 2) and then into motifs that point to the *recognition of the authority of the texts by groups* (3 and 4). The fifth motif – namely, the inner-biblical intertextuality (5) – likewise gives information about the text-internal hermeneutic of the writings and about its relationship to the phenomenon of the canon.

(1) The earliest of the impulses that led to the preservation and collection of the Christian texts and thus marked the beginning of the early Christian writings that later obtained canonical status can be studied especially well in Papias, whose activity stands more at the end of the early efforts at collection and canonization – namely, the unquestionable high esteem for the Jesus tradition as the “sayings of the Kyrios.” According to Eusebius’ report in his *Historia ecclesiastica*, bishop Papias from Hierapolis in Phrygia in Asia Minor collected oral Jesus tradition at a time in which the Gospels of Mark and Matthew were already available, which Papias also knew himself.⁵⁵ His motive for collection lay in the authority of the *Kyrios* and of the maximally secure and authentic handing down of the sayings of the Lord through a chain of tradition that led back to the apostles and through them to Jesus himself: “But if ever anyone came who had followed the *πρεσβύτεροι*, I inquired into the words of the *πρεσβύτεροι*, what Andrew or Peter or Philip or Thomas or James or John or Matthew, or any other *τῶν τοῦ κυρίου μαθητῶν* had said, and what Aristion and ὁ *πρεσβύτερος* John, *τοῦ κυρίου μαθηταί*, were saying.” For οὐ γὰρ τὰ ἐκ τῶν *βιβλίων* τοσοῦτον με ὠφέλειν ὑπελάμβανον, ὅσον τὰ

⁵⁴See E. Käsemann, “Einheit und Wahrheit. Über die Faith-and-Order-Conference in Montreal 1963,” *MPTb* 53 (1964): 65–75.

⁵⁵Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39. For Papias, see now also S. C. Carlson, *Papias of Hierapolis, Exposition of Dominical Oracles: The Fragments, Testimonia, and Reception of a Second Century Commentator* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

παρὰ ζώσης φωνῆς καὶ μενούσης.⁵⁶ It is notable that Papias exclusively collected Jesus tradition. M. Günther notes that “the letters of Paul, which were in circulation in Asia Minor at the time of Papias, evidently did not attract his interest”⁵⁷ – an indifference to the letters of Paul that Papias shared with the *auctor ad Theophilum*, who likewise collected Jesus traditions and reworked them in the Gospel of Luke, while remaining silent about the letters of Paul, although he was the person who collected additional apostle traditions and Paul traditions from the mission of the first generation and in his “Acts of the Apostles” became *nolens volens* the first and most important biographer of Paul. Evidently, neither for the *auctor ad Theophilum* nor for Papias did the letters of Paul have the authority that they assigned to the apostolic Jesus traditions and that Paul claimed for himself. As already mentioned, Papias is also the first person about whom Eusebius hands down that he commented also on the origin of the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. When Papias, as is well known, consistently speaks of the sayings of the Lord (λόγια κυριακά), which Mark – on the basis of the teachings of Peter – and Matthew are said to have committed to writing, and places “the living and enduring voice” of the apostles and apostle students *over* these accounts (*Hist. eccl.* 3.39) and when Eusebius himself makes a case for the priority of the oral over the written tradition (*Hist. eccl.* 3.24),⁵⁸ then we are still very far from the authority of a written *book* canon. Despite his knowledge of the Gospels, Papias has the impression that the genuine Jesus tradition reaches far beyond what has been committed to writing up to that point. He is likewise rather skeptical in relation to the authority of the Gospels that were already available. By contrast, the authority of the Jesus tradition guaranteed through the apostles and their students has normative character for him. Ironically, Papias himself contributed to the commitment of the Jesus tradition to writing through his five book *Exposition of the Sayings of the Lord*, which did not, however, gain entrance into the Gospel canon and received little respect from Eusebius.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, one thing is very clear in Papias. All interest is focused on the *Kyrios*. The apostolic tradition of Jesus’ teachings is thus a decisive root of the idea of the New Testament canon. Every canon hermeneutic that is based on a book theory must critically call to mind the fact that the canonization of early Christian writings was understood as the last step of the safeguarding of the oral teaching of Jesus and the gospel proclamation of the apostles. The tragedy of Papias lies in the fact that he came too late for the further collection of oral Jesus tradition. His endeavor was similarly anachronistic as Marcion’s and Tatian’s efforts to obtain a single gospel. The commitment of the Jesus tradition to writing was already so far advanced that its canonization – namely, in the four Gospels – had already begun

⁵⁶Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39 (trans. K. Lake, LCL 153, 293, with Greek words inserted by O. W.). Unless otherwise noted, subsequent translations of Eusebius’ *Historia ecclesiastica* are also taken from the LCL.

⁵⁷M. Günther, “Papias,” in *RGG*⁴ 6 (2003), 862; ET = M. Günther, “Papias,” in *RPP* 9 (2011), 514.

⁵⁸The apostles Matthew and John “took to writing perforce”; John had “used all the time a message which was not written down”; Matthew had “preached to Hebrews.” The basis for the commitment to writing was his mission outside of Israel: “When he was on the point of going to others he transmitted in writing in his native language the Gospel according to himself, and thus supplied by writing the lack of his own presence to those from whom he was sent.” The apostle students Mark (interpreter of Peter) and Luke (companion of Paul) likewise “had already published the Gospels according to them.”

⁵⁹*Hist. eccl.* 3.39: σφόδρα συμκρὸς ὧν τὸν νοῦν.

and the Gospels were no longer “open terrain.” Thus, Papias is an especially important witness for the early beginning of the canonization of the Gospels on the basis of their close connection to the apostolic tradition.

What reasons can we discern for the preservation, collection, and ultimate canonization of the *Pauline letters* – those texts that appeared in written form from the beginning and were meant to maintain the oral and personal communication of Paul with his communities in his absence?⁶⁰ A reference to the proclamation and teaching of Jesus is not present. At the end of her book *Paul, the Corinthians and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics*,⁶¹ Margaret M. Mitchell raises the question of why the letters of Paul, which are so difficult to interpret and therefore already interpreted controversially at a very early date,⁶² were preserved, collected, and – as I add – made the foundation of the later *New Testament*. Her answer is that

We should . . . note here that the fact that Paul’s letters were not plain, were not easily digested on the first reading, was not only cause for interpretive debate, but also a major *condition for their preservation*: after all, missives that have released their information and done their work can be discarded or the writing surface reused. The threshing Gregory described so well requires the safeguarding of the text for continual rereading.

Thus, Margaret Mitchell finds in the complexity of the Pauline letters – which were not exhausted in current information or situational communication and therefore required a higher degree of attention and thus could become a source for interpretation and hermeneutics – a presupposition for the preservation of these community letters, which, though initially functioning as current and situational functional texts, did not come to an end in this function and thus already carried within them the foundation for their later canonization.⁶³ Eve-Marie Becker speaks in this context of the “metacommunicative excess” of the Pauline letters.⁶⁴

Some Pauline communities – to be more precise, the communities in Thessalonica, Corinth, and Philippi as well as the Christian house communities in Rome⁶⁵ – must have understood the theological quality (cf. 2 Cor 10.10)⁶⁶ and material authority of

⁶⁰On the Pauline epistolography, cf. E.-M. Becker, “Form und Gattung der paulinischen Briefe,” in *Paulus Handbuch*, ed. F. W. Horn. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 141–49.

⁶¹M. M. Mitchell, *Paul, the Corinthians and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 106. Mitchell alludes to Gregory of Nyssa.

⁶²Cf. esp. 2 Peter.

⁶³There are, of course, also other reasons for the preservation and archiving of pieces of writing. On the theme of the complexity of texts, cf. O. Wischmeyer, *Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments*, 158–71.

⁶⁴E.-M. Becker, *Schreiben und Verstehen. Paulinische Briefhermeneutik im Zweiten Korintherbrief*, NET 4 (Tübingen: Francke, 2002), 134: linguistic forms “that have independent propositional content and that Paul formulated in the context of meta-communicative reflections.”

⁶⁵The fact that Philemon is also preserved is interesting. A strong Christian house church presumably also stands behind Philemon.

⁶⁶A distinction is important here. The orthonymous Pauline letters were preserved in certain communities because of the authority of their author *and* because of their high degree of complexity and universal claim

the Pauline letters, which, on the one hand, reached beyond the *oral* gospel proclamation⁶⁷ and teaching that stood at the center of the Pauline activity, beyond the communication and situational instruction and admonition of their founding missionary, who called himself – not without contestation – *apostle*, and, on the other hand, contained his gospel proclamation. They evidently also did not take to heart Paul's theological-missional interpretation that *they* are his “letter” to all people (2 Cor 3.1–3) but preserved the letters of Paul, so that the first collections of Pauline letters soon emerged, which can be regarded as a nucleus of the later New Testament canon alongside – or even before – the four Gospels. These letters – in this respect they are most comparable to the Gospel of Mark – developed a formative literary power that very soon led to imitations. The Deutero- and Trito-Pauline letters bear witness to a Pauline school⁶⁸ – however this is to be specified – or at least to Pauline tradition,⁶⁹ whose members were themselves literarily, pedagogically, and organizationally active in the vein of and on the basis of the Pauline letters and who borrowed for this the authority of the apostle, which had already become more established in the time since his death.⁷⁰

(2) Alongside the handing down of logia on the basis of the absolute authority of the *Kyrios* and the preservation of Pauline letters⁷¹ on the basis of the personal authority of the *apostolos* (2 Cor 10.10) and because of their textual complexity, we can recognize *another reason* that contributed to the commitment of the Jesus traditions to writing, their literary composition in Gospels, as well as to the collection of the New Testament letters and thus created the basis of the later New Testament canon – the comprehensive *theological claim* of early Christian texts vis-à-vis the religion of Israel and the Greco-Roman religious worlds.

The authors of the Gospels – notwithstanding their specific traditions and different early Christian community contexts, their individual cultural profiles and intentions, and their personal literary and theological strategies – surely all understood their books in the first instance as media for the secure preservation of Jesus traditions. We have already seen that Eusebius still handed down this understanding – namely, that the Gospels are only the written “sayings of the Lord.” But this self-understanding, which

to interpretation – thus, at least Galatians and Romans. The circumstances that led to the preservation and later canonization of the Deutero- and Trito-Pauline letters as well as the Catholic epistles was probably different. Here, we must start from local and theologically-oriented traditions and “schools.” In the name of early Christian leadership figures – above all Paul, Peter, and James have weight here – the authors of the non-orthonymous epistolary literature wrote themselves into the formative Christian tradition literature.

⁶⁷Cf. only Rom 10.14–21 and Rom 15.14–24.

⁶⁸T. Schmeller, *Schulen im Neuen Testament? Zur Stellung des Urchristentums in der Bildungswelt seiner Zeit* (Freiburg: Herder, 2001); T. Vegge, *Paulus und das antike Schulwesen*, BZNW 134 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006).

⁶⁹On this, cf. the essays in J. Frey, J. Herzer, M. Janßen, C. K. Rothchild, and P. Engelmann, eds., *Pseudepigraphie und Verfälschungsfiktion in frühchristlichen Briefen – Pseudepigraphy and Author Fiction in Early Christian Letters* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).

⁷⁰The most interesting case of a borrowing of the authority of Paul is, however, not the pseudoepigraphical Pauline letters but what we encounter in 2 Peter, whose pseudonymous author is committed to the Petrine authority and yet cannot avoid appealing to Paul, as difficult as this is for him.

⁷¹The ἀπόστολος is Paul. Peter is perceived less as an author. See Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.3. Mark writes “for him.”

is reflected in the understanding of the ecclesiastical writers, does not exhaust the significance of the Gospels. From the perspective of New Testament scholarship, this task of collection and handing down does not yet describe the actual *achievement* of the authors. Out of these Jesus traditions – which Papias also sought and collected, though without joining and reworking them literarily – the evangelists respectively configure their own magisterial Jesus stories, which represent for them the foundation of their interpretation of the world and of human beings. The Gospel of Mark stages itself literarily as εὐαγγέλιον Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, as announcement of the eschatological time.⁷² Taking up the biblical creation narrative, the Gospel of John interprets Jesus as the eternal Logos who has definitively disclosed the truth and the life to human beings and seeks to awaken faith in its hearers and readers (John 20.31). The Gospel of Luke understands itself as a precise account (διήγησις) that provides assurance about the λόγος or λόγοι of the Jesus story for the patron Theophilus (Luke 1.4). The Gospel of Matthew places the whole Jesus story under the rubric of the διδασχὴ of Jesus, which claims validity for the whole world. These different concepts have *one* thing in common – they all understand and interpret the Jesus story within the framework of a comprehensive world interpretation on the basis of the Jewish religion, which is developed between the universal theologoumena of God's creation of the world and human beings, his covenantal law, and the general last judgment.⁷³ All the Gospels sketch Jesus into this theology. Their claim to definitive world interpretation,⁷⁴ which is especially explicit in the Gospel of John, is derived from their interpretation of Jesus as the last and definitive revelation of the God of Israel, who is the God of the world.⁷⁵ The authors of the Gospels are also by no means “mouthpieces” or “minute-takers” of Jesus.⁷⁶ They do not understand themselves as Jesus' voice, and they also do not act only as *collectors* and *tradents* of Jesus traditions, as Papias did. Instead, they write as *interpreters* of the εὐαγγέλιον Ἰησοῦ

⁷²On this, cf. O. Wischmeyer, “Forming Identity through Literature: The Impact of Mark for the Building of Christ Believing Communities in the Second Half of the First Century C.E.,” in *Mark and Matthew. Comparative Readings I: Understanding the Earliest Gospels in their First Century Settings*, ed. E.-M. Becker and A. Runesson, WUNT 271 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 355–78.

⁷³In Matthew and Luke this is documented through the genealogies, which sketch Jesus into the history of Israel and into the history of humanity.

⁷⁴On this, cf. G. Theißen, “Wie wurden neutestamentliche Texte zu heiligen Schriften? Die Kanonizität des Neuen Testaments als literaturgeschichtliches Problem,” in *Kanon in Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion. Kanonisierungsprozesse religiöser Texte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart. Ein Handbuch*, ed. E.-M. Becker and S. Scholz (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 423–47; G. Theißen, “Die Kanonizität der Schrift. Wie wurden urchristliche Texte zu Heiligen Schriften? Ein literaturgeschichtliches Problem,” in *Texttranszendenz. Beiträge zu einer polyphonen Bibelhermeneutik*, BVB 36 (Münster: LIT, 2019), 275–300.

⁷⁵This distinguishes them from Papias. It also distinguishes them from Q, which in this perspective, is by no means to be understood even only as a “half Gospel.”

⁷⁶This is Papias' view of the apostles. The ecclesiastical writers vacillate between the idea that the Gospels according to Mark and Luke are later transcriptions of the oral teachings of Peter and Paul and their own observations on the independent profiles of the authors. Cf., e.g., the sketch of the distinctive Lukan profile in Irenaeus' dispute with the Marcionites and Valentinians (*Haer.* 3.14.3). In all four Gospels, however, the recourse back to the apostolic tradition, i.e., to Jesus, is primary for the ecclesiastical writers.

Χριστοῦ, of God's definitive saving action in Jesus Christ.⁷⁷

It is evident that the letters of Paul have materially the same claim. They are not only – as Margaret Mitchell specifies – complex texts but are also texts that work out from the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus a definitive world interpretation⁷⁸ in the framework of the Jewish religion.⁷⁹ The semantic cipher for this world interpretation is the εὐαγγέλιον Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ⁸⁰ as information about the end-time action of God toward human beings. There is no place in this εὐαγγέλιον for interpretation, discussion, and alternatives.⁸¹ This fundamental theological claim of the Gospels and of the letters of Paul represents something like a material implicit canonical claim.⁸² Gerd Theißen speaks very generally of the “reference to transcendence” of these writings.⁸³

(3) It is not necessary to present the history of the early collection of early Christian texts here.⁸⁴ I will merely call to mind a few aspects that make clear that there was an early and lasting recognition of early Christian texts in the communities that led to their preservation, collection, and compilation. The letters of Paul were meant to be passed on between the communities. Paul himself already makes clear thereby that his letters were meant to be read not only in a situational way and in relation to the problems of individual communities. In 2 Peter, a collection of Pauline letters is not only presupposed (3.15–16), but an effort is also made to appeal to Paul as a witness for the eschatological teaching of (pseudo-)Peter. Thus, there are also pointers to a (pre-canonical) harmonization between Pauline letters and Catholic epistles. The mutual influence of the four Gospels and the tendency to group them is evident at the latest since the secondary ending of Mark, John 21, and, later, Tatian's *Diatessaron*.⁸⁵ For the process of canonization three tendencies follow from this – first, the high esteem for the

⁷⁷The distinct theological profile of the evangelists was recognized also by Eusebius, though with great caution and only very small results (*Hist. eccl.* 3.24). In the last century, the method of redaction criticism led New Testament scholarship to significant insights here.

⁷⁸I prefer the term world interpretation (*Weltdeutung*) to the term “meaning creation” (*Sinnstiftung*), which is used by Udo Schnelle and others. The term “meaning creation” contains an active-independent constructive element, which the biblical authors, who understood themselves primarily as witnesses of the εὐαγγέλιον and as interpreters of the Old Testament, would not have embraced.

⁷⁹The differences to the Gospels play no role in this connection.

⁸⁰εὐαγγέλιον occurs in this sense in Paul and in the Gospel of Mark.

⁸¹Discussion, alternatives, polemic, and apologetic do not occur in the Gospel of Mark on the level of the εὐαγγέλιον itself but rather are embedded as text sections in the narrative announcement of the macrotext εὐαγγέλιον – in the controversy dialogues of Jesus with Jewish authorities. On this, cf. L. Scornaienchi, “Jesus als Polemiker oder: Wie polemisch darf Jesus sein?” in *Polemik in der frühchristlichen Literatur: Texte, Themen, Kontexte*, ed. O. Wischmeyer and L. Scornaienchi (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 381–414.

⁸²On this, cf. F. W. Horn, “Wollte Paulus ‘kanonisch’ wirken?” in *Kanon in Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion. Kanonisierungsprozesse religiöser Texte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart. Ein Handbuch*, ed. E.-M. Becker and S. Scholz (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 400–22.

⁸³On this, cf. Theißen, “Wie wurden neutestamentliche Texte zu heiligen Schriften?”; Theißen, “Die Kanonizität der Schrift.”

⁸⁴On this, cf. H. von Lips, “Kanondebatten in 20. Jahrhundert,” in *Kanon in Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion. Kanonisierungsprozesse religiöser Texte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart. Ein Handbuch*, ed. E.-M. Becker and S. Scholz (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 109–26.

⁸⁵On these texts, cf. the analyses in T. K. Heckel, *Vom Evangelium des Markus zum viergestaltigen Evangelium*, WUNT 120 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999).

writings that were regarded as original; second, the clear limitation of these writings in demarcation from other texts; third, the retention of the variety of the original writings in opposition to standardizing and reductionistic tendencies, as we observe them in Marcion and Tatian. Canon formation is not simply reduction but documentation of the original variety within limits.

(4) According to the shared testimony of Origen,⁸⁶ Augustine,⁸⁷ and the Easter letters,⁸⁸ the most important criterion for the belonging of one of these new Christian writings to the *canon* was their use and their public reading in the community worship services,⁸⁹ i.e., a second orality. The Old Testament, adapted in a Christian way, was also persistently understood by Origen and others as “word of God,” i.e., from the perspective of its oral power.⁹⁰ The *book* thesis – which from a history-of-religions perspective is often made the basis for explaining the biblical canon and supported by the

⁸⁶Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.25. Origen attests the “22 books of the Old Testament,” while his “New Testament” includes only one generally recognized letter of Peter and John, respectively. With respect to Hebrews, the position of Origen is open. He recognizes Revelation.

⁸⁷Augustine, *Doctr. chr.* 2.12.13.

⁸⁸On the Easter letters, cf., by way of introduction, K. Fitschen, “Osterfestbrief,” in *LACL* (2002): 538–39 (with literature). On the Thirty-ninth Easter Letter, see, e.g., D. A. Brakke, “A New Fragment of Athanasius’s Thirty-Ninth Festal Letter: Heresy, Apocrypha, and the Canon,” *Harvard Theological Review* 103 (2010): 47–66, here 56: “This last point restates part of my earlier argument about the significance of the thirty-ninth Festal Letter: Although most scholars remain focused on the lists of books, the greater importance of the letter is that it reveals the role of canon formation in supporting one form of Christian piety and authority and undermining others. Different scriptural practices accompany different modes of authority and spirituality, and we should not take the bounded canon of episcopal orthodoxy as either the inevitable *telos* of early Christian history or the only way that Christians construed and used sacred writings. The new fragment, however, makes clear that in establishing a defined canon Athanasius sought to undermine not only a general spirituality of free intellectual inquiry and its academic mode of authority, but also the specific false doctrines to which he believed such a spirituality gave rise.” The significance of the Letter of Athanasius for the history of the canon is above all terminological in character: “Only since the middle of the fourth century were the ecclesiastically normative collection of the Scriptures of the OT and NT designated as canonical This is first attested in the Thirty-ninth Festal Letter of Athanasius from 367 CE” (Ohme, “Canon,” 18).

⁸⁹Theiß (“Wie wurden neutestamentliche Texte zu heiligen Schriften?,” “Die Kanonizität der Schrift,”) speaks of the cultic use. On this, cf., on the one hand, the reports of the reading out of writings in the community gatherings (but when did this begin to apply to the early Christian writings and for which writings did it apply?) and, on the other hand, specifically the thesis of the construction of the Gospel of Mark in pericope form, which implies a purpose relating to the worship service; on this, cf. L. Hartmann, “Das Markusevangelium, für die lectio solemnitas im Gottesdienst abgefasst?” in *Geschichte – Tradition – Reflexion. Festschrift für Martin Hengel*, vol. 1, ed. H. Cancik, H. Lichtenberger, and P. Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 147–71. On the very difficult reconstructions of the readings in the early Christian worship service, cf. P. C. Bloth, “Schriftlesung I,” in *TRE* 30 (1999): 520–58. On this, cf. the critical evaluation of C. Buchanan, “Questions Liturgists Would Like to Ask Justin Martyr,” in *Justin Martyr and His Worlds*, ed. S. Parvis and P. Foster (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 152–59. In light of the lack of sources, both theses (on the reading out and on the pericopes) remain very hypothetical. Cf. C. Marksches, “Epochen der Erforschung des neutestamentlichen Kanons in Deutschland. Einige vorläufige Bemerkungen,” in *Kanon in Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion. Kanonisierungsprozesse religiöser Texte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart. Ein Handbuch*, ed. E.-M. Becker and S. Scholz (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 578–604.

⁹⁰Cf. also the orality of the Torah, which is strongly emphasized by current Jewish studies scholarship (cf. note 33). Texts such as those of Origen must be taken into account by Jewish studies scholars who reject closed “Bible concepts,” so that an inappropriate opposition between Jewish and Christian “Bible” concepts can be avoided.

hypothesis of the Christian origin of the codex, which is said to have provided the material foundation for the *one*, closed Christian canonical Bible *book*⁹¹ – is not historically useful for the phase of the emergence of the New Testament canon.

(5) As already mentioned, the intertextuality that exists between *Septuaginta* and *New Testament* as well as within the New Testament writings or partial collections proves to be a decisive factor for the pre-canonical valence of the early Christian writings. The early Christian authors refer, in the first place, primarily and extensively to the *Septuaginta*. At the same time, an initial self-canonization in the sense of the surpassing of the *Septuaginta* arose already in the Pauline letters and then even more clearly in the Gospels. In the process of canonization, the coordinates for a *hermeneutic* of these writings, which takes their canonical status into account, is also developed. In doing so, the ecclesiastical writers who were especially involved in this process, such as Irenaeus, Origen, Tyconius, Augustine, and John Cassian,⁹² could make recourse to hermeneutical course settings in the New Testament writings themselves, i.e., to different forms of literary and theological intertextuality⁹³ and to the already mentioned hermeneutical tools of typology and allegoresis – in short, to the various ways in which early Christian authors interacted with the *Septuaginta*, which represents the prehistory, the contemporary basis, and the religio-cultural foundation of the early Christian writings that were to become the *New Testament*. This applies not only to the religious statements, conceptual worlds, and linguistic forms, but also to the *hermeneutic* of the Jewish *Scriptures*. As I have already mentioned, the early Jewish texts did not, for example, emerge in a religious-cultural and hermeneutical vacuum or in a pre-cultural no man's land, as might be suggested by the conception of early Christian *Urliteratur*, which, in this view, arose from orality and was a phenomenon of the lower class or of groups on the margins.⁹⁴ Instead, they explicitly support themselves with reference to the existing library of Greek speaking Judaism,⁹⁵ the *Septuaginta*.⁹⁶ Thus, from the beginning, they stand, on the one hand, in a canonical environment and, on the other hand, also in direct material connection to the *hermeneutic* of the Greek Jewish *Scriptures* that was developed in Alexandria⁹⁷ and to their general cultural environment. Beyond this, they must specify their own relation to the *Scriptures* – this too begins in the early Chris-

⁹¹Schuller, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and Canon and Canonization," appears to argue in this way. On this, cf. the critique of this perspective in H. R. Seeliger, "Buchrolle, Codex, Kanon. Sachhistorische und ikonographische Aspekte und Zusammenhänge," in *Kanon in Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion. Kanonisierungsprozesse religiöser Texte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart. Ein Handbuch*, ed. E.-M. Becker and S. Scholz (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 547–76.

⁹²See O. Wischmeyer, ed., *Handbuch der Bibelhermeneutiken* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016).

⁹³On the hermeneutical valence of intertextuality, cf. O. Wischmeyer, *Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments*, 185–93.

⁹⁴On this, cf. the approach of Theißen, *Die Entstehung des Neuen Testaments als literaturgeschichtliches Problem*.

⁹⁵See Mark 1 and Rom 1 as well as the beginnings of the three large Gospels. The writers make this connection programmatically clear from the very beginning.

⁹⁶However, through Jesus himself and his disciples who came from Galilee, the Hebrew Bible also remains visible in the background as pretext of the Gospels.

⁹⁷Cf., by way of introduction, Kugel, "Early Jewish Interpretation." Kugel mentions "four fundamental postulates" of ancient Jewish (Hebrew as well as Greek) biblical hermeneutics: (i) "scriptural texts were ba-

tian texts with Paul and the Gospel of Mark and leads to a complex and many-voiced process that presents one of the great, enduring hermeneutical tasks of the ecclesiastical writers since the debate with Marcion. The biblical hermeneutics of the last two generations has taken the specification of this relationship into view again.⁹⁸ The enduring close connection of the early Christian texts to the canonical *Septuaginta* and its hermeneutic placed the early Christian texts themselves – in a similar way to some Qumran writings – in a pre-canonical sphere. These texts were not commentaries but claimed for themselves an authority that built on that of the Scriptures, respected it, and at the same time surpassed it. This disposed them for a canonical status and ultimately made them pre-canonical texts.

2.4 Processes of Diversification: *Aemulatio* and *Imitatio*

The analysis of the aforementioned motifs should neither be overestimated nor absolutized and made into the exclusive foundation of a one-dimensional canon hermeneutic. With respect to their latent canonical dimension, the theological claim of the Gospels and the Pauline letters is only limited. After all, we have not *one* Gospel, as Marcion wanted, but several – according to the *auctor ad Theophilum* even many – and we have not only the Gospels but also the Pauline letters. And, conversely, we have not only the Pauline letters, in which the *εὐαγγέλιον* gets by almost entirely without the Jesus story, but also the interpretation of the *εὐαγγέλιον* precisely as Jesus story in the Gospels. Beyond this, the engagement of the large Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John with the Gospel of Mark makes clear that the authors of the post-Markan Gospels did not acknowledge the theological-formative role of the oldest Gospel but understood the Gospel of Mark – if at all⁹⁹ – only as one source alongside others.¹⁰⁰ This also applies to the Sayings Source, to which the two large Synoptics evidently did not pay the same respect as Papias did to the “sayings of the Lord.” We hear nothing at all about a written sayings source in Papias. The prologue of the Gospel of Luke proceeds in this way even with the “many” already existing Gospels. Something analogous applies to the Pauline letters. While the authentic Pauline letters were indeed preserved,¹⁰¹ even hypotheses that assume a very early corpus of Pauline letters that made a claim to pre-canonical

sically cryptic,” (2) “the basic purpose of Scripture was to *guide* people nowadays,” (3) the different biblical texts ultimately contained “a single, unitary message,” (4) “all of Scripture was of divine origin” (132).

⁹⁸Cf., by way of introduction, Dohmen and Stemberger, *Hermeneutik der Jüdischen Bibel und des Alten Testaments*.

⁹⁹This qualification applies to the Gospel of John.

¹⁰⁰The outline of the Jesus story of the Gospel of Mark was probably the most important thing for the two large Synoptics. On the question of whether the Gospel of Matthew wanted to replace the Gospel of Mark, cf. the essays in E.-M. Becker, and A. Runesson, eds., *Mark and Matthew. Comparative Readings I: Understanding the Earliest Gospels in their First Century Settings*, WUNT 271 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

¹⁰¹The question of the extent to which they were reworked in the communities (Corinthian correspondence) and the question of how many letters of Paul were lost cannot be raised here.

status¹⁰² must consider the fact that the pseudonymous authors of the Deutero- and Trito-Pauline letters did not respect these collections as such but expanded them beyond recognition – and the latter may have been redactionally active. Even if one were to affirm David Trobisch's proposed reconstruction of an early collection of Pauline letters,¹⁰³ it would nevertheless remain decisive that the possible editors did *not* demarcate the authentic epistolary corpus of Paul but rather wrote themselves into such a potential corpus. This means that the possible editors did not start from a closed "canon" of Pauline letters but rather from an open one. And it is not evident from the Pastoral epistles that they sought to close this part of the canon.

Viewed historically, what stood at the beginning was the variety of competing early Christian writings¹⁰⁴ that did not necessarily show consideration for one another, were written with a latent canonical claim, and had claims that were based on different and competing motives.¹⁰⁵ The prologue of the Gospel of Luke in particular makes clear that the early Christian authors also did not regard this as a problem at all but rather were active in the sense of the literary *aemulatio*, whereas the authors of the Deutero- and Trito-Pauline letters wrote in the sense of the *imitatio*. At least for the Gospel of Luke it is clear that his author was not interested in protecting and preserving the Gospel of Mark.¹⁰⁶ This diverse and – measured by the small number and the social status of the early Christians – extremely productive literary scene, which did not come to an end with the latest "New Testament" writings but rather came into bloom, led already in the second century to that process of safeguarding and selection that we know as the beginning of the canon history of the later "New Testament" writings of early Christianity. The canonization of the writings of the apostles and the Gospels that began in the second century – known under the term "the *Kyrios*" and the "*Apostolos*" – already presupposes their theological significance, their community reception,

¹⁰²On this, cf. Theißen, "Wie wurden neutestamentliche Texte zu heiligen Schriften?"; Theißen, "Die Kanonizität der Schrift."

¹⁰³D. Trobisch, *Die Entstehung der Paulusbriefsammlung. Studien zu den Anfängen christlicher Publizistik*, NTOA 10 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1989); on this, cf. the critical evaluation in Horn, "Wollte Paulus 'kanonisch' wirken?"

¹⁰⁴Thus the classic positions of W. Bauer and E. Käsemann. On the evidence of the texts that have been handed down, cf. the helpful presentation in L. W. Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), especially 20–24 on the early Christian texts. What is conspicuous here is the eleven manuscripts of the Shepherd of Hermas, on the one hand, and the relatively small number of New Testament apocryphal writings, on the other hand. Thus, the picture of the preserved early Christian texts – which is to a high degree contingent – results in an astonishingly "conservative" and not very surprising sketch of the early Christian literary scene. The high regard for the Gospels (apart from Mark), which far exceeds the presence of Pauline letters, is likewise evident.

¹⁰⁵This applies, in the first place, to the four canonical Gospels, on the one hand, and to the Pauline letters, on the other hand, which have no competition. Writings of the "opponent" missionaries have not been handed down. By contrast, the Deutero- and Trito-Pauline letters as well as the Petrine and Johannine letters and the letter of James point to conflicts between early Christian streams that were carried out with the help of apostolic authorities.

¹⁰⁶The *aemulatio* also applies to the Deutero-Pauline letters, especially to the high theological claim of Ephesians. On the relationship of the Gospels among one another, cf. also the reflections on suppression mechanisms in historiographical literature in Mendels, *Memory in Jewish, Pagan, and Christian Societies*, which illuminate the relationship between the Gospel of Mark and the large Synoptics.

and their “implicit” canonicity, i.e., their claim to authority. Canonization in the sense of the exclusion of certain valued writings resulted fundamentally from the increasing mass of Jesus traditions and theologically interpretive writings of different genres and provenances, which could appear to lead to an inability to grasp the whole and to arbitrariness. This was opposed by the process of canonization. Alongside the category of apostolicity, which was especially placed in the foreground by men such as Papias, the criteria of the reading of a work¹⁰⁷ in the communities, which was already mentioned earlier, and the agreement with the so-called *regula fidei* were developed further.¹⁰⁸ The numerous later Gospels, letters, acts, and apocalypses – designated today as “New Testament apocrypha” – used the New Testament genres and wanted, according to their self-understanding, to be apostolic.¹⁰⁹ By contrast, the ecclesiastical writers designated them as “inauthentic,” since they doubted their connection back to the apostles. In retrospect, the so-called New Testament apocrypha become early Christian post-New Testament edifying literature,¹¹⁰ which have their own place alongside the clearly non-canonical commentaries, theological apologetic and polemical writings, and poetic and historical writings of the ecclesiastical writers,¹¹¹ and serve as witnesses for the rapid inculturation of the Christians in the literature of incipient late antiquity. The canonization is then in its end stage a product of the needs of the community and of the leadership bodies of the church in light of the growth of “Christian literature,” which did not make clear its distance from the apostolic writings, and it has liturgical, ecclesial-legal, and dogmatic status¹¹² that continues to exercise influence into the present.

¹⁰⁷On this, cf. especially Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*.

¹⁰⁸On this, cf. Brakke, “A New Fragment of Athanasius’s Thirty-Ninth Festal Letter.”

¹⁰⁹Cf. the scandal around the presbyter who “forged” the Acts of Paul (cf. note 126).

¹¹⁰On the New Testament apocrypha, see H.-J. Klauck, *Apokryphe Evangelien. Eine Einführung*, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2008); ET = H.-J. Klauck, *Apocryphal Gospels: An Introduction*, trans. B. McNeil (London: T&T Clark International, 2003); S. Luther and J. Röder, “Der neutestamentliche Kanon und die neutestamentliche apokryphe Literatur. Überlegungen zu einer Verhältnisbestimmung,” in *Kanon in Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion. Kanonisierungsprozesse religiöser Texte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart. Ein Handbuch*, ed. E.-M. Becker and S. Scholz (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 469–502. Cf. now also M. Bockmuehl, *Ancient Apocryphal Gospels* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2017); J. Schröter, *The Apocryphal Gospels: Jesus Traditions Outside the Bible*, trans. W. Coppins (Eugene: Cascade, 2021).

¹¹¹On this, cf. the reflections in Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 37: “As we have noticed, these other (ultimately extracanonical) Gospel writings were read, and apparently in the very Christian circles that seem to have also read and revered the familiar canonical Gospels. But the manuscript data suggest that, though these Christians regarded texts such as the “Egerton Gospel” and the sayings collection we know as the Gospel of Thomas as suitable for Christian reading, they did not consider these texts as appropriate for inclusion in the early Gospel collections that reflect steps toward a New Testament canon.”

¹¹²Cf. O. Wischmeyer, *Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments*, 63–80 (with literature). See also L. M. McDonald and J. A. Sanders, eds., *The Canon Debate* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002), which is an extensive, historically and exegetically oriented handbook on the canons of the Old/First Testament and of the New Testament that includes helpful appendices on pp. 580–97, as well as E. Thomassen, *Canon and Canonicity: The Formation and Use of Scripture* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2010). Cf. also the criteriolog in Theißen, “Wie wurden neutestamentliche Texte zu heiligen Schriften?”; Theißen, “Die Kanonizität der Schrift.”

2.5 Processes of Canonization: Orality and Literality

The term “canon,” when related to the *Bible*, is, in general usage, semantically shaped chiefly by its end form and refers less to a collection of writings in the sense of a catalogue of especially valuable and authoritative books – this would be a possible definition of a literary canon¹¹³ – than to a closed collection of texts that have to a certain extent lost or surrendered their own life to the canon and now exist together as a textual collection in the form of a book and are in this regard more comparable to a collection of laws.¹¹⁴ Thus, the term describes not a process but rather the state of a closed process in which both the historical development and the independent existence of the individual texts are “sublated.” In contrast to this, the historical perspective asks about the process of canonization. What exists before this end state and what hermeneutical relevance does this prehistory possess? On the basis of what has been said thus far, I would like to emphasize again more clearly three relations of tension that are important for the question of the relation between canon and hermeneutics: (1) collection of writings and book, (2) closedness and openness of the canon, (3) orality and authenticity of the gospel.

(1) The fact that the writings that form the canon of the Christian Bible do not enter into history as “a book”¹¹⁵ is central. They become “a book” only much later. The fact that they become a book – which has already been touched on above – is an important result of canonization. It stands at the *end*¹¹⁶ of the canonization process and not at the beginning. The new early Christian writings become part of two collections – one that already existed (though it was not closed) and one that first had to be created – which are, in turn, composed of heterogeneous individual writings and have rather blurred “margins.” Here, a clear distinction must be made between the Christian *Old Testament*, whose wording and scope as Hebrew and Greek *Scripture* of ancient Ju-

¹¹³Cf. O. Wischmeyer, *Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments*, 75–80; J. A. Loader, H. von Lips, W. Wischmeyer, C. Danz, J. Maier, N. Sinai, and S. Winko, “Canon,” in *LBH* (2009): 310–16 (with literature on the literary canon). On this, see, in detail, N. Irrgang, “Vom literarischen Kanon zum ‘heiligen Buch.’ Einführende Bemerkungen zu den autoritativen Textsammlung der griechisch-römischen Welt,” in *Kanon in Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion. Kanonisierungsprozesse religiöser Texte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart. Ein Handbuch*, ed. E.-M. Becker and S. Scholz (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 130–36.

¹¹⁴Cf. note 4.

¹¹⁵The idea of the *one book*, supported by the Latin loan word *biblia*/βιβλίον, which has been taken up into the European languages, especially characterizes the Muslim view of late antique Judaism and Christianity. Cf. Neuwirth, *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike*, 81. Neuwirth’s plea (170) to understand the Quran itself, by contrast, not as a “holy book” but as an oral text (following K. Nelson, *The Art of Reciting the Qur’an* [Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2001]) finds an analogy in the clear tendency of Jewish studies to speak not so much of the Hebrew Bible but rather of *Scripture* or the *Scriptures*. Cf. Schuller, “The Dead Sea Scrolls and Canon and Canonization” (literature and critical reflections); cf. also J. J. Collins, “Canon, Canonization,” in *EDEJ* (2010): 460–63 (with literature). Other aspects can be found in E.-M. Becker, “Antike Textsammlungen in Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion,” in *Kanon in Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion. Kanonisierungsprozesse religiöser Texte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart. Ein Handbuch*, ed. E.-M. Becker and S. Scholz (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 1–32; E.-M. Becker, “Literarisierung und Kanonisierung im frühen Christentum. Einführende Überlegungen zur Entstehung und Bedeutung des neutestamentlichen Kanons,” in *Kanon in Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion. Kanonisierungsprozesse religiöser Texte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart. Ein Handbuch*, ed. E.-M. Becker and S. Scholz (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 389–99.

¹¹⁶This is meant materially rather than historically, i.e., since there is no historical closing of the biblical canon.

daim was already established to a large extent when the earliest Christian writers – Paul and Mark – referred to *Scripture*,¹¹⁷ and the emerging *New Testament*, whose texts first had to be led from orality, particularity, and regional appreciation to a general and canonical concept. The ecclesiastical writers also distinguished between the Scriptures of the *Old* and *New Testaments* in their canon lists.¹¹⁸

(2) Something analogous applies to the idea of the *closedness* of the canon. The starting point of the canonization process of the early Christian writings was not the idea of a closed group of writings but the safeguarding of the “sayings of the Lord.” Neither the canon of the Hebrew and Greek Jewish Bible nor the Christian canon of the “New Testament” can be understood on the basis of the initial idea of an exclusive closedness, even though this was already insinuated by Jewish writers such as the author of the Letter of Aristeas, Philo, and Josephus in the context of their cultural situation, which was characterized by books, lists and collections of books, libraries, writing, and the production of commentaries.¹¹⁹ The ever recurring debates and explanations concerning the universally recognized, debated, and inauthentic writings of the New Testament – which Eusebius provides in a meticulous presentation of the positions of early Christians known to him in historical sequence¹²⁰ – make very clear that we can by no means speak of a fixed canon in the sense of a closed list of books. An especially telling exam-

¹¹⁷Cf. the careful presentation of Collins, “Canon, Canonization.” Collins draws on Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.37–41 and 4 Ezra 14.45–47 as first witnesses to a more or less closed Hebrew canon of 22 or 24 writings and states concerning the meeting at Jamnia: “Josephus and 4 Ezra were contemporary with the sages of Jamnia, but the delimitation of the books was not the result of a conciliar decree” (463).

¹¹⁸Cf. note 120 on Eusebius’ lists.

¹¹⁹The intention of the Letter of Aristeas is to place the “laws of Moses” on the same level as the rest of the books of the Alexandrian library in order to then highlight its categorical superiority. The author inserts the “law of the Jews” into the cultural concept of the Ptolemaic state, since only in this way can its qualitative superiority come to light. This must take place via its reception as a book and into the library. See the commentary by B. G. Wright, *The Letter of Aristeas. “Aristeas to Philocrates” or “On the Translation of the Law of the Jews”* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015). The significance of the category of literature for Philo as a commentator and for Josephus as a court author who wrote for the Flavian library need not be discussed here. Eusebius’ note that not only Josephus (*Hist. eccl.* 3.9) but also Philo found such recognition in Rome that his writings were considered worthy of inclusion in the library (*Hist. eccl.* 2.18) is interesting. The lists of books that play such a great role among all the early Christian and early church writers come from this cultural context. On this, see E. A. Schmidt, “Historische Typologie der Orientierungsfunktionen von Kanon in der griechischen und römischen Literatur,” in *Kanon und Zensur*, ed. A. Assmann and J. Assmann, Beiträge zur Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation 2 (Munich: Fink, 1987), 246–58. On library and book collections in Jerusalem, cf. also 2 Macc 2.14–15. On this whole topic, cf. N. Irrgang, “Eine Bibliothek als Kanon. Der Aristeasbrief und der hellenistische Literaturbetrieb Alexandriens,” in *Kanon in Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion. Kanonisierungsprozesse religiöser Texte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart. Ein Handbuch*, ed. E.-M. Becker and S. Scholz (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 257–92. Cf., by contrast, on the openness and diversity of early Jewish canons, by way of introduction, E. Ulrich, “The Jewish Scriptures.”

¹²⁰On the program of Eusebius, cf. *Hist. eccl.* 3.3: “As the narrative proceeds I will take pains to indicate successively which of the orthodox writers in each period used any of the doubtful books, and what they said about the canonical and accepted Scriptures and what about those books which are not such” (trans. K. Lake, LCL 153, 193). *Hist. eccl.* 2.5 on the Gospel of Mark, ratified by Peter; *Hist. eccl.* 3.3 on the letters of the apostles: only one letter of Peter; 2 Peter is “instructive” but does not belong to the Bible; other writings attributed to Peter are rejected; fourteen letters of Paul (nevertheless, Hebrews is not undisputed!); *Hist. eccl.* 3.24 on the Gospels; *Hist. eccl.* 3.25 with a listing of the writings that were regarded as recognized, disputed, and inauthentic at the time of Eusebius; *Hist. eccl.* 5.8 with a report on Irenaeus’ lists of New Testament writings

ple for the enduring fuzziness of the concept of canon and for the imbalance between closed and open concepts of canon also *after* Athanasius is provided by Augustine in *De doctrina Christiana* 2.12, when he writes:

The most expert investigator of the divine scriptures will be the person who, first, has read them all and has a good knowledge – a reading knowledge, at least, if not yet a complete understanding – of *those pronounced canonical*. He will read *the others* more confidently when equipped with a belief in the truth; they will then be unable to take possession of his unprotected mind and prejudice him in any way against sound interpretation or delude him by their dangerous falsehoods and fantasies. In the matter of canonical scriptures he should follow the authority of the great majority of catholic churches, including of course those that were found worthy to have apostolic seats and receive apostolic letters.¹²¹

After further statements on different community traditions, in 2.13 Augustine surprisingly continues with a precise listing out of the biblical books of the Old and New Testaments without returning to the differentiated statements of 2.12.¹²²

(3) The *oral* proclamation of the gospel or the “sayings of the Lord” is still superordinated over what is written in Eusebius, and all four Gospels are explicitly understood only as written substitutes vis-à-vis the proclamation of Jesus and the apostles. The protocanonical claim of the Gospels is based on the authority of the *Kyrios*. For Papias orality is a criterion of “authenticity,” and the collection of sayings of the Lord is still open. At the same time, the consciousness of genuine, i.e., apostolic and thus limited tradition, on the one side, and inauthentic tradition, on the other hand, is developed early also and precisely in Papias, so that a process of interpretation according to “genuineness,” which combines historical and authoritative aspects under the perspective of “apostolic tradition,” begins early. As I have already indicated, the Gospels and the Pauline letters testify to a clear implicit canonical claim. At the same time, as I have likewise shown, in juxtaposition to this stands the plurality of the Gospels, the plurality and variety of the New Testament genres (Gospels, letters), and the reworking of older and more original texts in the sphere of the Gospels and in the pseudepigraphical letters within the Pauline sphere, so that canonizing and diversifying tendencies appear alongside one another.¹²³ Despite the aforementioned debates and the fact that the canon was still not closed at the time of Augustine, from the second century onward we already encounter the excluding construction of the tetraevangelium¹²⁴ and of a rel-

and attachment of the Septuagint legend from Haer. 3.21.2; *Hist. ecl.* 6.14 on Clement of Alexandria; *Hist. ecl.* 6.25 on Origen; *Hist. ecl.* 7.25 on Dionysius of Alexandria on the Revelation of John.

¹²¹Trans. R. P. H. Green, ed., *Saint Augustine: On Christian Teaching* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 35; O. W.’s emphasis.

¹²²Elsewhere, he uses different lists.

¹²³The Catholic Epistles do not play a major role in the process of canonization.

¹²⁴Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.11.8 (τετραμόρφον εὐαγγέλιον; on this, cf. the interpretation in Heckel, *Vom Evangelium des Markus zum viergestaltigen Evangelium*); cf. Eusebius, *Hist. ecl.* 5.8 and Papyrus 45. Cf. also

atively closed collection of Pauline letters.¹²⁵ In the later second century a consciousness of apostolic “genuineness” (τάς τε κατὰ τὴν ἐκκλησιαστικὴν παράδοσιν ἀληθεῖς καὶ ἀπλάστους καὶ ἀνωμολογημένας γραφάς) vis-à-vis secondary “forgeries”¹²⁶ is also already documented, which was itself meant to lead to the collection of authentic – and, more specifically, only authentic – Jesus tradition. From the middle of the second century at the latest, the four-Gospel canon is no longer expandable. The incorporation of another, *fifth* Gospel – there would have been sufficient possibilities – was not discussed. On the other hand, Marcion evidently backed *one* Gospel, and Tatian¹²⁷ and his communities preferred a unification of the four Gospels in a four-book, the harmony of the Gospels. Here we find early tendencies to obtain *one* book or at least a strong concentration of the different writings. This, however, met with opposition from the diversity that had already been tested and accepted in the communities. In light of the already existing plurality of the subsequently canonized Gospels, Marcion’s and Tatian’s preference for one Gospel or one Gospel book – which was comparable in purpose though very different in result – was already anachronistic.

2.6 Historical Results and Hermeneutical Implications

The *Scriptures* of Hellenistic Judaism – in whatever form – constitute the foundation of the canonical *Scriptures* of the Christians, both as the first part of the new Christian *Bible* and as the singular religious and cultural reference text of the New Testament writers and of the early Christian communities. Alongside this, very early on, between 50 and ca. 120 CE, the two core collections – the four Gospels and the Pauline letters – of a developing new, second part of the canon, of the later *New Testament*, emerged. At the end of the second century at the latest, the ecclesiastical writers, and especially Irenaeus, already start from a firm core of New Testament writings. However, the “margins” of this emerging second part of the canon always remained unsharp, as shown by

Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 36–37. Hurtado states, “This makes it worth noting which Gospel texts were linked and copied together. To my knowledge, the only Gospels so treated in the extant evidence are those that became part of the New Testament canon. None of the other (apocryphal) Gospel texts is linked with any other Gospel” (37). In Augustine we encounter the consciousness of the unity of the four Gospels in the formulation “The authoritative New Testament consists of the gospel in four books (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John)” (*Doctr. chr.* 2.13; trans. Green, *Saint Augustine: On Christian Teaching*, 37). The debate over the worthiness of being included in the canon concerned the letters and the Revelation of John and not the Gospels. On the Gospel of the Hebrews, cf. Klauck, *Apokryphe Evangelien*, 55–61 (ET = Klauck, *Apocryphal Gospels*, 36–42).

¹²⁵Papyrus 46. Theißen, *Die Entstehung des Neuen Testaments als literaturgeschichtliches Problem*, 283, states with regard to Irenaeus: “He grounds the number four so emphatically that it is probably still not taken for granted. But for him it stands firm. Beyond this there were no canonical Gospels. The Pauline letter collection is functionally closed for him. But he lacks a statement about its being closed.”

¹²⁶Thus the judgment regarding the Acts of Paul in Tertullian, *De baptismo* 17: The priest in Asia had written the Acts “out of love for Paul.” In Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.25 “inauthentic” (ἀντιλεγόμενα) in opposition to the ὁμολογούμενα, but not “heretical.”

¹²⁷On Tatian, cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.29. Cf. also P. Bruns, “Diatessaron,” in *LACL* (2002): 193–94; J. W. Barker, *Tatian’s Diatessaron: Composition, Redaction, Recension, and Reception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

the many different lists of New Testament writings; the textual witnesses, which differ in order and scope; and the different engagement with the *dubia*.¹²⁸ Thus, early Christianity very soon had a conception of canonical writings that referred to the Gospels and Pauline letters. With respect to Hebrews,¹²⁹ the Catholic Epistles, and the Revelation of John, as well as a few other early Christian writings, such as 1 Clement, the Shepherd of Hermas, and the Didache, an ongoing uncertainty or openness prevailed.¹³⁰

The tendency toward demarcation from writings that could no longer make plausible their apostolic origin is clear.¹³¹ The canonical status of the New Testament writings – which, on the one hand, places these writings on par with the Old Testament and, on the other hand, prioritizes them from a Christian perspective – depends on their authentic relationship to the ἀρχή in the form of apostolic tradition. At the same time, the ἀρχή has a historical and authoritative character. The canon is always related to the *Kyrios* and to the one εὐαγγέλιον and does not come to have a value in and of itself. On the whole, the canon of the Christian Bible is determined by the idea of the authority of the apostolic tradition that refers to Jesus Christ as the *Kyrios*. This conception makes possible the incorporation of the *Old Testament* as a prophecy of the *Kyrios* and excludes at the same time those early Christian writings that could no longer make plausible their direct relationship to the apostolic tradition and to uncontested use in the communities.¹³² Thus, the motif of apostolic tradition and authority stands at the beginning of the construction of the New Testament canon and not the principle of the exclusion of heretical books. As already mentioned, the canonical figure of thought of the formation of a book that excludes other writings¹³³ could have taken its start from Jerome's translation, which presented a uniform text, and would thus be a late or derived product of the process of canonization of the first centuries.

If one reconstructs the emergence of the New Testament canon from a hermeneutical perspective, then several fundamental consequences for a hermeneutic of the canonical writings emerge from the outset. The constant relationship to the *Kyrios* and to the original oral gospel proclamation of the apostles lends to the Gospels and letters some-

¹²⁸ Here, the stance of Dionysius of Alexandria on the Revelation of John is instructive (cf. note 39). Dionysius makes very clear that, on the one hand, the New Testament canon exists for him as idea and reality, but, on the other hand, that it does not ruin his respect for disputed writings but rather provokes his creative effort of interpretation, here conceptualized as allegorical exposition.

¹²⁹ On this, see Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 31 (on Papyrus 46).

¹³⁰ On this, cf. H. von Lips, "Kanondebatten in 20. Jahrhundert."

¹³¹ Cf. the harsh treatment of the letter of James that can still be found in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.23, who has great respect for James, but does not transfer this respect to the letter that bears James' name: "Such is the story of James, whose is said to be the first of the Epistles called Catholic. It is to be observed that its authenticity is denied, since few of the ancients quote it, as is also the case with the Epistle called Jude's, which is itself one of the seven called Catholic; nevertheless, we know that these letters have been used publicly with the rest in most churches."

¹³² Clement presents a good example here. This letter claims no apostolic authority for itself, but it is considered important in many communities and therefore read out.

¹³³ The numerous book lists since Origen, which are meant to establish the scope of the canonical writings of the *Bible*, are more comparable to lists of books held in a library or to the lists of works recorded in Eusebius (there beginning with Philo) than to canonical judgments. Here, the meaning "book lists, catalogue" is predominant.

thing provisional and at the same time transparent. They remain transparent for the oral teaching of Jesus and the preaching of the apostles. The New Testament writings have the character of witness and present no ultimate value in themselves, neither theologically nor literarily.¹³⁴ They are understood neither as literature in the sense of the ancient aesthetic canon nor as a “holy book” that claimed veneration for itself in material and normative respects.¹³⁵ From the perspective of the early Christians this applies to the *Old Testament* to an even higher degree. It has canonical status in the Christian communities not as – highly esteemed – *law of Moses* but as prophecy of the coming of Jesus.¹³⁶ At the same time it is also the case that precisely this transparency for the *Kyrios* lends the Old Testament and New Testament writings their authority. The fundamental tools of the biblical hermeneutic – allegoresis and typology – have their *Sitz im Leben* here. The transparency and the relative closedness of the Christian canon are interrelated, since only the “apostolic” writings have the necessary transparency and reference character. This reference character enables and necessitates the incorporation of the *Old Testament* into the Christian double canon, since for the early Christian and early church hermeneutic the *Septuaginta* is transparent for the coming of Jesus Christ. For this hermeneutic, there arises an inversion of the temporal relation between the two canons of the Christian *Bible*. Viewed *historically*, the *Septuaginta* stands – as already noted – at the beginning of the Christian biblical canon, namely, both as model and as material and formal norm. Both Paul and the author of the Gospel of Mark embed their εὐαγγέλιον in *Scripture* (Rom 1.1–7 and Mark 1.1–4). Viewed *theologically*, for the ecclesiastical writers the relationship can then also be presented the other way around: [First] “the sojourning of Jesus led those who might have suspected the Law and the Prophets not to be divine to the clear conviction that they were composed by heavenly grace,” writes Origen.¹³⁷

The picture sketched out here also sheds light on the question of the anonymity of the Gospels. The *transparent character* of the Gospels is preserved in the anonymity of the Gospels. They want to point to the “sayings of the Lord,” even though they actually set forth their own christological concepts, as we have seen. This also applies to the titles that were added after the fact, i.e., “Gospel *according to Mark*,” etc. Augustine

¹³⁴On the second aspect, cf. only Eusebius’ comments on the Gospels and their makeshift commitment to writing (*Hist. eccl.* 3.24: “Those inspired and venerable ancients, I mean Christ’s Apostles, had completely purified their life and adorned their souls with every virtue, yet were but simple men in speech (τὴν δὲ γλῶσσαν ἰδιωτεύοντες). ... Thus they announced the knowledge of the Kingdom of Heaven to all the world and cared but little for attention to their style (τὸ λογιγραφεῖν)”) (trans. K. Lake, LCL 153, 249–50).

¹³⁵On the material veneration, cf. the Letter of Aristeas as well as N. Irrgang, “Eine Bibliothek als Kanon. Der Aristeasbrief und der hellenistische Literaturbetrieb Alexandriens.” This aspect increasingly came into the foreground in the course of the history of the early church. Cf. only the Bible illustrations from late antiquity: K. Weitzmann, *Illustrations in Roll and Codex*, Studies in Manuscript Illumination 2, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970); K. Weitzmann, *Spätantike und frühchristliche Buchmalerei* (Munich: Prestel, 1977); U. Zimmermann, *Die Wiener Genesis im Rahmen der antiken Buchmalerei*, Spätantike – Frühes Christentum – Byzanz 13 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2003).

¹³⁶Cf. Origen, *Princ.* 4.1.6 = 302.

¹³⁷Origen, *Princ.* 4.1.6 (trans. J. Behr, ed., *Origen, On First Principles*, vol. 2 [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017], 475). Origen argues in such a way that the law of Moses and the prophetic writings are already given by God, but that they first receive convincing power for gentiles through Christ.

speaks of the *one* gospel of the four¹³⁸ evangelists.

Things are different in Paul. He announces the *εὐαγγέλιον* that the Lord revealed to him. He vouches for this with his name, person, and biography. He himself, in his proclamation, is transparent for the *Kyrios*. He understands his office (2 Cor 4–5) as service to the gospel; he is *apostolos* and ambassador of God. Ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ οὖν πρεσβεύομεν ὡς τοῦ θεοῦ παρακαλοῦντος δι' ἡμῶν· δεόμεθα ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ, καταλλάγητε τῷ θεῷ (2 Cor 5.20). Very different is the approach of the second New Testament author to write by name, the author of the Revelation of John. He writes what the Lord and the Spirit show him about the end of the world. The prophet John also understands himself as the one who reproduces the μαρτύρια Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (2 Cor 1.2), and his apocalyptic series of visions is likewise transparent for the *Kyrios*. But he discloses the *future* action of the *Kyrios*. The temporally-eschatologically conceptualized gospel concept appears to be overextended thereby and has become a cipher for transcendent eternity (*εὐαγγέλιον αἰώνιον*; 2 Cor 14.6). The original historical connection back to the *Kyrios* and the *apostolos* is abandoned. This places the Revelation of John at the margin of the canon in terms of substance.

3. Hermeneutic Paradigms

Canonization affects not only canons but also their hermeneutic, as the sentence, from which I started, shows: “*Canonical writings need and develop their own doctrine of understanding.*” In what follows I will show that and how the sentence “*What the writings of the New Testament need is not their own doctrine of understanding but rather a reflection on their reception history*” represents the legitimate reading of the first sentence in the times of deconstruction, i.e., in our cultural and scholarly world. To this end, I will sketch out three paradigms of canon hermeneutics

3.1 *Canonicity and Hermeneutics: The Greek Paradigm*

The canonical writings – or, better, the canonized writings that stand at the beginning of the European cultural sphere – have given rise to their own doctrines of understanding and interpretive practices. As we have seen, this began not with the biblical hermeneutic but with the Greek Homer philology and hermeneutic and with the philosophical hermeneutic.¹³⁹ The canon hermeneutic is not a theological conception but a cultural conception of Greece, whose foundations and methods were applied to the Greek-language *Pentateuch*¹⁴⁰ and later also to the *Bible*. The Greek-speaking Jewish

¹³⁸ *Doctr. chr.* 2.13: “These forty-four books form the authoritative Old Testament; the authoritative New Testament consists of the gospel in four books” (trans. Green, *Saint Augustine: On Christian Teaching*, 37).

¹³⁹ On Plato hermeneutics, cf. H. Dörrie, ed., *Der hellenistische Rahmen des kaiserzeitlichen Platonismus*, *Platonismus in der Antike* 2 (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1991).

¹⁴⁰ On the hermeneutic of Philo, cf. I. Christiansen, *Die Technik der allegorischen Auslegungswissenschaft bei Philon von Alexandria*, BGBH 7 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1969); D. R. Runia, “The Structure of Philo’s Allegorical Treatises,” in *Exegesis and Philosophy: Studies on Philo of Alexandria* (Aldershot: Vari-

scriptural exegetes of Alexandria took over basic characteristics and techniques of this hermeneutic. Greek as well as Jewish-Alexandrian hermeneutics obey the same basic conviction: canonical texts, such as the epics of Homer, the *Tanak*, and the *Septuaginta* contain transtemporal potentials of meaning that can be newly disclosed for each present with the help of hermeneutical guidelines.

What this hermeneutical program specifically looks like for a *Septuaginta* text – which is to be read and understood in the context of early Judaism – can be seen with reference to an example from Philo’s tractate *De confusione linguarum* on Gen 11.7 (190):

but those who merely follow the outward and obvious think that we have at this point a reference to the origin of the Greek and barbarian languages. I would not censure such persons, for perhaps the truth is with them also. Still, I would exhort them not to halt there, but to press on to allegorical interpretations (μετελθεῖν δὲ ἐπὶ τὰς τροπικὰς ἀποδόσεις) and to recognize that the letter is to the oracle but as the shadow to the substance and that the higher values therein revealed are what really and truly exist.¹⁴¹

Philo is not satisfied with the so-called literal sense, i.e., in this case with an aetiology of the diversity of languages but rather seeks and finds an ethical meaning. He derives this from his special interpretation of the word *σύγχυσις*, which from his perspective points to a destructive scattering of the vices, so that by the scattering of the people in the diversity of languages what is really meant is the expulsion of the vices of the godless tower builders, through which a new possibility of influence is opened for the virtues. Thus, God’s destructive action is constructively reinterpreted in the sense of virtue ethics. Philo himself would say: thus, the constructive meaning of the narrative comes to light. To find this is the task of the hermeneutic. The pan-ethicizing of the Pentateuchal texts by Philo may ultimately appear unsatisfactory to the historically trained eye of the present-day exegete of the Hebrew Bible, since Philo flattens out and shows contempt for precisely the explanatory achievement of cultural-aetiological narratives, such as the story of the tower of Babel. From the perspective of historical exegesis, the literary and aetiological achievement of Gen 11 is not merely obscured in Philo but actually destroyed. However, the more recent history of the hermeneutics of the Bible makes us receptive to the insight that Philo had to assert himself in the philosophical and philological culture of his time, and, in his commentaries, he needed and wanted to demonstrate his conviction that the Torah was ethical speech. This kind of hermeneutic is not only structurally related to varieties of the *canonical approach* or “canon hermeneutics”¹⁴² but also closer to present-day liberation-theological, post-

orum, 1990), 202–56; P. Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria: An Exegete of His Time* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); M. R. Niehoff, *Jewish Bible Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

¹⁴¹Trans. F. H. Colson, LCL 261, 113–14. Cf. also M. R. Niehoff, “Philons Beitrag zur Kanonisierung der griechischen Bibel.” For the hermeneutic of *De confusione linguarum*, see N. Treu, *Das Sprachverständnis des Paulus im Rahmen des antiken Sprachdiskurses*, NET 26 (Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto, 2018).

¹⁴²Cf., by way of introduction, A. Scharf, “Canonical Approach,” in *LBH* (2009): 115.

colonial, and gender-related *readings* than one might believe at first glance. It is classic canon hermeneutics in the sense that it makes its canonical texts meaningful for the leading paradigms of its respective present. In the early imperial period, ethics was the general paradigm to which important texts were meant to contribute. What this classic hermeneutic lacks from the perspective of the present – namely, first, a deeper engagement with the so-called *literal sense*, which Philo recognizes but does not acknowledge, since it does not fit in the ethical horizon of expectation, and, second, the *critical* engagement with the text that is characteristic of present-day contextual hermeneutics – does not count in the canonical hermeneutical paradigm. Rather, what matters here is the bridging of the temporal distance through transtemporal ethics. The central role of the hermeneutic – and its representatives – in this paradigm is clear. For in this perspective the hermeneutic as doctrine of understanding comes to its actual and most demanding task in the interaction with the canonical writings – the establishment of guidelines for the interpretation of texts of special quality and normativity.¹⁴³ Since the canonical writings respectively come from the past and are the result of a process of collection and selection,¹⁴⁴ the task of interpretation presents itself as a combination of historical and systematic efforts. What is historical must first be made comprehensible and then made contemporary. Historical clarification, explanation of language and realia of every kind,¹⁴⁵ and the respective applications – which differ greatly in character – occur in the respective present and for every present, i.e., on the level of time and of historical change. At the same time, a certain transtemporality and general validity of the canonical writings must be claimed and demonstrated. In this type of doctrine of understanding, the most important means for doing so was allegoresis or “tropological” interpretation.¹⁴⁶ Ever since the Alexandrian Homer interpretation and above all ever since Philo’s ethically oriented allegorical interpretation of the *Pentateuch*, the concern had been with the uncovering and mediation of enduring norms in history and reaching into the respective present.

¹⁴³Cf. Tyconius, *Liber regularum* and, on this, K. Pollmann, “Tyconius,” in *LACL* (2002): 702–3. See also Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*; cf. K. Pollmann, ed., *Augustinus, Die christliche Bildung (De doctrina Christiana)*, trans. K. Pollmann (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2013).

¹⁴⁴M. Finkelberg, “The Canonicity of Homer,” demonstrates how fundamental this is not only for the different biblical canons but also for the Homeric epics.

¹⁴⁵On the spheres in which clarification and explanation are necessary, cf. Augustine, *Doctr. chr.* 2.16–63. Augustine recognizes the contribution of historical scholarship in *Doctr. chr.* 2.42ff. Augustine is concerned especially with questions of dating.

¹⁴⁶Cf. D. Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); F. Siegert, “Early Jewish Interpretation in a Hellenistic Style,” in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, vol. I/1, ed. M. Saebo (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 130–98; R. L. Wilken, “In Defense of Allegory,” *Modern Theology* 14 (1998): 197–212; E. Birnbaum, “Allegorical Interpretation and Jewish Identity among Alexandrian Jewish Writers,” in *Neotestamentica et Philonica: Studies in Honor of P. Borgen*, ed. D. E. Aune, T. Seland, and J. H. Ulrichsen (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 307–29; I. Ramelli, “Philosophical Allegoresis of Scripture in Philo and Its Legacy in Gregory of Nyssa,” in *The Studia Philonica Annual: Studies in Hellenistic Judaism XX*, ed. G. Sterling and D. T. Runia (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 55–99; J. A. Loader, K. Erlemann, J. Ulrich, P. Stoellger, F. Siegert, N. Sinai, S. Döpp, and S. Waldow, “Allegorie/Allegoresis,” in *LBH* (2009): 8–10; J. N. Rhodes, “Allegory,” in *EDEJ* (2010): 323–24.

The early Christian authors whose writings later became the *New Testament* share the hermeneutical-methodological fundamental conviction of the early Jewish canon hermeneutic. In hermeneutical perspective, the early Christian writings are neither original nor normative but rather part of the cultural and religious canon hermeneutic of their tradition and their time. Their authors know and use above all the hermeneutical methods of allegoresis quite unselfconsciously, such as when Paul says *en passant* about Deut 25.4 (“You shall not muzzle the ox while it is threshing”): μή τῶν βοῶν μέλει τῷ θεῷ ἢ δι’ ἡμᾶς πάντως λέγει· (1 Cor 9.9–10). At the same time, the early Christian writers enrich and alter this hermeneutic through a typology that is shaped in a specifically christological (messianic) way.¹⁴⁷ They read the *Septuaginta* in a consistently typological way and use this interpretation in their own argumentation, without commenting on it like Philo or rewriting it as the numerous early Jewish examples of *rewritten Bible*.¹⁴⁸ In this respect, the early Christian writings are themselves part of the extensive early Jewish works on canon hermeneutics.¹⁴⁹ At the same time, they use allegoresis in the interpretation of their own tradition – the Jesus tradition.¹⁵⁰ Here, it is no longer *Septuaginta* hermeneutics that is practiced but hermeneutics of the *Kyrios*. The later New Testament writings go beyond this when, for example, Hebrews develops an independent Christology with the help of allegoresis.¹⁵¹

Building on the New Testament authors themselves, Christian biblical hermeneutics from the time of the early ecclesiastical writers has always retained and further developed the paradigm of the binding of the hermeneutic to canonicity. This also applies to the twentieth century and to contemporary biblical hermeneutical conceptions. The existentialist interpretation of Rudolf Bultmann¹⁵² starts from the possibility of a direct, not historically mediated existential dimension of the New Testament texts, as does feminist exegesis and many other engaged approaches or *readings*. The basic idea of these engaged hermeneutics continues to be *canonical*: the biblical text must and can magisterially answer the questions of the present because they, as canonical writings, cannot be exhausted in what is historically contingent and past. In the classic model of canon hermeneutics that I have sketched out, the historical relatedness and limitation of biblical texts was allegorically overwritten. The tower of Babel spoke not of the astonishing phenomenon of the diversity and incommensurability of the lan-

¹⁴⁷Cf., by way of introduction, M. Weigl, H. K. Nielsen, H. E. Lona, P. Stoellger, and M. Margoni-Kogler, “Typos/Typologie,” in *LBH* (2009): 613–16.

¹⁴⁸Cf. S. W. Crawford, *Rewriting Scriptures in Second Temple Times* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008); Tigheelaar, “Wie haben die Qumrantexte unsere Sicht des kanonischen Prozesses verändert?” 169, speaks of “Interpretive Rewriting.” On this topic, cf. now also Jonathan M. Potter, *Rewritten Gospel: The Composition of Luke and Rewritten Scripture*, BZNTW 267 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2024).

¹⁴⁹Cf. the typological interpretation of the prophets in the Qumran scrolls.

¹⁵⁰The first example is in Mark 4. Here, the evangelist has Jesus himself allegorically interpret for his disciples his parabolic speech, which is directed to all hearers. In this way, there emerges the constellation of outer (encoded) speech and inner (open) speech. The parable becomes a secret speech, the allegoresis the means of disclosure (μυστήριον vs. ἀποκάλυψις). The Gospel of Matthew expands the parable form on a grand scale and portrays Jesus as end-time teacher whose parables are latent allegories.

¹⁵¹Christ as the high priest.

¹⁵²Cf. U. H. J. Körtner, “Existential Interpretation,” in *LBH* (2009), 174–75.

guages but rather of vices and virtues, as Philo presents it. Since Bultmann at the latest, the hermeneutical figure of *allegoresis* has been replaced by the hermeneutical figure of *criticism*. The biblical texts and conceptions that are resistant to an existentialist interpretation are subjected to the so-called *Sachkritik*.¹⁵³ This hermeneutical figure has been taken over by the various engaged hermeneutics and radicalized through the figure of *suspicion*.¹⁵⁴ The canonical paradigm, however, is not abandoned by any of these hermeneutical figures.

3.2 Decanonization and Taking Leave of Hermeneutics: The Historical Paradigm

New Testament scholarship is indebted to a doctrine of understanding that is explicitly opposed to the canonical model that has been sketched above. The paradigm of historical understanding in which New Testament scholarship works is much more critical toward canons and hermeneutics than the “*Sachkritik*” of Bultmann and the “hermeneutics of liberation.” It owes its questions, methods, and scholarly task to the phase of the emancipation of the “biblical disciplines” or of “biblical theology” from theological dogmatics and to the development of historical scholarship as a leading scholarship in the nineteenth century. The history of the emergence of New Testament scholarship¹⁵⁵ was understood as a history of liberation by its own representatives. It became an important part of the large changes to the humanities and to theology during the nineteenth century. The “life of Jesus research” is a shining example of this work.

For New Testament scholarship the *Bible* ceased to be interpreted as canonical “Holy Scripture” and as basis and subject of theological doctrine. It instead became a source writing that disclosed the “history of Israel” and the “history of primitive Christianity” and thus led Christianity back to its beginnings. The *canon* was not destroyed – that could be brought about only by the Christian churches since the canon of the *Bible* is the result of ecclesiastical (and not theological) agreements and determinations – but rather opened for historical questions of every kind and for comparisons with the literary, historical, philosophical, and religious environment. Thus, it became part of its cultural environment, which was likewise shaped since the eighteenth century by phases of historicization and decanonization and by the establishment of new literary canons that decidedly served their own goals beyond the biblical canon. With the thoroughgoing work on contextualization New Testament scholarship brought about

¹⁵³Cf. L. Bormann and M. Petzoldt, “Sache/Sachkritik,” in *LBH* (2009): 512–13. Cf. also R. Morgan, “Thiselton on Bultmann’s Sachkritik,” in *Horizons in Biblical Hermeneutics: A Festschrift in Honor of Anthony Thiselton*, ed. S. E. Porter and M. R. Malcolm (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 39, “What ... Bultmann meant by the word [*Sachkritik*] was criticism of a *text* (what is *said*) in the light of the *Sache* that the New Testament author intended to speak of (what was *meant*), ultimately the truth of the gospel.” Common proposals for translating *Sachkritik* into English include “theological criticism,” “content criticism,” and “material criticism.” In my (Wayne Coppins’) judgment, it is best to retain the German technical term *Sachkritik* – or, if it must be translated, to render it with “theological criticism.”

¹⁵⁴Cf. D. Hiller and T. Wesche, “Verdacht/Misstrauen,” in *LBH* (2009): 631–32.

¹⁵⁵A more in-depth presentation of the history of New Testament scholarship in the sense of an enduring self-enlightenment is a desideratum.

a de facto *decanonization*. At the same time, the historicization of the canon and its individual writings brought with it a fundamental transformation of the *hermeneutic*. In this paradigm, understanding took place via historical and literary explanation. The historical dimension became the central category of understanding, and in its historical-critical function New Testament scholarship itself thus took over hermeneutical tasks. In this paradigm the canon-determined hermeneutic does not lose its object, i.e., the canonical collection of writings – which in historical perspective is, in fact, the enduring scholarly object of the discipline – but it does lose its hermeneutical foundational argument, according to which the biblical canon requires its own hermeneutic. For hermeneutics as a historical doctrine of understanding has no preferential attachment to canonical or classic writings. Instead, historical explanation operates in an egalitarian way. All texts are read as sources and investigated with historical methods. From this perspective, the theme “canonicity and hermeneutic” represents only an echo of the general ancient canon hermeneutic that has come to an end through the historical line of questioning. However, the theme “canonicity and hermeneutics” continues to be pursued in systematic and practical theology as well as in the so-called canonical approach and in biblical theology, i.e., in different disciplines of Christian theology,¹⁵⁶ which understands itself as the reflexive organ of the Christian church. I will return to his point below. I have already touched on the parallels in contemporary Judaism and Islam.

The detachment from the special interpretation of canonical texts thus creates a new situation not only for the canonical texts but also for the hermeneutic as canonical doctrine of understanding. As we have seen, it was the great classic and canonical texts of Greco-Roman, Israelite-Jewish, and Christian antiquity that led to the hermeneutical and methodological reflections in Plato, Aristotle, the Alexandrian philologists, Philo, the rabbis, and the ecclesiastical writers from Origen to Augustine and that brought forth the great interpretive achievements of the Greek, Jewish, and Christian commentaries. When canons lose their dominant and normative aesthetic, ethical, and religious status in the framework of their institutions, not only does the normative power of the canons fade but also the necessity of a special hermeneutical grappling with their texts. Decanonization is joined by the gradual “taking leave of hermeneutics.”¹⁵⁷ The undertaking of hermeneutics is reduced to the philological securing of

¹⁵⁶Cf. the objectives of the *Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie*. Cf. also the essays in volume 25 (2011): *Wie biblisch ist die Theologie?* As already mentioned, concepts of contemporary canon hermeneutics and Jewish hermeneutic models stand alongside this.

¹⁵⁷On this, cf. the different critical approaches, especially in contemporary debates in literary studies, linguistics, and philosophy, in A. N. Terrin, C. Dohmen, G. Schunack, G. Figal, W. G. Jeanrond, J. Fischer, H. Schroer, and M. Vincent, “Hermeneutik,” in *RGG*⁴ 3 (2000): 1648–63; ET = A. N. Terrin, C. Dohmen, G. Schunack, G. Figal, W. G. Jeanrond, J. Fischer, H. Schroer, and M. Vincent, “Hermeneutics,” in *RPP* 6 (2009): 87–96. Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, is already critical (against the interpretive analysis of the meaning of art); See also O. Marquard, “Frage nach der Frage, auf die die Hermeneutik die Antwort ist,” in *Abschied vom Prinzipiellen. Philosophische Studien* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1981), 117–46; J. Hörisch, *Die Wut des Verstehens. Zur Kritik der Hermeneutik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988); H. U. Gumbrecht, *Diesseits der Hermeneutik. Über die Produktion von Präsenz* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004) (in continuation of S. Sontag against methodological constructivism and “interpretation”).

the text and the interpretation of sources for the purpose of historical reconstruction. In this paradigm, hermeneutics is coextensive with *method-led explanation*¹⁵⁸ according to the guidelines of philology and historical scholarship. The reduction of hermeneutics to explanation presents itself as a simultaneous deconstruction of canon and hermeneutics. This tendency continues in a stream of the more recent history of hermeneutics. In the wake of different approaches to *canon criticism*, a philosophical and ideological *hermeneutics criticism* has developed that suspects forms of the establishment and interpretation of dominating power in the special effort to understand canonical texts and seeks to deconstruct these.¹⁵⁹

Let us look back again at the nineteenth century, which made binding the historical approach to *all* kinds of texts that came from the past. Alongside historicism,¹⁶⁰ Schleiermacher's hermeneutic has exercised an enormous influence,¹⁶¹ since it pursued a distinct hermeneutical goal, though it comes close to the historical doctrine of understanding in its result. Schleiermacher wanted to transfer the *hermeneutica sacra* into a general doctrine of understanding and thus made a distinct hermeneutic for canonical writings superfluous. We could say that this hermeneutic wanted to bestow the status of canonical texts on *all* demanding texts – whether literary, philosophical, or religious – in the sense that they merit an empathetic or sympathetic and elaborate interpretation. Here too, the bond between canon and hermeneutics is undone. The concern is no longer with a deconstruction of canon and hermeneutics but with a conceptual new understanding of the idea of canon and hermeneutics. The classic idea of canon is expanded to such an extent that at least a distinct hermeneutic for canonical writings becomes superfluous.¹⁶²

Both the historical doctrine of understanding and Schleiermacher's hermeneutic distance themselves from the foundational argument of the canon hermeneutic thematized at the outset: "*Canons need their own doctrine of understanding.*" Instead, the following principle has applied since the nineteenth century: "*There is (only) one uni-*

¹⁵⁸Cf. D. Erbe-Küster, O. Wischmeyer, M. Leiner, D. Oschmann, M. Habermann, and M. Weber, "Erklärung/Erklären," in *LBH* (2009): 147–52.

¹⁵⁹For a concise introduction, see Körtner, *Einführung in die theologische Hermeneutik*, 40; D. Erbe-Küster, A. Standhartinger, and M. Köhlmoos, "Feministische Bibelhermeneutik," in *LBH* (2009): 176–78.

¹⁶⁰On historicism, cf., by way of introduction, G. Scholtz, "Geschichte, Historie IV," in *HWBb* 3 (1974): 361–71; H. W. Blanke, "Aufklärungshistorie und Historismus: Bruch und Kontinuität," in *Historismus in den Kulturwissenschaften*, ed. O. G. Oexle and J. Rüsen (Cologne: Böhlau, 1996), 69–97; S. Jordan, "Zwischen Aufklärung und Historismus. Deutschsprachige Geschichtstheorie in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts," *Sb. Leibniz-Sozietät* 48 (2001): 5–20; J. Nordalm, ed., *Historismus* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2006).

¹⁶¹F. Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik*, ed. H. Kimmerle (Heidelberg: Winter, 1959); F. Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik und Kritik. Mit einem Anhang sprachphilosophischer Texte Schleiermachers*, ed. M. Frank (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977). Cf. A. N. Terrin, C. Dohmen, G. Schunack, G. Figał, W. G. Jeanrond, J. Fischer, H. Schroer, and M. Vincent, "Hermeneutik," in *RGG* 4/3 (2000), 1656: "Through F. Schleiermacher ... hermeneutical thinking as a whole obtained a new philosophical starting point. All authorities that stood outside the text were rejected in the interpretation and with them every claim to a special (e.g., theological or legal) hermeneutic. Rather, every text was to be interpreted with a view to both its individual meaning (psychological understanding) and the linguistic means through which meaning is enabled (grammatical understanding)."

¹⁶²Cf. the tendency in Dilthey to transfer this hermeneutic to poetry ("die Dichtung").

versal methodological understanding of texts." E. Preuschen expressed this perspective in a nutshell in the first volume of *ZNW* in 1900: "In the future it will probably no longer be said that one regards a 'biblical' hermeneutic, a 'biblical' philology, etc., as possible, as still happened in the first half of the century."¹⁶³ Preuschen interprets the history of New Testament scholarship as the history of the liberation of the writings of the New Testament from the canon and from the theological special hermeneutic: "Through this term [the canon] a group of writings was detached from the context of the living literature and understood in its isolation as a doctrinal norm and no longer as an expression and product of personal life. But insofar as this took place ... one unconsciously ensured that the writings became fossils."¹⁶⁴

The hermeneutical achievement of this approach can be summarized concisely as follows: the *historical approach*, which forms the backbone of New Testament scholarship and an extremely large portion of scholarly work in the discipline "New Testament"¹⁶⁵ starts with the *authors* of the texts – whether they can be grasped historically or must be inferred – and their *intention*. According to this understanding, the texts are not open for interpretation but rather bearers of distinct statements and messages of their known or unknown authors.¹⁶⁶ But what does this mean for a hermeneutic of the canonical texts? Since the nineteenth century the so-called "introductory questions" have been regarded as the key to understanding the biblical writings. The great success story of the historical exegesis of Old and New Testaments is nourished by the thoroughgoing historical line of questioning, whose program, under the label of historical contextualization, also dominates contemporary exegesis, at least in the German-language sphere. In the process, the emphases can change. Thus, at present scholars are asking less about historical authors and more about historical community profiles, in whose political, social, and cultural context the New Testament writings are to be placed. The historical line of questioning, however, remains the same. This historical research is based on an implicit hermeneutical conviction that is not made explicit: "The uncovering of the beginnings creates understanding." This is why the (hi)stories of the beginnings are investigated so intensively,¹⁶⁷ even when – or precisely when – it is known that the first beginnings always remain obscure.¹⁶⁸ The unusual energy

¹⁶³E. Preuschen, "Idee oder Methode?" *ZNW* 1 (1900): 1–15.

¹⁶⁴Preuschen, "Idee oder Methode?" With a view to the history of scholarship it is interesting that Preuschen presupposes and reinforces the historical paradigm, on the one hand, and yet points, on the other hand, to its weaknesses (collection of materials instead of interpretation) and invokes anew Baur's "idea" vis-à-vis a mere material reconstruction. In this way Preuschen makes clear that the historical paradigm alone is not sufficient (any longer) for the interpretation of the New Testament texts. In Preuschen, however, it is unclear how he will compensate for the interpretive deficits of historicism.

¹⁶⁵On this, see O. Wischmeyer, ed., *Herkunft und Zukunft der neutestamentlichen Wissenschaft*, NET 6 (Tübingen: Francke, 2003); O. Wischmeyer, "Die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft am Anfang des 21. Jahrhunderts. Überlegungen zu ihrem Selbstverständnis, ihren Beziehungsfeldern und ihren Aufgaben," in eadem, *Von Ben Sira zu Paulus. Gesammelte Aufsätze zu Texten. Theologie und Hermeneutik des Frühjudentums und des Neuen Testaments*, ed. E.-M. Becker, WUNT 173 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 245–71.

¹⁶⁶Here, I can pass over other important motifs, such as the historical classification of the texts.

¹⁶⁷A current example is research on the beginnings of the *Quran*.

¹⁶⁸E. Angehrn, *Anfang und Ursprung. Die Frage nach dem Ersten in Philosophie und Kulturwissenschaft* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007).

that has been invested for many generations in the comprehensive investigation of the beginnings of Christianity – currently still conducted prominently as a discussion of *the parting of the ways* of Judaism and Christianity – can be explained only as a latent hermeneutical movement to find in the historical beginnings a truth¹⁶⁹ that cannot be found in the doctrine of faith or dogmatics.

The hermeneutical paradigm is by no means so foreign to the writings of the New Testament as one might suspect according to their own belonging to the ancient canon hermeneutic. They stand, however, despite this belonging, with an astonishing taken-for-grantedness, in the history of their time¹⁷⁰ and understand their writings in different ways as witnesses to “the beginning of the gospel” *in this time* (Mark 1.1). The rather rare historical-political specifications in the Gospels¹⁷¹ are not part of a literary staging that places a narrative in a historical context¹⁷² but rather must be read as what they are – as temporal specifications. The significance of the witnesses of the beginning is not only underlined by the *auctor ad Theophilum* (Luke 1.2) but, with very different theological language, *also* by the author of 1 John (1.1–2). Nevertheless, as we have seen, there is not only *one* account of the “beginnings” but *four*, though these do not differ in the broad features of the so-called “Jesus story.” What predominates is not historical exactness in the sense of the clarity of historical research¹⁷³ but authorial style of narration in the sense of ancient historiography. Paul, too, combines biographical retrospections with historical inexactness. On the other hand, he very explicitly and authorially introduces himself as an author in every one of his letters and consistently binds his teaching and parenesis to his person. When Acts has him be active as a historical person, it captures his self-understanding. We have already discussed the connection between historical trustworthiness and “apostolicity.” Accordingly, the category of historical trustworthiness and thus of history in the sense of historical scholarship can by no means be distanced from the hermeneutic of the New Testament.¹⁷⁴ On the contrary, the New Testament writings are not transtemporal but situated in time. They are concerned with a person from the history of the first century CE – with *Jesus of Nazareth*.¹⁷⁵ The historical hermeneutic discloses this basic aspect of the New Testament writings and cannot

¹⁶⁹On this, cf. especially the historical-hermeneutical program of Martin Hengel; M. Hengel, “Eine junge theologische Disziplin in der Krise,” in *Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft: Autobiographische Essays aus der Evangelischen Theologie*, ed. E.-M. Becker (Tübingen: Francke, 2003), 18–29; ET = M. Hengel, “A Young Discipline in Crisis” (trans. W. Coppins), in *Earliest Christian History. History, Literature, and Theology. Essays from the Tyndale Fellowship in Honor of Martin Hengel*, ed. M. F. Bird and J. Maston, WUNT 2/320 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 459–71. Cf., more generally, W. Paravicini, *Die Wahrheit der Historiker* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2010), who argues for the rehabilitation of “truth” as a guideline or benchmark for the work of the historian (24–28). He refers to the saying of Wilhelm von Humboldt: “The truth of what has happened appears easy but is the highest that can be thought. For if it would be gained entirely, it would lie revealed in it what determines all reality as a necessary chain” (W. von Humboldt, *Schriften zur Anthropologie und Geschichte*, 3rd ed. [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1980], 585–606, here 587).

¹⁷⁰This applies not only to the *auctor ad Theophilum* but already to the author of the Gospel of Mark.

¹⁷¹Cf. especially the synchronisms in the Gospel of Luke.

¹⁷²Thus, e.g., the literary framework of the Letter of Aristeas.

¹⁷³This applies also to the Gospel of Luke and the often very imprecise presentation technique of Acts.

¹⁷⁴Different rules of historical referentiality apply to the collection of the books of the *Tanakh*.

¹⁷⁵This applies also to the Gospel of John.

make do without the program of the search for “historical truth,”¹⁷⁶ also and precisely in the times of deconstruction and the new concept of historical construction.

3.3 *A New Connection between Canon and Hermeneutics: The Paradigm of Reception Aesthetics*

As a general hermeneutical yield of the scholarship of the nineteenth century, such as E. Preuschen summarized it in 1900 for New Testament scholarship, one can formulate the following statement: “*There is (only) one universal methodological understanding of texts.*” But the nineteenth century established two different tracks of the interpretation of this sentence – first, the strictly historical study of sources, which regarded its task as the reconstruction of past happenings, and, second, the empathetic interpretation of great texts in the sense of Schleiermacher. Even though Schleiermacher’s hermeneutic rejected a *hermeneutica sacra*, and that means a special canon hermeneutic, the interpretation of great texts is nevertheless not reduced to historical explanation. Schleiermacher keeps open the task of an appropriate interpretation. E. Preuschen also did not want to stop with historical reconstruction. He made recourse to Baur’s idea and thus to Hegel and thereby reconnected historical work and historico-philosophical interpretation. The way then led to new syntheses of historical-critical exegesis and theological-philosophical canon hermeneutics in dialectical theology, existentialist interpretation, and the new hermeneutic. All these approaches agreed that historical reconstruction alone could not bring about an adequate understanding of canonical texts or, put differently, that the quest for the origin or beginning did not establish adequate understanding. In these major attempts to set forth a hermeneutic of the New Testament *after* historicism, i.e., to retain and develop the historical method and at the same time to take seriously the transtemporal claim of the New Testament, the historical approach always continued to play the leading role in exegetical work.¹⁷⁷ At the same time, in the last few decades, it has been attacked from various sides, on the one hand, and developed further, on the other hand.

As is well known, these processes stand in connection to the new cultural studies paradigm, which need not be presented here.¹⁷⁸ For our hermeneutical question two points are important from the shifts in self-understanding within the humanities: (1) as already mentioned, in the second half of the last century, historical studies has discovered the dimension of the *construction* of the past and has thus moved beyond the goal of the reconstruction of the past, at least in the theoretical sphere;¹⁷⁹ (2) literary stud-

¹⁷⁶ A. von Harnack, “Nachwort zu meinem offenen Brief an Herrn Professor Karl Barth,” in *Theologische Bücherei* 17/1. *Anfänge der dialektischen Theologie. Teil 1: Karl Barth. Heinrich Barth. Emil Brunner*, ed. J. Moltmann, 6th ed. (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlag, 1995), 346–47: “As there is only *one* scholarly method, there is also only one scholarly *task* – the pure knowledge of its object.”

¹⁷⁷ Cf. only the journal *Early Christianity* 1 (2010). Cf. note 22.

¹⁷⁸ On this, cf. O. Wischmeyer, *Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments*, 195–211. The cultural studies paradigm is supported especially with reference to literary studies and literary-theoretical considerations.

¹⁷⁹ This applies despite the brilliant objection of Paravicini, *Die Wahrheit der Historiker* (cf. note 169). His criticism of an exaggerated historical constructivism/deconstructivism does not distinguish clearly enough

ies has developed the hermeneutical paradigm of *reception aesthetics* and discovered the reader instead of the author as the hermeneutically relevant entity for the construction of meaning.¹⁸⁰ These changes are important for the hermeneutics of the *Bible* because while they do not supplant the one-dimensionality of the historical model of understanding, which believed it could find the understanding of the texts exclusively in the beginnings and read the biblical texts *in toto* only with reference to their source value, they do supplement and correct it.

What does the approach of reception aesthetics achieve?¹⁸¹ The author is replaced by the reader. The *reader-oriented* approach perceives the *texts in their textuality*, since in this hermeneutical model they are understood as open for later meaning potentials, which are independent of the original authorial intention, and places the *readers* of the texts at the center, who in the act of reading must constantly connect anew the texts of the past to the life-worldly and theoretical contemporary contexts.¹⁸² In New Testament scholarship, the reception aesthetic perspective initially plays less of a role in exegetical work itself than in hermeneutical theory. In a similar way to the historical paradigm, which in the historical methods makes direct interpretive work on the texts possible, reception aesthetics also develops its own lines of questioning and modes of investigation. In doing so, the reception-aesthetical approach is in a certain way closer to the text than the historical approach, i.e., since here the texts are liberated from their one-sided attachment to their own time – i.e., to the past – and taken seriously in their future dimension or future relevance. After all, they themselves do want to have both.¹⁸³ Canonical texts as texts with a high interpretive potential and interpretive claim can be interpreted and understood by the historical methods always only in their “historical context.” Their further-reaching claim is taken from them. In this way they are consciously disempowered. This liberating influence of the historical interpretation is not revoked by the reception-aesthetical methods, but it is corrected in such a way that it frees up the way for an interpretation that reaches into the respective present. With this approach, which *does not replace* the historical methods – which retain their disclosing function for texts of every kind – *but rather supplements*

between “history” and “the writing of history” and ultimately underestimates the constructive achievement of that historiography. On this topic, cf. now also Jens Schröter, *From Jesus to the New Testament*, ed. W. Coppins and S. Gathercole, trans. W. Coppins, BMSEC 1 (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2013), 9–70.

¹⁸⁰Cf. J. A. Loader, O. Wischmeyer, U. H. J. Körtner, S. Döpp, and C. Lubkoll, “Autor,” in *LBH* (2009): 60–63 and H. Utzschneider, S. Döpp, C. Sporhase, and J. Meibaum, “Autorenintention,” in *LBH* (2009): 63–66. Here too, however, it applies that the insights into the role of the reader does not in itself bring with it the “death of the author”; cf. F. Jannidis, G. Lauer, M. Martínez, and S. Winko, eds., *Rückkehr des Autors: Zur Erneuerung eines umstrittenen Begriffs* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1999); F. Jannidis, G. Lauer, M. Martínez, and S. Winko, eds., *Texte zur Theorie der Autorschaft* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2000).

¹⁸¹Cf. M. Grohmann, B. H. McLean, T. Schmitz, and M. Sauter, “Reader-Response Criticism,” in *LBH* (2009): 478–81.

¹⁸²Systematic theology has connected the reader-oriented approach under the keyword of the *inspired reader* with a theory of interpretation that has been adapted in a reception-theoretical way. Within the framework of New Testament scholarship, this systematic theological approach cannot be pursued further. In any case, with reception aesthetics we are dealing with a strictly “innerworldly” theory of meaning construction in relation to texts. Theological points of contact must be incorporated into this theory from the outside.

¹⁸³Cf. just the Gospel of Mark as announcement of the eschatological time or Rom 13.

them precisely for canonical texts, a new stage in the history of canon hermeneutics is reached. At the same time, the reception-aesthetical theory protects us from an uncritical interaction with the authoritative and normative potential of the biblical canon since its reception-historical component always consciously remains aware of the pre-canonical history of emergence of the canonized text. This connects it with the critical function of the historical paradigm. Understanding always takes place as a new critical engagement with possible sense and meaning potentials¹⁸⁴ for the respective present from the standpoint of the present. While allegoresis “unconceals” or uncovers the respectively dominant cultural paradigm – in Philo virtue ethics – in their texts and thus functions in a precritical and repetitive way from a historical-critical perspective, in reception theory the critical reader establishes meaning in each case. The reception-aesthetical hermeneutical model is thus not post-canonical, but it is post-normative. It makes possible the critical discussion of the *Sache* or subject matter, and the recognition of this as an instrument of hermeneutics is an enduring achievement of Rudolf Bultmann. The reception-aesthetical approach makes possible a deconstructive hermeneutical approach to canonical texts, which can be expressed as follows: “*It depends not on the application of a distinct canonical hermeneutic but on the judgment of the reader whether and in what way she or he wishes to confer a special – i.e., normative – status upon the canonical texts. A pre-given canon hermeneutic cannot bring about this decision.*”¹⁸⁵

4. The Canon-Oriented Hermeneutical Achievement of New Testament Scholarship

4.1 New Testament Scholarship in the Field of Tension between Theological and Historical Readings

Let us return for the last time to the starting conditions for a hermeneutic of the biblical writings. The relations between Jewish-Christian and Greco-Roman religious and literary canons and hermeneutics have been equally close and diverse since Alexandrian philology. Jewish and later Christian exegetes and hermeneuticists have taken over the main features of the ways of dealing with the texts of Homer. This canonical hermeneutics paradigm has long come to an end for the canonical exemplary writings of Homer and Vergil. Since the rise of historical thinking – we are dealing with a process of the historicizing of these texts, which includes the classical and new humanistic renaissances up to the second half of the twentieth century – Homer and Vergil have lost their culture-canonical significance and their own hermeneutic, and the national

¹⁸⁴C. Hardmeier, O. Wischmeyer, D. Korsch, M. Becker, U. Kundert, I. H. Warnke, and H. Ineichen, “Bedeutung,” in *LBH* (2009): 67–73; C. Hardmeier, O. Wischmeyer, D. Korsch, M. Becker, U. Kundert, K. Ehlich, and E. Angehm, “Sinn,” in *LBH* (2009): 548–55.

¹⁸⁵For the recent debate on reception history see R. Burnet, *Exegesis and History of Reception: Reading the New Testament Today with the Readers of the Past*, WUNT 455 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021); C. Hoegen-Rohls, “Rezeptionskritik und Rezeptionsgeschichte des Neuen Testaments: Eine methodologische Skizze,” *NTS* 69 (2023), 258–270; eadem, “Überlegungen zur Rezeptionsgeschichte des Neuen Testaments im Gespräch mit Régis Burnet,” *NTS* 69 (2023), 291–98.

literary canons are also noticeably fading. By contrast, despite the decanonizing tendencies¹⁸⁶ of the last two centuries and the loss of its cultural environment of literary canonical writings, the *Bible* has thus far retained its canonical status both in the religious and in the scholarly framework.¹⁸⁷ From this constellation the following question arises once again: Does the New Testament under present-day conditions of understanding need its own hermeneutic?

The hermeneutic of the ecclesiastical writers was already not without tensions. Thus, Origen insists that the writings not only of the New Testament but also already of the Old Testament are not human words:

The reason, in all the cases mentioned, for the false beliefs and impious or ignorant assertions about God appears to be nothing else than Scripture not being understood according to its spiritual sense (πνευματικά), but taken as regarding the bare letter (πρὸς τὸν ψιλὸν γράμμα). Therefore, for those who are persuaded that the sacred books are not compositions of human beings, but that they were *composed* and have come down to us from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (ἐξ ἐπιπνοίας τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος) by the will of the Father of all *through Jesus Christ*, one must indicate the apparent ways [of understanding Scripture followed] by those who keep the rule of the heavenly Church of Jesus Christ through succession from the apostles.¹⁸⁸

Augustine argues, by contrast, that in the Bible human words are read by humans and therefore human aids to understanding are not only legitimate but necessary:

All this [the instruction and baptism of Paul and of Cornelius] could certainly have been done through an angel, but the human condition would be wretched indeed *if God appeared unwilling to minister his word to human beings through human agency*. It has been said, “For God’s temple is holy, and that temple you are” [1 Cor. 3:17]: how could that be true if God did not make divine utterances from his human temple but broadcast direct from heaven or through angels the learning that he wished to be passed on to mankind? Moreover, there would be no way for love, which ties people together in the bonds of unity, to make souls overflow and as it were intermingle with each other, if human beings learned nothing from other humans.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶Cf. Becker, “Antike Textsammlungen in Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion.”

¹⁸⁷The Jewish faith community and the Christian churches and the corresponding academic training courses are meant here.

¹⁸⁸*Princ.* 4.2.2 (trans. Behr, *Origen, On First Principles*, 489, 491; O. W.’s emphasis and insertion of Greek words). Interesting here is not only the notion that Jesus Christ composed “the Holy Scriptures” but also the trinitarian formulation.

¹⁸⁹*Doctr. Chr.*, prologue (trans. Green, *Saint Augustine: On Christian Teaching*, 5–6; O. W.’s emphasis and insertion of [the instruction and baptism of Paul and of Cornelius]). On this, cf. W. Wischmeyer, “Von Men-

Thus, Augustine begins his hermeneutic *De doctrina Christiana* with a clear criticism of those who think they do not need any hermeneutic as a human doctrine of understanding since the texts disclose themselves to them in their meaning. Between Origen and Augustine and within the exegetical work of the two ecclesiastical writers,¹⁹⁰ biblical hermeneutics developed itself in its different varieties of literal meaning and allegoresis, of human authorship and inspiration. The later history of biblical hermeneutics built upon Origen and Augustine. Both poles, literal sense and allegoresis, are, however, part of the tension-filled framework of a cultural paradigm of their time, of the canon hermeneutic. Restating this point in a nutshell, the ecclesiastical writers did not advocate a special hermeneutic but interpreted the *Bible* on the basis of the general models of understanding of their culture. Only the insistence of Christian theology – and analogously also of Jewish and Islamic scriptural hermeneutics – on this canon hermeneutic under entirely changed cultural conditions led to the notion that the Bible requires *per se* its own hermeneutic.

Since its emergence, New Testament scholarship, by contrast, has worked on the basis of the conditions of understanding of its time. The disciplines of Old and New Testament scholarship have not taken the path of a special hermeneutic for their texts that is separated from the general cultural development. Instead, in the sense of the indivisibility of the hermeneutic, they have carried out the decanonization of the classic literary canon for their canon.¹⁹¹ In this way, both scholarly disciplines carried forward the constellation of the general Greek (exemplary) canon hermeneutic under the conditions of their time. Vis-à-vis a threatening petrification (Preuschen) of the Bible as Holy Scripture, cult book, or the like, New Testament scholarship places the early Christian writings, on the one hand, in their own time (historical contextualization) and, on the other hand, in the present (reception aesthetics), and thereby makes them accessible to an understanding that is appropriate to the time – the very understanding that was always the concern of the hermeneuticists. New Testament scholarship¹⁹² does not thereby regress behind its *raison d'être*, i.e., the historical-critical perspective, to which

schen für Menschen. Augustins Schrift *de Doctrina Christiana* – Die hermeneutischen Positionierungen des Prologs,” in *Heiliger Text. Die identitätsbildende Funktion klassischer Texte innerhalb einer Gemeinschaft*, ed. H. de Roest and W. Wischmeyer (Groningen: Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 2007), 109–17.

¹⁹⁰We also find, of course, acknowledgments of the literal meaning in Origen and allegoresis in Augustine. On this, cf., by way of introduction, U. Heil, R. Leonhardt, H. Liss, and H. Kugler, “Schriftsinn, vielfacher,” in *LBH* (2009): 531–35. I have selected the quotations with a view to the subject matter and not as quotations that are characteristic of the persons.

¹⁹¹Representatives of both Old and New Testament scholarship made a decisive contribution themselves to the general process of decanonization in the humanities.

¹⁹²In this field of tension, representatives of New Testament scholarship perceive, however, very different options. (1) They develop their own hermeneutics of the New Testament in their own discipline and on the basis of their textual understanding. (2) They limit themselves to the exegetical explanation of the Bible, while leaving hermeneutics to systematic theology. (3) They work exclusively in the historical-critical context as a small subdiscipline of the ancient history of religion and Jewish studies and consciously refrain from every hermeneutical reflection. (4) A fourth tendency, which is especially widespread in Anglo-American exegesis leads in its direction to patristics, either with a broader history-of-religions focus on Gnosticism or on the patristic history of exegesis and thus in the direction of a new canonical approach on the basis of reception history.

it owes its existence. This perspective means freedom in relation to canonical norm and institutional tradition. It makes possible the historical *deconstruction* of the canon; the *construction* of the history of emerging Christianity, of its writings and structures of authority; and the *discourse-analytical*¹⁹³ approach to the messages and instructions of the New Testament writings. Theology and ethics of the New Testament writings are presented and historically contextualized in their relationships. The combination of historical and reception-aesthetical lines of questioning in contemporary New Testament scholarship is the form in which canonical hermeneutics can be set forth in a post-canonical epoch in the framework of text-interpretive scholarship, i.e., in which the understanding of the New Testament texts under the current conditions of understanding can take place. *Decanonization* and the historical and reception-aesthetical interpretation fulfill the same purpose that the ancient allegorical canon interpretation pursued – namely, making possible the understanding of the texts under general conditions of knowledge. These conditions – and not the texts – are subject to constant change. *Decanonization* is the current presupposition for understanding, as the status of canon was the presupposition for understanding in precritical hermeneutics. The concern here is not with a simple model of progress in which “precritical” is evaluated as more distant from the text in comparison with the “historical-critical” approach – or, vice versa, with a view in which “precritical” is regarded as that which is appropriate to the texts of the Bible in contrast to criticism and suspicion – but rather with presenting the belonging of the three hermeneutical paradigms to their respective cultural and theoretical contexts. The historical and reception-aesthetical paradigms are not better than the precritical-canonical one but the hermeneutical response that is respectively appropriate to the time, to the question that must always be posed and answered anew, namely, “*How do I read canonical texts?*” in their respective cultural and theoretical environments. This applies also to the conflict – which is only apparent – between the historical and the reception-aesthetical hermeneutic. Only when the hunger for historical knowledge and its liberating and deconstructive effect was slaked to some extent could spheres other than the historical ἀρχή become hermeneutically relevant and could the reader’s own role be reflected upon anew.

4.2 New Testament Scholarship and Reception Aesthetics

I have presented the process of canon formation and of the specific canon hermeneutic from the perspective of New Testament scholarship. New Testament scholarship was and is the scholarly instrument of decanonization. In the place of a canon hermeneutic it sets the historical and reception-aesthetical perspective with their analytical and constructive work steps. My remarks have made clear that the historical and reception-aesthetical paradigm is not oriented *against* a hermeneutic of the New Testament but rather itself represents the *hermeneutical program* for understanding the New Testament in the context of present-day textual scholarships. New Testament scholarship is

¹⁹³Cf. U. Sals, S. Scholz, J. F. Lehmann, and I. H. Warnke, “Diskursanalyse,” in *LBH* (2009): 135–38.

devoted to the understanding (hermeneutics) and interpretation (methods) of the texts that in the course of their early reception history became the *New Testament*, the second part of the *Bible*. I will summarize the achievement of New Testament scholarship in three points.

(1) While New Testament scholarship does not work in the canonical hermeneutic paradigm, it does work in a *canon-oriented* way.¹⁹⁴ The writings of the New Testament canon constitute its primary object of investigation. To this extent, its approach is that of reception history, for canonization is – as mentioned at the outset – an integral and enduring component of the reception history both of the individual writings and later also of the canonical collection of writings. At the same time, the analysis of the latent internal self-canonization of the Gospels and Pauline letters makes clear that at least these early Christian writings have a tendency toward canonization. A historical interpretation will not be able to ignore this tendency. The concept of canon is not superfluous for New Testament scholarship and its hermeneutic but remains its base concept. To this extent, New Testament scholarship will continue to distinguish between the texts of the New Testament and the so-called New Testament apocrypha – not for normative reasons but for reception-historical ones.

(2) New Testament scholarship works, second, in a *text-oriented* way. It investigates the texts of the New Testament text-critically, text-historically, exegetically, and thematically. To this extent, its approach is the general text-scholarly one. Through the fact that it interprets the texts with philological, historical, literary-historical, and history-of-religions methods and lines of questioning, it mediates the New Testament texts in their distinct profile and in their contexts to all the scholarly disciplines that deal with texts. It continues to be the first advocate for the texts and the effort to understand them.¹⁹⁵

(3) New Testament scholarship works, third, in a *hermeneutic-oriented* way. It connects the investigation of the Greek, Jewish, and early church canon hermeneutics¹⁹⁶ with the hermeneutical implications of the history of interpretation, on the one hand, and contemporary hermeneutical research, on the other hand. In this way, it presents a hermeneutical platform for the bringing together of different historical and contemporary approaches of canonical hermeneutics.¹⁹⁷ However, New Testament scholarship itself does not develop a *separate* “canon hermeneutic” that isolates the writings of the New Testament and their interpretation from their contexts on the basis of a closed, exclusive, and normative conception of canon. At the same time, it also does not withdraw exclusively to the older historical paradigm, which leaves undiscussed the different conceptions of “world interpretation” that the texts work out. It is obligated to the contemporary reception-aesthetical hermeneutical concept, which applies to emi-

¹⁹⁴ This is not to be confused with a canonical approach. On the canonical approach, cf. note 142.

¹⁹⁵ Since Origen, establishing the text, exegesis in commentary form, and hermeneutics have been interdependent. On the enduring value of philology for hermeneutics, cf. K. Pollmann, “Five Contributions to Latin Philology AD,” *Millennium* 7 (2010): 1–8.

¹⁹⁶ On this, see now Mitchell, *Paul, the Corinthians and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics*.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. the rationale of the *Lexikon der Bibelhermeneutik* (ed. O. Wischmeyer).

nent texts¹⁹⁸ and works with an open, historically dynamic conception of canon and the hermeneutical concept of expectation¹⁹⁹ and criticism²⁰⁰ in relation to the world interpretation of the texts. In this way, it keeps the texts in the tension between claim and opposition, in which they have stood since Paul's letter to the Galatians.

Contemporary New Testament scholarship works with the hermeneutical principle "*What the writings of the New Testament need in the hermeneutical discourse of the present is not their own doctrine of understanding or canon hermeneutic but rather a hermeneutical reflection on their reception history, that is, canon research. It depends on the reader whether and in what way she or he will confer a special status on the canonical texts. A pre-given canon hermeneutic cannot bring about this decision.*"

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¹⁹⁸Thus the formulation of H. G. Gadamer, who clearly refers back to Dilthey's conception.

¹⁹⁹The category of expectation refers to all texts that have a complex structure and contain statements that do not exhaust themselves in mere information.

²⁰⁰The category of criticism refers to the texts mentioned in the previous note. The world interpretation conceptions of eminent texts must be subjected to different critical processes, which apply, on the one hand, to the statement and argumentation worlds of the texts themselves and, on the other hand, critically interrogate the statements of the texts in the respectively current discourse. This applies in a special way to texts that are furnished with a canonical claim by the institutions that are carried by them and by their interpretive communities. Concepts such as the Bultmanian "*Sachkritik*" and "engaged readings" or "contextual hermeneutics," which go beyond the understanding of the texts and inquire about the theoretical and practical possibilities of their implementation, carry the canonical claim of the New Testament texts into the religious and philosophical discourse of the present.

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Paul as Storyteller? Conclusion

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1. On the Contemporary Skepticism toward the Characterization of Paul “as Storyteller”

Talk of “narrative” structures in the Letters of Paul has significantly shaped the exegetical discussion in the Anglophone sphere for some time. The “narrative approach,” which was especially inspired by Richard B. Hays and N. T. Wright, faces, however, a skeptical attitude in large parts of scholarship. Critics of the approach have regarded narrativity and epistolarity as aspects that stand in tension with each other. The reasons for this reserve were presented in section 2.2 of Chapter 1:

1. Within the canonical framework, the epistolary literature represents a corpus that stands in quite clear continuity to the narrative works (Gospels and Acts), which, in turn, *clearly* exhibit a narrative character.
2. In exegetical scholarship, a methodological division of labor corresponds to this rough division of the subject area into two entities. While “narrative analysis” has established itself as an important approach for narrative works, “rhetorical criticism” apparently provides a methodological counterpart for the adequate description of the structure and effects of the epistolary literature. Moreover, in this context, the aspect of narrativity appears to be accounted for already through the ancient rhetorical category of *narrationes*, through which the application of modern narratological categories to the Pauline letters moves even further away.
3. The different varieties of genre criticism also reinforce this disparate relationship between narrative works (such as the Gospels) and letters (such as those of Paul). Starting from the original interest in oral preliminary stages of the text, scholarship initially focused on the structural characteristics of the individual “forms” from which a text was compiled. Here, the discussion concentrated especially

¹For the German version of this work, see C. Heilig, *Paulus als Erzähler? Eine narratologische Perspektive auf die Paulusbriefe*, BZNW 237 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020), 991–1015 [<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110670691>]. Cf. now also C. Heilig, *Paul the Storyteller: A Narratological Approach* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2024).

on the subunits of the Gospels, i.e., it had a rather narrowly focused perspective in which the relationship between narrativity and epistolarity could hardly play a role. A broadening of the perspective, which has especially emerged in the English-speaking world, led to a development in which former genres (such as parables) came to be designated as forms and the notion of genre came to be set at a higher level. However, this concept of genre also usually took its orientation from the canonical subdivision of the New Testament, i.e., it usually differentiated between Gospels, Acts, letters, and Revelation. Within this framework, scholarship has scarcely focused on the relationship of these (super-)genres to one another but rather on their relationships to comparable literary categories from the environment (i.e., Gospels *as* Bios, etc.).

2. A Text-Linguistic Perspective on Narrative Textualizations in the Pauline Letters

All three factors contribute to the fact that in scholarship the New Testament letters stand over against a “text type narration” as “non-narrative texts.” However, as presented in detail in section 3 of Chapter 2, such a dichotomy is untenable from the perspective of *text linguistics*. Within the framework of an “integrative” text understanding – which takes account of structural, semantic, and also *pragmatic* factors of textuality – a hierarchical classification of different text types is instead made with the aid of different “areas of communication.” Against this background, the Pauline letters can be understood as examples of a text type, which play a specific function in the framework of the broader communication system “early Christianity.” The Gospels, too, are analogously embedded in this system. Narrativity (or also epistolarity as a parameter of the medium) plays no role at all in this hierarchical classification of early Christian writings.

The category of narration is, however, significant for the interaction with text types. For narrative can be understood as one of several possible “strategies” with which a theme can be developed in a text. In addition to hierarchical text classification according to spheres of communication, early Christian text sorts can correspondingly also be organized according to whichever “strategy of textualization” (description, explication, argumentation, or narration) is dominant in the respective text type. In such a “typologization” – which runs horizontal to the hierarchical classification – the Pauline letters and the Gospels do, in fact, come into a discontinuous relationship.

It by no means follows from this, however, that the narrative textualization pattern would be insignificant for the text sort to which the Pauline letters belong. Two important points must be noted here.

1. In exegetical scholarship, a “paraenetic” text that aims at a change of behavior is often connected to the category of argumentation. However, vis-à-vis the kind of textualization, the “text-function” (the impact that the author intends through the communication) constitutes a *separate* linguistic criterion, according to which a typologization can likewise be made (i.e., as an *alternative* to taking one’s orientation from the strategy of textualization). Thus, the question of whether narrativity is significant for the text sort Pauline letter must be pursued

independently of the circumstance that the text function does not correspond to the informational-declarative (or else aesthetic) communicative intent that is typical for narrative works.

2. The assignment of a text to a text sort presupposes that the investigated text follows the “pattern” that constitutes this text sort (or, more specifically, that it varies it, in which case we speak of “text sort variant”). In this context, however, it is not only the “dominant” textualization strategy on the level of the global text structure that plays an important role. For a precise description of the text type also presupposes the careful clarification of the question of how *different textualization strategies are related to and intertwined with one another*. Even if narration occurs in a text sort primarily in a supporting function for the argumentative strategy of textualization, it can nevertheless present an important aspect of the underlying pattern. From a text-linguistic perspective, the question of which role narrative textualizations play in the Pauline letters is therefore of elementary significance for the text-linguistically central task of describing the text sort that is co-constituted through the Pauline letters.

3. The Lack of Clear Definitions in the “Narrative Approach”

Since the quest for “narratives” in the Pauline letters presupposes a precise understanding of the subject matter that is to be identified, a solid definitional foundation for exegetical work is very important. A survey of the literature shows, however, that in the framework of the narrative approach scarcely any attention has been given thus far to this theoretical foundation (Chapter 2). While Richard B. Hays and N. T. Wright do indeed attempt to support their undertaking text-theoretically, they do not provide a clear definition of what constitutes a ‘story’ from their perspective.²

The discussion that has followed upon Hays and Wright scarcely goes beyond the reflections of the two pioneers of the paradigm. The intertextual turn in Pauline scholarship, which was likewise co-established by Hays, has instead led to a situation in which the theoretical discussion is primarily restricted to the question of how a subtle connection to another narrative can be identified in the text – but without addressing the question of what constitutes a narrative in the first place. The concentration on the questions of *where* the postulated narratives are to be localized and what *content* they possess has had an analogous effect.

However, the aspect of localization in particular points to the basic problem of the “narrative approach,” which remains pre-theoretical over large stretches. If there is no clarification of what a narrative is, then it is also not possible to make a statement about its relationship to the aspect of textuality. Discussion about whether narratives can be identified “under” or “behind” the non-narrative text are fruitless against this background.

²Translator’s note: When referencing concepts, such as the concept of ‘story’ or the concept of ‘narrative,’ Heilig uses single quotation marks.

4. Explicit Narratives in the Framework of Narratology

Against that background, Chapter 3 attempts to work out a definitional framework for the analysis of the Pauline letters from the perspective of *narratology*. There is, on the one hand, the possibility of working with a definition that starts from a “prototype” of the category ‘narrative’ and from the view that narrativity can be present in different degrees. The advantages of prototypical definitions can, however, also be realized in the framework of the traditional equivalence definition (which specifies necessary and sufficient conditions for a classification) by setting up definitions that differ in the extent to which they are rich in content, i.e., that summarize a different number of elements as ‘narrative.’

A minimalistic definition (which thus presupposes a very broad understanding of narrativity, i.e., which classifies a lot of entities as ‘narrative’) presupposes that (1) a *text* is concerned with (2) *at least two events* (3) that are spoken of as actually having occurred (or as presently occurring) and that (4) are temporally connected and (5) meaningfully joined in at least one other way.

This definition builds on a proposal of the narratologists Tilmann Köppe and Tom Kindt, who advocate for a rather traditional understanding with respect to the scope and task of narratology. This can be seen, for example, in the fact that even the broadly conceived minimal conditions presuppose that the entity in question is a *text*. If one instead starts from a prototypical definition, as, for example, it is proposed by the narratologist Marie-Laure Ryan (Chapter 3, section 3.3), then it is much more unproblematic to speak of (a certain degree of) narrativity also in cases in which there is no linguistic act of narration present.

For the analysis of the Pauline letters, it is nevertheless advisable to presuppose initially the conservative framework of Köppe and Kindt as a foundation, in order to increase the significance of a potential positive result. If *even* on this basis it is possible to speak meaningfully of Paul as storyteller, then this presents a significant confirmation of the validity of a narratological perspective on the Pauline letters.

5. The Analysis of Explicit Narratives as a Starting Point for a Transfer of the “Narrative Approach” into a Narratological Perspective

This concentration on *explicit narratives* stands, of course, in contrast to the emphases of Richard B. Hays and N. T. Wright, who point to the importance of implicit narrative structures (Chapter 2, sections 2 and 3), i.e., wish to speak of “narratives” precisely where the text does not follow a clearly discernable narrative strategy of textualization. The two authors’ polemic against explicit narratives can be explained, however, primarily as the result of an apologetic motivation. Since the talk of Paul as “storyteller” can be attacked in light of the apparent fact that he does not tell stories explicitly or scarcely does so, the two exegetes distance themselves from explicit narration in an exaggerated manner.

The arguments that they present for this, however, are by no means compelling (cf.

Chapter 2, section 4). Precisely if one is interested in the question of whether there is something like “non-narrated narratives” in the Pauline letters, one must first clarify *how* Paul communicates narratively in the narratively textualized sections. The Pauline style of narration can be reliably ascertained only in places where narratives in the text can be clearly identified and described. For the quest for “implicit narratives” to be regarded as having an empirical basis, it must arise from the analysis of the actual narratives.

In following such a procedure, we must not, of course, rule out the possibility that the results of this analysis may bring to light phenomena that are close to the category of narrativity, even though they do not fulfill the conditions of an explicit narrative. Against such a background, it would *then* be possible to pursue the question of how, from a narratological perspective, we can speak meaningfully about text sections that are textualized in a non-narrative manner. The presented minimalist equivalence definition thus represents a promising *starting point* that enables one to pursue the line of inquiry of Hays and Wright from a methodologically less controversial standpoint and on the basis of engagement with the text itself.

6. A Text-Grammatical Approach to Narrative Textualizations

The difficulty in reaching an agreement about *whether* or *to what extent* Paul tells stories must, on the one hand, be traced back to different – usually unconsciously presupposed – definitions (cf. Chapter 2, sections 2 and 3, and Chapter 3, section 1), and, on the other hand, is also connected to the fact that a systematic examination of the Pauline letters against the background of this line of questioning has not previously been undertaken. Moreover, between definitional foundation and empirical evaluation lies the task of explicating the narratological conditions in such a way that they are practicable for the analysis of the reconstructed Greek text. It is therefore necessary to clarify the following two questions: (1) What does the structure of a text that is to be classified as a narrative look like? (2) What different possibilities are there for the implementation of this structure, i.e., how can the individual narratives be described by us?

For the clarification of these questions, Chapter 4 draws upon the text grammar presented by Heinrich von Siebenthal. Just as questions on the syntax of Koine Greek are pursued as a matter of course on the basis of scholarly studies on the grammar of the sentence, so the scholarly aspiration of New Testament research demands that we draw upon the current text-grammatical state of knowledge for the investigation of the structure above the level of the sentence. Accordingly, even though the presentation of the text structure with the aid of the categories that Heinrich von Siebenthal applies to Koine Greek is currently still rather uncommon in the exegetical discourse, this approach nevertheless remains the best possible framework for identifying and describing narratives in Paul.

Narratology has a descriptive orientation. It thus has a primarily classificatory interest, which can, however, also refer to levels of meaning. Accordingly, the application of narratological categories may presuppose interpretation. In the framework of

the present work, which views the Pauline letters as artefacts of historical processes of communication, an intentionalist concept of meaning is presupposed. The text-grammatical approach provides the method with which the semantics of the text can be investigated within this framework (cf. Chapter 3, section 6.3). In parallel to the analysis undertaken here, theories of interpretation that, for example, locate meaning on the level of reception can likewise make use of the narratological “tool kit.” The text-grammatical integration of the conceptions is also probably not insignificant for such interpretations, even though different decisions will necessarily be made in individual cases.

7. Pauline Narration and Temporal Order

In the framework of this text-grammatical perspective, a narration will be recognizable through the fact that both the expression-side (or “grammar”-side) and the content-side of the text structure will exhibit specific characteristics (cf., for the content-side, Chapter 5, and for the expression-side, Chapter 6). Current research on grammatical aspect and lexical situation type (*Aktionsart*) potential in Koine, as it is summarized here, offer especially great potential for a language-specific narratological analysis of New Testament narratives. The fact that the reader correctly reconstructs the semantic propositional structure of the text, i.e., the hierarchical structure from pairs of propositions (“connections”), is ensured on the expression-side of the text structure above all through connectors (e.g., conjunctions, adverbs, and prepositions).

A quite specific profile of Pauline narration already emerges from the examination of the linguistic options of the expression-side of narrative textualizations (Chapter 6). This is worked out with even more precision through a detailed investigation of the factor of “temporal order” – one of the constitutive factors of narrative – in the Pauline letters (Chapter 7). On the one hand, the explicit temporal connections are investigated here, i.e., the anterior (Chapter 7, section 2), posterior (Chapter 7, section 3), and simultaneous (Chapter 7, section 4) relations between two propositions. They can each appear with a multitude of different emphases. On the other hand, the temporal order in non-temporally focused connections is also discussed (Chapter 7, section 5).

Here, it not only becomes clear that Paul does, in fact, tell stories in numerous places, but also *how* he does so (cf. also Chapter 8, section 2). Thus, it is, for example, very conspicuous that Paul is very reserved with respect to the “classic” anterior narration, in which the presentation of a (chronologically) earlier event is followed by a communicatively equally important subsequent situation, which (on the level of grammar) is usually indicated through an adverb such as τότε, ἔπειτα, or εἶτα in the clause that expresses the subsequent event, which occurs in the text in the second place. The Pauline style of narration differs markedly in this regard from, for example, the Gospel of Matthew, where τότε is very frequently used in this function (i.e., “X. Then Y.”) This circumstance probably also explains the impression that Paul “does not tell stories.” One must, by contrast, say more precisely that Paul scarcely ever tells stories *in a certain way*, i.e., that he is “a different kind” of storyteller.

Viewed positively, we can say that (a) the very extensive development of simultaneous connections is conspicuous. This can be explained on the basis of the narration type that is often found in Paul. Paul often uses the narrative strategy of textualization when he thematizes situations that occur at the time of writing. Thus, he narrates simultaneously (i.e., not in retrospect) what is now taking place and how different events relate to one another in the present.

A second positive conclusion that we can draw is that while (b) temporal sequence is also present at many points, it is usually expressed through connections that do not exhibit a temporal focus but are based on logical relationships. Here, we see the concision of the Pauline style of narration. Against this background, more extensive narrative textualizations, such as Gal 1.13–2.21, are especially conspicuous. Here, we can indeed speak of narratives that fulfill the definition that is richer in terms of content (cf. Chapter 3, section 3.4.4).

8. Pauline Narration and Pragmatics

8.1 *Relief of the Expression-Side of the Text Structure*

Since Heinrich von Siebenthal's text grammar presupposes the integrative text model (see section 2 above), it is also necessary to investigate how the Pauline narratives are embedded in the specific *communicative* (text-internal and text-external) situation of the letter. Here, it is, on the one hand, conspicuous that the pragmatics on the expression-side of the text structure often leads to a relief of the syntax (Chapter 8, section 2). In place of a "strict" narration, in which events are presented through indicative forms of the augment tenses as (1) having actually occurred and (2) as being located in the past, we find infinitive and participial constructions that merely express the situation that is expressed by the verb itself but do not encode the relationship to reality grammatically. Still, the reader can infer that the concern is with events that occurred in the past. However, it only emerges from the prior knowledge that is shared by the storyteller and recipient.

8.2 *Relief of the Content-Side of the Text Structure*

Analogously, on the content side, we can observe the phenomenon of elliptical narration, i.e., the phenomenon that situations as a whole are omitted but must be inferred (Chapter 8, section 3). For the question of implicit narratives, this observation is extremely relevant, for it points to the fact that Paul's narration in his letters often presupposes *other narratives* – or at least shared experiences that both Paul and the addressees *could narrate*.

Interestingly this phenomenon extends not only to the undisputed Pauline letters (cf., e.g., Col 1.21–22; Eph 6.21). Independent of the judgments that are made regarding authenticity in each case, it can thus be stated that the disputed Pauline letters also prompt acts of lively imagination. There, the focus does not seem to be merely on what is recounted in the narrative but also, due to the peculiarity of the narration, on the

“historical” relationship between addressees and storyteller. Accordingly, even though the question of the relationship of pseudepigraphic letters to Pauline *Vorlagen*, which dominates in many commentaries, is certainly important, it must not be overlooked in this context that material is not simply “processed” here. Rather, through the narration (1) an occurrence that precedes the text and (2) communicative events are implied, which both influence the reading experience.

8.3 Text Function/Communicative Intention

The pragmatic dimension of Pauline narration also points to the special *function* of the narrative textualizations (Chapter 8, section 4; cf. also above, Chapter 1, section 3.5 on text function as a linguistic criterion of the typologization of text sorts into text types; on this, cf. section 2 above). With explicit narratives in letters, one would normally expect the sender to narrate something here that informs the recipient about events. The text function of the Pauline narratives, however, often appears to be *evaluative* rather than assertive. A section that is narrated like Gal 3.23–25 not only presupposes that other narratives about this nexus of events can be assumed as knowledge (cf. the previous observations on the pragmatic relief of the narrative text structure), but also that the intention of the storyteller does not consist primarily in having the reader believe a certain sequence of events but rather in moving them to adopt a certain evaluation of specific episodes of the plot. If one investigates the global text structure of whole writings, it also becomes clear that some narratives in Paul should not be assigned to the “intention type” that targets the level of beliefs at all but rather aim at a transformation of the *volition* and thereby encourage an action (cf., for example, Gal 1.13–3.21 against the background of Gal 4.12).

8.4 Narration-Specific Tasks

The text function can be discerned, on the one hand, via the analysis of the speech acts in the text. For example, in Gal 4.12 we find a “request.” What Paul requests the readers to do here is very important for the intention that stands behind the letter as a whole. Other important insights can be gained if we grasp precisely how Paul as storyteller needs to carry out the “narration-specific tasks” that confront him. What is meant by this is that the storyteller must make known *in* the communication *that* (and *why*) he tells stories. From the way in which Paul transitions to narratives within the discourse and returns again to non-narrative textualizations, important conclusions about the text function can be derived. On the one hand, an analysis of these aspects confirms again that Paul rarely appears as a “typical” storyteller (who would narratively thematize previously unknown material in an assertive-informing way in the discourse). On the other hand, it also becomes impressively clear here how consciously and diversely Paul employs narrative textualizations in order to carry out his communicative intention.

8.5 *Borders of Narrative Textualizations*

The investigation of the embedding of narrative textualizations in the communicative context also leads to a perception of the complex interplay with other (descriptive and argumentative) textualizations. In the analysis of these phenomena, one repeatedly encounters difficulties of demarcation. Thus, one can, for example, consider whether in the case of some descriptions the story world that previously found expression in the narrative may still be presupposed (e.g., Gal 3.28). Likewise, it is conspicuous that Paul sometimes places the event of his own narration (esp. 2 Cor 12.1–6) so strongly at the center that the act of narration itself appears as a kind of – more or less explicitly narrated – framework narrative. All these phenomena (see Chapter 8, section 3.5) point to the fact that narrative considerations can be applied in a heuristically fruitful manner for the Pauline letters also in places where the apostle does not narrate explicitly (let alone in the “strict” sense).

8.6 *Embedded Narration Type*

While the aspects of the text function encountered in Paul (and, thus, concomitantly, the carrying out of the narration-specific tasks) are probably rather uncommon for epistolary text sorts, other peculiarities of the Pauline narration are unusual in comparison to literary narrative works but occur quite frequently in private letters (cf. Chapter 8, section 7). While some epistolary text sorts (e.g., love letters) primarily display communication (so-called “internal”) events (such as affirmations of love), most letters nevertheless refer to events in the experienced world. Here, the so-called “*embedded*” *narration type* is typical, which is also characteristic, for example, for diaries. In such narratives, the perspectives of the narrated and narrating “I” overlap, since the narrated events are still experienced as “directly” present at the time of narration. The reference to the present – which is typical for embedded narration – in the middle of statements that refer to the past can also be found in Paul through other means, namely when he comments on his own narration in a meta-narrative manner (e.g., Gal 1.20).

8.7 *Looking Forward: Aspects that are Suggestive of Implicit Narratives*

The analysis of explicit narratives in Paul thus points time and again to narratives “behind” the text, i.e., to narratives in the communicative prehistory that do, in fact, influence the configuration of the text structure. To this we can add (cf. Chapter 7, section 6) the fact that in the analysis of temporal order in the Pauline letters phenomena became visible time and again that do not fulfill the conditions of a narrative but come very close in a different respect.

Thus, in light of the reserved use of the sequential-anterior narration, it is conspicuous how often Paul uses the connection type that expresses this temporal relationship to join *future events* with one another. Since future events are merely possible, they cannot be “narrated” in the sense that we have established as a basis here. How close this phenomenon comes to narration already becomes clear, however, through the fact that

Genette speaks here of “predictive narration.” *Negated events* represent a similar phenomenon, i.e., events that are talked about – sometimes in great detail – in the texts, but the occurrence of which is precisely not asserted. Thus, also in the case of these breaches of the narrative textualization pattern, the analysis of explicit narratives repeatedly brings into view aspects that underscore the demand for a deeper examination of the question of “implicit” narratives.

9. Implicit Narratives as Mentally Simulated Proto-Narratives that Become Visible in Narrative Fragments

Chapter 9 investigates the question of what role implicit narratives could play from a narratological perspective. Although “non-narrated narratives” initially appears to present a contradiction in itself, it is shown with the aid of the category of the dream that the concept of a mental narrative does indeed have an intuitive validity (Chapter 9, section 2). With the help of Fisher’s comprehensive narrative paradigm of communication (Chapter 9, section 3.2), which has been overlooked in the “narrative approach to Paul,” I then show how a comprehensive understanding of narrativity would enable the analysis of every communication with the aid of narrative categories. However, it also becomes clear, in light of the criticism of Fisher’s approach, that, such an understanding would, on the other hand, lead to a neglect of the “narrative” aspects in the stricter sense. Precisely against the background of the analysis undertaken in Part II (Chapters 3 to 8), such an approach would be a step in the wrong direction. It must therefore be considered whether it is not possible to speak of implicit, mental narratives also in the framework of a stricter conception of narrativity.

At first glance, the conception of Ryan (Chapter 9, section 3.3) appears to offer a promising approach here. Since she defines narration above all semantically, one could apply the definition also to mental entities. However, upon closer examination of her approach it becomes clear that also with respect to the mental level it is ultimately necessary to distinguish between the “story” as a semantic entity and an underlying “narrative discourse.” When someone observes a battle and reflects on how they will narrate this to their family at home, then it is necessary to differentiate between the plot of this mental narrative and the concretely imagined narrative realization (in the course of which, for example, another ordering of the events can be made).

A good understanding of this constellation can be obtained in the framework of simulation theory (Chapter 9, section 3.4). The mental narration arises also from an act of narration – even though it is only a *simulated* one. With Köppe and Kindt such non-verbalized/non-written narratives can be called “proto-narratives.” The process that leads to this proto-narrative can be understood as a multi-staged process, so that “narrativization” can be present in different stages (i.e., the battle can be made present mentally in its basic contours or imagined as a narrative that is fleshed out even to the level of the word choice).

For the *text* analysis, *mental* proto-narratives can indeed be relevant when they penetrate to the surface of the text as “narrative fragments” (Chapter 9, section 4). With

reference to the example of Gal 4.3–12, I show that a proto-narrative can be discerned that underlies the whole section (Chapter 9, section 5). It not only connects the two narrative textualizations, but it also integrates the events to which v. 11 and v. 12 refer. In v. 11 a fear clause is used to call into question an event in the past, i.e., to indicate that it might not have happened. In v. 12 an imperative is used to address an event that refers to the future, whose realization is still pending. In both cases, there is a clearly recognizable reference to an implicit narrative. Should the fear prove to be accurate, the explicit narration in vv. 3–6 would thereby show itself to be false in retrospect (i.e., the narration would prove to be “unreliable,” to use narratological terminology). By contrast, if the Galatians comply with the exhortation, then they thereby guarantee that they can claim this narrative for themselves, also for the future.

10. Disnarrated Events as Narrative Fragments of Proto-Narratives

The phenomenon of calling into question or even denying the occurrence of past events is very frequent in Paul. Precisely in connection with affirmative statements about the past, i.e., with actual narratives, the relevance of these portions of text for a narratological perspective becomes especially clear. Through the fact that the episodes are emphatically *not* narrated, they point to the excluded option of this narration. These “anti-narratives” thus exclude whole classes of explicit narratives – namely, all those that would exhibit the disnarrated event as their plot. This phenomenon of “disnarration” (Chapter 10) is attested in very different shades in Paul (Chapter 12). It becomes clear that Paul does indeed exhibit an extensive and – as regards the situations’ relationship to reality – nuanced use of this category of references to events.

11. Future Events as Narrative Fragments of Proto-Narratives

Future events (Chapter 11) can also frequently be understood as narrative fragments of implicit proto-narratives. This often becomes clear precisely when references to the future are connected to explicit narratives. For example, it can be shown with reference to Rom 15 (Chapter 11, section 8) that the future references are very skillfully connected to events of the past and present. There arises in this way a network of actual and possible events, within which Paul attempts to navigate the reader. The prayer to which he exhorts the Romans is assigned an important role here. It ensures that the events develop in such a way that the momentarily only *potential* narrative can one day actually be narrated explicitly in retrospect.

In dialogue with categories of the narratologists Lämmert and Genette (Chapter 11, section 3), I highlight with respect to Paul above all the significance of those events which contain “foreshadowings” of his own future (Lämmert), where Paul “predictively narrates” (Genette). An analysis of the future forms in Romans shows that Paul uses these forms only in a small minority of their occurrences for “certain foreshadowings” (*zukunftsgewissen Vorausdeutungen*), i.e., to create *narrative fixed points* for narratives that cannot yet be narrated at the present point in time (Chapter 13).

By contrast, the “uncertain foreshadowings” (*zukunftsungewissen Vorausdeutungen*), with which Paul points out *possible developments of the plot*, are very frequent and extremely multiform (Chapter 14). Here, Paul has at his disposal, in addition to the modal future in declarative clauses or an adverbial weakening of the same, also a multitude of other linguistic means (e.g., interrogative clauses and desiderative clauses or purpose-oriented connections), with which he can configure potential storylines in respectively very specific ways and modulate them in their relation to reality.

For example, within the conditional connections (Chapter 14, section 5.2), it is possible to differentiate between the use of indefinite and prospective conditional constructions, which make quite distinct contributions to the configuration of a potential plot thread. In the framework of an exegetical approach that does not place such narrative dynamics at the center, this specific contribution (e.g., in 2 Cor 12.6) is often not adequately recognized. In Chapter 14 it was not possible in all cases to pursue in detail how events with reference to the future are embedded in larger proto-narratives. However, individual in-depth analyses, such as the examination of the purpose clause in Gal 1.14 (Chapter 14, section 5.3.2.6) demonstrated that Paul ably puts the linguistic means at his disposal in a very intentional manner into the service of the text-function of the respective overall letter.

12. Explicit and Implicit Narratives as Elements of the Text Sort Pattern

The analysis of narrative textualizations in the Pauline letters provide initial building blocks for the description of the text sort(s) to which they are to be assigned. It is initially conspicuous that Paul narrates explicitly only in isolated cases with purely *informing-assertive* intention. In context, such narrative textualizations sometimes support argumentation that is meant to lead to a new *evaluation* of a situation by the addressees; this is especially noticeable in 2 Corinthians.

More frequently, explicit narratives are invoked in a reminding way, in order to serve as a point of reference for anticipations and disnarrations. The network of events that is set forth in this way then usually has an *appellative* text-function; this is especially clearly recognizable with respect to Galatians. It is more the normal case rather than the exception that the addressees are (meant to be) stimulated by the text to form mental proto-narratives. In the course of this narrativization, in which the recipients of the letter must usually then integrate themselves as narrative figures, it is also necessary to make decisions pertaining to the “action,” which then also have direct effects upon their “actions” in the real world (e.g., Rom 15.24). Sometimes Paul intentionally leaves gaps in what is narrated (e.g., Gal 1.4) or even hypothetically calls into question the coherence and thus reliability of the narrative (e.g., Gal 4.1–12). Moreover, at least in Rom 6, we even seem to be dealing with intentional ambiguity, which allows for different receptions, with the text exhibiting different text-functions depending on the circumstances of the respective readers/hearers.

Precisely the consideration of disnarrated and future events underscores the observation that also the disputed Pauline letters “tell stories” in a manner that is indeed com-

plex. Sections that are often classified as incoherent in the secondary literature, especially in German-language scholarship, can sometimes be adequately explained against the background of a proto-narrative, which can often be reconstructed with good reasons. It remains to be seen to what extent this observation can contribute to the debates about authenticity, which are still conducted in a lively manner on an international level (especially with respect to Colossians and 2 Thessalonians). (In fact, one could evaluate some observations on “Pauline” narration as a counterargument to the significance of the secretary hypothesis, which is often put forth as an alternative to pseudepigraphy – cf. Chapter 4, section 2). It is, however, in any case, at least necessary to perceive the fiction that is created through the aforementioned narrative fragments: the narration itself and thus the figure of the narrating Paul is part of the imagination that the letters encourage. The narration of Paul – and his diverse mental pondering of different sequences of events – thus constitutes the frame narrative, which must not be overlooked.

With regard to the differentiation between authentic and pseudepigraphic Pauline letters in different text sorts, no consistent differences in the underlying text sort pattern have become apparent, at least with regard to narrative textualizations and implicit proto-narratives. The hypothesis lies close to hand that a demarcation of different text sorts here would have to take place above all on the level of pragmatics, i.e., with a view to the different functions that the writings most certainly had for the communication sphere of early Christianity. (If a late date is assigned to a pseudepigraphical letter, then one must, of course, take into account the change in the social system as well as the continuing influence of the older letters in a secondary reception context.)

13. The Conceptions of Hays and Wright and Proto-Narratives

After the category of implicit narrative was made plausible narratologically (Chapter 9) and it was demonstrated through concrete text-analysis that “narrative fragments” can be identified in the whole *corpus Paulinum* (Chapters 10–14), the conceptions of Hays and Wright could be discussed in conclusion.

A careful comparative analysis of the two authors (Chapter 15) shows the diverse roles that narrative aspects play in the two conceptions. The aspects that have to do with the intersection of Pauline thinking and text-production are especially significant for exegesis.

A rough distinction can be made between two different conceptions (Chapter 15, section 4.5), which can be differentiated with reference to their differently oriented lines of questioning. Wright is interested in a “larger implicit narrative” that *can be construed from the letters*, while Hays’ talk of “narrative substructures” has the primary objective of illuminating *the structure of individual passages*.

If the two conceptions are related to the category of the mental proto-narrative, then it becomes evident how the two approaches can, in fact, be used in a narratologically justified way in the text-analysis (Chapter 15, section 5). Hays’ narrative substructure can be understood as a proto-narrative that has influenced the configuration of a

non-narrative or – though Hays does not focus on this option – narrative section.

Insofar as this proto-narrative has the content postulated by Wright, the two conceptions overlap at this point. The proto-narrative reconstructed by Wright then becomes the source of the narrative substructures. From the opposite perspective, the substructure that is derived from the concrete text can be viewed as a narrative fragment of the more comprehensive implicit narrative of Wright. Proto-narratives that are not part of the Wrightian version of the comprehensive Pauline proto-narrative can, of course, also influence the discourse. The conceptions that are respectively brought into focus by these two authors deserve their own examination.

14. Narrative Substructures according to Richard B. Hays

The category of narrative substructures, which Hays introduced into the exegetical discussion, should continue to play an important role in Pauline exegesis. It proves to be an extremely promising heuristic tool – both with respect to the analysis of non-narrative textualizations (Chapter 16, section 2) and with regard to the configuration of explicit narratives with different content (Chapter 16, section 3).

In practice, however, it is always necessary to pay attention to the “explanatory potentials” of this assumption and to that of the competing hypotheses (Chapter 15, section 4): Thus, with reference to the example of 2 Cor 2.14, I illustrate both the promise of the category and the danger of postulating narrative substructures because elements of the text would “make sense” against this background, even though the text as a whole does *not* correspond to what one would *expect* in the case of the assumed proto-narrative. It is also always necessary, of course, to give equal (!) consideration to the (respective estimation of the) background plausibility of the substructure hypothesis. Provided that these guiding principles are observed, a careful application also of this category of “implicit” narrative to the Pauline letters is indeed desirable and promises numerous new insights in the engagement with individual problems relating to the interpretation of specific texts.

15. The Comprehensive Worldview Narrative of Paul according to N. T. Wright

The approach of Wright is characterized by the fact that he proceeds from the assumption that a *single, coherent “implicit narrative”* can be derived from the Pauline letters. As a theoretical basis, Wright points to a study of Petersen on Philemon. Peterson had compiled and chronologically ordered all the events that are contained or also only implied (thus, e.g., the reception of the writing) in the letter (Chapter 17, section 2). Upon closer examination, however, the narrative that is obtained in this way proves to be the *narrative of the exegete*. While such an approach may have a justified place (e.g., in the framework of a “narrative history”), it stands in sharp contrast to Petersen’s and Wright’s claim to identify “the story of Paul.” This claim makes an understanding of the implicit narrative as *proto-narrative*, i.e., as a nexus of events that is narratively connected *through Paul’s mental activity*. The fact that Paul could potentially have identi-

fied with our construct is not sufficient to turn the narrative into “his” narrative. If we accept the idea that Wright’s larger implicit narrative needs to be understood as a proto-narrative, it follows, in turn, that Wright cannot appeal to Petersen for his methodology.

This criticism, however, does not apply only to Wright’s comprehensive conception but also to much more cautious reconstructions, which are also found among critics of the “narrative approach,” for example, when scholars reconstruct a narrative of Paul with the aid of a certain “topic” or with a focus on a certain “figure” – without providing evidence that this connection has not been first established by them (see Chapter 17, section 3).

Such an approach is fundamentally problematic because it cannot simply be assumed that scattered statements on an entity in the text are part of the same storyline of a proto-narrative. As is also the case with explicit narratives, the same figure can appear with quite *different* functions in *different* narratives or in different threads of the proto-narrative. Instead of the common concentration on individual figures as crystallization points of proto-narratives, it is therefore necessary, for methodological reasons, to recommend an analysis of the text that follows the order of the text (Chapter 17, section 4.1). It is only in this way that proto-narratives, which initially appear disparate, actually belong together (cf., for example, the analysis of Gal 4). The quest for different storylines that follow individual narrative figures belongs in the *aftermath* of such a reconstruction, since this is an act of describing interpretations, which presuppose a text that is to be interpreted in the first place.

For the combination of several proto-narratives into a single, more comprehensive narrative, one must, in addition to taking one’s orientation from the order of the text, also consider the fact that very different constellations are possible here (Chapter 17, section 4.2). For example, in two *independent mental acts of narration*, reference can be made to events that, though they follow upon each other chronologically in the real world, do not, in fact, belong to the same proto-narrative, so that it would not be appropriate to synthesize them here.

Thus, Wright’s thesis must be problematized from a methodological perspective, and yet it simultaneously presents an attractive research program. Scholarship still needs to show whether and to what extent the different proto-narratives that we can reconstruct on the basis of the Pauline letters can also *be synthesized*. The overview in Chapter 14 of the different possibilities of establishing future references (with different degrees of certainty) and thus of creating narrative fragments may provide especially helpful categories and pointers for this analysis.

For this evaluation of the thesis of the comprehensive “larger implicit narrative” of Wright, which still remains to be done, it is necessary, of course, to be able to adequately grasp its exact form. For this reason, the present work also seeks to flesh out Wright’s conception in narratological terms (Chapter 17, section 5). A precise reproduction in narratological categories is made difficult at times by the fact that Wright’s terminology is sometimes polyvalent and his illustrations are sometimes misleading. In the narratological categories used here, Wright’s conception may be sketched out as follows:

1. One could assume that in the wake of the Damascus experience, Paul meditates upon the proto-narrative, which is primarily taken from the Holy Scriptures, and reformulates it in such a way that the crucified Messiah could be integrated into it (Chapter 17, section 5.6). One can speak here of a mental “leading act of narration,” which gave rise to a comprehensive proto-narrative.
2. Since this narrative grounds the Pauline self-understanding, one might postulate that it finds expression in fragmentary form time and again. One could therefore assume that isolated references to events, miniature narratives, and narrative substructures respectively represent narrative fragments of this narrative, which Paul has mentally present in the moment of writing. These fragments would thus give insight into different sections of the proto-narrative and could be synthesized into a comprehensive proto-narrative, with it being especially necessary to pay attention to the thematic and temporal connections that the text itself signals.
3. If the attempt to reconstruct this narrative succeeds, then its overall plot can be established, which may involve a chronological rearrangement of the events as they allegedly occur in the proto-narrative. Subsequently, one could attempt to describe it by way of abstraction as consisting of *three plots/storylines* (Chapter 17, section 5.7). For this task, it is important to keep in mind that a plot is not simply “part” of a narrative, but it presupposes interpretation. The question of whether this interpretation is plausible is connected not least to the question of *how* a narrative is narrated. Thus, the task is not simply to identify references to events. Instead, it is also necessary to examine whether specific matters are connected within the narrative fragments *in the particular way that one would expect* in the case of the postulated narrative. For example, it must be clarified whether the Pauline letters contain narrative fragments in which Israel is indeed related to humanity in the role that Wright assumes (and analogously whether the Messiah is integrated into the history of his people as “true Israelite,” etc.).
4. A potential critique of Wright in light of the last consideration reckons with the possibility, however, that exegetes are not the only ones who can interpretively evaluate the proto-narrative of Paul. Paul himself might have identified individual storylines *as such* out of the entirety of the events contained in his proto-narrative (Chapter 17, section 5.8). Just as Wright can paraphrase these plot threads sequentially as three narratives (cf. Chapter 17, section 5.4), it is also possible for Paul to draw on the storylines as bases for new acts of narration. In that case, one could, for example, explain the fact that in Gal 1.4 only the “story of humanity” finds expression and the Israel components – which present another, supporting plot thread in the main narrative – are “lacking.”
5. Wright could make the case that these “shortened” narratives can be understood adequately only when one correctly grasps that they arise for Paul out of the interpretation of his own guiding narrative, which thus never completely fades

into the background, even though Paul, in the meantime, tells stories at times with a wider and at times with a narrower focus.

The individual assumptions are not without difficulties and in any case not without alternatives (cf., e.g., Chapter 17, section 5.6.2 for Hays' different understanding of the "main act of narration" as a process that accompanied the Pauline mission). On the other hand, with its emphasis on the implicit narrative in the Pauline letters, the conception takes up an aspect that does indeed appear to be underdeveloped in previous scholarship. Even though Wright's sketch – both in detail and with respect to the overall contours – still requires extensive scrutiny with reference to the text and even though the paradigm in its absoluteness, as a more or less monocausal explanation of all the phenomena of the text, probably will not gain (broad) acceptance, it is thus at least necessary to acknowledge this important push in the right direction. The precise understanding of what it means to speak of Paul "as storyteller" and the clarification of the question of the extent to which this manner of speaking about the apostle is appropriate is and remains an important task of Pauline scholarship.

16. Looking Forward

The present work had the goal of critically taking up the impulses introduced by the "narrative approach" and integrating them into a *narratologically founded and text-linguistically explicated* perspective on the Pauline letters. In the process, both explicit narrative textualizations and implicit mental proto-narratives have proven to be extremely relevant entities for the interpretation of the text.

At the same time, however, it has proven to be true again and again that one must proceed with great caution here in order to prevent exegetical uncontrolled growth. I hope that scholarship will not be scared off by the potential problems of the analysis and by the fact that I have highlighted them frequently. These discussions of the obstacles – which are undoubtedly real in my opinion – can ultimately be understood as constructive guidelines for a comprehensive analysis of the Pauline texts from a narratological perspective.

It is my hope that this book will help to advance the discussion in two respects. First, Chapters 4 through 7 offer a very detailed presentation of the text grammar of Heinrich von Siebenthal, which will hopefully contribute to an increased use of his approach in exegetical scholarship. At the same time, however, concrete Pauline texts are also already discussed here. Chapters 12 to 14 also provide individual observations on numerous passages throughout the whole Pauline epistolary corpus, so that other New Testament scholars may find diverse building blocks that can also be used to subject the letters they work on to a narratological approach, i.e., alongside other approaches that retain their justification.

A disadvantage of the presentation chosen for Chapters 12 through 14, which are oriented to the variety and breadth of the linguistic possibilities of expression, lies in the fact that it can obfuscate the fact that narrative structures actually hold together and make intelligible, in context, larger portions of text or entire texts. This also applies

– to a lesser extent – to earlier chapters (e.g., Chapter 7). To be sure, cross-references to phenomena that can be analyzed in conjunction were inserted into the text when possible, but it should also be stressed again here that it is the systematic assessment of larger text parts in relation to the letter as a whole that ultimately allows for the most significant insights.

A brief look at Galatians demonstrates this. Of course, I focused on the extensive narrative textualization of Gal 1.13–2.21, highlighting different narratologically suspicious features and attempting an overall interpretation.³ This fundamental understanding is, however, also confirmed by the immediate embedding of the narrative – and, moreover, it can be demonstrated on this basis that the narrative exhibits a very specific function that has its place within the broader communicative intention of the author (cf. Chapter 8, section 5.4 on the narration-specific tasks, as they are carried out especially in Gal 1.10–12 and in the transition to 3.1). Fragments of proto-narratives, such as the petition in Gal 4.12, also contribute to this text-function (cf. the discussion of Gal 4.12 and of Gal 4.30 in Chapter 8, section 4.4.4). It is part of a small proto-narrative, which is clearly identifiable in the immediate context. The way Gal 4.12 interlocks with these earlier signals concerning Paul's communicative intention demonstrates that this smaller proto-narrative is part of a more comprehensive proto-narrative about the Galatians (on the smaller proto-narrative of Gal 4.1–12, cf. Chapter 9, section 5; see also Chapter 17, section 4.2.2 on the unity within that proto-narrative; cf. also the discussion of the narrative substructure within Gal 4.1–7 in Chapter 16, section 3). Since this extensive proto-narrative underlies the writing as a whole, it also casts light on very small fragments, such as Gal 1.6 (cf. Chapter 8, section 4.4.1) or even the purpose clause in Gal 1.4 (Chapter 14, section 5.3.2.6). This last verse, in particular, raises the question of the extent to which this proto-narrative is itself part of a larger mentally simulated proto-narrative (cf. Chapter 17, section 5.8 on the possibility of the “reworking” of a very comprehensive original Pauline main narrative).

As this – very selective – overview shows, the discussion of individual⁴ Pauline

³See the index of C. Heilig, *Paulus als Erzähler?* for details. Some of the discussed aspects would be, in the order of the text, the following ones. Text structure and plot/theme in Gal 1.13–17 (Chapter 5, Section 5.2.2), elliptical narration and contextual prior knowledge in Gal 1.15–17 (Chapter 8, section 3.4), the macrostructure of the propositional macro-structure in Gal 1.15–17 (Chapter 5, section 5.1.2.1), the influence of aspect and tense on the information structure in Gal 1.16 and Gal 1.17 (Chapter 4, section 8.1.3.4 and Chapter 6, section 3.3.4.4), the adversative connection in Gal 1.16c–17 (Chapter 5, section 3.6), the disnarration in Gal 1.16c–17a (Chapter 10, section 1), the meaningful connection of temporal blocks in Gal 1.18, 1.21, and 2.1 (Chapter 5, section 5.2.3), the elliptical narration on the basis of world knowledge in Gal 1.18–19 (Chapter 8, section 3.6), the embedded narration type in Gal 1.18–21 (Chapter 8, section 7.3), elliptical and summary narration in Gal 1.21–2.1 (Chapter 8, section 3.2), the explicative connection in the embedded narrative in Gal 1.23 (Chapter 5, section 3.8), foreshadowing to the past of the storyteller in Gal 2.2 and 2.16–17 (Chapter 11, section 6.2), embedded narration in 2.4 and 2.5 (Chapter 6, section 3.5), narrative figure and text function in Gal 2.11 (Chapter 8, section 4.4.4), embedded narration in Gal 2.12 (Chapter 6, section 3.5), etc.

⁴On a canonical level this can, of course, also go beyond the letter as a whole, in which case the intertextual connections – which the present work often perceived to be inadequately integrated in the interpretation – within the framework of the assumption of pseudepigraphy could also find an appropriate place. Cf., for example, M. Ebner, *Der Brief an Philemon*, EKKNT 18 (Ostfildern: Patmos, 2017), 148–50 on Col 4.7–9 as narrative connection of Phlm 13, 21.

letters in text-sequence under the aspect of narrativity would be possible and potentially very profitable. In the medium term, a commentary series on the New Testament texts – including the Pauline letters – from a narratological perspective would therefore be extremely desirable. The same verdict applies to a text-grammatical analysis of the propositional macrostructure of the New Testament texts as well as, in general, the text-linguistic description of text sorts used in the communication sphere of early Christianity by participants in this communication.⁵

The cases of plagiarism in the genre of New Testament commentaries, which have repeatedly made headlines in recent years, point to a fundamental problem, namely, that the variety of the descriptive and interpretive approaches to the text and the flood of the secondary literature that must be cited – which sometimes does not even take into account the fact that these different operations are sometimes incompatible – basically no longer permit the production of all-encompassing biblical commentaries.⁶

It would therefore be very advisable to limit the tasks that authors of the individual series are obligated to fulfill. The combination of highly specialized commentary series that comment on individual descriptive dimensions of the text (and only on these and only where they are present), and proposals on text-meaning composed within the framework of different theories of interpretation (which consider only the descriptions relevant for this purpose and only alternative interpretations that make use of the same conception of meaning and are, thus, ultimately comparable) appears to offer the best chance of escaping from the present misery.⁷

⁵F. Simmler, “Textsorten des religiösen und kirchlichen Bereichs,” in *Text- und Gesprächslinguistik/Linguistics of Text and Conversation*. 1. Halbband: *Text- und Gesprächslinguistik*, ed. G. Antos, K. Bringer, W. Heinemann, and S. F. Sager. Handbücher zur Sprach- und Kommunikationswissenschaft/Handbooks of Linguistics and Communication Sciences 16/1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 681: “As for the Old Testament, so also for the New Testament writings (Gospels, Acts, Apocalypse, Letters) there is no complete linguistic text analysis or text sort classifications.” Paul is not even mentioned in the short considerations that follow. Since the text grammar of Heinrich von Siebenthal relies to some extent on the work associated with the SIL International, the volumes of the Semantic and Structural Analysis Series offer at least some initial contribution toward closing the first of these two gaps. See the interaction in the present work with E. M. Rogers, *A Semantic Structure Analysis of Galatians* (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics).

⁶S. E. Porter analyzes commentaries on Romans from different periods of time against the background of (what constitutes in his judgment) the respectively current linguistic state of knowledge. See S. E. Porter, “The Linguistic Competence of New Testament Commentaries,” in *On the Writing of New Testament Commentaries: Festschrift for Grant R. Osborne on the Occasion of his 70th Birthday*, ed. S. E. Porter and E. J. Schnabel, TENTS 8 (Leiden: Brill, 2012). Despite all disagreement with respect to the insights linguistics holds for exegetes (on this, see, in detail, Chapter 6, section 3.3.4, on information structure and section 3.1 in the same chapter on the temporality of Greek tenses), Porter’s concluding judgment (pp. 52–53) is to be affirmed. The claim to discuss every dimension of the text leads – already due to the mass of secondary literature and also because of the great breadth of necessary competencies – to an over-taxation, which finds expression in the fact that many “commentaries have become less commentaries on the Greek text, or even on the text in translation, and more commentaries on previous commentators – as these commentaries provide the major source of information for current commentators.”

⁷Porter, “Linguistic Competence,” 53 calls for at least the first of these two steps in a way that is indeed convincing: “I believe that it is time to re-assess what it is to write a commentary, and to adjust our sights to something much more manageable and attainable – commentaries that specialize in particular elements of the text, or that reflect particular viewpoints, and that can make a valid attempt to cover the most important secondary literature and actively respond to it in the commentary itself, all the while keeping the text

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as the center of focus. In other words, we should have commentaries that investigate the linguistic issues of the Greek text (I don't know of a commentary series devoted to such an approach), the historical and literary issues, or the theological issues; as well as commentaries that approach the text from a particular point of advocacy, such as an epistolary commentary, or a historical commentary, or a particular ideological commentary." The "Papryologische[n] Kommentare zum Neuen Testament" (edited by P. Arzt-Grabner, J. S. Kloppenborg, and Mauro Pesce) provides such an approach (with different degrees of success, of course). In other commentary series (which, for example, apparently have something "sociological" in view), the conceptual orientation is unfortunately often less clearly recognizable. This unfortunately applies also to numerous series that are committed, according to their titles, to a specific concept of meaning. The Semantic Structural Analysis Series of SIL provides at least a stimulating text-grammatical preliminary work that is sketched out in rough lines. However, the interaction with Rogers, *Galatians* in the present work also reveals a lack of sharpness with respect to individual propositional connections, which also has an impact upon the analysis of higher levels of the semantic structure. It also becomes clear that the narratological approach, on the one hand, and the semantic-communicative interpretation of narrative textualizations that integrates these narratological categories, on the other hand, require a more comprehensive "toolbox." At least as one work among many others, the New Testament is planned to be included in the forthcoming series "Brill's Narratological Commentaries on Ancient Texts" (edited by J. F. de Jong and R. KIRSTEIN). The theoretical basis for the series is to be provided by I. J. R. de Jonge, *Narratology and Classics: A Practical Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); M. Fludernik, *An Introduction to Narratology*, trans. P. Häusler-Greenfield and M. Fludernik (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009); D. Herman, *Basic Elements of Narrative* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

Perfect Life Through Special Nourishment: Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 5

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1. Introduction

In his listing out of the tasks of Christian theology and instruction in *Haer.* 1.10.3, the Gallic bishop Irenaeus ranks the redemption of the flesh as one of the central, universally agreed upon contents of the proclamation of the church. In the fifth book of his large-scale work *Adversus haereses*, he himself also presents a detailed examination of this topic (5.1–14) and embeds it in his conception of the economy of salvation, which makes an arc from God's action at the creation of the world to its complete restitution and salvation at the end of time and seeks to provide a bullwork in the conflict with competing early Christian-gnostic systems. Thus, for Irenaeus, the redemption of human flesh belongs to a more comprehensive argumentation for the value of the created, material world. Consequently, Irenaeus understands his remarks on the role of the Eucharist in the salvation of the flesh in *Haer.* 5.2.3² – a central text in what follows – as one of several argumentative building blocks that he uses to contest such teachings, which, in his view, denigrate creation and exclude human *σάρξ* from the end-time salvation.³

At the same time, Irenaeus shares some fundamental convictions and frameworks of thought with his opponents.⁴ He is connected to them by the reflection on the flesh of Jesus and human beings within the framework of a worldview in which the *σάρξ* or

¹For the German version of this work, see C. Jacobi, *Leiblich vermitteltes Leben. Vorstellungen vom Überwinden des Todes und vom Auferstehen im frühen Christentum* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2023), 201–39 (<https://www.mohrsiebeck.com/buch/leiblich-vermitteltes-leben-9783161599507/>).

²Alongside this text, it is also necessary to mention *Haer.* 4.18.5, where Irenaeus likewise describes the Eucharist as a ritual in which the flesh of the recipient receives a share in “life” and in a “heavenly element.” On this, cf. also Y. de Andia, *Homo Vivens. Incorruptibilité et divinisation de l'homme selon Irénée de Lyon* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1986), 237–55; A. Rousseau and L. Doutreleau, eds., *Irénée de Lyon: Contre les Hérésies*, vol. 5.1: *Introduction, notes justificatives, tables*, SC 152 (Paris: Cerf, 1969), 212–13.

³However, one will not do justice to the comprehensive salvation-historical conception of Irenaeus if one reduces it to a mere skirmish and to an anti-heretical counter-conception to gnosis.

⁴On this, cf. M. J. Olson, *Irenaeus, the Valentinian Gnostics, and the Kingdom of God (A.H. Book V). The Debate about 1 Corinthians 15:50* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 7: “Sometimes the bitterest of foes

ἐλγ of human beings is a fundamental part of the created, changeable, material, and perishable cosmos. The discussion of anthropological questions in a principles-based cosmological framework is something that he has in common with gnostic thinkers, such as Valentinian theologians, and it is only against this background that he can enter a discussion with them at all.⁵

As a community theologian connected to ecclesiastical piety, Irenaeus – as will become clear in what follows – places his view of the fate of the flesh and of the fleshly resurrection on a firm creation-theological foundation. This means that he consistently ties back his argument to a specific image of God as the creator of the world and of human beings. Against the background of a biblically oriented picture of the human being, who was created and enlivened by God as a unity of body and soul, Irenaeus' central concern lies in demonstrating that the human being, including his body or flesh, participates in imperishable, eternal life and divine being and thus can overcome his destiny of perishing also with respect to his body. He wishes to show that the flesh can receive imperishable life. Here, Irenaeus argues for the *salus carnis* on an epistemological, ethical, and ontological level.⁶ In what follows, the concern will be only with the last of these dimensions, i.e., the ontological, substantial salvation of the flesh.

Irenaeus follows the tradition in the conviction that the Eucharist mediates between the present, perishable existence and the future, glorious existence. Perfect life is bestowed upon the human being through it. But he concretizes the traditional notion of the gift of life in the Eucharist in such a way that the eucharistic elements introduce eternal life as a fundamentally new quality to the flesh of the recipient of the Eucharist. Therefore, he ascribes essential significance to it for the preparation for imperishability under earthly conditions. Irenaeus interprets this kind of participation in salvation as the progressive growth of the believer until his perfecting and as continued divine creative activity. On the whole, the theology of Irenaeus is characterized by a specific kind of interpretation and argumentative use of Scripture in a specific hermeneutical

share common perspectives which they do not even question, of which they themselves are not even aware." Cf. also E. Pagels, *The Gnostic Paul: Gnostic Exegesis of the Pauline Letters* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975); E. Thomassen, "§ 91. Valentin und der Valentinianismus," in *Philosophie der Antike*, vol. 5/1: *Philosophie der Kaiserzeit und der Spätantike*, ed. C. Riedweg, C. Horn, and D. Wyrwa (Basel: Schwabe, 2018), 867–73, here 873.

⁵At the same time, alongside this kind of argument, Irenaeus is also familiar with a specific salvation-historical interpretation of the human being and his relationship to God. This, however, recedes entirely into the background in *Haer.* 5.2.3, i.e., in the text with which we are concerned in what follows.

⁶Corresponding to his twofold interpretation of the economy of salvation, which has a creation-theological support and a support related to the sin of Adam and Adam's recapitulation in Christ, Irenaeus also presents multiple conceptions of the mediation of salvation. The epistemological and ethical approach can be sketched only briefly here. With the incarnation of Jesus, knowledge of God becomes possible for the human being. The human being can turn to God and be reconciled with him. If he receives the Spirit of God, the human being becomes capable of good works and in this respect becomes the spiritual human being, even though the substance of his flesh does not change (cf. *Haer.* 5.10.2). He is now no longer only "flesh and blood, but pneumatic human being" (5.10.2). By contrast, the one who does not receive the Spirit remains flesh and blood and therefore cannot inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 15.50). Irenaeus interprets the passage in 1 Cor 15.53 in this context not in relation to the substance of the flesh but in relation to the desires of the flesh and as a pointer to the gift of the Spirit that is necessary for the overcoming of these desires.

framework.⁷

Adversus haereses 5.1–14 deals with the relationship between human flesh as formed and enlivened earth and the rest of the world created from earth. *Adversus Haereses* 5.2.3, the section that is of special interest here, is situated in this context.

2. The Text: *Haer.* 5.2.3

(1) *Quando ergo et mixtus calix et factus panis percipit verbum Dei et fit Eucharistia sanguinis et corporis Christi, ex quibus augetur et consistit carnis nostrae substantia, quomodo carnem negant capacem esse donationis Dei quae est vita aeterna, quae sanguine et corpore Christi nutritur et membrum ejus <est>?*⁸

When, therefore, both the mixed cup and the prepared bread receive the word of God and become Eucharist of the blood and body of Christ, from which the substance of our flesh is increased and is composed, how can they contest that the flesh is capable of receiving the gift of God, which is eternal life? It is nourished through the blood and body of Christ and is a member of him.

The argumentation in *Haer.* 5.2.3 is initially developed in demarcation from people who contest the capacity of the flesh to receive eternal life (cf. *Haer.* 5.1). Against this view, the text presents two beginnings of an answer to the question of how the perishable flesh can attain imperishability. The first answer is given in the first section, which is quoted here. Against the view that is to be refuted, it marshals the transformation event in the celebration of the Eucharist, in which the eucharistic elements of the mixed cup and prepared bread receive the word of God through invocation and thus become the body of Christ. The argument of Irenaeus boils down to a continuous activity of the word of God: for the substance of which the flesh of the human being is composed is incorporated into the Eucharist event. By taking the eucharistic food to himself, the flesh of the human being is nourished and put together as in the case of a normal ingestion of food, so that it “grows.” The word of God that has previously gone over to bread and cup now mediates itself via the nourishment further to the flesh of the recipient of the Eucharist. The substance of the flesh is not transformed or transmuted, but it does take on the heavenly qualities of the gifts. It is made capable of receiving the life that God gives. This is the first part of Irenaeus’ answer to the objection of his opponents, and it refers to the present preparation of the human being for his imperishable resurrection existence.

⁷Cf. B. C. Blackwell, “Paul and Irenaeus,” in *Paul and the Second Century*, ed. M. F. Bird and J. R. Dodson (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 190–206, here 197: “Since unity in God’s work in creation and salvation is the center of Irenaeus’ work, he expected God’s revelation through the scriptures to speak with one voice. Therefore, methodologically Irenaeus argues that the part should be read in light of the whole.”

⁸Here and elsewhere, the Latin text of *Adversus haereses* is quoted from N. Brox, ed. *Irenäus, Adversus haereses I–V*, FChr 8/1–5 (Freiburg: Herder, 1993–2001).

(2) *Quemadmodum et beatus Apostolus ait in epistola quae est ad Ephesios: Quoniam membra sumus corporis ejus, de carne ejus et de ossibus ejus, non de spiritali aliquo et invisibili homine dicens haec – spiritus enim neque ossa neque carnes habet – sed de ea dispositione quae est secundum verum hominem, quae ex carnibus et nervis et ossibus consistit, quae de calice qui est sanguis ejus nutritur, et de pane quod est corpus ejus augetur.*

As the blessed Apostle says in the letter to the Ephesians, “We are members of his body, from his flesh and from his bones.” He does not say this about some sort of pneumatic and invisible human being – for a spirit has neither bones nor flesh – but about the disposition of the true (real) human being, which is composed of flesh and nerves and bones, which is also nourished from the cup, which is his blood, and built up from the bread, which is his body.

The line of argumentation is interrupted in the second part through an insertion that aims to clarify what kind of substance is exactly in view here. Irenaeus must apparently reckon with reinterpretations of the terms *σάρξ* (*caro*) and *σῶμα* (*corpus*) among his opponents. To guard against this, he offers a sort of scriptural proof for the substance of the flesh. To this end, he combines a quotation from Eph 5.30 that has been expanded though allusions to Gen 2.23⁹ – which was already present in the tradition available to Irenaeus – and an allusion to Luke 24.39.¹⁰ The combination of these scriptural passages aims, first, to demonstrate that the flesh of the incarnate Jesus is identical with human flesh, i.e., that the body of Jesus is not composed of a *different* substance. Irenaeus reinforces thereby his preceding interpretation of the Eucharist, for only because our bodies are “members” of the body of the incarnate Word of God can our flesh be nourished and built up by the eucharistic elements.¹¹ Second, with the further specification of the flesh via “nerves and bones” this section confirms that the concern here is not with an invisible, pneumatic body but rather with the body created from earth. The insertion at this point is an anticipation of a more detailed argumentation about the flesh of Jesus in *Haer.* 5.14.1–2, where Irenaeus addresses the possible objection that Jesus’ flesh was composed of a different substance than the flesh of human beings. There too, the goal of the argumentation is to make plausible the salvation of human flesh. In *Haer.* 5.14.1–2, however, Irenaeus pursues a different path of justification. His

⁹Eph 5.30: ὅτι μέλη ἐσμὲν τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ. Cf. Gen 2.23^{LXX}: καὶ εἶπεν Ἀδὰμ· Τοῦτο νῦν ὁστέον ἐκ τῶν ὁστέων μου καὶ σὰρξ ἐκ τῆς σαρκός μου· αὕτη κληθήσεται γυνή, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ ἀνδρός αὐτῆς ἐλήμφθη αὕτη. (Vulgata: *dixitque Adam hoc nunc os ex ossibus meis et caro de carne mea haec vocabitur virago quoniam de viro sumpta est*).

¹⁰In *Haer.* 5 Irenaeus also elsewhere draws on scripture extensively to demonstrate that the flesh is not unimportant. In *Haer.* 6.6.1–2, for example, he argues that 1 Cor 3.16–17; 6.15; and John 2.19 refer to the body of the human being as “temple of God” or “members of Christ.” Thus, our flesh is not irrelevant and will not be destroyed but resurrected.

¹¹Cf. O. Perler, “Logos und Eucharistie nach Justinus I. Apol C. 66,” in idem, *Sapientia et Caritas. Gesammelte Aufsätze zum 90. Geburtstag*, ed. D. van Damme and O. Wermelinger, Par. 29 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1990), 471–91, here 489.

concern there is with the recapitulation of the flesh in the incarnate Logos and not with the continued activity of the creator God on the flesh of the human being. In the third and longest section in 5.2.3 Irenaeus returns once more to this creative activity and to the Eucharist:

(3) Et quemadmodum lignum vitis depositum in terram suo fructificat tempore, et granum tritici decidens in terram et dissolutum multiplex surgit per Spiritum Dei qui continet omnia, quae deinde per sapientiam in usum hominis veniunt, et percipientia verbum Dei Eucharistia fiunt, quod est corpus et sanguis Christi, sic et nostra corpora ex ea nutrita et reposita in terram et resoluta in ea resurgent in suo tempore, Verbo Dei resurrectionem eis donante in gloriam Dei Patris: qui huic mortali immortalitatem circumdat et corruptibili incorruptelam gratuito donat, quoniam virtus Dei in infirmitate perficitur, ut non quasi ex nobisipsis habentes vitam inflemur aliquando et extollamur adversus Deum ingrati mentem accipientes, experimento autem discentes quoniam ex illius magnitudine, sed non ex nostra natura, habemus in aeternum perseverantiam, neque ab ea quae est circa Deum gloria sicuti est frustremur aliquando, neque nostram naturam ignoremus, sed ut sciamus et quid Deus potest et quid homo beneficii accipit, et non erremus aliquando a vera comprehensione eorum quae sunt [et] quemadmodum sunt, hoc est Dei et hominis. Et numquid forte, quemadmodum praediximus, propter hoc passus est Deus fieri in nobis resolutionem, ut per omnia eruditi in omnibus simus diligentes, neque Deum neque nosmetipsos ignorantes?

And just as a cutting from the vine planted in the ground fructifies in its season, or as a corn of wheat falling into the earth and becoming decomposed, rises with manifold increase by the Spirit of God, who contains all things and then, through the wisdom of God, serves for the use of men, and having received the word of God, becomes the Eucharist, which is the body and blood of Christ; so also our bodies, being nourished by it, and deposited in the earth and suffering decomposition there, shall rise at their appointed time, the Word of God granting them resurrection to the glory of God, even the Father, who freely gives to this mortal immortality, and to this corruptible incorruption, because the strength of God is made perfect in weakness, in order that we may never become puffed up, as if we had life from ourselves, and exalted against God, our minds becoming ungrateful; but learning by experience that we possess eternal duration from the excelling power of this Being, not from our own nature, we may neither undervalue that glory which surrounds God as He is, nor be ignorant of our own nature, but that we may know what God can effect, and what benefits man receives, and thus never wander from the true comprehension of things as they are, that is, both with regard to God and with regard

to man. And might it not be the case, perhaps, as I have already observed, that for this purpose God permitted our resolution into the common dust of mortality, that we, being instructed by every mode, may be accurate in all things for the future, being ignorant neither of God nor of ourselves?¹²

Thus, after clarifying what kind of *caro* was being spoken of in the second section, Irenaeus returns in the third section to his actual answer to the question of how our flesh can receive imperishability. In this concluding part, Irenaeus now also discusses the end-time resurrection. For this he expands his perspective far beyond the actual Eucharist celebration, while simultaneously remaining connected to it. His concern is to show that the Spirit of God is not active for the first time in the Eucharist but, first, already *before* it through the ordering creative power of God, which creates fruits from the inanimate wood of the vine put into the earth and from the seed, and, second, also *after* the Eucharist, when this life-giving power has gone over to the bodies of the dead and resurrected them. The Eucharist event is thus placed as a punctiliar event, in which the activity of the Spirit coalesces and the Spirit goes over to the *σάρξ* of the human being, in the framework of a comprehensive process of creation. In conclusion, Irenaeus draws ethical consequences for human beings from what has been presented and interprets what happens in the sense of a pedagogical intention of God.

The aspects that have been worked out here – namely, (1) the transforming and life-giving activity of the Spirit in the Eucharist, (2) the character of the flesh of Jesus and of human beings, and (3) the activity of the Spirit in nature and on human beings as a continued activity of the creator God, and, finally, (4) the exhortation to human beings to find the proper stance toward this – must now be interpreted further and also viewed in the context of the writing as a whole. Since it is advisable to address the processes in the Eucharist and in created nature in relation to one another, I begin, first, with the second point, the character of the flesh of Jesus and of human beings.

3. The Character of the Flesh of Human Beings and of Jesus' Flesh

3.1 *The Significance of the Flesh for Irenaeus' Anthropology*

Irenaeus develops his anthropology in opposition to a view of human beings that traces back the various, differently redeemable parts of the human being to different creator deities – a view that he regards as heretical. To the one, whole human being corresponds his complete creation by the one God.¹³ Beneath this level, Irenaeus distinguishes between the flesh and soul of the human being, to which the spirit, as an enlivening third, is added. The great significance that Irenaeus assigns to the *flesh* in this trichotomic specification of the human being is instructive. In *Haer.* 5.9.2 he makes a fundamental anthropological statement about the nature of the spiritual human being: “He is alive

¹²Trans. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, eds., “Irenaeus Against Heresies,” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1 (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1896), 528 (modified).

¹³Cf. D. Wanke, *Das Kreuz Christi bei Irenäus von Lyon*, BZNW 99 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 100.

through participation in the Spirit, but human because of the substance of the flesh (*homo autem propter substantiam carnis*).” According to Irenaeus, the flesh substance of a human being is decisive for the nature of the human being, including the saved. A pneumatic human being is not one who gets rid of the flesh but one who *participates* with his flesh in the Spirit (*Haer.* 5.6.1).¹⁴ It is not the *nous* or the like that makes the human being a real human being but rather the fleshly substance, the fleshly formation made by God out of dust.¹⁵ For this he appeals to Gen 2.7 as evidence that the human being is a being who has been created from earth and enlivened entirely by God (cf. *Haer.* 3.2; 14.2). The whole human being comes from the dust of the earth, so that the term “flesh” can be used synecdochally also for the entirety of the human being.

For Irenaeus, the event of the creation of the human being possesses consequences not least for the image of God. The creative power of God reveals itself precisely in the fact that he can form something living out of dust. What was formed originally possessed the image of God.¹⁶ Irenaeus can even say that “we belonged by nature to the omnipotent God” (cf. *natura essemus Dei omnipotentis*, *Haer.* 5.1.1). Not only the invisible soul of the human being but also his visible parts are the image of the invisible God. Here, the body is “the image” of God,¹⁷ the soul “the likeness” of God, as can be seen from Irenaeus’ presentation of the apostolic proclamation (*Epid.* 11):

But He fashioned (πλάσσω) man with His own Hands, taking the purest, the finest <and the most delicate> [elements] of the earth, mixing (συγκράννυμι) with the earth, in due measure, His own power (δύναμις); and because He <sketched upon> the handiwork (πλάσμα) His own form – in order that what would be seen should be godlike (θεοειδής), for man was placed upon the earth fashioned <in> the image (εἰκών) of God.¹⁸

¹⁴Cf. also *Haer.* 5.8.1, where Irenaeus explains that we already have the Spirit now as a pledge and for this reason already now become pneumatic human beings who do not live according to the flesh. This shows that for the pneumatic being it is not necessary – and also not possible – to lay aside the flesh.

¹⁵In *Haer.* 5.7.1–2 Irenaeus endeavors to prove that there is no immortal element in the human being but rather that the talk of the resurrection of the dead (cf. 1 Cor 15.36, 42–43; Rom 8.11) can refer only to the flesh, which dies and goes into the earth.

¹⁶Cf. *Haer.* 5.6.1 (trans. Roberts and Donaldson, eds., “Irenaeus Against Heresies,” 531): “For by the hands of the Father, that is, by the Son and the Holy Spirit, man, and not [merely] a part of man, was made in the likeness of God. Now the soul and the spirit are certainly a *part* of the man, but certainly not the man; for the perfect man consists in the commingling and the union of the soul receiving the spirit of the Father, and the admixture of that fleshly nature which was moulded after the image of God.”

¹⁷On the question of the corporality of God, which naturally follows from this, cf. C. Marksches, *Gottes Körper. Jüdische, christliche und pagane Gottesvorstellungen in der Antike* (Munich: Beck, 2016), 261–67 (ET = C. Marksches, *God’s Body: Jewish, Christian, and Pagan Images of God*, trans. A. J. Edmonds [Waco: Baylor University Press, 2019], 193–98). In his review of the texts, Marksches concludes that Irenaeus (amidst all unclarity in his statements) does not attribute a material body to God but a body in the “form of immaterial structures of a material corporeality” (Marksches, *God’s Body*, 195; cf. Marksches, *Gottes Körper*, 263: “Form von geistigen Strukturen einer materiellen Körperlichkeit”).

¹⁸Trans. J. Behr, ed., *St. Irenaeus of Lyons, On the Apostolic Preaching* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997) 46 with Greek words inserted by Behr.

Irenaeus can ground the special dignity of human flesh not only with recourse to the creation of the human being according to Gen 2.7 but also with reference to the end of salvation history, the incarnation of the Word of God. For the incarnation of Jesus is also said to show that the flesh of the human being comes from God and that the body of the human being has been formed by God, according to his image.

The human being, however, lost the image of God through apostasy, the Fall.¹⁹ This loss is the starting point of the development of the economy of salvation and of the event of recapitulation. In this line of argumentation, Irenaeus traces back the conception of the redeemability of the flesh to its recapitulation through the incarnation of the Word of God. According to Irenaeus, Christ has come in the flesh (cf. John 1.14a) because the flesh of the human being was meant to be saved.²⁰ The incarnation of the Logos serves the recapitulation of Adam, the formation of God, in Christ, and reconciles human flesh with God again.²¹ It makes the human being to be in the image of God again.

With the reconciliation of the flesh and the restoration of the image of God lost through the Fall, there is a recognizable change to a different level of justification in which the sin of Adam stands at the center. Perishability and death appear here not as qualities of matter but rather as a consequence of human beings' distance from God, which is overcome by the incarnate Logos. Irenaeus develops here a reciprocal understanding of the incarnation. The Lord becomes like us in order that we may become perfected to him: "by letting God come down to human beings through the Spirit and through his incarnation letting the human being ascend to God" (*Haer.* 5.1.1). It is conspicuous that here the Spirit does not serve to let the human being come to God and it is not the incarnation that brings God to the human being, but vice versa: The gift of the Spirit brings God to the human being, while the incarnation lets the human being ascend to God. This interpretation of gift of the Spirit and the incarnation shows

¹⁹Cf. *Haer.* 5.1.1 (N. Brox, ed., *Irenäus, Adversus haereses I–V*, trans. N. Brox, FChr 8/1–5 [Freiburg: Herder, 1993–2001], 8/5, 26; trans. Roberts and Donaldson, eds., "Irenaeus Against Heresies," 527): *Et quoniam iniuste dominabatur nobis apostasia et, cum natura essemus Dei omnipotentis, alienavit nos contra naturam, suos proprios faciens discipulos...* ("And since the apostasy tyrannized over us unjustly, and, though we were by nature the property of the omnipotent God, alienated us contrary to nature, rendering us its own disciples...").

²⁰C. Uhrig, "Und das Wort ist Fleisch geworden." *Zur Rezeption von Joh 1,14a und zur Theologie der Fleischwerdung in der griechischen vor-nizänischen Patristik*, Münsterische Beiträge zur Theologie 63 (Münster: Aschendorff, 2004), 124 points out that the history of Israel and the prophetic promise of Christ are already adduced and interpreted by Irenaeus with a clear emphasis on the incarnation of the Logos.

²¹Cf. here again the central passage of *Haer.* 5.14.1 (Brox, ed., *Irenäus*, 8/5, 114; trans. Roberts and Donaldson, eds., "Irenaeus Against Heresies," 541): *si enim non haberet caro salvari, nequaquam Verbum Dei caro factum esset [...]*; "For if the flesh were not in a position to be saved, the Word of God would in no wise have become flesh."

the soteriological intertwining of the human being with Christ and what is exemplary in the Christ event.²²

As becomes clear, Irenaeus can use the term “flesh” for the whole person, thus stressing his creatureliness and thereby also taking up biblical language (cf. Gen 6.17; 9.11; Lev 13.3; Isa 40.5–6; 49.26; and elsewhere; cf. also 1 Pet 1.24). Beyond this, he differentiates the fleshly substance of the human being more finely into veins and arteries (the conduits for blood and pneuma), nerves, bones, eyes, ears, hands, tendons, different innards, and blood, which is the connection of soul and body. All this is formed in this way through God’s art and wisdom and therefore also has a share in God’s power (*Haer.* 5.3.2). God’s creative power shows itself precisely therein (*Haer.* 5.3.2):

But that He is powerful in all these respects, we ought to perceive from our origin, inasmuch as God, taking dust from the earth, formed man. And surely it is much more difficult and incredible, from non-existent bones, and nerves, and veins, and the rest of man’s organization, to bring it about that all this should be, and to make man an animated and rational creature...²³

For Irenaeus the *σάρξ* thus occupies a central place in the definition of the human being and is understood by him as a decisively physical, substantial entity. This also affects his understanding of physical death. In *Haer.* 5.1–14, death interests Irenaeus not as a consequence of sin and of human beings’ disturbed relationship to God but rather as an essential quality of the earthly substance. This substance-ontological embedding of the question of the salvation of the flesh is, among other things, also recognizable in the fact that Irenaeus speaks of the body and flesh of the human being not only in an ethical dimension pertaining to life conduct and does not only use “flesh,” following Paul, as a cipher for a fleshly conduct that takes its orientation from what is earthly or understand flesh merely as an anthropological component that comes alongside the soul and characterizes the human being in his creatureliness. Rather, going beyond this, Irenaeus, in *Haer.* 5.1–14, defines the flesh of the human being as a part of the whole, perishable matter that comes from the earth, upon which the creator God has acted. This is central for his train of thought. Via nourishment, for example, the flesh has a direct connection to gifts of creation, such as the fruit of the vine and wheat. With all the works of God created from the earth, it also shares, however, the characteristic of being something that came to be and something that changes and is perishable. These same characteristics also apply when Irenaeus comes to speak of the humanity of Christ and of his salvific activity.

²²The event of redemption realizes itself exemplarily in relation to Christ; in his incarnation the assumption and redemption of human flesh as such takes place. The model of an exemplary validity of the Christ event is also present in the Gospel of Philip, when Jesus’ baptism is recounted there in such a way that it appears as a paradigm for the ritual of baptism and as prefiguration of Christian baptism.

²³Trans. Roberts and Donaldson, eds., “Irenaeus Against Heresies,” 529.

3.2 *Jesus' Flesh is Like Ours*

Also in the presentation of the event of salvation, Irenaeus can introduce the “flesh” both as a direct subject and as an object of the events, and thus in *Haer.* 5.14.2, following a quotation from Col 1.21–22, he can write:

He says, “Ye have been reconciled in the body of His flesh,” because the righteous flesh has reconciled that flesh which was being kept under bondage in sin, and brought it into friendship with God.²⁴

Thus, in this text Irenaeus can even designate the saving reconciliation with God of the human being who is far from God as a deed of the flesh itself; the “flesh” appears as the agent of this event. In *Haer.* 5.1.1 he can analogously describe the salvific significance of the death of Jesus as follows:

Since the Lord thus has redeemed us through His own blood, giving His soul for our souls, and His flesh for our flesh . . .²⁵

The saving death of Jesus is divided into the individual components of his human existence (“his flesh for our flesh”) to emphasize that this death decidedly also includes the physiological components of the human being in redemption.

The presupposition for the event of redemption described in this way is the conviction that the Irenaeian definition of *caro* as a substance that originates from the formation made from dust (*Caro enim vere primae plasmationis e limo factae successio*, *Haer.* 5.14.2) applies also to Jesus’ flesh. A central statement in the line of argument of book 5 of *Adversus haereses* is then also that Jesus’ flesh does not differ from our flesh according to its substance. Irenaeus therefore speaks of the flesh of Jesus not only in the context of the incarnation and the reconciling salvific death but also explicitly in the context of general corporeal, physical contexts. Along with the flesh of Jesus, he mentions his blood, veins, nerves, and bones and then pointedly states in *Haer.* 5.2.2: “which [substance] the Word of God was truly made.”²⁶ Here, John 1.14a stands in the background, though in a clearly concretized reworking. The Word of God has, so to speak, himself become creation, the dust from which ears, eyes, nerves, bones, etc. come. In Christ, the passive matter that receives life thus connects itself to the life-giving Spirit – in this regard the Christian anticipates the glorious existence of the human being.

There is thus only *one* real flesh. If the flesh of Jesus had been of a different substance – a view that is advocated, among others, in the Gospel of Philip (cf. Gos. Phil.

²⁴Trans. Roberts and Donaldson, eds., “Irenaeus Against Heresies,” 541.

²⁵*Haer.* 5.1.1 (Brox, ed., *Irenäus*, 8/5, 27; trans. Roberts and Donaldson, eds., “Irenaeus Against Heresies,” 527): *Suo igitur sanguine redimente nos Domino, et dante animam suam pro nostra anima et carnem suam pro nostris carnibus . . .*

²⁶Cf. *Haer.* 5.2.2 (Brox, ed., *Irenäus*, 8/5, 32; trans. Roberts and Donaldson, eds., “Irenaeus Against Heresies,” 528): *Sanguis enim non est nisi a venis et carnibus et a reliqua quae est secundum hominem substantia, quae vere factum Verbum Dei* (“For blood can only come from veins and flesh, and whatsoever else makes up the substance of man, such as the Word of God was actually made”).

72c, NHC II,3, p. 68.31–37) – then, according to Irenaeus, it could not have reconciled human flesh.²⁷ This line of argument is developed especially in *Haer.* 5.14.2:

But if the Lord became incarnate for any other order of things, and took flesh of any other substance, He has not then summed up human nature in His own person, nor in that case can He be termed flesh. For flesh has been truly made [to consist in] a transmission of that thing moulded originally from the dust. But if it had been necessary for Him to draw the material [of His body] from another substance, the Father would at the beginning have moulded the material [of flesh] from a different substance [than from what He actually did]. But now the case stands thus, that the Word has saved that which really was [created, viz.,] humanity which had perished, effecting by means of Himself that communion which should be held with it, and seeking out its salvation. But the thing which had perished possessed flesh and blood. For the Lord, taking dust from the earth, moulded man; and it was upon his behalf that all the dispensation of the Lord's advent took place. He had Himself, therefore, flesh and blood, recapitulating in Himself not a certain other, but that original handiwork of the Father, seeking out that thing which had perished.²⁸

In contrast to ours, the flesh of Jesus does, however, possess a special *ethical* quality. It is righteous and therefore reconciles the flesh that is held fast in sin with God. The previously cited interpretation of the Colossians quotation in *Haer.* 5.14.3 also clarifies this connection. The fact that the flesh of Jesus is righteous and is not under the rule of sin also manifests itself in the conception and birth of Jesus. According to *Haer.* 5.1.3, Jesus' birth differed from every natural birth, for (according to Luke 1.35), "the Holy Ghost came upon Mary, and the power of the Most High did overshadow her: wherefore also what was generated is a holy thing, and the Son of the Most High God."²⁹ Thus, God himself brought about the incarnation and "showed forth a new [kind of] generation"³⁰ (*Haer.* 5.1.3).

Finally, one last aspect of Irenaeus' use of *σάρξ* is conspicuous. Although, with John 6.51–58, the letters of Ignatius, and Justin's apology, the expression "*σάρξ* of Jesus" had already become established for the eucharistic bread at the time of the composition of *Adversus haereses*, Irenaeus, as far as I can see, never identifies the bread with the *σάρξ* (*caro*) of Jesus but always with his *σῶμα* (*corpus*). This is noteworthy insofar as Irenaeus

²⁷Cf. also de Andia, *Homo Vivens*, 248–49: "L'eucharistie repose sur la consubstantialité charnelle du corps et du sang du Christ avec notre corps et notre sang."

²⁸Trans. Roberts and Donaldson, eds., "Irenaeus Against Heresies," 541.

²⁹Trans. Roberts and Donaldson, eds., "Irenaeus Against Heresies," 527.

³⁰Trans. Roberts and Donaldson, eds., "Irenaeus Against Heresies," 527. Irenaeus speaks in this context of two kinds of begetting, a natural one, from which human beings inherit death and a new begetting through which human beings receive life (*Haer.* 5.1.3). This is reminiscent of the notion of begetting in the Gospel of Philip. There, however, this special begetting or birth of the new body of the redeemer is individually retraced by the believers in the ritual and through this life is obtained; the Christians are themselves begotten anew. By contrast, Irenaeus affirms that it is the same God who formed Adam and the living human being; it is even "the same hand" of God (*Patris manus*).

does not otherwise distinguish between *corpus* and *caro* (sometimes he also uses *plasma*) but rather uses these terms synonymously with reference to human beings. For the eucharistic elements, by contrast, Irenaeus uses – also in *Haer.* 4.18.5 and 5.2.3 – the terms “body and blood of Jesus” (*corpus et sanguis Christi*), which likewise occur in the Synoptic words of institution. However, for describing the humanity of Jesus (e.g., *Haer.* 5.1.2), the expression *caro et sanguis* is a composite phrase that is preferred by Irenaeus, and there is talk of the “flesh of Jesus” in this way also in the context that is of interest to us here. In *Haer.* 5.2.3, in the passage that I specify as the second part and as an insertion, which is concerned in general with the substance of the flesh of Jesus and with the constitution of every human being, there is also talk of the *caro* of Jesus (cf., e.g., also *Haer.* 5.10.2).

4. The Transforming and Life-Giving Activity of the Spirit in Nature, in the Eucharist, and in the Resurrection

4.1 Introduction

The substantiality of the flesh is emphasized not only via the semantic field of physiological components (“nerves and bones”), in which it appears in Irenaeus, but also through the fact that Irenaeus connects it to biological processes such as the ingestion of nourishment. Thus, its growth, buildup, and nourishment through food and drink come into view. At the same time, Irenaeus can use this aspect for his interpretation of the Eucharist, which he initially specifies in a biological, natural-scientific approach as *ingestion of nourishment*. In the Eucharist, the flesh is built up through the gifts of creation and nourished (*Haer.* 5.2.3), for example, through the fruit of the vine and through wheat. In this way the flesh becomes part of a large, divinely established and enlivened connection between the dust of the earth, the fruitfulness of the earth, and their gifts (vine, wheat), which then become the human being’s nourishment. In this way, Irenaeus establishes a direct connection between the creation of the human being from earth, his bodily character, and his continuing subsistence through created things. All these processes and conditions have a share in the earth and emerge from it. At the same time, they all need an enlivening principle from outside, which shall be examined more closely in what follows.

4.2 The Concept of Life in Irenaeus

In the quoted text from *Haer.* 5.2.3, “eternal life” is mentioned right at the beginning. It is designated as the “gift of God,” which is given in the Eucharist to the communicants.

How can they contest that the flesh is capable of receiving the gift of God,
which is eternal life?

With the view that the reception of the Eucharist meal elements mediates “life” to the recipients of the Eucharist, Irenaeus takes up a traditional understanding of the Eu-

charist, as it is also represented in the Didache and letters of Ignatius.³¹ With respect to the *σῶμα* of Jesus, texts that connect the Eucharist to the term life (John 6.51–58; Did. 9.3; 10.2–3; Ign. *Eph.* 20.2; Ign. *Smyrn.* 7.1) show an interest in its effect, but, in distinction from Irenaeus, do not give special attention to the quality of the *σῶμα* as substance. In the Didache, the meal elements are placed in a connection to ordinary nourishment and give not only transitory life but eternal life. Both forms of nourishment are, however, gifts of the one creator God, a point that is reminiscent of *Haer.* 5.2.3. Prior to Irenaeus, Ignatius presents a medicinal metaphor for the life-giving effect of the correctly celebrated Eucharist in his letter to the Ephesians (Ign. *Eph.* 20.2), where he gives the Eucharist the designation *φάρμακον ἀθανασίας*. It is common to these texts that they connect (sometimes in an unspecific way) the gift of eternal life to the eucharistic elements, which as nourishment or “medicine” exercise a corresponding effect, and that the final resurrection is at the same time still expected in the future.

According to Irenaeus, too, “eternal life” is not, for example, a fixed, naturally given quality of the substance or nature of a human being (for example, of a pneumatic person)³² but rather something that is given to the human being from *outside*, in the Lord’s Supper. In this respect, Irenaeus stands in the tradition described above, which views eternal life as a salvific good mediated in the Eucharist. Unlike John 6.51–58, however, in *Haer.* 5.2.3 Irenaeus does not understand the gift of life as a relation between the believer and Christ constituted by faith; he does not understand it spatially as remaining in Christ or in the “salvific sphere” of Christ. Instead, it is more likely that he takes up a conception of nourishment that is also attested in the Didache, according to which the bread and the wine are special, spiritual foods that make possible not temporal but rather eternal life. For him the meal elements have a direct effect upon the flesh of the believer,³³ to the point that this “life” benefits the flesh of the recipient via the meal elements and becomes its special quality. Here too, the focus is again on the *flesh*, which actually comes into view as the component that creates continuity between the present and the future life.

The flesh is conceptualized as a passive entity, which can, however, take on characteristics of the actively operating Spirit, for which Irenaeus uses the image of a burning

³¹On this, see Chapter 2 on Ignatius in Jacobi, *Leiblich vermitteltes Leben*, 35–76. Cf. also D.-A. Koch, “Eucharistievollzug und Eucharistieverständnis in der Didache,” in *The Eucharist – Its Origins and Contexts. Sacred Meal, Communal Meal, Table Fellowship in Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity*, vol. 2: *Patristic Traditions, Iconography*, ed. D. Hellholm and D. Sänger, WUNT 376 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 845–81; L. Wehr, “Die Eucharistie in den Briefen des Ignatius von Antiochien,” in *The Eucharist. Its Origins and Contexts. Sacred Meal, Communal Meal, Table Fellowship in Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity*, vol. 2: *Patristic Traditions, Iconography*, ed. D. Hellholm and D. Sänger, WUNT 376 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 883–900; L. Wehr, *Arznei der Unsterblichkeit. Die Eucharistie bei Ignatius von Antiochien und im Johannesevangelium*, NTA.NF 18 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1987), 351–56.

³²Cf., however, the interpretation of John 6.53 among the Naassenes (Hippolytus, *Haer.* 5.8.11).

³³Cf. here also the correspondence between the flesh and blood of Jesus and our flesh and blood, which Justin (*1 Apol.* 66) describes (on this, see the excursus on *1 Apol.* 66 below). Justin also interprets the elements of bread and wine as nourishment, though precisely not as ordinary food but as *σῶμα καὶ αἷμα* of the incarnate Jesus that, after a transformation, nourish our flesh and blood. In Justin a connection to eternal life is lacking.

torch and a wet sponge.³⁴ The flesh can in principle receive life.³⁵ After all, it lives also in the present, i.e., one can already recognize now that it has a share in temporal life. From this Irenaeus infers that it is even more capable of having a share also in the future, eternal life. He understands the flesh as the *one* bearer of both the present and the future life, and insofar as it is enlivened at every time by God, it becomes the connecting link between the two forms of existence. On the one hand, in its materiality and in its connection via nourishment, for example, through bread and wine, the flesh is part of the whole perishable creation. On the other hand, through the reception of the gift of eternal life it participates in the imperishability of God. Irenaeus apparently avoids a potential view of eternal life and imperishable corporeality in the glorified existence in which this appears completely detached from the earthly corporeality that exists in creation. Instead, his concern is to connect the future life as well to the flesh that comes from the creation and to continue to understand it as part of the divine creative activity. Even though the flesh is not itself heir of the kingdom of God, even though it is passive, it nevertheless shows – in its special differentiation in the human body with all its organs and specific functions – the artistry and wisdom of God, as it is recognizable in the whole creation and as it will show itself again also in the heavenly glory.

In the Eucharistic section in *Haer.* 5.2.3, there is also then talk of the *caro*, especially with reference to the *recipient* of the Eucharist. His *caro* is, so to speak, the actual addressee in the event of the Eucharist. Irenaeus describes eternal life as something bound to the eucharistic gifts, whence it is passed on to the recipient of the Eucharist, in order to build up his flesh and change its quality. In this way, the dynamic and relational character of the giving of life in John, the opening of an intensive relationship and mutual immanence through faith in Jesus and his saving death, for which the “chewing of the flesh of Jesus” stands metaphorically, is “materialized” in *Haer.* 5.2.3 and interpreted in the sense of a biological event of receiving nourishment. The giving of life starts with the flesh, works upon the flesh of the recipient of the Eucharist, and changes it. This ultimately enables the fleshly substance to receive imperishability. In this way, Irenaeus establishes a direct, substantial connection between the reception of the Eucharist and the future resurrection of the dead. Above all, however, his interpretation of the Eucharist is oriented in such a way that it becomes an argument for his central thesis regarding the salvation of human flesh.

³⁴In this sense, the flesh can also be “inherited” (cf. *Haer.* 5.9.4).

³⁵Cf. J. Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement*, OECT (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 96 (with reference to *Haer.* 2.34 and 5.3.3): “this passage emphasizes that man lives as long as God wants, or as long as God confers life on his flesh. It is important to note that although it is God who provides life, it is man who lives. Participating in this life provided by God, man does not lose his identity; nor does the gift exist apart from him or superadded to him; but, rather, the gift is ‘personalized’ by each human being: the gift is life, yet it is the human being who lives this life in their flesh.”

4.3 *How is Imperishability Mediated to the Flesh? Adversus haereses 5.2.3 in the Framework of Ancient Theories of Nourishment*

To ground the end-time resurrection of the flesh vis-à-vis critics, Irenaeus must answer the question of how the immaterial Spirit can affect human flesh. The starting point is the view that flesh/matter and spirit stand over against each other and are distinct spheres. Since Irenaeus affirms the material, substantial fleshliness of the human being also in the resurrection and avoids the notion of a transformed “pneumatic body,” he must conceptualize how imperishability can be mediated in a correspondingly material and substantial way.³⁶ In doing so, Irenaeus endeavors to satisfy contemporary scientific theories about the character and development of human nature. Here, he stands in the tradition of early Christian apologists.³⁷

He begins his argument with the eucharistic elements bread and cup or wheat and vine and presupposes here that human – and then also Jesus’ – flesh, just like bread and cup, come from the *earth*. Between the human body and the gifts of the earth there operates, as an establishment of the divine order of creation, a circle of nourishment. Presupposing this view, Irenaeus can, finally, draw on ancient theories of nourishment regarding the growth of human flesh for his explanation of the salvation of the flesh

³⁶One of the presuppositions comes from the Jewish or early Christian tradition of the word of God as “bread” for human beings. Cf. also the image of “milk” for Jesus’ teaching and person/saving work, which is received and interiorized by human beings in faith (cf. John 6; 1 Cor 3) – this metaphoricism actually pictorially depicts faith.

³⁷Cf., for example, Athenagoras’ tractate on the resurrection (*De Resurrectione*). In this work, Athenagoras, on the one hand, critically engages with views that contest the bodily resurrection and, on the other hand, presents positive arguments for the bodily resurrection. He first presents a picture of the body, in which this is composed of individual parts. The living human being is composed of soul and body together (it also corresponds to this view that bodily continuity of the human being after his resurrection is not linked to material correspondence but to the rejoining together of the body’s own parts [ἐκτῶν οὐκείων μερῶν]). In *Res.* 18, Athenagoras then also speaks of the double nature of the human being: taken on its own, the soul is free of desires, whereas the body recognizes neither law nor right. Correspondingly, death is the separation of soul and body and the dissolution of the composite body (*Res.* 16). Athenagoras consequently understands the resurrection of the body not as a re-enlivening of the bodily substance but as the rejoining together of the parts of the body that fell apart in death. For Athenagoras, the first argument for the bodily resurrection consists in the creative power of God. Thus, he describes the event of resurrection (interfused with Platonic conceptions) in analogy to creation. His second argument is natural-scientific in character and aimed against an objection that comes from outside. A body that serves the nourishment and thus the building up of a different body could not rise. Against the background of a theory of digestion in which nourishment builds up the body, the devoured human being is partly assimilated to the animal body (and even more complexly: if the animals, in turn, are eaten by human beings and thus serve the building up of their bodies – to whom, then, do the parts belong in the resurrection?). In *Res.* 3–9, Athenagoras engages critically with this “chain-nourishment-argument.” Not only is it possible for God to bring together scattered parts again. The chain-nourishment-argument can also be invalidated from a scientific perspective. Some nourishment is inappropriate and does not serve the building up of the bodily substance. In its case, parts are not digested and assimilated to the body that is to be nourished (*Res.* 5). The nature of the human being (and the natural development of all living beings) would also show that they pass through serious bodily changes – they develop from seeds via adolescence and mature to an old person (*Res.* 17). These observable changes let one infer that the human being can undergo fundamental bodily changes again also after his physical death. On Athenagoras, see, in general, N. Kiel, *Ps-Athenagoras, “De Resurrectione.” Datierung und Kontextualisierung der dem Apologeten Athenagoras zugeschriebenen Auferstehungsschrift*, SVigChr 133 (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

and against this background sketch out the specific effect of the Eucharist.

Information about ancient conceptions regarding the way that nourishment works in the human organism can be found, among others, in the writing of Ps.-Hippocrates titled *De alimento* or *Nutriments*, which is to be dated to the beginning of the first century CE.³⁸ There, we read (*Alim.* 1.2–3):³⁹

(2) αὖξει δὲ καὶ ῥώννυσσι καὶ σαρκοῖ καὶ ὁμοιοῖ καὶ ἀνομοιοῖ τὰ ἐν ἐκάστοις κατὰ φύσιν τὴν (3) ἐκάστου καὶ τὴν ἀρχῆς δύναμιν.

(2) It [the nourishment] increases, strengthens, clothes with flesh, makes like, makes unlike, what is in the several parts, according to the nature (3) of each part and its original power.

Thus, the effect of the nourishment consists in the promotion of the growth, strengthening, and building of the flesh, and it does this in the form of assimilation and dissimilation (ὁμοιοῖ καὶ ἀνομοιοῖ, “like and unlike”). On the one hand, this manner of operation is dependent on the organs, upon which the nourishment has an effect. On the other hand, it is dependent upon the kind of nourishment, with there being disagreement in ancient tractates about the exact processes involved. Thus, it appears that the organs have the capacity to assimilate related substances but also the capacity to cut out nourishment. The text quoted from *De alimento* does not clearly indicate what assimilates and what is assimilated, i.e., whether the organs assimilate the nourishment or the nourishment the organs.

The presentation of the ingestion of nourishment is somewhat clearer in Galen, from whom an investigation of the processes related to nourishment titled *De naturalibus facultatibus* is likewise handed down. According to this text, powers of assimilation and dissimilation operate between the nourishment and the respective organ (*De fac. nat.* 3.155.15–156.1):⁴⁰

ὥς γὰρ κάκεινα δέδεικται ποιότητων μεταβολῇ γιγνόμενα, κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον καὶ ἡ ἐν τῇ γαστρὶ πέψις τῶν σιτίων εἰς τὴν οἰκείαν ἐστὶ τῷ τρεφεμένῳ ποιότητα μεταβολῇ.

³⁸ Thus K. Deichgräber, ed., *Pseudohippokrates Über die Nahrung. Text, Kommentar und Würdigung einer stoisch-herakleitisierenden Schrift aus der Zeit um Christi Geburt*, AAWLM.G 1973/3 (Mainz: Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, 1973), 12.

³⁹ *Alim.* 1.2–3 (LCL 147, 342 [Jones]); trans. Jones, LCL 147, 343 (Jacobi's insertion). Cf. also the translation of Deichgräber, ed., *Pseudohippokrates*: “Sie [die Nahrung] stärkt und baut auf, bekleidet mit Fleisch und macht ähnlich bzw. Unähnlich das in jedem Einzelnen (Enthalte), gemäß der Natur jedes Teils und der ursprünglich (vorhandenen) Kraft.”

⁴⁰ K. G. Kühn, ed., *Claudii Galeni Opera omnia*, vol. 2: *Medicorum graecorum opera quae exstant* 2 (Hildesheim: Olms, 1964 [1821]); trans. A. J. Brock, LCL 71, 241.

For, just as it has been shown that these two processes depend upon a change of qualities, similarly also the digestion of food in the stomach involves a transmutation of it into the quality proper to that which is receiving nourishment.

Galen interprets the event of nourishment as leading like to like and unlike to unlike.⁴¹ In his view, nourishment is an assimilation of the thing nourishing to the thing that is nourished, i.e., a transformation of the nourishment into the substance or into the characteristics of the nourished organ. Nourishment can be understood as a dynamic relationship between the organism and the nourishment substance, with powers of attraction, repulsion, and assimilation being active between the nourishment substances and the body. Bread is transformed through the medium of the power into bodily substance, whereas nourishment that cannot be adapted to the respective organ is cut out. In this way, fitting is drawn to fitting and assimilated, whereas the unfitting is rejected. This is possible not only on account of the active powers but also because nourishment substances are similar to the body substances and therefore can assimilate themselves to the organs through transformation. And vice versa, the organs are also akin to the nourishment.⁴²

The medical tractates cast light upon the presentation of the effect of eucharistic nourishment upon human beings, which Irenaeus sets forth in Haer. 5.2.3. Potential for the interpretation of the Eucharist is possessed especially by the notion, developed in medical writings, that the flesh can absorb nourishment and receive its powers. Thus, the flesh appears to be fundamentally in a position to assimilate stuff from outside, to adapt it to itself, and thereby to build up its substance.

Irenaeus describes the special way in which the eucharistic food affects the recipient as an adaptation, i.e., as an assimilation of the human flesh to the characteristics of this special food. At the same time, when he uses the modified Ephesians quotation to affirm the sameness of our bodies with the body of Jesus, he emphasizes the physiological principle of the effect of like upon like. Not only wheat and wine, which come from the earth and the vine, are components of the one creation of God and come, like the human being himself, from the earth but also the flesh of Jesus as such is like human flesh and can also only for this reason enter into a relation of impact to the human bodies, in which the gift of life is then transferred. Finally, the powers that, according to Galen, operate between nourishment and bodily substance can be understood in analogy to the power of the word of God in the Eucharist.

⁴¹Cf. Deichgräber, ed., *Pseudohippokrates*, 18.

⁴²On this, cf. C. Hoffstadt, F. Peschke, A. Schulz-Buchta, and M. Nagenborg, eds., *Der Fremdkörper*, Aspekte der Medizinphilosophie 6 (Bochum: Projektverlag, 2008).

Excursus: Forerunners and Aftereffects of the Irenaeian Interpretation of the Eucharist: Justin, *1 Apol.* 66.2 and Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio Catechetica Magna* 37

In his *1 Apology*, Justin could already presuppose not only that the Eucharist is a special food – as Did. 9.3; 10.2–3 and Ignatius, *To the Romans* (cf. Ign. *Rom.* 7.3, where the “bread of God” stands over against perishable food) already attest for early Christianity – but also that the manner of its operation presents a special form of the ordinary process of nourishment.

The text of Justin’s *1 Apology* is addressed to Emperor Antonius Pius, his adoptive son Marcus Aurelius, and Lucius Verus (as well as the Roman senate and the whole Roman people, as a presumable gloss adds⁴³) and understands itself to be a petitionary writing and appeal for the “unjustly” hated and maligned people from “every tribe” (*1 Apol.* 1). Alongside the fact that the grievance is addressed to the emperor, the elements of the genre include the portrayal of the legal problem (2.1–4), the petition for administrative intervention (3.1–5), and the reproduction of a “judicial document to establish the legal situation.”⁴⁴ Justin expands this schema to include an extended refutation of the accusation that the Christians are deniers of God, atheists, despisers of morals, and enemies of the state, in which he presents Christianity as a rational and honorable philosophy (13–60) and elucidates the cultic practice of the Christians (61–67). The Christians are said to worship the one, true God with reason and in truth (6). On the one hand, time and again, Justin presents the similarity of the Christian doctrine to the philosophy and mythology of the Greeks and Romans. On the other hand, he postulates a reversed relation of dependency, according to which Plato in particular had read Moses (cf. 59–60).⁴⁵ His writing demands that the addressees judge Christians impartially and with reason. The person who proceeds in this way will recognize the truth of Christianity. Justin also points out that the Christians could deny their faith in the trials but do not do so because they expect an end-time judgment and hope for eternal existence with God (8).

The passage that is important for our context appears in *1 Apol.* 66, where Justin comes to speak of the Eucharist. Only interrupted by an excursus on the “aping” of Christian doctrine and practice by the “demons” and on the correct interpretation of Moses and the prophets (62–64), *1 Apol.* 61.61–67 deals with the Christian ritual practice and the order of the worship service. After his elucidation of baptism, which he describes with a quotation from John 3.3 as a bath for rebirth and illumination (*1 Apol.* 61), Justin presents the course of the celebration of the Eucharist, which follows baptism. After baptism, everyone gathers for prayer and for the kiss of peace.⁴⁶ After this, bread and a cup with water and wine are handed to the presider; he speaks the thanksgiving over these, and they are then distributed to all by the deacons (*1 Apol.* 65; *1 Apol.* 67 is similar, there as part of the Christian Sunday worship service). In *1 Apol.* 66.1–2, Justin grounds the exclusivity of participation in the Eucharist, to which only those who are baptized are admitted, with a description of the nature of the proffered elements of bread and wine or drink. In doing so, he formulates a parallelism, which places aspects of the Eucharist in relation to the salvation-historical incarnation of Jesus.

οὐ γάρ ὡς κοινὸν ἄρτον οὐδὲ κοινὸν πόμα ταῦτα λαμβάνομεν, ἀλλ’ ἐν τρόπῳ διὰ λόγου
θεοῦ σαρκοποιηθεὶς Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ὁ σωτὴρ ἡμῶν καὶ σάρκα καὶ αἷμα ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας ἡμῶν
ἔσχεν οὕτως καὶ τὴν δι’ εὐχῆς λόγου τοῦ παρ’ αὐτοῦ εὐχαριστηθεῖσαν τρῶσθαι ἐξ ἧς αἷμα καὶ

⁴³Cf. D. Minns and P. Parvis, eds., *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr. Apologies*, trans. D. Minns and P. Parvis, OECT (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 35.

⁴⁴Cf. D. Wyrwa, “Justin,” in *Philosophie der Antike*, vol. 5/1: *Philosophie der Kaiserzeit und der Spätantike*, ed. C. Riedweg, C. Horn, and D. Wyrwa (Basel: Schwabe, 2018), 790–806, here 792.

⁴⁵Cf. also *1 Apol.* 22.

⁴⁶Cf. Tertullian, *Or.* 18.

σάρκες κατὰ μεταβολὴν τρέφονται ἡμῶν ἐκείνου τοῦ σαρκοποιηθέντος Ἰησοῦ καὶ σάρκα καὶ αἷμα ἐδιδάχθημεν εἶναι.⁴⁷

For we do not receive these things as ordinary bread or ordinary drink.

But just

as through God's word
Jesus Christ was made flesh,
our Savior,
and had flesh and blood
for our salvation

So we have been taught

that also the through a word of prayer⁴⁸ from him
with thanksgiving furnished nourishment,
from which our blood and flesh according to a transformation are nourished,
is flesh and blood
of that Jesus who was made flesh.

The parallel structure already shows that Justin introduces two kinds of analogies. One analogy is between the activity of the word in the incarnation of Jesus and the activity of the word of prayer in the Eucharist. The other analogy is between Jesus Christ's assumption of *σάρξ* and *αἷμα* in the incarnation (*σαρκοποιηθεὶς Ἰησοῦς Χριστός ... καὶ σάρκα καὶ αἷμα ... ἔσχεν*) and the fact that according to Christian doctrine the eucharistic nourishment "is" the flesh and blood of Jesus (*εὐχαριστηθεῖσαν τρόφην ... ἐκείνου τοῦ σαρκοποιηθέντος Ἰησοῦ καὶ σάρκα καὶ αἷμα ἐδιδάχθημεν εἶναι*).

In the second analogy, it is conspicuous that there is not talk of a *transformation* of the meal elements into the flesh and blood of Jesus, and Justin also does not clarify *how* bread and drink become Jesus' flesh and blood.⁴⁹ It is true that Othmar Perler assumes that *εὐχαριστεῖν* is already used here as a *terminus technicus*, which is to be translated with "become Eucharist" and not with "bless with thanksgiving."⁵⁰ In that case, there would be talk here, in the clause *καὶ τὴν δι' εὐχῆς λόγου τοῦ παρ' αὐτοῦ εὐχαριστηθεῖσαν τρόφην*, of the "Eucharist becoming" of the elements bread and drink, and this would be connected with the activity of the word. Against this view, however, nothing suggests that *εὐχαριστεῖν* already has this meaning here. For Justin it is solely decisive that we are not dealing here with ordinary (*κοινός*) food and that the entire event has its correspondence in the incarnation of Jesus Christ for our salvation. It is true that one could infer from this correspondence that the activity of the word plays a role, but this is not developed further.⁵¹ Thus, *εὐχαριστηθεῖσαν τρόφην* is here, initially, to

⁴⁷Justin, *1 Apol.* 66.1–2 (M. Marcovich, ed., *Iustini Martyris Apologiae pro Christianis*, PTS 38 [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994]).

⁴⁸The expression δι' εὐχῆς λόγου τοῦ παρ' αὐτοῦ can be interpreted in different ways. If λόγος is dependent on εὐχή, it would need to be translated with "through a prayer of the Word" (i.e., of the Logos, *genitivus subjectivus*) or "through prayer of a word" (the words of institution that Christ spoke) or "through a prayer for the Word" (Logos, *genitivus objectivus*). If, by contrast, εὐχή is dependent on λόγος, then one must render it with "through a word of prayer" (i.e., through a prayer word, *genitivus explicativus*). On this, cf. Perler, "Logos und Eucharistie nach Justinus I. *Apol.* C. 66," 475.

⁴⁹Cf. also A. Lindemann, "Die eucharistische Mahlfeier bei Justin und Irenäus," in *The Eucharist – Its Origins and Contexts. Sacred Meal, Communal Meal, Table Fellowship in Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity*, vol. 2: *Patristic Traditions, Iconography*, ed. D. Hellholm and D. Sänger, WUNT 376 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 901–34, here 930.

⁵⁰Cf. Perler, "Logos und Eucharistie nach Justinus I. *Apol.* C. 66," 479.

⁵¹Cf. also J. Schröter, *Das Abendmahl. Frühchristliche Deutungen und Impulse für die Gegenwart*, SBS 210 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2006), 83–84: "As in the Didache, there is thus also in Justin a close connection between the prayers of thanksgiving and the special character of the food of the Eucharist."

be translated simply with “nourishment over which a thanksgiving has been spoken.”⁵²

Nevertheless, the text does speak of a transformation – namely, with the term μεταβολή in the relative clause, which refers to the nourishment of the blood and flesh of human beings. Under the presupposition that the concern of the sentence construction is above all with the transformation of the food in the Eucharist and is to be translated with “to become Eucharist,” J. Betz therefore assumed that for the event of the transformation of the food, Justin, with the relative clause ἐξ ἧς αἷμα καὶ σάρκες κατὰ μεταβολὴν τρέφονται ἡμῶν, invokes a quasi-natural-scientific argument of the general transformation of nourishment and the assimilation of nourishment into bodily substance in order to explain the transformation of the eucharistic food. “From the natural transformation capacity of food, which becomes flesh and blood in the living organism,” Justin derives the ability “that also in the Eucharist nourishment can become the flesh and blood of Jesus.”⁵³ Betz therefore translates: “Not like ordinary bread and ordinary drink do we take it. Rather, in the same way as Jesus Christ, our redeemer, who became flesh through the logos of God, had flesh and blood, so, according to our doctrine, the food that has become Eucharist through a prayer for the logos that comes from him (God) is the flesh and blood of that very Jesus who became flesh, as (also otherwise) with us flesh and blood are formed from food on the basis of the transformation of the nourishment.”⁵⁴

In my judgment, J. Betz is correct in his view that ancient conceptions of the transformation of nourishment into bodily substance stand in the background of this text, as they are also found, for example, in the quoted passage from Galen. This is supported not least by the fact that Galen likewise uses the term μεταβολή for this process. But is the μεταβολή in the ingestion of nourishment in the relative clause in 1 *Apol.* 66.2 ultimately meant to ground a transformation of the eucharistic elements? The attachment of ἐξ ἧς το εὐχαριστήθεισαν τρῶφην speaks against the translation and interpretation by Betz. The relative pronoun undoubtedly refers to the previously mentioned *eucharistic* nourishment, which nourishes (our?)⁵⁵ flesh and blood “according to a/our transformation.” Only this nourishment is spoken of here – and not other, ordinary nourishment. To this extent, Betz’s translation, which understands the relative clause as a general statement about the physiological transformation of nourishment into flesh and blood, is unconvincing. If, however, this understanding is excluded, why then does Justin speak at all of human αἷμα καὶ σάρκες at this point? After all, in 1 *Apol.* 66.2, Jesus’ σὰρξ and αἷμα is conspicuously set in relation to our αἷμα καὶ σάρκες (and in order to distinguish the flesh and blood of *Jesus* from that of human beings Justin changes, when he speaks of human flesh and blood, the order of the word pair and uses the plural σάρκες).

One possibility is that the “transformation” refers simply to the transformation of the nourishment into bodily substance, as the event in which we are nourished (cf. Ps.-Hippocrates, *De alimento* and Galen, *De naturalibus facultatibus*). Thus, Justin could simply emphasize here that the Eucharist also presents an ingestion of nourishment in which the flesh is built up. Against this view, one can, however, invoke (in addition to the fact that this information is actually superfluous and delivers nothing for the special significance of the Eucharist with which Justin is, after all, concerned) the fact that the whole sentence structure is constructed in parallel and that alongside the two aforementioned parallels, i.e., the activity of the W/word and the salvation-historical and eucharistic “incarnation,” there is also a possible third parallel that pertains to the salvific effect. In the first part Justin states that the

⁵²Thus, C. Marksches, “Abendmahl II.1: Alte Kirche,” in *RGZ* 1 (1998), 15–21, here 16 (ET = C. Marksches, “Eucharist/Communion II. Church History 1. Early Church,” in *RPP* 4 [2008], 621–25, here 622).

⁵³J. Betz, *Die Eucharistie in der Zeit der griechischen Väter*, vol. 1/1: *Die Aktualpräsenz der Person und des Heilswerkes Jesu im Abendmahl nach der vorexpressionistischen griechischen Patristik* (Freiburg: Herder, 1955), 272.

⁵⁴J. Betz, *Die Eucharistie in der Zeit der griechischen Väter*, 268.

⁵⁵The reference of ἡμῶν is not clear and is interpreted in different ways. Cf. Perler, “Logos und Eucharistie nach Justinus I. *Apol.* C. 66,” 482, who assigns ἡμῶν to μεταβολή, and Schröter, *Das Abendmahl*, 84, who, by contrast, relates ἡμῶν to αἷμα καὶ σάρκες.

incarnation took place for our *σωτηρία*. This statement of salvation could have its counterpart in the comment about the salvific transformation of our flesh and blood that is brought about through the eucharistic nourishment: ἐξ ἧς αἷμα καὶ σὰρκες κατὰ μεταβολὴν τρέφονται ἡμῶν.

If this is correct, then Justin does not stop with a description of our nourishment through the eucharistic food as an ordinary process of the transformation of nourishment into bodily substance. Rather, as the incarnation in the first part, he enriches also the eucharistic incarnation with a soteriological significance. Not only the historical but also the eucharistic incarnation is there for our salvation, in that Jesus' flesh and blood, through a transformation, nourish our flesh and blood and prepare them for the resurrection and eternal glorious existence.⁵⁶ If one views this text from the perspective of the later interpretation of the Eucharist in Irenaeus, then the result of the *μεταβολή* can only be the enabling of the human flesh and blood for imperishability. The significance of the Eucharist as spiritual nourishment and as a ritual that mediates perfect life is already attested in the Didache and in the letters of Ignatius. Thus, this would also be nothing unusual in the context of *1 Apology*. However, Justin would be the first transmitted witness to locate the effect of the Eucharist specifically in the *σὰρξ* and *αἷμα* of the believer and to describe this effect as a physiological process.⁵⁷

It is problematic for such an understanding of the text that Justin, beyond the short relative clause and the parallel constructed sentence structure, does not adduce any further arguments that would support this interpretation. However, the concern in the context is with describing and defending the gatherings of Christians for worship to outsiders and not, by contrast, with the Christian belief in the resurrection of the flesh. This is different in Irenaeus, who engages in detail and against the background of very different fronts with the salvation of the flesh and therefore deals at length with the eucharistic effect on human flesh. Justin, by contrast, professes the resurrection of the flesh in another place, namely, in *Dial.* 80.5, in the context of a dispute with different streams within Christianity: Ἐγὼ δέ, καὶ εἰ τινὲς εἰσιν ὀρθογνώμονες κατὰ πάντα Χριστιανοί, καὶ σαρκὸς ἀνάστασιν γενήσεσθαι ἐπιστάμεθα Thus, he does indeed reckon with the fleshly resurrection and defends the resurrection belief there against the view of other Christians who maintain that there is no resurrection of the dead but that souls are directly received into heaven at death.

Beyond this, Justin also adduces other, conventional arguments in support of the bodily resurrection of the dead. For example, in *1 Apol.* 18–19, he appeals to the omnipotence of God and the power of transformation in creation, which already becomes recognizable in the earthly development of the human being from seed to adult man.⁵⁸ According to *1 Apol.* 19, the omnipotence of the creator God

⁵⁶ A similar interpretation of this text is also advocated by Perler, "Logos und Eucharistie nach Justinus I. *Apol.* C. 66," 473 and Schröter, *Das Abendmahl*, 84.

⁵⁷ Cf. also Marksches, "Eucharist/Communion II. Church History 1. Early Church," 622 (GV = Marksches, "Abendmahl II.1: Alte Kirche," 16): "By way of the transformation of this food within the body during the process of digestion ... the human being receives both physical and spiritual nourishment."

⁵⁸ Cf. *1 Apol.* 18.1–19.8 (trans. Minns and Parvis, eds., Justin, 123, 125, 127, 129): "18.1. Consider what happened to each of the kings that have been. They died just like everybody else. Which, if death led to unconsciousness, would have been a godsend to all the unjust. 18.2. But, since consciousness endures for all those who have existed, and eternal punishment lies in store, take care to be persuaded and to believe that these things are true. 18.3. For conjurings of the dead – both visions obtained through uncorrupted children, and the summoning of human souls – and those whom magicians call 'dream-senders' or 'attendants' – and the things done by those who know these things – let these persuade you that even after death souls remain in consciousness. 18.4. And let these two persuade you of the same 18.6. Receive us, at least like these, since we believe in God not less, but rather more, than they do: we who expect even to receive our own bodies again, after they have died and been put in the earth, since we say that nothing is impossible for God. 19.1. And what would seem more incredible to someone thinking about it than if we were not embodied and someone said that from some small drop of human seed bones and nerves and flesh were able to come to be, depicted as we see them? 19.2. For, consider the hypothesis now. If, while you neither were such as these, nor were derived from these things, someone said to you with conviction, while showing you human

shows itself in the fact that he can create human beings with all different body parts (bones, tendons, flesh) from the small seed. Likewise, at the end of time God can let “the human bodies that have been dissolved and, like seeds, been placed into the earth rise” and put on imperishability. In *1 Apol.* 18, with the Christians’ view that not only the souls live on after death but that God can raise again even the dead bodies that are laid in the earth, he wishes to show that Christians stand not only in the tradition of the philosophers (Empedocles and Pythagoras, Plato, and Socrates) but, beyond this, also distinguish themselves especially by their piety. Here, he criticizes the notion that God is not able to raise the dead and that everything instead returns to where it came from. This Middle Platonic body of thought also includes the notion of the imperishability of the soul, with which Justin critically engages especially in *Dial.* 4–6.

Thus, it becomes evident that at other points in his works Justin must argue both against the view that the soul is immortal and against the view of the powerlessness of God in the face of the fundamental perishability of the human body. For according to Middle Platonic conceptions, which had also fundamentally shaped Justin himself in his pre-Christian period, matter is, to be sure, eternal, but not the human body. In both contexts, the argumentative goal of the urban Roman apologist is to place the power of the creator God over the creaturely conditions of the human being.

The interpretation of the Eucharist that becomes visible in *1 Apol.* 66.2 can be embedded in this larger nexus and understood in the context of all the extant writings of Justin. Justin was concerned to affirm the bodily – indeed fleshly – resurrection of the dead, for reasons relating to the Christian picture of God. The interpretation of the Eucharist in *1 Apol.* 66.2 could already reflect the attempt to explain the transformation of the bodily substance in the resurrection, so to speak, scientifically. It could imply the notion that bread and wine as flesh and blood of Jesus have an effect upon the flesh and blood of human beings in a special way and yet at the same time analogously to ordinary nourishment and prepares them for the imperishable glorious existence.

This type of argumentation is fully developed in the fourth century in Gregory of Nyssa, in his *Oratio catechetica magna*, where the Eucharist is described as an event in which the human being receives the imperishable body of Christ and transforms Christ’s whole nature into his own nature.⁵⁹ The basic pattern of this conception of the Eucharist is “union with life also brings about participation in life.” From the double nature of the human being, who consists of body and soul, one can infer, according to Gregory, that both components must each make a distinct connection to the “author

seed and a painted image, that from such could come to be, before seeing it come to be you would not believe it. Who would dare to contradict this? **19.3.** So in the same way, it is because you have never seen a dead man raised that you remain incredulous. **19.4.** But just as in the beginning you would not have believed that human beings could come from a small drop and yet you see it happening, so now take into account that it is not impossible that human bodies, when they have dissolved and, like seeds, been resolved into earth, do rise in due time, at the command of God, and put on incorruptibility. **19.5.** For what sort of power worthy of God those people are talking about who claim that each thing passes into that from which it came, and that not even God is able to do anything further beyond this, we cannot say. But let us consider this – that they would not have believed that it was possible that such things would ever come to be as they see have come to be, and from such origins, in the case both of themselves and of the whole world. **19.6.** But we have learnt that it is better to believe both these things and also those that are even impossible for human beings by their own nature, than to be incredulous like the others, since we know our teacher Jesus Christ said: ‘Things that are impossible for human beings are possible for God,’ **19.7.** and: ‘Do not fear those who kill you and after this are not able to do anything. Fear rather the one who is able after death to send both soul and body to Gehenna.’ **19.8.** And Gehenna is a place where those are going to be punished who live unjustly and do not believe that these things will happen just as God taught through Christ.”

⁵⁹Cf. Marksches, “Eucharist/Communion II. Church History 1. Early Church,” 623 (GV = Marksches, “Abendmahl II.1: Alte Kirche,” 18): “Gregory presents the probably most elaborate ancient attempt to comprehend the mode of this transformation ...”

of life.”⁶⁰ Interestingly, he assigns to the soul and the body respectively different ways of connecting themselves to Christ as the bearer of life. For in contrast to the soul, the body cannot unite with life through *faith*. The connection of the body to life must occur via a material medium that penetrates into the innards. Like Ignatius (Ign. *Eph.* 20.2), Gregory thinks here of an antidote that, according to a typological figure of thought, nullifies the deadly poison ingested by Adam. Thus, not the transgression of the commandment by Adam brought death but the bad paradisaical nourishment. Over against this stands a new nourishment, the imperishable body of Christ, which, when it is ingested in the Eucharist, transforms the bodies of the believers to itself. The enlivening dynamis that is necessary for this, which makes bodily substance from nourishment, is received together with the nourishment. In order to fully clarify for his addressees the process that he has in mind in the working of the Eucharist, Gregory very explicitly turns to the physiological processes in the ingestion of nourishment:⁶¹

Therefore it is fitting for the argument to digress a little into the physiology of the body, so that, looking to the order [of the argument], our faith might have no doubt about the proposed thought. For who has not known that the nature of our body itself, in itself, does not have life in its own subsistence, but it holds itself together and remains in existence by an influx of power into it, that draws to itself what it lacks by a ceaseless motion, and casts out what is superfluous?”

Nourishment is the power that keeps the body alive at all. It already contains, according to potentiality, the complete body that it will build up:⁶²

Therefore he who looks at these things [bread and drink as ordinary nourishment of the human being] sees the bulk of our body in potential; for in me these become blood and body, the nourishment correspondingly changed into the form of [my] body by [a nutritive] power of alteration.

The body of Jesus, in which God’s word dwelt at the same time, also nourished itself from bread and built up his body from this. This process repeats itself, as it were, in the Eucharist, when, there too, the bread is passed, which nourishes the bodies of the believers and lets them, because it is transformed into the body of Christ through blessing, become sharers in imperishability (cf. *Oratio catechetica magna* 37.12).⁶³

Irenaeus’ writing *Adversus haereses* is an important milestone on the way to an interpretation of the Eucharist that operates extensively with contemporary theories of nourishment, such as we find in Gregory of Nyssa. For the bishop, the corresponding medical insights of his time do not, of course, stand outside of his Christian understanding of

⁶⁰Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica magna* 37.1 (trans. I. Green, ed., *Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Catechetical Discourse: A Handbook for Catechists* [New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2019], 144): “But since humanity is twofold, being a commixture of both soul and body, it is necessary for those who are being saved to lay hold of him who leads to life through both.”

⁶¹Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica magna* 37.5 (trans. Green, ed., *Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Catechetical Discourse*, 146).

⁶²Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica magna* 37.7 (trans. Green, ed., *Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Catechetical Discourse*, 147 [the first insertion is from C. Jacobi, the others are from Green]).

⁶³See Green, ed., *Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Catechetical Discourse*, 149. Cf. Marksches, “Eucharist/Communion II. Church History 1. Early Church,” 623 (GV = Marksches, “Abendmahl II.1: Alte Kirche,” 18).

reality but rather are made plausible by him through their integration into a larger conception of the enlivening and preservation of the material world through the wisdom of the creator God.

On this basis, Irenaeus then advances to the decisive point of his argumentation: since the wine and blood that come from the earth receive the word of God (*verbum Dei*) into themselves in the Eucharist and thus – so he explains in *Haer.* 4.18.5 – can receive a heavenly element (*res caelestis*), the strived for unity of matter and spirit realizes itself already in the eucharistic gifts:

For we offer to Him His own, announcing consistently the fellowship and union of the flesh and Spirit.⁶⁴

Just as these gifts can consequently receive spiritual quality, so also human flesh, which likewise comes from the earth, can also take on this characteristic in the ingestion of nourishment. According to Irenaeus, the special quality of imperishability is present in the eucharistic bread and wine in the same way as the strengthening, flesh-building powers in ordinary nourishment. From there, it transfers itself to the flesh of the recipient, which adapts itself to this characteristic. How then can someone claim that we cannot receive the gifts of God (cf. *Haer.* 5.2.3)?

Their effect stands on the whole within the salvation-historical and creation-theological framework insofar as God, within the temporal, transient world, prepares the human being for imperishability as the goal of his creation and for this purpose also uses matter and what comes from the earth as an aid. Irenaeus is thus concerned with the connection between the action of God in creation and the end-time perfecting, with the unity of creator God and Father of Jesus Christ, and with the salvation of the created world.⁶⁵

This can also be seen in Irenaeus' treatment of the Jesus tradition. It likewise displays a creation-theological emphasis. In *Haer.* 3.11.5, Irenaeus interprets the transformation of water into wine at the wedding in Cana (John 2.1–11) and the blessing of the bread at the feeding of the 5,000 as indications that the same God who is active in Jesus is also the creator of the earth, since Christ, the Word of God, does not create something out of nothing but rather acts upon the existing, created natural matter.⁶⁶ At

⁶⁴Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.18.5 (trans. Roberts and Donaldson, eds., "Irenaeus Against Heresies," 486; cf. Brox, ed., *Irenäus*, 8/4, 147). On the different contexts of the passages, cf. de Andia, *Homo Vivens*, 238: "Mais le contexte est différent au livre IV et au livre V: dans le premier texte, Irénée insiste sur l'identité du Dieu Créateur et Sauveur pour montrer que l'eucharistie ne peut être l'oblation des prémices de la création que si c'est le même Verbe de Dieu qui a créé le pain et le vin 'coupe de la création,' et les a offerts en s'offrant lui-même au Père. Dans le second texte, il souligne l'identité de la chair du Christ et de notre 'substance' charnelle ..., la réalité de l'incarnation du Verbe fait chair prouvant la réalité de notre espérance de la résurrection de la chair."

⁶⁵B. Mutschler, *Irenäus als johanneischer Theologe. Studien zur Schriftauslegung bei Irenäus von Lyon*, STAC 21 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 221–222: "Here Irenaeus sees with John the unfathomable, invisible Father at work in the visible and fathomable Son."

⁶⁶Cf. also Mutschler, *Irenäus*, 221, "Irenaeus places the Johannine feeding of the five thousand alongside the wine miracle. In both Christ, with bread and water, took a starting point from the creation into service, even though he did not need to do so."

the same time, here too, there is an echo of the Lord's Supper, since Irenaeus, with the connection of the wine story and feeding story, comes to speak of the gift of food and drink through Christ (cf. the pair of terms in John 6.55).

5. Resurrection as Process

How then does this affect the conception of the *resurrection of human beings* in Irenaeus? Here, it is, first, conspicuous that Irenaeus, in accordance with his general pattern of thought with its orientation to the whole Bible, does not reckon with a present resurrection. The Spirit received in the Eucharist is, initially, a pledge of the *future* resurrection to imperishability.⁶⁷ However, the resurrection – as a gift of life that comes from God and is intended for creation – is understood as the *endpoint* of a more comprehensive process that reaches from the creation of the human being to the completion of salvation history. Thus, in Irenaeus, “resurrection,” as high point of the developing, perfect life in the human being, is embedded in a whole series of similar life-giving actions of the creator God, which can be summarized as follows:

1. Already at the first creation, God had formed the earth/dust and enlivened it through his Spirit.
2. In the order that henceforth kept the creation in operation, his Spirit then becomes active when the roots of the vine, which lie in the earth, bring forth fruit and when wheat grows from the seed. The language that Irenaeus uses for these events in *Haer.* 5.2.3 possesses corresponding eschatological overtones (cf. the expressions *depositum in terram, in terram et dissolutum, surgit per Spiritum Dei*). These expressions are, of course, formulated already with a view to the resurrection of human beings, which is spoken of at the end. As examples from nature, vine and wheat are intended to make the resurrection plausible, entirely in the vein of apologetical argumentation. Nevertheless, Irenaeus goes beyond the mere formulation of an analogy here and already interprets the natural growth of the plants themselves as an activity of the Spirit and an enlivening by God. The “manifold rising” (*multiplex surgit*), in turn, makes an arc back to the beginning of creation and God's commission to his creation to be fruitful and multiply.⁶⁸
3. In a certain, indirect way, the life-giving Spirit is also active in the nourishment of the human being through the gifts of creation and in the wisdom of human beings to prepare the gifts of creation into bread (and wine). All this is set in motion by the art and wisdom of God.

⁶⁷Cf. Behr, *Asceticism*, 74.

⁶⁸Cf. Gen 1.22, 28. Cf. de Andia, *Homo Vivens*, 245.

4. The Spirit becomes active once more in the Eucharist, when the prepared bread that comes from the earth (*Haer.* 4.18.5) and the cup become the body and blood of the Lord.⁶⁹
5. These characteristics transfer themselves to the recipients of the gifts when they eat and drink. In the same way as the flesh of the human being grows in the case of the ordinary ingestion of nourishment through the assimilation powers of the organs, in the Eucharist, as well, the special character of the nourishment – namely, the heavenly element that is productive in them, i.e., the word of God – has an effect on the flesh of the human being. The flesh is prepared in this way for imperishability. In the process, the substance of the flesh is not altered. It remains unchanged also for the “pneumatic,” i.e., spiritual human being who acts ethically. Nevertheless, the flesh can accept the characteristics of the Spirit and be made conform to the Word of God. In *Haer.* 5.9.3, Irenaeus formulates this in as follows: *ibi ... caro a spiritu possessa, oblita quidem sui, qualitatem autem Spiritus assumens, conforma facta Verbo Dei.*⁷⁰
6. Finally, the word of God or the Spirit is active in the end-time resurrection.⁷¹

Thus, this last, end-time resurrection does not stand by itself as a singular event but rather is the endpoint in a series of different life-giving activities of the Spirit and of a process that strives toward the end-time resurrection. Irenaeus understands the end-time resurrection of the flesh as part of the whole creative activity of God, which is already operative among temporal, earthly conditions. The consistent protagonist of these events is God, whereas matter, the earth, from which the human body, that which nourishes it, and the eucharistic elements come, constitutes the object of his activity.

While Irenaeus reveals a connection to the creation-theological grounding of the resurrection in the apologists Theophilus of Antioch,⁷² Athenagoras, and Justin,⁷³ he simultaneously goes a step beyond them. The end-time resurrection of the flesh is not only prefigured in the processes of nature but directly presupposes them. According to *Haer.* 4.18.5, the gifts of nature, after the invocation of God, receive a heavenly element (*ex duabus rebus constans, terrena et caelesti*), whose characteristic then transfers itself to the bodies of those (*corpora nostra*) who receive the Eucharist. This activity of the Spirit

⁶⁹In the context of this passage, Irenaeus explains that the “heretics” cannot affirm this if they do not regard Christ as the Son of the creator. They devalue the creation by sacrificing to someone other than the creator or by claiming that the creation arose out of a misstep or out of ignorance. Since, however, the eucharistic gifts are said to come from creation, their identification with the body and blood of Christ also demonstrates Christ’s closeness to the creation.

⁷⁰Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.9.3 (Brox, ed., *Irenäus*, 8/5, 78; trans. Roberts and Donaldson, eds., “Irenaeus Against Heresies,” 535); “[there is] the flesh possessed by the Spirit, forgetful indeed of what belongs to it, and adopting the quality of the Spirit, being made conformable to the Word of God.”

⁷¹Cf. also the four transformations that de Andia, *Homo Vivens*, 245–247 identifies in *Haer.* 5.2.3: a natural transformation (that occurs in creation), a eucharistic transformation, the transformation of mortal bodies into immortal bodies, and the transformation of water into wine in the miracle at Cana.

⁷²Cf. Theophilus, *Autol.* 1.13.

⁷³Cf. Justin, *1 Apol.* 19.

already now begins to transform human beings and prepare them for the eschatological resurrection and imperishability. According to Irenaeus, the Eucharist is the bridge that connects God's activity in creation with the final resurrection.

6. The Educative Approach and the Co-working of the Human Being in his Growth unto Imperishability (*Haer.* 4.38.1–3)

In another paradigm – namely, in the context of the human being's capacity for knowledge and his development unto perfect knowledge – Irenaeus can also speak metaphorically of “bread” and “flesh” or of “milk” for the activity of the Spirit and the teaching, person, and saving work of Jesus, which is received by human beings in faith and internalized and through which they grow in their perfection. Here, he builds on early Christian tradition.

Talk of the word of God as “nourishment” is known in Israelite-Jewish tradition.⁷⁴ For example, the manna in Deut 8.3 is correspondingly interpreted: “And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know; that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.”⁷⁵ On the word of God as “food,” cf. also Jer 15.16: “Thy words were found, and I ate them, and thy words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I am called by thy name, O LORD, God of hosts.”⁷⁶ The idea of a progressive development and growth in knowledge is connected with the metaphor of food in 1 Cor 3.2 and 1 Pet 2.2.⁷⁷ Hebrews 5.12–14 designates with “milk” the *στοιχεῖα τῆς ἀρχῆς τῶν λογίων τοῦ θεοῦ*, the first principles of the oracles of God. The Johannine bread discourse, and especially John 6.35, also builds on the role of wisdom as nourishment or giver of nourishment (cf. Sir 24.21 and Prov. 9.1–6). The Johannine Jesus identifies himself with the bread that comes from heaven. The pretext of the bread discourse is the miracle of the manna, invoked through the quotation from Ps 78.24: “Bread from heaven he gave them to eat.” The bread discourse in John 6 quotes from this and is then developed in the form of an interpretation of this quotation (in John 6.45, Isaiah 54.13 is

⁷⁴Cf. K.-G. Sandelin, *Wisdom as Nourisher: A Study of an Old-Testament Theme, Its Development within Early Judaism and its Impact on Early Christianity*, AAABo.H 64/3 (Åbo: Åbo Akademis Förlag, 1986).

⁷⁵Trans. RSV.

⁷⁶Trans. RSV.

⁷⁷On the reception of 1 Cor 3.2–3 in Irenaeus, cf. R. Noormann, *Irenäus als Paulusinterpret. Zur Rezeption und Wirkung der paulinischen und deuteropaulinischen Briefe im Werk des Irenäus von Lyon*, WUNT 2/66 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 470. On the soteriology of Irenaeus and his reception of Pauline theology, cf. B. C. Blackwell, *Christosis: Pauline Soteriology in Light of Deification in Irenaeus and Cyril of Alexandria*, WUNT 2/314 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2011), 69–70.

cited in addition) in which words from the quotation are paraphrased in a homily like manner.

In Irenaeus the term “bread” occurs metaphorically for the “nourishing” function of the Spirit, which illustrates its growth-promoting, educative activity, which contributes to the perfecting of the human being.⁷⁸ The human being’s process of growth and the role of the Spirit as “nourishment” for the human being are summarized in *Haer.* 4.38.3.⁷⁹

Here, the educative approach comes to expression in the *οἰκονομία* of Irenaeus. Human beings cannot initially grasp the Logos as he is in his true glory but only in weakened form. In connection with John, Irenaeus develops from this an interpretation of the incarnation. The incarnation of the heavenly, perfect “bread”⁸⁰ is a form of turning to the human beings that corresponds to them and accommodates their capacity for understanding. At the same time, with it, a cognitive and educative process for the human being begins. These two sides of the incarnation – on the one hand, the appearance of the Logos that is adapted to human beings, and, on the other hand, the start of a strengthening and growth-promoting pedagogical effect of this appearance upon human beings – leads Irenaeus to the picture of the gift of “milk for small children.”⁸¹ Expressed figuratively, the nourishment with milk prepares one “to eat and to drink”

⁷⁸ According to de Andia, *Homo Vivens*, 214, Irenaeus designates the Spirit in its nourishing, life-giving function as “bread”: “Cependant, que l’Esprit soit nommé ‘eau’ ou ‘pain,’ ce qui est désigné à chaque fois c’est cette fonction nutritive ou fécondante de l’Esprit de vie’ qui ‘nourrit et accroît,’ tout en unifiant ce qu’il multiplie.”

⁷⁹ *Haer.* 4.38.3 (trans. Roberts and Donaldson, eds., “Irenaeus Against Heresies,” 521–522). “By this arrangement, therefore, and these harmonies, and a sequence of this nature, man, a created and organized being, is rendered after the image and likeness of the uncreated God, – the Father planning everything well and giving His commands, the Son carrying these into execution and performing the work of creating, and the Spirit nourishing and increasing [what is made], but man making progress day by day and ascending toward the perfect, that is, approximating to the uncreated One. For the Uncreated is perfect, that is, God. Now it was necessary that man should in the first instance be created; and having been created, should receive growth; and having received growth, should be strengthened; and having been strengthened, should abound; and having abounded, should recover [from the disease of sin]; and having recovered, should be glorified; and being glorified, should see his Lord.”

⁸⁰ Cf. John 6.51. This interpretation of the incarnation also underlies the bread discourse in John 6, where the bread that comes from heaven is ultimately identified with the flesh of Jesus in 6.51 and is thus made to correspond to the Johannine motif of the *καταβάσις*.

⁸¹ Cf. *Haer.* 4.38.1 (trans. Roberts and Donaldson, eds., “Irenaeus Against Heresies,” 521): “If, however, any one say, ‘What then? Could not God have exhibited man as perfect from the beginning?’ let him know that, inasmuch as God is indeed always the same and unbegotten as respects Himself, all things are possible to Him. But created things must be inferior to Him who created them, from the very fact of their later origin; for it was not possible for things recently created to have been uncreated. But inasmuch as they are not uncreated, for this very reason do they come short of the perfect. Because, as these things are of later date, so are they infantile; so are they unaccustomed to, and unexercised in, perfect discipline. For as it certainly is in the power of a mother to give strong food to her infant [but she does not do so], as the child is not yet able to receive more substantial nourishment; so also it was possible for God Himself to have made man perfect from the first but man could not receive this [perfection], being as yet an infant . . . and therefore it was that He, who was the perfect bread of the Father, offered Himself to us as milk, [because we were] as infants. He did this when He appeared as a man, that we, being nourished, as it were, from the breast of His flesh, and having, by such a course of milk-nourishment, become accustomed to eat and drink the Word of God, may be able also to contain in ourselves the Bread of immortality, which is the Spirit of the Father.”

the word of God. The “eating of the word of God” can be a metaphor for the study of Scripture, for listening to God, and for the reception of salvation, as *Haer.* 5.20.2 also shows:

but to flee to the Church, and be brought up in her bosom, and be nourished with the Lord’s Scriptures ... therefore says the Spirit of God, “Thou mayest freely eat from every tree of the garden,” that is, Eat ye from every Scripture of the Lord; but ye shall not eat with an uplifted mind, nor touch any heretical discord.⁸²

However, eucharistic practice can also be heard in the connection to “eating and drinking,” which the metaphoricism in *Haer.* 4.38.1 establishes. According to this, the “bread of imperishability” can refer to *the word or speech of God* (after all, it is also identified with the Spirit; cf. also *Haer.* 4.38.2), but it can also designate the *eucharistic bread*.

According to Irenaeus, both have the same effect – the human being receives the Spirit into himself and preserves it, so that he himself collaborates in his upbringing and continued creation until his perfect conformity to the image of God and imperishability.⁸³ As in John 6.51–68, the echoes of the Eucharist are only hinted at and not completely unpacked in *Haer.* 4.38.1–3. “Body and blood of Jesus” are not mentioned; the “flesh” also does not appear in connection to the Eucharist but with the incarnation; and the text never speaks of an action at a meal. Here, it is not the ritual that stands in the foreground but the *effect* of the Eucharist, which is comparable to the growth in faith in Jesus.

7. Summary: The Receptions of John 6.51–58 and 1 Cor 15.35–54 in Irenaeus and in the Discourse Context

In the investigation of the interpretation of the Eucharist in *Haer.* 5.2.3, it has become clear that Irenaeus has developed his conception of the flesh’s capacity to be redeemed in proximity to the principle-based thinking of the popular philosophy of his time and to the gnostic teachings combatted by him, though he can neither be regarded as a speculative thinker nor identified as a figure who engages intensively with contemporary philosophy. The particular way in which he develops his ideas about the resurrection is also shaped by his critical engagement with gnostic thinking in the fifth book of *Adversus haereses*.

On multiple occasions, scholars have observed the thematic commonalities between the group of sayings on the resurrection and flesh of Jesus in Gos. Phil. 23b (NHC II,3, p. 56.32–57.8) and the eucharistic section in *Haer.* 5.2.3.⁸⁴ The Gospel of

⁸²Trans. Roberts and Donaldson, eds., “Irenaeus Against Heresies,” 548.

⁸³The substance of the spiritual human being does not change but remains the same. However, by means of an interpretation of the Pauline image of the olive tree, Irenaeus demonstrates in *Haer.* 5.10.2 that the gifting with the Spirit shows itself in the works of the human being – he produces a different fruit.

⁸⁴Cf. Noormann, *Irenäus als Paulusinterpret*, 503–504; J. Schröter, “Eucharistie, Auferstehung und Vermittlung des ewigen Lebens,” in *Docetism in the Early Church: The Quest for an Elusive Phenomenon*, ed.

Philip agrees with Irenaeus' remarks in *Haer.* 5.2.3 insofar as they both see realized in the eucharistic event a transformation of the human being, which, taking up John 6.53–54, is brought into connection with the flesh of Jesus and is regarded as indispensable for the fleshly resurrection of human beings.

The anti-heretical work of Irenaeus and the Gospel of Philip attest that the new awareness of the problems associated with the flesh's capacity to be redeemed brought forth a new understanding of the Eucharist, which, independent of the proto-orthodox or "gnostic" basic tendency of the respective writings, stressed the gift of life that was to be received in the Eucharist and its efficacy for the fleshly resurrection. A comparison of the two texts is also interesting with respect to the reception of writings that later came to belong to the New Testament. With John 6.51–58 and Eph 5.30 or 1 Cor 15.35–54, both *Adversus haereses* and the Gospel of Philip make recourse to two witnesses of the normative time of origin, John and Paul. They refer to these texts already against the background of a running discussion and are thus familiar with other interpretations.⁸⁵ While Gos. Phil. 23b recognizably reproduces a paraphrase of John 6.53–54 as a saying of Jesus and places it together with 1 Cor 15.50, the recourses to John 6 and 1 Cor 15 in *Haer.* 5.2.3 are somewhat more complex. In the context of the passage (*Haer.* 4.38.1), the talk of the "perfect bread of the Father" and the "bread of imperishability" is initially reminiscent of the Christology of the Johannine bread discourse (cf. John 6.51: ὁ ἄρτος ὁ ζῶν). Above all, the gift of eternal life can then be traced back to John 6.51–58, which Irenaeus, in *Haer.* 5.2.3, locates in the eating of the eucharistic bread and drinking of the mixed cup, which, through invocation, become the blood and body of Jesus. Here, the life-giving "chewing" of the flesh of Jesus in John 6.51, 53–54, 57–58 can be heard. Receptions of texts from the *corpus Paulinum* are also recognizable in *Haer.* 5.2.3. In addition to the direct quotation from Eph 5.30, we find an allusion to 1 Cor 15.37 in *Haer.* 5.2.3: ... *qui huic mortali immortalitatem circumdat et corruptibili incorruptelam gratuito donat.*⁸⁶ In addition, in *Haer.* 5.2.3 Irenaeus transforms the Pauline analogy between the sowing and fruit bearing of the grain and the bodily resurrection (1 Cor 15.37–38, 42–44) into a direct chain of effects that connects with one another the activity of the Spirit upon the wheat, upon the eucharistic bread, and, finally, in the fleshly resurrection. The whole argument of the last part of *Haer.* 5.2.3 is ultimately influenced by the Pauline image of the sowing and bearing of fruit.

It thus becomes clear that contents and individual passages from 1 Cor 15 and John 6.(26–51b), 51c–58 became important for the discourse on the resurrection that was in-

J. Verheyden, R. Bieringer, J. Schröter, and I. Jäger, WUNT 402 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 89–112, here 108–110; O. Lehtipuu, *Debates over the Resurrection of the Dead: Constructing Early Christian Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 198; cf. also H. Schmid, *Die Eucharistie ist Jesus. Anfänge einer Theorie des Sakraments im koptischen Philippusevangelium (NHC II 3; SVgChr 88)* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 329, 332–38.

⁸⁵For example, Ign. *Eph.* 20.2 (ἀντίδοτος τοῦ μὴ ἀποθανεῖν) appears to stand in the background of *Haer.* 3.19.1, 10 (*antidotum vitae*).

⁸⁶*Haer.* 5.2.3 (Brox, ed., *Irenäus*, 8/5, 36; trans. Roberts and Donaldson, eds., "Irenaeus Against Heresies," 528); "who freely gives to this mortal immortality, and to this corruptible incorruption." Cf. 1 Cor 15.53: Δεῖ γὰρ τὸ φθαρτὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσασθαι ἀφθαρσίαν καὶ τὸ θνητὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσασθαι ἀθανασία. Cf. also *Haer.* 5.13.3, where, alongside 15.53–54, Phil 3.20–21 and 2 Cor 5.4 are also cited.

tensively carried out in the second century CE.⁸⁷ Above all, themes and motifs from 1 Cor 15, such as the images of sowing, transformation, and the “swallowing up” of the mortal by the immortal, as well as the motif of “inheriting the kingdom of God,” are broadly attested in texts that deal with the resurrection.⁸⁸ Thus, the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of these texts is not restricted to the Pauline slogan *σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα βασιλείαν θεοῦ κληρονομήσαι οὐ δύναται* (1 Cor 15.50) – which was especially coopted by the heretics for their teaching according to Irenaeus and which has already received great attention in scholarship⁸⁹ – but also goes far beyond this.

With the problem of corporality in the resurrection and the fate of the human *σὰρξ* in 1 Cor 15.35–54, Paul appears already to anticipate the theme of the later controversy. His manner of speaking in 1 Cor 15.35–54 remains, in the first place, pictorial and unsharp, and this promoted its utilization for general ontological speculations about matter and the cosmos as such. And it could even – as far as one can believe Irenaeus here – be connected to christological conclusions about the nature of the body of Jesus and

⁸⁷Ign. *Rom.* 7.3 could reflect knowledge of the Johannine bread of life discourse or John 6.27, 33, 51–56: “I take no pleasure in corruptible food or the pleasures of this life. I want the bread of God, which is the flesh of Christ who is of the seed of David; and for drink I want his blood, which is incorruptible love” (trans. M. W. Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002], 175). Cf. also Ign. *Eph.* 5.2: “Let no one be misled: if anyone is not within the sanctuary, he lacks the bread of God. For if the prayer of one or two has such power, how much more that of the bishop together with the whole church” (trans. Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 141). For further receptions of 1 Cor 15.50, cf. Tertullian, *Res.* 48; 3 Corinthians; Theophilus, *Aut.* 13 (trans. R. M. Grant, ed., *Theophilus of Antioch, Ad Autolycum* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1970], 17): “If you will, consider the termination of seasons and days and nights and how they die and rise again. And what of the resurrection of seeds and fruits, occurring for the benefit of mankind? One might mention that a grain of wheat or of other seeds when cast into the earth first dies and is destroyed, then is raised and becomes an ear.” For the discussion of the fleshly resurrection in general, cf. also Justin, *Dial.* 80; Pol. *Phil.* 7.1–2; Athenagoras, *Res.*; Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 34.11 (trans. G. W. Clarke, ed., *The Octavius of Marcus Minucius Felix* [New York: Newman Press, 1974], 116): “Furthermore, notice how the whole of nature brings us comfort by rehearsing our future resurrection. The sun sinks down and is reborn, the stars slip away and return, flowers fall and come to life again, shrubs decay and then burst into leaf, seeds must rot in order to sprout into new growth. As trees are in winter, so are our bodies in this world; they keep their verdure concealed beneath deceptive barrenness.”

⁸⁸Another witness to the reception and processing of 1 Cor 15.35ff. is, for example, the Letter to Rheginus, which independently reworks again the picture that Paul used of the swallowing up of the mortal by the immortal.

⁸⁹Cf. Lehtipuu, *Debates over the Resurrection*; J. R. Strawbridge, *The Pauline Effect: The Use of the Pauline Epistles by Early Christian Writers*, Studies of the Bible and Its Reception 5 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015). The slogan occurs in *Haer.* 5.9.1 (trans. Roberts and Donaldson, eds., “Irenaeus Against Heresies,” 534): “Among the other [truths] proclaimed by the apostle, there is also this one, ‘That flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.’ This is [the passage] which is adduced by all the heretics in support of their folly, with an attempt to annoy us, and to point out that the handiwork of God is not saved.” Cf. also *Haer.* 5.13.2–3 (trans. Roberts and Donaldson, eds., “Irenaeus Against Heresies,” 539–40): “Vain, therefore, and truly miserable, are those who do not choose to see what is so manifest and clear, but shun the light of truth, blinding themselves like the tragic Oedipus ... so it is with respect to that [favourite] expression of the heretics: ‘Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God;’ while taking two expressions of Paul’s, without having perceived the apostle’s meaning, or examined critically the force of the terms, but keeping fast hold of the mere expressions by themselves, they die in consequence of their influence (*περί αὐτάς*), overturning as far as in them lies the entire dispensation of God. For thus they will allege that this passage refers to the flesh strictly so called, and not to fleshly works, as I have pointed out, so representing the apostle as contradicting himself.”

his incorporeal resurrection, as is reported in *Haer.* 1.30.13.⁹⁰ The Pauline argumentation with natural processes could also be a point of contact for attempts to show the natural-scientific evidence for the resurrection. On the other hand, John 6.51–58 became relevant, for a connection the flesh of Jesus and the present reception of eternal life was established for the first time there. On this basis, the *flesh* of Jesus could be described as especially efficacious.

The later receptions of these two texts in Irenaeus and yet also in the Gospel of Philip, indicate that the passages could be read together and sometimes combined with each other or with other passages from the Scriptures as if they mutually supplemented one another. This succeeded through their integration into the described larger frameworks of substance-ontological, principles-based considerations.

Irenaeus and Gos. Phil. 23 also interpret 1 Cor 15 and John 6.51–58 against the background of the question of the fate of matter as such and of the whole created, substantial world. From this perspective, they reach back to the Pauline line of questioning in 1 Cor 15 and let this text, together with parts of John 6.51–58, answer the question of how perishable matter can receive imperishability. It is conspicuous here that Irenaeus and the author of the passage in the Gospel of Philip interpret John 6.51–58 in relation to the more fundamental Pauline question of the fate of the *σαρξ* and of the bodily resurrection.

They refer to John 6 to discuss how the human, bodily substance can someday gain a share in the heavenly sphere. According to them, “resurrection,” i.e., the overcoming of physical death, can only exist if the perishable substance of the human being receives a new *quality* or the human being *himself* receives an imperishable substance and thus becomes capable of entering the heavenly sphere. In 1 Cor 15, Paul, with his solution of an end-time transformation of the bodies from psychic to pneumatic *σώματα*, had left open questions about their continuity and described the process of transformation only by means of analogies. The incarnation of Jesus and the Eucharist as events in which the heavenly sphere was already connected to the earthly sphere in the present could fill the gap that is felt there. For Irenaeus and the author of Gos. Phil. 23, a transformation of the bodies takes place in the eating of the eucharistic bread and drinking of the mixed cup, when the eucharistic elements, as body and blood of Jesus, exercise their concrete effect upon the corporeality of the believers. Both receptions take up the Johannine realism of the eating as a material-bodily event and take it further in the direction of a substantial effect upon believers.

The Irenaeian reception of John is also developed in *Haer.* 5.2.3, where Irenaeus,

⁹⁰*Haer.* 1.30.13 (trans. Roberts and Donaldson, eds., “Irenaeus Against Heresies,” 357): “They affirm that many of his disciples were not aware of the descent of Christ into him; but that, when Christ did descend on Jesus, he then began to work miracles, and heal, and announce the unknown Father, and openly to confess himself the son of the first man ... Jesus was crucified. Christ, however, was not forgetful of his Jesus, but sent down a certain energy into him from above, which raised him up again in the body, which they call both animal and spiritual; for he sent the mundane parts back again into the world. When his disciples saw that he had risen, they did not recognize him – no, not even Jesus himself, by whom he rose again from the dead. And they assert that this very great error prevailed among his disciples, that they imagined he had risen in a mundane body, not knowing that ‘flesh and blood do not attain to the kingdom of God.’”

like John 6.51–58, connects the gift of life to believers (*donatio Dei*) with the eating of the body of Jesus and also connects the future bodily resurrection to this. However, what stands in the foreground of *Haer.* 5.2.3 is not eating and drinking as symbolic processes for the believing reception of Jesus. Rather, for Irenaeus the concern in the Eucharist is with an event with an effect that can actually be demonstrated biologically. He interprets the way in which the Eucharist works in the framework of nourishment-physiological categories, i.e., in a natural-scientific paradigm, which makes it possible for him to emphasize the physical and bodily aspects of the process.

This is connected to his rejection of readings of the Johannine text that work, for example, with the idea of a different, pneumatic, life-giving flesh-substance of Jesus. Irenaeus wishes to defuse any potential for an interpretation of John 6.51–58 that goes in this direction. Moreover, he hedges in the conception of a pneumatic flesh substance in the resurrection by means of a decidedly creation-theological framework of the Eucharist, for which he makes recourse to Paul. Like 1 Cor 15.35–54 and some apologists who make plausible the resurrection of mortal bodies in general through creation-theological analogies from natural processes of sowing and plant growth and the transformations that take place therein, Irenaeus also traces back the enlivening and the transition from mortal to imperishable corporality not to a self-active resurrection body of Jesus but ultimately to God's creative activity.⁹¹ Going beyond Paul, he therefore emphasizes that the resurrection body of Jesus, from which believers are nourished in the Eucharist, belongs on the side of the created. However, the same Spirit of God was active on the body of Jesus that is then also mediated to human beings via the Eucharist.

Irenaeus' interpretation of 1 Cor 15 is likewise influenced by the fact that he has knowledge of competing interpretations of this text in the principles-based-theoretical discussion about the place of matter and the redemption of the cosmos. Statements that more likely stand alone in Paul are therefore systematized by Irenaeus and integrated into his overall argument, which always also has his "opponents" in view. In the wake of this, it is conspicuous that Irenaeus positions himself in the debate with a decisive subordination of all powers, figures, and forces under his picture of God as creator. The creator God becomes the vanishing point of his remarks. To him he subordinates the role of Jesus and the function of his resurrection body in the saving event and yet also the "weakness of the flesh" of human beings. With respect to the role of Jesus, Irenaeus always ties back the Logos and the Spirit to God's creative activity. The Word of God and the Spirit are the two "hands" with which the creator God is active in the world overall and in various ways.⁹² Irenaeus then also places the plant metaphor of 1 Cor 15 under precisely this banner. It is the Spirit of God that acts upon creation in the enlivening of the seeds and in the fruit bearing of the natural gifts that come from the earth. He extends the natural process described by Paul to the Eucharist. The bread

⁹¹The regaining of the image of God, which is already perfectly embodied by Christ, is connected to this.

⁹²Cf. *Haer.* 4, preface (trans. Roberts and Donaldson, eds., "Irenaeus Against Heresies," 463): "Now man is a mixed organization of soul and flesh, who was formed after the likeness of God, and moulded by His hands, that is, by the Son and Holy Spirit, to whom also He said, 'Let Us make man.'" Cf. also *Haer.* 4.20.1; 5.5.1.

from the earth always becomes the body of Christ in the Eucharist when it experiences the invocation of God (4.18.3) and receives the word of God (5.2.3).

Just as the Logos and the Spirit are modes of God's action, the perishability of matter must also be subordinated to the conception of God, according to Irenaeus. He criticizes his opponents for elevating the perishability of matter to a principle and making their picture of God secondary to it. They place the "weakness of the flesh" at the center of their argumentation. In *Haer.* 5.2.3, by contrast, Irenaeus, building on 2 Cor 12.9, understands the weakness of the flesh as the aspect on which the creative power of God can first fully reveal itself at all. God is not delivered over to the principle of death-bound matter. On the contrary, he has created temporal, transient, and visible things as well as intelligible, invisible, eternal things – both are dependent upon him and God himself is responsible for the becoming and passing away of the world.⁹³ In this respect, the overall conception of the Irenaeian salvation history ultimately also transcends the boundaries of the purely material, principle-based question of whether the flesh substance must pass away or whether it can become imperishable. For Irenaeus understands perishability and finitude as framework conditions of human life that have been intentionally created by God and out of which human beings can develop unto the divine and attain imperishability. Here, aspects of the free will of the human being and his capacity for ethical life conduct also come into play for the salvation of the flesh.⁹⁴ In this framework, Irenaeus interprets the celebration of the Eucharist as a possibility – which is given to human beings and also is to be seized by them – for allowing God's creative activity to continue to work on them.⁹⁵ The Eucharist is God's intervention in the world under temporal conditions and is interpreted by Irenaeus as continued creation.

The creator God is active not only in the natural order and in the Eucharist; he can also intervene freely in history, as the examples that Irenaeus adduces from Scripture show – the three men in the fire oven who do not burn up, Jonah in the whale, the great

⁹³Cf. *Haer.* 1.10.3 (trans. Roberts and Donaldson, eds., "Irenaeus Against Heresies," 331): "and set forth why it is that one and the same God has made some things temporal and some eternal, some heavenly and others earthly."

⁹⁴Cf. *Haer.* 5.13.3.

⁹⁵Here, the ethical aspect of the salvation-historical conception of Irenaeus comes into play. Unlike the other created things and creatures, the human being was created by God from the beginning with the goal of ultimately participating in the imperishability of God (cf. *Haer.* 4.5.1). For this he was equipped with a free will (cf. *Haer.* 4.31.1–5). He can himself work toward his perfection or, alternatively, also entirely fall victim to perishability, namely, by either subjecting himself to the creative power of God and integrating himself into the action of his creator, i.e., letting God's creative activity continue to work on him, or by withdrawing himself from it. A central statement that discloses the backgrounds of the Irenaeian argumentation is directed against the "heretics" in *Haer.* 5.3.2 (trans. Roberts and Donaldson, eds., "Irenaeus Against Heresies," 529): "Those men, therefore, set aside the power of God, and do not consider what the word declares, when they dwell upon the infirmity of the flesh, but do not take into consideration the power of Him who raises it up from the dead." On the whole, the perfecting of the human being and his resurrection are understood as the fulfillment of the actual creative intention of God. The human being can already collaborate with this in the present. To this end he possesses a free will. The perishability of his fleshly substance is not a consequence of sin but configured in this way by God with pedagogical intention. The aspect of development and growth in faith until the perfection of the human being is reflected in the Eucharist, which builds up the flesh, lets it grow, and nourishes it.

age of the patriarchs, and the translation of Enoch and Elijah (*Haer.* 5.5.1–2). According to Irenaeus, the examples demonstrate that temporal life as well can be extended and preserved according to God's wish, with God's will alone being decisive here. Life, according to Irenaeus, is always and in every form, whether temporal or eternal, a gift of this creator God. He maintains that it is solely the activity of the word of God on material things – on a grain of wheat, on bread, and equally on the flesh of believers – that can give life in different qualities. For him, eternal life is not *categorically* different from temporal life. Rather, in temporal life the continued creative action of God on human beings realizes itself unto eternal life, so that there is ultimately only a gradual transition between them. The discontinuity that Paul identifies between the psychic (in later reception “sarkic”) and the pneumatic body is flattened out in this creation-theological overall perspective.

Against this background, the answer that the Gospel of Philip gives to the question of the bodily resurrection of believers can also be traced out more sharply. The text from Nag Hammadi excludes an action of the creator God on the flesh of human beings. The Gospel of Philip places over the power of the creator the principle of the perishability of earthly matter and its incapacity for entering the heavenly sphere, in support of which the author quotes 1 Cor 15.50 (Gos. Phil. 23a, NHC II,3, p. 56.32–34). John 6.51–58 then serves, in view of the weakness of human flesh, to uphold the special character and life-giving effect of the flesh of Jesus: “The one who does not eat my flesh and drink my blood does not have life within him.”⁹⁶

The apocryphal Gospel relates the words of the Johannine Jesus and of the apostle Paul to one another in a complementary way to ground a fundamental *difference* between Jesus' resurrection flesh and human flesh, which is also thematized in saying 72c (NHC II,3, p. 68.31–37). While 1 Cor 15.50 is meant to underpin the fact that it is precisely human flesh that cannot receive imperishability, the paraphrase from John 6.53–54 secures the different character of the flesh of Jesus. The special substance of the body of Jesus, which originated from a spiritual begetting in the pleroma, accounts for the effect of the Eucharist. In it, believers put on this special flesh of Jesus that is not created and does not come from the earth and thereby generate a reality in the pleroma that remains hidden on earth and is also irrelevant for earthly connections. Only with the postmortem ascent of believers into the pleroma will the flesh of Jesus become their new glorious garment instead of their own flesh, which is discarded at death. The solution to the problem of a fleshly resurrection that devalues human flesh and ascribes a different “heavenly” substance to the flesh of Jesus was known to Irenaeus, so that it is to be surmised that it was attractive not only to the circle of influence of the Gospel of Philip.⁹⁷

The two elaborations of the eucharistic preparation for the resurrection differ in yet another aspect. Irenaeus understands the Logos and the Spirit of God as entities that

⁹⁶ Gos. Phil. 23b, NHC II,3, p. 57.4–5; trans. G. Smith, *Valentinian Christianity: Texts and Translations* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2020), 261.

⁹⁷ As shown already in chapter 5, it is also handed down as a view of Valentinus in Ps.-Tertullian (*Adversus omnes haereses* 4.5: Valentinus is said to have believed not in the resurrection of this flesh but in the resurrection of another flesh).

in the Eucharist act upon the body of the recipient of the Eucharist and yet ultimately cannot be identified with the meal elements themselves but time and again come forth anew from God. By contrast, it is characteristic for the reception of 1 Cor 15 and John 6 in Gos. Phil. 23b (NHC II,3, p. 57.6) that in an independent reception of John 1.14a, Jesus' flesh is directly equated with the Logos himself and the Spirit is identified with his blood. Thus, the believer receives Logos and Spirit *directly* into himself, and they appear as available entities to which the believer assimilates himself.

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