

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 Würtemberg, 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 founding 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. Schweitzer, *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" (ὑπὲρ 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 Ställning till 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 (ἁββᾶ). 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 *ἀββᾶ* 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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