

AGNTS

ACCESSIBLE GERMAN NEW TESTAMENT SCHOLARSHIP

VOL. 2 | 2026

EDITED BY
WAYNE COPPINS & JACOB N. CERONE



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ISSN (PDF) 3068-6660
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Published 2026 by Accessible German New Testament Scholarship. © 2026 Wayne Coppins, Jacob N. Cerone, Hans Rollmann, Werner Zager, Sandra Huebenthal, Barbara Beyer, and Oda Wischmeyer. This journal is available as an Open Access publication at www.agntsjournal.com

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Accessible German New Testament Scholarship

Volume 2

August 2026

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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.

The 2026 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 New Testament scholarship composed originally in German, the translation of Hans Rollmann and Werner Zager's wonderful edition of William Wrede's unpublished letters on the problematization of the Messianic self-understanding of Jesus signals our commitment to include some older works as well.

As with the first issue, our selection of articles for this second issue intentionally highlights our interest in featuring works by both senior and junior scholars. Thus, alongside Sandra Huebenthal's article "‘And she was serving them’ (Mark 1.31): Exegetical Stories about Peter's Mother-in-Law," we have also included Barbara Beyer's article "Ἐν τινὶ εἶναι as the Background to Paul's Discourse on Being ‘in Christ.’"

Sandra Huebenthal's article is also representative of another aim – namely, to include at least some articles that achieve the difficult feat of advancing the scholarly conversation while also being well-suited for use in the classroom. With this in mind, we have made a special effort to make this article accessible to students, as was already the case in the German original.

Finally, the current issue concludes with Oda Wischmeyer's review of Beverly Gaventa's landmark commentary on Romans. As with all our reviews, our goal here was to identify an especially well-qualified scholar to review a significant book. In addition to making them maximally accessible for both German and English speakers, we hope that our publication of reviews – and previously unpublished articles – in both German and English will prove to be a valuable resource for students and scholars who are seeking to establish, improve, or revive their proficiency in reading German or English.

Wayne Coppins (University of Georgia)

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Unpublished Letters of William Wrede on the Problematization of the Messianic Self-Understanding of Jesus

Edited by Hans Rollmann and Werner Zager¹

Translated by
Wayne Coppins

Abstract

This year [2026] William Wrede's epoch-making book *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien. Zugleich ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Markusevangeliums* (The Messianic Secret in the Gospels: At the Same Time a Contribution to the Understanding of the Gospel of Mark) celebrates its one-hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary. In 1906, the year of Wrede's untimely death, Albert Schweitzer designated the tome as the end-point in modern life of Jesus research and in 1919 Rudolf Bultmann described it as methodologically honest, exemplary, and in no way dated. The methodological significance of the work, which continues to engage biblical and theological scholarship, lies in its distinction between a Gospel's literary character and the historical value of its most ancient traditions. Wrede's "messianic secret" has received much critical attention, and the book's tradition-historical approach anticipated developments in biblical studies, especially that of redaction criticism. Although his study raised the question of whether Jesus considered himself the Messiah, Wrede never answered this question rashly or conclusively. An answer to this question could only result from a series of studies in the tradition-history of the Gospels, of which the *Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien* was the first volume. The present edition shows Wrede's care in making historical judgments, and how he may have wavered between a proleptic interpretation of Jesus' messianic self-consciousness and an implied denial of this claim in the Gospel tradition. He had espoused the former position in 1894 and, according to a letter to Adolf von Harnack (1905), he may have returned to it after 1901 without ever compromising his scholarly method. The documentation not only presents Wrede's unpublished correspondence with the publisher, Wilhelm Ruprecht, but also all of the known relevant statements on christological topics – most of which are unpublished – made to his

¹For the German original of this article, see H. Rollmann and W. Zager, eds., "Unveröffentlichte Briefe William Wredes zur Problematisierung des messianischen Selbstverständnisses Jesu," *ZNTbG/JHMTb* 8 (2001): 274–322. For an English translation of Wrede's lectures and studies, see W. Wrede, *Lectures and Studies*, trans. M. Botner and S. Dürr (forthcoming).

scholarly contemporaries: Martin Rade, Hans Lietzmann, Adolf von Harnack, Heinrich Weinle, Paul Wernle, Rudolf Otto, Friedrich Loofs, and Albert Schweitzer. The editors have also included a little-known text by Wrede, in which the author announces and summarizes the book in *Die Christliche Welt* (22 August 1901).

Editors' Introduction

The present documentation contains all the discoverable epistolary remarks of William Wrede (5/10/1859 – 11/23/1906) on christological questions – specifically on the problem of whether Jesus held himself to be the Messiah. Since 1893 Wrede was secondary professor and since 1893 full professor of New Testament at the Protestant theological faculty of the university of Breslau.

On the one hand, the chronologically ordered textual material is composed of previously unpublished letters of William Wrede to the publishers Wilhelm and Gustav Ruprecht from the years 1901 to 1906 (Documents 5–7, 9, 11, 12, and 18), which are held in the archive of the publisher Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht in Göttingen. In the footnotes, excerpts from the letters of the two brothers to Wrede, which have been obtained from the copy books of the publisher, have been added as a supplement. On the other hand, previously unpublished writings of Wrede to theological scholars have been edited – namely, to Adolf von Harnack (Documents 8 and 17), Heinrich Weinle (Document 13), Paul Wernle (Document 14), Rudolf Otto (Document 15), Friedrich Loofs (Document 16), and Albert Schweitzer (Document 19). The repositories and collection identifiers will be specified in each case below within the critical apparatus.

In the documentation, we have also included letters of Wrede that have previously either been published only in part – such as the letter to Martin Rade together with the marginal note of Adolf von Harnack (Documents 1 and 2) – or are being reprinted for the sake of comprehensiveness and precise reproduction – thus the two letters to Hans Lietzmann (Documents 3 and 4). With respect to the thematic context, a hardly known text of Wrede is also included – the self-review of his book *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien*² in *Die Christliche Welt* from August 22, 1901 (Document 10). At the end of the documentation, we have included the text of a previously unpublished card from Elisabeth Wrede to Albert Schweitzer from December 24, 1906 (Document 20), in which she thanks him for his recognition of her husband during his lifetime, which other theologians denied him – certainly not least because of Wrede's critical stance toward traditional Christology.

²W. Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien. Zugleich ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Markusevangelium* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901); idem, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien. Zugleich ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Markusevangelium*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913); idem, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien. Zugleich ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Markusevangelium*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963); idem, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien. Zugleich ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Markusevangelium*, 4th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969). For the English translation, see idem, *The Messianic Secret*, trans. J. C. G. Greig (Cambridge: James Clark, 1971). Unless otherwise noted, subsequent references to Wrede, *Messiasgeheimnis*, refer to the 4th edition.

In general, the text of the letters is reproduced completely. Abbreviations are unpacked in square brackets; likewise, other additions made by the editors are marked with square brackets.

I

In 1919, Rudolf Bultmann – at that time secondary professor of New Testament at the Protestant theological faculty of the university of Breslau – in a survey of New Testament scholarship in the twentieth century appraised William Wrede's book *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien* as "one of the most honest and methodologically exemplary books that exists, still not outdated," with which every theologian should grapple.³ This verdict applies with unrestricted validity also 125 years after the publication of the first edition. In consistently distinguishing methodologically between the question of the literary character of a Gospel and the question of the historical value of the oldest units of tradition, Wrede anticipated the insights of redaction criticism.⁴ Beyond this, to this day, a multitude of studies on the theology of the Gospel of Mark refer to Wrede's opus⁵ – whether by building upon it or by demarcating themselves from it.

The following phenomena that can be observed in the Gospel of Mark form the basis for Wrede's theory of the "messianic secret":

1. The "messianic knowledge" of the demons and the commands to silence addressed to them (Mark 1.23–25, 34; 3.11–12; 5.6–7; 9.20),⁶

³See R. Bultmann, "Die neutestamentliche Forschung im 20. Jahrhundert," *Oldenburgisches Kirchenblatt* 25 (1919): 115–16, 119–22, here, 121.

⁴Cf. C. Conzelmann, "Review of W. Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien*, 1963," *ThLZ* 91 (1966): 754–55, here 754.

⁵Cf., e.g., J. L. Blevins, *The Messianic Secret in Markan Research, 1901–1976* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1981); H. J. Ebeling, *Das Messiasgeheimnis und die Botschaft des Marcus-Evangelisten*, BZNW 19 (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1939); J. Ernst, "Das sog. Messiasgeheimnis – kein 'Hauptschlüssel' zum Markusevangelium," in *Theologie im Werden. Studien zu den theologischen Konzeptionen im Neuen Testament*, ed. J. Hainz (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1992), 21–56; U. Luz, "Das Geheimnismotiv und die markinische Christologie," *ZNW* 56 (1965): 169–185; U. Luz, "The Secrecy Motif and the Marcan Christology (1965)," in *The Messianic Secret*, ed. C. M. Tuckett, IRT 1 (London: SPCK, 1983), 76–96; H. Räisänen, *Das "Messiasgeheimnis" im Markusevangelium. Ein redaktionskritischer Versuch*, SESJ 28 (Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society, 1976); H. Räisänen, *The "Messianic Secret" in Mark's Gospel* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990); G. Strecker, "Zur Messiasgeheimnistheorie im Markusevangelium," in *Papers Presented to the Second International Congress on New Testament Studies Held at Christ Church, Oxford, 1961*, ed. F. L. Cross, TU 88 / StudEv III (Berlin: Akademie, 1964), 87–104; G. Theißen, "Die pragmatische Bedeutung der Geheimnismotive im Markusevangelium. Ein wissensoziologischer Versuch," in *Secrecy and Concealment: Studies in the History of the Mediterranean and Near Eastern Religions*, ed. H. G. Kippenberg and G. G. Stroumsa, SHR 65 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 225–45; C. M. Tuckett, *The Messianic Secret*, IRT 1 (London: SPCK, 1983); F. Watson, "The Social Function of Mark's Secrecy Theme," *JSNT* 24 (1985): 49–69; R. Weber, *Christologie und "Messiasgeheimnis" im Markusevangelium* (PhD Diss., Marburg, 1981); R. Weber, "Christologie und 'Messiasgeheimnis': ihr Zusammenhang und Stellenwert in den Darstellungsintentionen des Markus," *EvTh* 43 (1983): 108–25.

⁶Cf. also W. Wrede, "Zur Messiaserkenntnis der Dämonen bei Markus. Eine Erwiderung," *ZNW* 5 (1904): 169–77.

2. Jesus' prohibition against making his healings of the sick known (Mark 1.43–45; 5.43; 7.36; 8.26),
3. The commands to silence addressed to the disciples (Mark 8.30; 9.9),
4. Jesus' "intention to preserve the incognito" (Mark 7.24; 9.30–31),
5. The incomprehension of disciples and esoteric instruction of disciples (Mark 4.13, 40–41; 6.50–52; 7.18; 8.16–21, 32–33; 9.5–6, 19, 32; 10.24, 26, 32–33; 14.37–41),
6. The parable theory (Mark 4.10–13, 33–34).

Wrede views the individual motifs as part of a cohesive whole that was already given to Mark but was then developed further by him. And he holds that its understanding is disclosed from Mark 9.9: "... *during his earthly life Jesus' messiahship is absolutely a secret and is supposed to be such; no one apart from the confidants of Jesus is supposed to learn about it; with the resurrection, however, its disclosure ensues.*"⁷

Wilhelm Bousset summarizes Wrede's overall view, which is based on this foundation, as follows:

Jesus did not hold himself to be the Messiah during his lifetime. At minimum, a time in the development of the Gospel tradition must be presupposed in which nothing was known about such a self-claim of Jesus. Jesus' community initially believed that Jesus was elevated to messianic dignity through death and resurrection [cf. Acts 2.36; Rom 1.4; Phil 2.9–11]. Then one gradually began to view the earthly life of Jesus as life of the Messiah and the revelation of his messianic glory. But before one openly retrojected the messianic claims of Jesus into his earthly life, the theory of the messianic secret arose, of the messianic glory of the earthly Jesus, which constantly revealed itself and yet constantly remained hidden.⁸

While Wrede had not yet brought the problem of the messianic self-consciousness of Jesus to a definitive solution, though he also clearly tended toward a negative answer,⁹ Bousset surely judged correctly that Wrede's theory "stands or falls with the positive or negative answer to the question of whether or not Jesus made a messianic self-claim during his lifetime."¹⁰

II

If the notion of a secret messiahship of Jesus arose from the messiahship grounded in his resurrection, then the historical Jesus could have claimed for himself at best a proleptic

⁷ Wrede, *Messianic Secret*, 68 (GV = Wrede, *Messiasgeheimnis*, 67).

⁸ W. Bousset, "Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien," *ThR* 5 (1902): 307–16, 347–62, here 355.

⁹ It does, after all, say in Wrede, *Messianic Secret*, 230 (GV = Wrede, *Messiasgeheimnis*, 229): "If our view could only arise where nothing is known of an open messianic claim on Jesus' part, then we would seem to have in it a *positive historical testimony for the idea that Jesus actually did not give himself out as messiah.*"

¹⁰ Bousset, "Messiasgeheimnis," 355; similarly also W. Baldensperger, "Review of W. Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien*," *ThLZ* 27 (1902): 393–400, here 399.

messiahship – a possibility that Wrede, in agreement with Johannes Weiß,¹¹ advocated in his 1894 lectures on “Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes” (Jesus’ Proclamation of the Kingdom of God)¹² at the vacation course of the Protestant theological faculty of the university of Breslau but that he problematized seven years later in his book on the messianic secret, though without entirely ruling it out.¹³ Here, by contrast, he puts his finger on the fact that “Messiah” means a political ruler and Jesus therefore could scarcely have appeared as a messianic pretender, for this cannot be connected¹⁴ with his ostensibly unpolitical eschatological expectation.¹⁵

In 1894 Wrede had inferred from the eschatological-future character of the kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus that the Messiah was also future, i.e., “*Jesus becomes the Messiah only in the future.*”¹⁶ Wrede found support for his view in the fact that in the Synoptic tradition there is talk in an analogous way of the coming of the kingdom of God and the coming of the Son of Man.¹⁷ Wrede did not discuss how the messianic consciousness of Jesus may have arisen and developed. What mattered for him was only that the certainty or even the intimation of a future messiahship with Jesus presupposes the awareness that he was “not merely a prophet but the prophet of the very last time.”¹⁸

If one surveys Wrede’s statements on the questions of the messiahship of Jesus and of Christology – whether in publications or in letters, which are documented in what follows – then it becomes evident that they span the whole time of his teaching activity at the university of Breslau, from his appointment as secondary professor in the summer semester of 1893 to his death in 1906. Above all, we can observe his earnest and honest wrestling with the historical and theological problems that present themselves here. In an impressive way, Wrede himself implemented what he demanded from

¹¹Cf. J. Weiß, *Jesus’ Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*, translated, edited, and with an introduction by R. H. Hiers and D. L. Holland (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 130 (GV = J. Weiß, *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1892], 62): “The messianic consciousness of Jesus consists of the certainty that when God has established the Kingdom, judgment and rule will be transferred to him. God will raise him to the office of ‘Son of man’ (John 3:14), to which he is entitled (John 5:27), and will *make* him Lord and Messiah (Acts 2:36).”

¹²W. Wrede, “Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes. Vorträge beim Ferienkurs in Breslau am 9., 10. und 11. Oktober 1894,” in *Vorträge und Studien*, ed. A. Wrede (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1907), 84–126, here 101–8 (for an English translation, see Wrede, *Lectures and Studies*); see also W. Wrede, “Review of E. Erhardt, *Der Grundcharakter der Ethik Jesu im Verhältnis zu den messianischen Hoffnung seines Volkes und zu seinem eigenen Messiasbewusstsein*, 1895,” *ThLZ* 21 (1896): 75–79, here 79.

¹³Cf. Wrede, *Messiasgeheimnis*, 219–22 (ET = Wrede, *Messianic Secret*, 220–23). Bousset (in W. Wrede, *Paulus*, RV 1/5–6, 2nd ed. [Halle an der Saale: Gebauer-Schwetschke Verlag, 1907], 8*) fittingly states, “It [sc. Wrede’s work on the messianic secret] ends with a large question mark. Did Jesus hold himself to be the Messiah or not? Wrede is inclined to answer this question negatively, but he is much too cautious and conscientious to speak out the ‘no.’ He has not yet considered all the possibilities, not yet researched the broad region of the tradition of the words of the Lord – what he calls research. He stops halfway. Now you yourselves must look; but to whatever result you also come, you cannot bypass the questions and considerations that I put forth!”

¹⁴Cf. already Wrede, “Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes,” 116–19, 125.

¹⁵Cf. Wrede, *Messiasgeheimnis*, 220–21 (ET = Wrede, *Messianic Secret*, 221–22).

¹⁶Cf. Wrede, “Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes,” 101.

¹⁷Wrede, “Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes,” 104.

¹⁸Wrede, “Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes,” 108.

historical-scholarly work – precisely also in the sphere of religion – at the end of his lectures on “Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes” (Jesus’ Preaching of the Kingdom of God):

I start from the assumption that a historical investigation presupposes that the march route has not been mapped out from the outset. If I know the result beforehand without the historical research, then I do not need to begin the investigation. Historical research is free, or it is better that it does not take place. This fact may not be obscured. If the historical investigation is only half free, if the question of what the outcome will be always intervenes, then there emerges that unrestrained haggling with the facts, that weak, uncertain desire to save that grasps at every straw and is no longer guided by the effort to submit to the facts at hand but rather is guided by the effort to bend the facts themselves according to its own wishes.

I demand this freedom, however, also *for religion* and in the interest of *religion*. Religion demands the deepest earnestness. I demonstrate earnestness only if I fearfully guard myself against self-deception upon this most holy region. I must say to myself that it is more pleasing to God that I, with clear awareness and resoluteness, give up what the facts, which God himself has willed, demand that I give up than that I hold fast to them with secret fear in the heart as to whether my house is perhaps not built, after all, upon sand. Thus, the deep earnestness of the matter also demands that we, when we investigate historically, bring our personal wishes to silence. We must fear that they could cloud our vision, and we want, after all, to see clearly.¹⁹

Thus, we must evaluate it as an expression of intellectual integrity when Wrede, in his letter to Martin Rade on June 26, 1893,²⁰ requests that he not have to deliver a lecture on the dogmatic significance of the person of Jesus at the gathering of the Freunde der Christlichen Welt (Friends of the Christian World) because he had recognized the old foundation of Christology “as a sham foundation” and had still not found a substantiated dogmatic position himself. And thus it is certainly no accident when Wrede, in the years that followed, extensively occupied himself with the “Gospel tradition of Jesus as the Messiah.” The first mature fruit of his investigations in this area is represented by Wrede’s book *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien* (*The Messianic Secret*) with which he intended to inaugurate a series of studies on the question of “whether Jesus regarded and presented himself as the Messiah.”²¹ Here, Wrede proceeds methodologically in such a way that he first examines only the evangelical tradition of Jesus as the Messiah, while clearly distinguishing the question of Jesus’ own consciousness from this and allowing that question to recede behind it.

¹⁹ Wrede, “Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes,” 125–26.

²⁰ See Document 1 below.

²¹ See Document 6 below.

What Wrede presents in the preface to his study on the messianic secret as a possibility of thought corresponds to the result of the investigation: “It would, for example, be conceivable that one could judge the expressed messianic data of the Gospels very unfavorably and yet with this nevertheless not bring the question of the messianic secret to a decision.”²² With respect to Wrede’s skeptical stance toward the assumption of a – if also only prophetic – messianic consciousness of Jesus, he could feel himself confirmed through Hans Lietzmann’s published dissertation *Der Menschensohn* (1896).²³ After all, Lietzmann had, on linguistic grounds, sought to demonstrate that Jesus could not have designated himself as Son of Man. To be sure, apart from the title of majesty Son of Man, Lietzmann had left open what significance this would have for the authenticity of the Son of Man sayings.

Attention can now be given to the following statement of Wrede in a letter to Adolf von Harnack on January 2, 1905:²⁴ “I am more inclined than earlier to believe that Jesus regarded himself as designated to be the Messiah.” Even apart from the quite cautious formulation, we are dealing here not with a recantation of his position in *puncto* messianic secret from 1901, where he had not entirely excluded a proleptic messianic consciousness of Jesus. Wrede’s remark apparently signifies a return to the view that he advocated in 1894 at the theological vacation course in Breslau. Which argument prompted Wrede to revise his view can unfortunately no longer be shown. From the numerous discussions of his book on the messianic secret,²⁵ Wrede was probably most likely to have been convinced by the objection advanced on various occasions “that the faith of Jesus’ disciples in the risen one and in a crucified Messiah becomes an entirely impenetrable miracle if we delete every messianic self-revelation from the life of Jesus.”²⁶

²²Wrede, *Messiasgeheimnis*, V (ET = Wrede, *Messianic Secret*, 1).

²³See Document 3 below.

²⁴See Document 17 below (previously translated as W. Wrede, “Letter to Adolf von Harnack on Jesus as Messiah and Paul as a New Beginning,” trans. W. Coppins, *AGNTS* 1 [2025]: 3–6). G. Lüdemann, “Das Urchristentum,” *ThR* 65 (2000): 121–79, 285–349, here 173n55 referred to this previously unpublished letter. With its publication, we also fulfill a request of Prof. Martin Hengel of Tübingen. For Martin Hengel’s reception of the published letter, see 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; 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 (Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 1–29, here 23.

²⁵Cf. the discussions referenced in Document 12 below. In addition to the reviews mentioned in notes 8, 10, and 26, see also P. Feine, “Die religionsgeschichtliche Methode und die Evangelienforschung,” *ThLBl* 22 (1901): 505–10, 521–24; H. A. A. Kennedy, “Review of W. Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien*,” in *The Critical Review of Theological and Philosophical Literature*, vol. 12, ed. S. D. F. Salmond (London: Williams & Norgate, 1902), 339–44; W. Lütgert, “Review of W. Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien*,” *TLB* 26 (1903): 174–75; H. Weinle, “Leben Jesu,” *ThR* 5 (1902): 231–45, 278–91; A. C. Zenos, “Review of W. Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien*,” *AJT* 6 (1902): 575–76. The lasting discussion that Wrede’s book triggered is shown not least by the fact that in January/February 1903 “the historical character of the Gospel of Mark with special attention to Wrede’s critique” was discussed as “general theses topic” in the academic-theological associations of the Eisenach Kartell in Berlin, Bonn, Breslau, Göttingen, Greifswald, Heidelberg, Königsberg, and Straßburg. The theses of a referent and co-referent presented at these college towns as well as the “ultimately adopted theses” of the theological students are printed in *Kartel-Zeitung des Eisenach Kartells akademisch-theologischer Vereine* 13 (1903): 97–106.

²⁶Bousset, “Messiasgeheimnis,” 361n1. A similar statement can be found in C. Clemen, “Review of W. Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien*,” *LZD* 52 (1901): 1569–71, here 1571. Cf. further A. Meyer,

As we can infer from Wrede's letter to Gustav and Wilhelm Ruprecht on February 18, 1906,²⁷ the Breslau New Testament scholar held fast to his original intention to let another volume on the Messiah question follow *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien* (*The Messianic Secret*). This was to contain, among other things, an expanded version of his lecture "Jesus als Davidssohn"²⁸ (Jesus as Son of David) from April 18, 1904. In this study, Wrede could make probable the view "that the Davidic descent of Jesus is a theological idea, not a historical tradition."²⁹

A few months before his death, Wrede still occupied himself with Albert Schweitzer's work *Von Reimarus zu Wrede: Eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*.³⁰ With the two names "Reimarus" and "Wrede" Schweitzer "wanted to specify the two poles between which," in his judgment, "the life-of-Jesus research moved."³¹ It signifies, to be sure, a distortion of the position of Wrede when Schweitzer claims that Wrede, in his work on the messianic secret, undertook "the first solid attempt to deny that Jesus

"Review of W. Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien*, 1901," *DLZ* 23 (1902): 837–44, here 843: "Also according to Wrede, resurrection faith and Messiah faith come from the same root, from the faith in the powerful personality of Jesus. Is it likely here that the resurrection faith was first; must not such a powerful trust in him, which was able to struggle through victoriously even after his death, have already found expression before his death in the form that lay nearest at hand at that time, in the faith in Jesus' (future) messiahship?" A few weeks before Wrede's death Adolf Jülicher argued similarly (A. Jülicher, *Neue Linien in der Kritik der evangelischen Überlieferung. Fünf Vorträge, gehalten auf dem 2. Hessischen und Nassauischen theologischen Ferienkurs zu Marburg vom 8. bis 10. Oktober 1906*, Vorträge des Hessischen und Nassauischen theologischen Ferienkurses, H. 3 [Giessen: Töpelmann, 1906], 23 [II. Wrede, 14–36]): "If the disciples never suspected something entirely extraordinary, eschatological, with Schweitzer, I would like to say, never suspected the redeemer of Israel, then it is not clear how the resurrection of Jesus brought them to the idea that he is now the Messiah." It is evident from a letter of Adolf Wrede, the brother, to Jülicher from Nov 18, 1906, that W. Wrede had awaited Jülicher's lectures with anticipation. When they arrived, however, they were no longer shown to him because his health made "every intellectual activity impossible."

²⁷See Document 18 below.

²⁸Posthumously published in W. Wrede, "Jesus als Davidssohn," in *Vorträge und Studien*, ed. A. Wrede (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1907), 144–77 (for an English translation, see Wrede, *Lectures and Studies*). See further note 156 below.

²⁹Wrede, "Jesus als Davidssohn," 165.

³⁰A. Schweitzer, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede. Eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1906). From the second edition (1913) onward, the title was only *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*; see A. Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1913); A. Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, 9th ed., reprint of the 7th ed. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1984). Gotthard Eberlein, a student of Wrede at that time, recollected in a letter to Schweitzer from February 21, 1954 (Archives Centrales Albert Schweitzer, Gunsbach): "I can still remember the stormy discussions we had in the residence of our beloved Prof. Wrede when your book *Von Reimarus zu Wrede* came out." In the English translation, Schweitzer's work was given the influential title *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*. The English translation of the first edition includes the subtitle *A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*. See A. Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, trans. W. Montgomery (London: Adams and Charles Black, 1910). This subtitle is not included in the Fortress Press edition published in 2001. See A. Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, first complete edition, trans. W. Montgomery, J. R. Coates, S. Cupitt, and J. Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001).

³¹A. Schweitzer, *Aus meinem Leben und Denken* [1931]. Mit einem abschließenden Kapitel "Die weiteren Jahre" (1931–1965) von Rudolf Grabs (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1980 [1931]), 39–40. Cf. A. Schweitzer, *Out of My Life and Thought: An Autobiography*, trans. A. B. Lemke (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 45–46.

entertained any eschatological ideas at all.”³² At any event, after the sending of a free copy of Schweitzer’s work, there was a friendly exchange of letters between Wrede and Schweitzer.³³ In his autobiography, Schweitzer writes:

It moved me deeply to learn from him that he suffered from an incurable heart disease and might expect death at any moment. “Subjectively I am tolerably well; objectively my condition is hopeless,” he wrote in one of the last letters I received from him. The thought that I could work without thinking of my health while he had to give up his work in the best years of his life troubled me deeply. The tribute I had paid in my book to his achievements perhaps compensated a little for the hostility he had encountered in response to his courageous search for the truth.³⁴

³²Schweitzer, *Out of My Life and Thought*, 45 (GV = Schweitzer, *Aus meinem Leben und Denken*, 39–40).

³³Cf. Schweitzer, *Out of My Life and Thought*, 51 (GV = Schweitzer, *Aus meinem Leben und Denken*, 44) and Document 19 below. With the writing to W. Ruprecht from September 17, 1906 (Verlagsarchiv Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen), Wrede asked the publisher to send A. Schweitzer a “dedication copy” of his work on Hebrews: see W. Wrede, *Das literarische Rätsel des Hebräerbriefes. Mit einem Anhang über den literarischen Charakter des Barnabasbriefes*, FRLANT 8 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1906). Probably due to illness, this letter to his Göttingen publisher is not written by Wrede himself; only the concluding greeting comes from Wrede’s hand.

³⁴Schweitzer, *Out of My Life and Thought*, 51 (GV = Schweitzer, *Aus meinem Leben und Denken*, 44). On this, cf. also Document 20 below. With respect to the content of Schweitzer’s letter of condolence to Elisabeth Wrede, Gotthard Eberlein, in his letter to Schweitzer (see note 30), states: “Mrs. Wrede showed me one day your letter to her in which you – as I still remember it – wrote to her then that it was to you as if a fighter had been shot away from her side.”

Documents

1. [Letter of William Wrede to Martin Rade,³⁵ Frankfurt am Main]³⁶

Breslau, Victoriast. 7³⁷
 From July 1 at Goethestr. 9^{III}
 June 26, 1893

Dear Friend!

I say, first, to you once more: heartfelt thanks! Not merely because I am thankful to you for the confidence that your letter demonstrates to me but also because the suggestion itself and the sense in which you make it is deserving of thanks. You yourself, however, presuppose in your lines that your proposal would probably not find me to be immediately prepared to accept it with joy. I therefore also openly acknowledge to you that it has burdened me with an inner conflict that has not been without pain for me.

First, you yourself will find it understandable that in itself the idea of preparing myself, shortly after the wedding,³⁸ for such a lecture before such a distinguished public³⁹ is not exactly enticing. Naturally, I am also reluctant to leave my wife alone for a

³⁵Born on April 4, 1857 in Rennersdorf (Oberlausitz); 1875–1878 theological studies in Leipzig (especially influenced by A. von Harnack); 1882 pastor in Schönbach (Oberlausitz); 1886–1931 editor of *Die Christliche Welt* (founded with Wilhelm Bornemann, Paul Drews, and Friedrich Loofs); 1890 co-initiator of the Evangelisch-sozialen Kongress (Protestant Social Congress); 1892–1899 pastor in Frankfurt am Main; 1900 Habilitation for systematic theology in Marburg; appointed secondary professor in Marburg in 1904, full professor after 1921; died on April 9, 1940 in Frankfurt am Main.

³⁶*Nachlass* Martin Rade, Ms. 684/50, UB Marburg (published in part in J. Jantsch, ed., *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Adolf von Harnack und Martin Rade. Theologie auf dem öffentlichen Markt* [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996], 179–80n1).

³⁷Wrede lived temporarily with the family of Karl Müller (September 3, 1852 to February 10, 1940), who taught from 1891 to 1903 as full professor of church history in Breslau and gave the eulogy for Wrede in 1906. After his time in Breslau, Müller worked until his retirement in Tübingen as professor emeritus in 1922.

³⁸On August 10, 1893, Wrede married Elisabeth Schultz (1870–1955), whose father, Hermann Schulz (1836–1903; since 1876 full professor for systematic theology and Old Testament in Göttingen), married them in the Göttingen University Church (see G. Lüdemann and M. Schröder, *Die Religionsgeschichtliche Schule. Eine Dokumentation* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987], 91).

³⁹Martin Rade had asked Wrede by letter to give a lecture on the dogmatic significance of the person of Jesus at the meeting of the “Freunde der Christlichen Welt,” which took place in Eisenach on September 27 and 28, 1893 (thus *CCW* 3 [1893], 398; J. Rathje, *Die Welt des freien Protestantismus. Ein Beitrag zur deutsch-evangelischen Geistesgeschichte. Dargestellt am Leben und Werk von Martin Rade* [Stuttgart: E. Klotz, 1952], 84, specifies the date as September 26 and 27, 1893, as does Adolf von Harnack in his postcard to Martin Rade from September 14, 1893, though he is uncertain with respect to the exact date [cf. Jantsch, *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Adolf von Harnack und Martin Rade*, 286]). This was ultimately taken over by Wilhelm Bousset, whereas Johannes Weiß spoke on the “present ecclesiastical situation” (cf. Rathje, *Die Welt des freien Protestantismus*, 84). At this meeting of theology professors there were “lively disputes between the older Ritschlians such as J. Kaftan, W. Herrmann, and M. Rade and the younger history-of-religions school” (A. F. Verheule, *Wilhelm Bousset. Leben und Werk. Ein theologie-geschichtlicher Versuch* [Amsterdam: Ton Boland, 1973], 32; cf. *CCW* 3 [1893], 398). As can be inferred from a letter of Ernst Troeltsch to W. Bousset from September 4, 1893 (Cod. Ms. W. Bousset 130:23, Niedersächsische Staats- u. Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen), Rade had first invited Troeltsch to give a lecture on “the dogmatic significance of the historical Jesus,” before he turned to Bousset. Troeltsch, however, turned it down and suggested Bousset as a speaker, not least because of Bousset’s work *Jesu Predigt in ihrem Gegensatz zum Judentum. Ein religionsgeschichtlicher Vergleich* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1892).

series of days already so soon after the wedding. I do not think I am just being sentimental.

With respect to the *subject matter* itself, it can, indeed, give me no special joy, as I now stand, to give a lecture on this topic. If could speak with the feeling of the religious superiority of my position or even only with the feeling that even a far-reaching criticism would nevertheless not be able to alter the actual main thing, then the situation would be different. Alone when I consider what I have to say, then the sum of everything is criticism and negation. Not that I do not have a positive stance toward Jesus in my sense: but here the concern is, indeed, with the dogmatic significance of the person of Jesus, with his significance for the grounding and content of religious *faith* – and there the sum for me is, indeed, really criticism. I have lost old foundations or – according to my view – recognized them as false foundations, but a new, securely founded position is for me not so much a matter of possession than of seeking. And I personally take the view that one must possibly say “No,” even if one cannot bring oneself to say “Yes.” One acknowledges then precisely with sadness how things lie, and one remains silent and waits and keeps house in such humble quietness just as the clearly recognized situation of the finances allows.

And should I, with all this, now step out before people, some of whom I do not even know personally and for the majority of whom I know that such a lecture cannot be a cause of joy!

This is not a pleasant thought!

Despite everything, I do not want, as difficult as it is for me, to deny your request. I honor the motives that guide you in this plan; I am honored by the trust that is given to me with this invitation. I strongly share the desire that a mutual understanding may be present to the greatest possible extent, and this will, after all, admittedly not be brought about through silence and isolation. With Troeltsch⁴⁰ you would undoubtedly have had the better speaker, namely because he has at his command developed views of the modern cultural-historical development and the emergence of the present-day theological situation. But if he is not willing, then I will give the lecture, admittedly not as a dogmatist by profession, as I wish to stress, but as a layperson.

I have, however, above presented again the general character of my stance and what you would thus have to expect from me in order to ask you *whether you do not yourself regard it as more advisable to forgo my participation*. I cannot offer a confession of faith but only a confession of unbelief. Should you not be daunted by this, then I must discuss the formulation of the topic in greater detail with you. Somehow it must make it at least *possible* for me to provide question marks and nothing more.

You have, of course, the right to inform those who are immediately concerned about this letter; I only ask you not to give the whole letter with all its formulations to persons who are more distant from me personally.

⁴⁰ Ernst Troeltsch (born on February 2, 1865, in Augsburg; in his theological studies especially influenced by A. Ritschl and H. Schultz; 1890 private lecturer für systematic theology in Göttingen; 1892 secondary professor in Bonn; 1894 full professor in Heidelberg; 1910 also held teaching appointment in the philosophical faculty; 1914 full professor for philosophy in Berlin; 1919–1921, as secondary appointment, undersecretary for Protestant affairs in the Prussian ministry of education and cultural affairs; died on July 1, 1923, in Berlin).

If the gathering could be deferred, a lot or a little, then this would be preferable for me due to my personal circumstances.

I have passed on your greeting to Müller. He will scarcely be able to come. Between us, the Müllers are expecting a child around that time.⁴¹

May the matter, when it comes about, fulfill your hopes. I am not without further ado certain that the result will be a fruitful one.

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

Warmly,

Your W. Wrede

⁴¹The expected child of the Müllers is probably the youngest son of K. Müller, who later studied law in Göttingen and died of a throat infection in July 1914; cf. K. Müller, "Aus der akademischen Arbeit ['Selbstdarstellung']," in *Aus der akademischen Arbeit. Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1930), 1–44, here 35.

2. [Undated Marginal Note of Adolf von Harnack⁴² for Martin Rade on Document 1]⁴³

Dear Friend!

I would, precisely after this letter, wish that Wrede would speak and that the standpoint would thus come to expression. But apart from the consideration that is owed to the special situation that exists for Wrede, I perceive it to be almost an act of cruelty to compel someone to speak who is in the state that Wrede is in or believes himself to be in as a theologian. I see here the “state” by no means as tragic. I have always expected these setbacks and know them in my own theological thinking. There is contained in the Hermann-Gottschickian standpoint⁴⁴ much that is highly justifiable subjectively (but) must be opposed when it is identified with the foundation. However, I believe that you are right in the main thing; only it must be formulated more freely and put on a wider footing. – My suggestion with respect to what you should do is as follows: (turn over)⁴⁵

⁴²Born on May 7, 1851, in Dorpat; 1874 private lecturer for church history in Leipzig; 1876 secondary professor for church history in Leipzig; 1879 full professor in Gießen 1886 in Marburg, 1888 in Berlin; 1921 retirement as emeritus professor; died on June 10, 1930, in Heidelberg on a trip in the service of the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft. During his time in Leipzig, there arose around Harnack a circle of friends and students that was significant for the history of German theology: Julius Kaftan, Emil Schürer, Wolf Graf Baudissin, Oskar von Gebhardt, Friedrich Loofs, Martin Rade, William Wrede, and Wilhelm Bornemann.

⁴³Rade sent the letter of Wrede directed to him, together with a letter card dated June 29, 1893, to Harnack (cf. Jantsch, *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Adolf von Harnack und Martin Rade*, 279–80), who furnished Wrede's letter with a marginal note and sent it back to Rade. Over the writing of Wrede stands a note by Rade written in red: “Harnack to Rade, end of June 1893.” Below it there is a note written by Rade in green: “Request back.”

⁴⁴The “Hermann-Gottschick'sche Standpunkt” refers to the right wing of *Die Christlichen Welt*. Johannes Gottschick (born on November 23, 1847, in Rochau [Altmark]; 1878 spiritual inspector in Magdeburg; 1882 full professor for practical theology in Gießen, 1892 in Tübingen; 1891–1906 co-editor of the *ZThK*; died on January 3, 1907, in Tübingen) had presented his standpoint in his inaugural lecture in Tübingen: although “the historical picture of Christ, as it is sketched in the New Testament,” contains “contradictions and legendary features,” this does not “affect its historicity, through which Christ is for us the foundation and norm of this faith, through which alone he can lead us to God and draw us into his life, the historicity of his personal being, his character, his original, unique, and perfect unity with God, his disposition of love, his faithfulness unto death, his victorious life in the invisible world” (J. Gottschick, *Die Bedeutung der historisch-kritischen Schriftforschung für die evangelische Kirche. Akademische Antrittsrede* [Freiburg im Breisgau: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1893], 26).

And according to Wilhelm Hermann (born on December 6, 1846, in Melkow [Altmark]; 1874–1876 high school teacher; 1875 private lecturer for systematic theology in Halle on the Salle; 1879 full professor in Marburg; 1907–1916 co-editor of the *ZThK* with M. Rade; 1917 retirement as emeritus professor; died on January 2, 1922, in Marburg), faith is “entirely independent of the results of historical research” (W. Herrmann, *Die Gewissheit des Glaubens und die Freiheit der Theologie* [Freiburg im Breisgau: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1887], 56). For “the evidence of the historical reality of Jesus” is based “for believers always on the significance that the tidings of Jesus have acquired for him” (W. Herrmann, *Der Verkehr des Christen mit Gott. Im Anschluss an Luther dargestellt*, 2nd ed. [Stuttgart: Cotta, 1892], 184). Cf. also W. Herrmann, “Der geschichtliche Christus der Grund unseres Glaubens,” *ZThK* 2 (1892): 232–73 = P. Fischer-Appelt, *Schriften zur Grundlegung der Theologie. Teil I: Mit Einleitung und Anmerkungen*, TB 36/I (Munich: Kaiser, 1966), 149–85.

⁴⁵Here, there is a note from Rade written in blue: “Page 4” (continuation of the Harnack-text).

1. Make certain again – if you have not already done so – whether one of the two⁴⁶ is willing to do it “*without compulsion*.” If he is willing, then this is best.
2. If that is not possible, then, in my opinion, Hermann (or Gottschick or Loofs⁴⁷), on the one hand, or Wrede (or Troeltsch), on the other hand, are to be asked to prepare *theses* for our gathering, which must be submitted to you by September 1 at the latest and in which the main questions at stake in relation to the problem (historical Christ, development and results of Gospel criticism, Christ the exalted, Christ as foundation of faith) are to be made more precise negatively and positively. We are all aware that after a short introduction by you or me or someone else, the discussion can begin, which will also be fruitful. It would be best if the theses were sent confidentially beforehand. If this is not advisable, then one can also refrain from doing so.
3. Should it also not prove possible to proceed in this way, which I do not think will be the case, then we can discuss without theses according to a plan determined by you and me.

Warmly, A[dolf] H[arnack]

⁴⁶Wrede and Ernst Troeltsch are meant. In a letter card from June 29, 1893, Rade had communicated to Harnack that, following Wrede's answer, he had asked Troeltsch to take on the lecture at the Eisenach meeting (cf. Jantsch, *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Adolf von Harnack und Martin Rade*, 279–80).

⁴⁷Friedrich Loofs (born on June 19, 1858, in Hildesheim; in his theological studies especially influenced by A. von Harnack and A. Ritschl; 1882 private lecturer for church and dogma history in Leipzig; 1886 secondary professor of church and dogma history in Leipzig, 1887 in Halle on the Salle; 1888 full professor for church history in Halle on the Salle; 1926 retirement as emeritus professor; died on January 31, 1921, in Halle on the Salle) belonged to the co-founders of *Die Christliche Welt*, but did not open himself to the ideas of the history of religions school and represented a “New Lutheranism” with a distinct character.

3. [Letter of William Wrede to Hans Lietzmann,⁴⁸ Bonn]⁴⁹

Breslau, June 25, 1896.
Goethestr. 9.

Honored Sir!

Receive my honest and heartfelt thanks for kindly sending me your work on the Son of Man⁵⁰ – and not merely for the sending itself but also for the profit reading your work brought me.

I have also become increasingly certain for some time now that Jesus himself could not have called himself the Son of Man. Wellhausen's opinion⁵¹ about "man," as far as it could involve a self-designation of Jesus, appears to me as a monstrosity that I cannot understand at all with this scholar. I asked myself how the expression could have come into the Synoptics and came to the postulate that somehow words *about* the Messiah must have fallen into the speeches of the Lord, through which then the type of this strange form of speech was created. Arnold Meyer's equation Son of Man = "I"⁵² made me think for a moment that the positive explanation was found there, but I immediately had concerns about whether such a form of speech in Aramaic, which I unfortunately do not understand to date, is just as much of an oddity as in any other language. My earlier view of the Enoch texts was corrected by Eerdmans' articles,⁵³ which I first learned about long after the publication. Here, the alternation of the designation emphasized by you on p. 47 also appeared especially significant.⁵⁴ I could interpret the silence of Paul only as you did.

⁴⁸Born on March 2, 1875, in Düsseldorf; 1896 promotion to licentiate of theology in Bonn; 1898 high school teacher; 1900 private lecturer for church history in Bonn; 1905 secondary professor in Jena; 1908 full professor in Jena; 1924 full professor in Berlin as successor of Adolf von Harnack; died on June 25, 1942, in Locarno.

⁴⁹*Nachlass* Hans Lietzmann, Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster (first published in K. Aland, ed. *Glanz und Niedergang der deutschen Universität. 50 Jahre deutscher Wissenschaftsgeschichte in Briefen an und von Hans Lietzmann [1892–1942]. Mit einer ein-führenden Darstellung* [Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1979], 159–60, 1036 [letter number 8]).

⁵⁰H. Lietzmann, *Der Menschensohn. Ein Beitrag zur neutestamentlichen Theologie* (Freiburg im Breisgau/Leipzig: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1896).

⁵¹J. Wellhausen, *Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1894), 312n1 (on this, cf. Lietzmann, *Der Menschensohn*, 26–27, 81–82).

⁵²A. Meyer, *Jesu Muttersprache. Das galiläische Aramäisch in seiner Bedeutung für die Erklärung der Reden Jesu und der Evangelisten überhaupt* (Freiburg im Breisgau/Leipzig: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1896), 91–101, 140–49, 160–62 (on this, cf. Lietzmann, *Der Menschensohn*, 27–28).

⁵³B. D. Eerdmans, "De oorsprong van de uitdrukking 'Zoon des Menschen' als evangelische Messias-titel," *ThT* 28 (1894): 153–76 (for the discussion of the Enoch texts, see pp. 168ff.); B. D. Eerdmans, "De uitdrukking 'Zoon des Menschen' en het boek 'Henoch,'" *ThT* 29 (1895), 49–71 (on this, cf. Lietzmann, *Der Menschensohn*, vi, 27).

⁵⁴"For the view that 'son of man' is not a firmly established *terminus technicus* in Enoch, one can, in addition, also place emphasis upon a fact that tends to be given too little attention, namely, the alternation of the designation. In [1 Enoch] chapter 46.2, 3, 4; 48.2 we find 'son of the human being'; in 62.7, 9, 14; 63.11; 69.26, 27; 71.17 'son of the human born'; in 69.29; 71.15 'son of the man'; in 62.5; 69.29 'son of the woman.'" (Lietzmann, *Der Menschensohn*, 47).

I mention all this because it appears noteworthy to me that at different points the same conviction broke through at the same time. That I took up your work with anticipation goes without saying. But I do not wish to be understood as if your work only meant for me a desirable confirmation of results that had already been discovered. Rather, it also brought me a decisive clarification and new insights, and I am just as thankful to you for this as for the presentation of the Aramaic materials⁵⁵ and especially also for section 3,⁵⁶ which supports the already plausible result. In my own reflections, I had also not reached the degree of clarity that your discussion on pp. 93–94⁵⁷ (which I would have admittedly desired to be even more detailed since one could still consider other possibilities) brings. And in detail there is much that I either did not know in this way or had not recognized.

I have, thus, sincerely enjoyed your work and think that in its methodological clarity and concision, it should be better suited than any previous treatment of the topic to open the eyes of even the resistant – though, of course, among us theologians, the good will knows how to push aside much that is uncomfortable.

Even somewhat more strongly than you, I would have emphasized (the point is, after all, also extremely significant for passages such as Matt 11.27) the inconceivability of such continuous speech in the third person (in the case of “Messiah” also, although doubly so in the case of “man”).⁵⁸ In section 3, I would have perhaps judged more cautiously here and there. Even the extremely interesting Barnabas text⁵⁹ makes it perhaps not entirely impossible that the author knew the expression Son of Man, although it seems unlikely. I would have liked to see you touch upon the question of what the non-originality of the title means for the question of the authenticity or inauthenticity of all the logia in which it occurs. Nevertheless, you have probably excluded it intentionally, since this would, after all, basically touch upon a second topic.

With best congratulations for this fine beginning, I join the wish that your further work may be equally beneficial to our field of research.

Please greet my friend Grafe.⁶⁰

With highest respect,

Your most devoted W. Wrede

⁵⁵Lietzmann, *Der Menschensohn*, 30–50: “‘Son of Man’ in Aramaic.”

⁵⁶Lietzmann, *Der Menschensohn*, 51–80: “‘Son of Man’ in Greek.”

⁵⁷According to Lietzmann, the title was first used as a designation of majesty for Jesus in Christian apocalypses, as we still find remains of such in our Gospels (e.g., Mark 13.5–27; Matt 24.4–31; Luke 21.8–27). Since these revelations carried the character of speeches of the Lord, out of a designation ‘Son of Man’ became a self-designation of Jesus. Out of this apocalyptic usage, individual stereotyped formulas then detached themselves, which were independently also attached to other speeches of the Lord and integrated into these ...” (Lietzmann, *Der Menschensohn*, 93).

⁵⁸Cf. also the short article: W. Wrede, “Zum Thema ‘Menschensohn,’” *ZNW* 5 (1904): 359–60.

⁵⁹Barn. 12.8–10 (on this, cf. Lietzmann, *Der Menschensohn*, 57–58).

⁶⁰Lietzmann wrote his dissertation “Der Menschensohn” at the suggestion of Eduard Grafe (born on March 12, 1855, in Elberfeld; 1884 private lecturer for New Testament in Berlin; 1886 secondary professor in Halle on the Salle; 1888 full professor in Kiel; 1890 in Bonn; 1913 retirement as emeritus professor; died on June 13, 1922, in Bonn).

4. [Postcard of William Wrede to Hans Lietzmann, Bonn]⁶¹

Breslau, Goethestr. 12
December 11, 1898.

Esteemed Mr. Licentiate!

Heartfelt thanks for the new Son of Man study,⁶² which I have immediately read. I continue to stand entirely on your side and find Schmiedel's objections⁶³ to be unconvincing. It is especially pleasing to me that you so sharply oppose the mixing in of other questions into this problem.⁶⁴ I am, however, also firmly convinced that we will only make progress if we gain a multitude of *individual* results that are firm in themselves. Our whole life-of-Jesus research suffers fundamentally from the fact that people do not know this restriction and operate everywhere on the basis of questionable, entirely subjective constructions of the *whole*.

With most devoted greetings,

Your W. Wrede

⁶¹*Nachlass* Hans Lietzmann, Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster (first published in Aland, *Glanz und Niedergang der deutschen Universität*, 176, 1039 [Letter number 28]).

⁶²H. Lietzmann, "Zur Menschensohnfrage," in TARWPV 2 (1898), 1–14.

⁶³Cf. P. W. Schmiedel, "Der Name 'Menschensohn' und das Messiasbewußtsein Jesu," *PrM* 2 (1898): 252–67; idem, "Bezeichnet Jesus den Menschen als solchen durch 'Menschensohn'? Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Verständigung über einige Grundsätze der Evangelienkritik und der Erforschung des Lebens Jesu," *PrM* 2 (1898): 291–308.

⁶⁴Cf. Lietzmann, "Zur Menschensohnfrage," 2: "Precisely the investigation of the 'New Testament-theological' content of the Gospels presents such innumerable difficulties that it is advisable here, even more than otherwise, to consider the individual problems from the most varied perspectives and to conduct every study for itself, as independently as possible from the results of the others. Only in this way will we obtain a number of firm support points upon which summarizing insights can be built.

The question of the meaning and genuineness of the title 'Son of Man' is most closely connected with the question of the messianic consciousness of Jesus – everyone knows this; it is, however, an exaggeration to declare it to be identical with this. Thus, the person who deals with the Son of Man question with the intention of advancing the knowledge of the Messiah problem will do well to set aside for the time being arguments fetched from elsewhere and to strictly restrict themselves to the topic that lies closest at hand. The concern is thus with answering the question: 'Which vocabulary did Jesus use for ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου and what does this mean?' This is a purely philological problem, and it can be solved without any talk of the psychology of Jesus or messianic claims."

5. [Letter of William Wrede to Wilhelm Ruprecht,⁶⁵ Göttingen]

Breslau 12^{III},
April 2, 1901

Very honored Sir Doctor!

Some time ago I wrote to you that I was preparing a writing and after its completion would offer it first to your publishing house.

I have now completed the work in the main. However, it still requires a thorough revision and a reworking of individual sections.

The title of the work will be *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien. Zugleich ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Markusevangeliums* (The Messianic Secret in the Gospels: At the same time a Contribution to the Understanding of the Gospel of Mark).

The topic has not yet been addressed on its own. I seek to prove the idea that Jesus' messianic dignity (especially according to Mark) was a secret matter on earth, elaborate on the origin and history of the idea, and have the opportunity there to offer an opinion on the literary plan followed by Mark. The results are very radical. This may be sufficient to give you a rough idea of the contents.

The work encompasses ca. 220 pages in my manuscript. According to my calculations, this should be about 240 printed pages in the thickness of the pages in Wendt's *Lehre Jesu* I.⁶⁶ To this would be added a table of contents, an index of passages, a preface of a few pages, and a dedication. Twenty-five of the 220 pages above are allotted to excurses.

I would value a clean and good print quality. From the works available to me from your publishing house, the print type of the book of Wendt mentioned above especially appeals to me.

I cannot say exactly when I can hand over the manuscript. I would, however, like it very much if the printing could then begin immediately and be carried out at a good pace so that the work could still be published in the first-half of the next semester.

I would like to refrain from any speculation regarding what success the work may have on the book market.

Should you be inclined to accept it for publication, then I would ask you – the sooner, the better – to propose your conditions to me.

With exceptionally high respect and with most devoted greetings, also to your brother,⁶⁷

Your W. Wrede

⁶⁵Dr. Wilhelm Ruprecht led, together with his brother Gustav Ruprecht, the publishing house Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht in Göttingen from 1898 to 1923. Cf. W. Ruprecht, *Väter und Söhne. Zwei Jahrhunderte Buchhändler in einer deutschen Universitätsstadt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1935), 222–66.

⁶⁶H. H. Wendt, *Die Lehre Jesu*, vol. I: *Die evangelischen Quellenberichte über die Lehre Jesu* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1886).

⁶⁷Gustav Ruprecht (see note 65 above).

I ask that you keep this communication *confidential*. On the next page I am also attaching a general specification of the contents for orientation.

Introduction

Section I: Mark (113 pages)

1. Preliminary Material on the Overall Picture of the Messianic History of Jesus
2. The Messianic Self-Concealing of Jesus
3. The Concealment despite the Revelation
4. Retrospective on Mark

Section II: The Later Gospels (43 pages)

1. Matthew and Luke
2. John

Section III: Historical Elucidation (33 pages)

1. The Concealment of the Messiahship until the Resurrection
2. The Disciples' Lack of Understanding until the Resurrection
3. Once More Mark
4. On the Further History of the Conceptions

In addition, 6 excurses.

6. [Letter of William Wrede to Wilhelm Ruprecht, Göttingen]

Breslau, April 11, 1901
Goethestr. 12

Very honored Sir Doctor!

For a long time, I have wanted to reply to your very quick answer⁶⁸ to my query, but I sit so deeply in the still necessary revision of my work that I have postponed the continuation of the correspondence from one day to another.

I certainly hope that we can come to an agreement that is satisfactory to both parties. At the same time, I still wish to reserve to myself the definitive answer to your offer for the following reasons.

You write with full justification that you are somewhat in the dark with respect to the extent to which you may reckon, according to content and treatment, with a larger readership for my work. You also refer here to my remark that I do not wish to speculate about the success of the work on the book market. And with this I have indeed given you occasion to doubt my confidence in its success.

These remarks of yours have become important to me because they have made me conscious of how little my quickly jotted down intimations could suffice to orient you. At the same time, it seems you have not excluded the possibility that you could be inclined to modify your offer a little in my favor *in the case of a particular conviction* about the likely success of the work on the book market.

It is not at all my intention to ask for terms that would be out of proportion to a reasonable reckoning of what is probable. On the other hand, you will not hold it against me if I wish it to happen, should you be able to make the offered terms more favorable for me without difficulty.

⁶⁸In the written reply of Wilhelm Ruprecht to Wrede from April 4, 1901 (Copy Book from Nov 13, 1900 – June 6, 1901, 405) it states: “[...] A friendly thanks for your offer to the publisher, concerning the ‘messianic secret.’ We are quite willing to take over the publishing and propose to you the following terms: the print run is 700–800 copies plus the obligatory and complimentary copies. The royalty for the folded sheets of 16 pages is 32 marks, payable upon the publication of the book. Complimentary copies: 10 [marginal note: ‘wishes for more for nonbuyers compare Wrede’s letter from March 11’]. In the event of a new edition, the same terms should apply with the proviso that if the print run is increased, the royalty will rise at the ratio of 32 marks to 800 copies. We may, of course, presuppose the delivery of a readable and print-ready manuscript. Your handwriting is, after all, clear.

The configuration is like the enclosed sample of Wendt, *Job[annes]-Evangelium*. Since the printing of Wendt’s *Leben Jesu*, our format has changed a little. Should you, which we scarcely assume, not be in agreement with these proposals, then we would ask you initially to send us the manuscript. In this case, it would not be a matter for us of examining the content, since we are convinced that your work will satisfy all claims in this respect but only to see whether according to content and treatment we can reckon on a larger readership. In this respect, we are, after all, somewhat in the dark now, and you yourself do not dare to make a judgment about this.

We can certainly promise clean print quality and quick production if you make corrections promptly. It would be pleasing to us if we could know soon when the printing can begin, since we cannot print your work in every print shop. The font used for Wendt’s book is free at present.

It will interest you to hear something more about the sales of your small work ‘über die Aufgabe der neuest[amentlichen] Theologie.’ Altogether, 220–230 copies have been sold. Here and there a copy is still requested. [...]”

I would, however, not write in this way if I did not have the feeling that we have somewhat different points of view concerning the success of the book. I stress again that I find your comment about “being in the dark” fully justified. But I must also add that my comment about the success was not intended as you – I concede: naturally – understood it.

You had, namely, a special reason. I was thinking of my small writing on tasks and methods, etc.⁶⁹ At that time, I had certainly overestimated the success.⁷⁰ I did not want to expose myself to that a second time. This was the reason for the comment. Now, however, the course of the correspondence has proceeded in such a way that I have reason to express it: I do indeed have a specific view of the prospects of the writing. Why should I not express it? I can, even though I wish to protect myself from self-overestimation, even though I point out to myself how easily every author regards what he has just worked out for as important – I can nevertheless not free myself of the expectation that my writing will create a stir, namely in a way that writings of this size do not often do in this field. In support of this, I wish to emphasize the following objective aspects:

1. The topic is *new*, and it casts quite surprising spotlights in particular on the Gospel of Mark; moreover, it is important for the general question of whether Jesus presented himself as the Messiah at all, which is touched upon at multiple points in my book. What has been said that approaches my ideas in earlier times plays no role at all in today’s criticism.

2. My work is, I believe, in its form more peaceful; in substance it is a very sharp attack on the more recent life-of-Jesus and Gospel scholarship, as it is represented by

⁶⁹W. Wrede, *Über Aufgabe und Methode der sogenannten Neutestamentlichen Theologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1897). (= G. Strecker, ed., *Das Problem der Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, WdF 367 [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975], 81–154). (ET = W. Wrede, “The Task and Methods of ‘New Testament Theology,’” in *The Nature of New Testament Theology*, ed., trans., and with an introduction by R. Morgan [London: SCM, 1973], 68–116, 182–93.)

⁷⁰Cf. the remarks of Wrede in his letters to the publisher Carl Ruprecht, father of Wilhelm and Gustav Ruprecht, from April 23, 1897 (“I believe I can assume that the writing will find an audience. I am not thinking at all here of the participants of the vacation course. I am thinking in the first place of the content of the writing. It is concerned to combat the contemporary understanding of the tasks of the biblical theology of the New Testament, namely the general view, and to set a substantially different task for the research in question.”) and from April 27, 1897 (here an even more detailed justification appears; both letters can be found in the archive of the publisher Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen).

names such as Keim,⁷¹ Holzmann,⁷² B. Weiss,⁷³ J. Weiss,⁷⁴ Baldensperger,⁷⁵ and others (also Wellhausen⁷⁶). I dispute that these scholars rightly read and handle the Gospel of Mark or the Gospels; I characterize their criticism as uncertain, subjective, and only going halfway. (In the excurses I have provided a few special polemical discussions in order to illustrate the false procedure in detail). Right at the beginning of the work I seek to overturn the view of the development of the life of Jesus, as it indeed is predominant and is regarded as a special accomplishment of modern research.

3. My writing touches on a whole series of questions that have met with a special interest in recent criticism. I mention here remarks on the stories of the possessed, on Jesus' prediction of his death and resurrection, on the Gospels' understanding of the parables (Jülicher⁷⁷), on the evaluation of the apostles in the different Gospels, on Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah, on the plan of Mark, on the Farewell Discourse in John, on the oldest development of the Christian conceptions of the Messiah. Longer remarks are devoted to all these points.

4. In addition, there is an attempt to prove that pretty much all the historical material *that I have drawn upon for my topic* is to be explained not on the basis of historical memory but on the basis of the views of the earliest Christian community.

The presentation will hopefully not hinder the reading of the book. I have worked hard to avoid academic language and to express myself simply and clearly. I have also attempted to make it more readable by not merely giving the verse numbers for all the

⁷¹T. Keim, *Die Geschichte Jesu von Nazara in ihrer Verkettung mit dem Gesamtleben seines Volkes frei untersucht und ausführlich erzählt*, 3 vols. (Zurich: Orell, Füssli & Co., 1867/1871/1872); idem, *Die Geschichte Jesu nach den Ergebnissen heutiger Wissenschaft für weitere Kreise übersichtlich erzählt* (Zurich: Orell, Füssli & Co., 21874 [1872]).

⁷²H. J. Holtzmann, *Die synoptischen Evangelien. Ihr Ursprung und geschichtlicher Charakter* (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1863); idem, *Lehrbuch der historisch-kritischen Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (Freiburg im Breisgau: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck]), 31892 [1885]; H. J. Holtzmann, *Die Synoptiker* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 31901 [1890]); idem, *Lehrbuch der neutestamentlichen Theologie*, SThL, 2 vols. (Freiburg im Breisgau: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1897).

⁷³B. Weiß, *Lehrbuch der Biblischen Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Berlin: Wilhelm Hertz, 61895 [1868]); idem, *Das Markusevangelium und seine synoptischen Parallelen erklärt* (Berlin: Wilhelm Hertz, 1872); idem, *Das Leben Jesu*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Wilhelm Hertz, 21884 [1882]); idem, *Das Matthäus-Evangelium*, KEK 1,1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 31898 [1883]); B. Weiß and J. Weiß, *Die Evangelien des Markus und Lukas*, KEK 1,2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1892).

⁷⁴J. Weiß, *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1892); idem, *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1900); idem, *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*, ed., trans., and with an introduction by R. H. Hiers and D. L. Holland (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971).

⁷⁵W. Baldensperger, *Das Selbstbewusstsein Jesu im Lichte der messianischen Hoffnungen seiner Zeit* (Strassburg: J. H. Ed. Heitz [Heitz u. Mündel], 21892 [1888]).

⁷⁶J. Wellhausen, *Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte*, 4th ed. (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1901), 380–94: "Vierundzwanziges Kapitel. Das Evangelium"; idem, *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten*, Sechstes Heft (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1899), 187–215: "Des Menschen Sohn."

⁷⁷Cf. A. Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 2 vols. (Freiburg im Breisgau: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1888/1898). A letter of Wrede to A. Jülicher from December 11, 1898 (*Nachlass Adolf Jülicher*, Ms. 6951/1189, UB Marburg) says: "At that time I learned much from your first volume [of parable speeches] and found that the criticism at that time far too little recognized ... that you placed the investigation for the first time on the right foundation by casting forth the question of the general inner laws of the speech forms that come into question."

important passages but by providing the wording (as J. Weiss has often done to his advantage in his writings). To be sure, the work is not therefore written in a *popular* manner; it is designed for academically interested readers. Still, I have read the whole work aloud to my wife, without it presenting significant difficulties for her to understand it.

Now I am not demanding that you form a definitive judgment based on these communications. Much depends, of course, on *how* I have proceeded in the connections that are touched upon and the extent to which my remarks have the power, whether it be to convince, to stimulate, or to enliven the discussion. It would be useless to prophesy about this. What appears important to me, rather, is the fact that you yourself obtain a certain impression of my work. I can, after all, by no means adequately survey the different target markets. I also reckon, for example, on readers abroad. Whether you will come to the judgment that a larger readership is to be assumed is something that I must leave entirely to you. Thus, my suggestion is that I send you the work, after it is finished – or possibly earlier such a large part that you can then form a judgment and thereafter you can be so good as to make me your definitive proposal.

Perhaps you can also take account of the fact that I must give a very large number of copies as gifts, probably at least 40. Among these, probably 15–20 – according to a provisional estimate – are for people who would scarcely purchase the work if they do not receive it as a gift.

One more thing with respect to the subject matter of the book. I have envisioned it as the first piece of a larger circle of investigations that are all to be devoted to the question – which has, after all, already surfaced multiple times in the recent period – of whether Jesus regarded and presented himself as the Messiah. I have gathered much material for further studies. My plan is, after the finalization of this work, *to turn to these as soon as possible*. Beforehand, apart from a few small studies, I will only seek to bring to publication a study (ca. 130 pages) on the authenticity of 2 Thessalonians,⁷⁸ which I had already finished – except for revision and small additions – when I approached the “messianic secret” (I would first like to try to find a slot for it in Gebhardt-Harnack’s *Texten und Untersuchungen*,⁷⁹ since this would probably be the most suitable place for it). Under these circumstances, I have asked myself whether I should not choose an overall title: *Untersuchungen zur evangelischen Überlieferung von Jesus als dem Messias* (Studies on the Evangelical Tradition of Jesus as the Messiah) and publish the current study as volume 1.⁸⁰ However, it is, in fact, probably more correct to remain with the title *Messiasgeheimnis* (Messianic Secret), which has something punchy about it.

The print proof that you sent from Wendt’s *Johannesevangelium*⁸¹ appeals to me. My manuscript is written quite tightly, but, as I believe, very legibly. I believe that I can promise to make prompt corrections. Unfortunately, I cannot yet specify exactly

⁷⁸W. Wrede, *Die Echtheit des zweiten Thessalonicherbriefs*, TU 24.2 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1903).

⁷⁹Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur. Founded by Oskar von Gebhardt and Adolf von Harnack. Leipzig/Berlin, 1882ff.

⁸⁰On this question, W. Ruprecht, in his letter from April 16, 1901 (Copy Book from November 13, 1900 – June, 5, 1901, 416) commented as follows: “We provisionally advise against an overall title. If additional works follow, then the overall title can be brought in later.”

⁸¹H. H. Wendt, *Das Johannesevangelium. Eine Untersuchung seiner Entstehung und seines geschichtlichen Wertes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1900).

when the printing can begin. I think, however, that I will be finished working through and supplementing the manuscript in at most three weeks – a few parts are expanding a little more. I would already now be able to send a larger part of the manuscript if I did not sometimes need to turn back to the beginning parts for the later parts. But perhaps it is possible for me to send a part before the completion of the whole.

If you write to me after receiving the manuscript, please also attach a comment about how things stand with your and my rights, if, for example, a translation came into view for America or England.⁸² I do not say that I regard this as probable. Still, it would not be impossible, since, for example, Bousset's *Antichrist*,⁸³ if I am not mistaken, has been translated.

With exceptionally high respect,

Your devoted W. Wrede

⁸²Wilhelm Ruprecht answered in his letter from April 16, 1901 (see note 80): "With respect to the translation rights it is customary in academic publishing that the author and publisher split the remuneration that is to be paid for translations. After all, the publisher, if, for example, an English edition appears, loses the sales to England and America, which is usually significant. It is therefore much preferable to us if translations do not appear all too quickly." No translation of Wrede's study on the messianic secret appeared during his lifetime, but only much later. See W. Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*, trans. J. C. G. Greig (Cambridge: James Clark, 1971).

⁸³W. Bousset, *Der Antichrist in der Überlieferung des Judentums, des neuen Testaments und der alten Kirche. Ein Beitrag zur Auslegung der Apokalypse* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1895). (ET = W. Bousset, *Antichrist Legend: A Chapter in Christian and Jewish Folklore*, trans. A. H. Keane [London: Hutchinson, 1896]).

7. [Letter of William Wrede to Wilhelm Ruprecht, Göttingen]

Breslau XIII, Goethestr. 12
April 25, 1901

Very honored Sir Doctor!

Despite hard work, I have not been able to fully complete the revision of my work. I have therefore resolved to send it to you already tomorrow, so that you have it in your hands on Saturday and will have some more time to review it before your departure. I have rewritten a large part of the work and provisionally made a fundamental revision to the parts through Luke (p. 141).⁸⁴ It still lacks the section on John (pp. 141–162), in which there is still some, though not very much, that must be changed, and the main mass of section III⁸⁵ from p. 167 to 195 (or 188): here I am thinking of adding about 3–4 pages, reordering a bit, and making the style a bit more fluid here and there. The excurses still require at most a brief review (pp. 195–end), but I will probably add a seventh of 1–2 pages.⁸⁶

I am sending you everything except pp. 145–162 (on John). I think you will be able to do without this section; while it is not unimportant, it is relatively independent from the rest. I am keeping it so that I do not lose the time from midday tomorrow to Monday for the revision.

I would like to provide you with a few words of orientation as a way of lightening your review. You will not want to read everything. Therefore, I am calling your attention to what appears most important to me. In the first place, I place weight on the whole section on Mark (through p. 117), then on the third section, pp. 163 to 184 (or 188).

...

[In the] excurses I especially call attention to number IV⁸⁷ and VI.⁸⁸ I think that you have a sure indication here, and I hope that you, also as a layperson, will not find the presentation to be difficult (apart from the more specialized parts).

When I have your further suggestions in my hands, then, I will send you, in the case of agreement, a message (to the firm), possibly by telegraph, so that the printing can begin as soon as possible.

Keep the manuscript at least until you receive my answer. If we agree, then as much of the manuscript as is needed for the beginning of the printing can remain there, let us say for 8–10 days (by that time I would then send back additional material); I would like

⁸⁴ = Wrede, *Messiasgeheimnis*, 1–179 (ET = Wrede, *Messianic Secret*, 1–180).

⁸⁵ “Part Three: Historical Elucidation” (Wrede, *Messianic Secret*, 209–52; GV = Wrede, *Messiasgeheimnis*, 207–51).

⁸⁶ What is in view is probably the sixth excursus of the published book: “On Mark 10.47f.” (Wrede, *Messianic Secret*, 279–80; GV = Wrede, *Messiasgeheimnis*, 278–79).

⁸⁷ “Some recent points on the prophecies of Jesus’ suffering and resurrection” (Wrede, *Messianic Secret*, 264–75; GV = Wrede, *Messiasgeheimnis*, 263–74).

⁸⁸ = Excursus VII of the published book: “Predecessors” (Wrede, *Messianic Secret*, 280–86; GV = Wrede, *Messiasgeheimnis*, 279–86).

to receive back what is not needed since I could only partly read through my notes in relation to small comments and would like to make corrections after the fact only in cases of extreme emergency. At any event, I would like to be able to review the manuscript again briefly from p. 64 onward; it is *absolutely* necessary for me to receive pp. 129–144 in addition to all the rest. I take for granted that you will send it back with special postal security: I no longer have a draft for the largest part of the work.

With this I believe that I have touched upon all the important matters. If you could answer me soon,⁸⁹ you would especially place me in your debt.

With best wishes,

Your devoted W. Wrede.

⁸⁹William Ruprecht answered Wrede on April 29, 1901 (Copy Book from November 13, 1900 – June 5, 1901, 443): “[...] In keeping with your wish, we have expedited the review of the manuscript and the rest of the calculations as much as possible. You are right that the whole is written clearly and in a way that is easy to understand. Nevertheless, it would probably be amiss to calculate the print run over 800, since your work does presuppose a good knowledge of the relevant questions and literature, i.e., its circulation will indeed be restricted to the circles that occupy themselves with this problem academically or have at least diligently continued working.

Many of them will simply not be able to do without your work; for others, it will depend on the wallet whether they purchase it or borrow it now and again from a library. With the size of the work, we must count especially strongly on the international market. Should an English translation come, then hopefully no one decides to do so too soon, since the sales of the German edition in England and America virtually cease after the publication of an English version. According to the most exact calculation that we can make, the length of the whole amounts to about 16 folded sheets of paper (without index, etc.), but the exact estimation is difficult, and we can unfortunately not obtain the control estimate of the printer until tomorrow. Every additional folded sheet (Bogen) makes business difficult for us, of course (16–18 folded sheets!), since considering the limited means of many theologians, the price plays a great role, and it is disagreeable to set a high folded sheet price for a lengthy work. Under these conditions, we may have to modify our proposal as follows, in order to accommodate you as much as possible:

If the work, as we assume, remains under 17 folded sheets (without index, etc.), the royalty will be calculated at 36 marks. If it ends up being more, then, as proposed, it will be 32 marks per folded sheet.

We are increasing the number of complimentary copies to 16. We cannot really go higher for this number of published copies, especially since we cannot, after all, expect, unless quite unexpected circumstances come to pass, to sell the whole print run. We regard it, however, as more correct to print 700–800 in order to make it possible for the book sellers at home and abroad to present the work to those who are interested. This is of the greatest importance in this case. It seems to us, upon careful consideration, that we can scarcely contemplate a new edition. Should, against expectations, such an edition appear necessary or highly desirable, then we would possibly be prepared to throw some copies in the paper waste to help you to that end earlier, if that were especially important to you. But that is probably a dream of the future! [...]”

8. [Letter of William Wrede to Adolf von Harnack, Berlin]⁹⁰

Breslau XIII, Goethestr. 12,
July 12, 1901

Esteemed, dear Sir Professor!

A late thank you is, in the end, better than none at all. You kindly wrote to me a long time ago in response to my remarks on the address of 1 Peter,⁹¹ accompanied the letter with several of your articles, sometime later then also sent to me the *Wesen des Christentums*,⁹² and I have let not a word be heard from me. Long explanations of why letters have not been written are usually just as little edifying for the recipient as for the writer. In this case, however, I must at least say a word. Your mailings encountered me in a time of great depression. When it then departed in the previous autumn, there came a time of restless work in which I pushed aside everything that did not imperiously demand to be completed, and this time is actually only just now coming to an end. This is no excuse. And the fact that I am a rather sluggish fellow is certainly not either. But I ask you to at least believe me that I *wanted* to thank you time and again and to grant me mitigating circumstances because of this.

It is probably self-evident that I have taken a most lively interest in all the things you sent. I took special delight in the anti-Blassian articles. Such observations as those on Acts 15⁹³ and Acts 11⁹⁴ appear to me to be of decisive importance in this controversial question. To the extent that it deals with the question of the age of the text, I also found the article on Acts 18⁹⁵ to be convincing. By contrast, insofar as it seconds the *probabilia* about the Letter to the Hebrews,⁹⁶ I cannot suppress doubt. About these *probabilia* I actually wanted to write to you in more detail: put openly and honestly, they have not become *probabilia* for me. I cannot go along with you already at the point where you have contact with Zahn⁹⁷ with respect to the addressees. I cannot regard the “letter” as a real letter at all, although this is the usual opinion today. And other points as well have not convinced me and also not caused me to waver in my previous opinion. I already cannot easily get over the general misgivings regarding the view that a woman is to have written this theological treatise.⁹⁸

⁹⁰ *Nachlass* Adolf von Harnack, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz.

⁹¹ W. Wrede, “Miscellen, 3. Bemerkungen zu Harnacks Hypothese über die Adresse des 1. Petrusbriefs,” *ZNW* 1 (1900): 75–85.

⁹² A. von. Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums. Sechzehn Vorlesungen vor Studierenden aller Facultäten im Wintersemester 1899/1900 an der Universität Berlin gehalten* (Leipzig: Heinrichs, 1900); idem, *Das Wesen des Christentums*, edited and commented on by T. Rendtorff (Gütersloh: Kaiser, 1999); idem, *What is Christianity? Lectures Delivered in the University of Berlin during the Winter Term 1899/1900*, trans. T. B. Saunders, 2nd ed., revised (London: Williams and Norgate, 1902).

⁹³ A. von. Harnack, “Das Aposteldecret (Act. 15, 29) und die Blass’sche Hypothese,” *SPAW* 1899, 150–76.

⁹⁴ A. von. Harnack, “Über den ursprünglichen Text Act. Apost. 11, 27, 28,” *SPAW* 1899, 316–27.

⁹⁵ A. von. Harnack, “Über die beiden Recensionen der Geschichte der Prisca und des Aquila in Act. Apost. 18, 1–27,” *SPAW* 1900, 2–13.

⁹⁶ A. von. Harnack, “Probabilia über die Adresse und den Verfasser des Hebräerbriefes,” *ZNW* 1 (1900): 16–41.

⁹⁷ T. Zahn, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, vol. 2, 2nd edition (Leipzig: Deichert, 1900), III–59.

⁹⁸ While Zahn gives preference to Luther’s hypothesis that Apollos wrote Hebrews, while ultimately affirming Origen’s view (in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.14.2–4) that only God knows the author (Zahn, *Einleitung*,

I especially wish to thank you for sending your lecturers on the nature of Christianity. The book has already had its history; it has become a sign that is opposed and yet also cheered. For me it has in a way renewed the hours in which I sat at your feet in Leipzig.⁹⁹ I have not merely read these speeches – no, I heard them, and in doing so had to experience how they affected those who were their first audience. With these words I can, in a certain sense, best indicate the impression that I received. I could not forget for a moment that you yourself confronted me in the thoughts that you express. The warmth of the whole, the personal character of so many remarks, the emotional dimension and the victorious tone had a special impact upon me, as did the pointing beyond knowledge, scholarship, and school. All this, however, also reminded me, after all, that I could not speak in this way, even if your language, your art, and your far-reaching overview of Christian history were given to me. I can feel this painfully, but I must accept it. And this is ultimately due to the fact that I see many things differently than you do. This will probably not surprise you to hear; you know it. Naturally, what you say about Jesus captivated me to a very special degree. I rejoice here over many agreements. But I also cannot deny that I cannot simply agree with respect to the whole. It will be difficult for me to unpack this in detail at the moment; I would first need to refresh the impressions by rereading. A few points, however, are clear to me. I am much more skeptical with respect to the Gospel tradition than you are, and for me the image of Jesus is thus covered by a veil in many respects. But apart from that, I do not quite believe that what you call the gospel¹⁰⁰ forms the characteristic content of the appearance of Jesus, nor that this gospel represents the actual core of the history that follows. I think that Christianity, as the historical power that it was, actually has still other essen-

152), Harnack traces back Hebrews to the married couple Aquila and Prisca and makes a case for Prisca as the author.

⁹⁹Wrede, who studied theology for three semesters in Leipzig (Michaelis 1877 to Easter 1879) increasingly turned, in the course of this time, to Harnack and the circle of friends gathered around him, where he found understanding for his fundamental doubt relating to his faith and vocation (cf. W. Wrede, "Lebenslauf in den 'Vitae Hospitum Luccensium' vom 3.9. 1884," in *Die Religionsgeschichtliche Schule. Eine Dokumentation*, ed. G. Lüdemann and M. Schröder [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987], 102–8). While Wrede visited a course taught by the young Privatdozent from Dorpat in each of his first two semesters, in his third and last semester in Leipzig he enrolled in three courses with Harnack. Harnack's lectures were distinguished by pedagogical sensitivity as well as by the clarity and substance of the presentation. While Harnack had contempt for rhetoric and lectures designed to bring about a desired effect, he nevertheless knew, according to the unanimous judgment of his former students, how to inspire his hearers for church and dogma history (cf. W. Bornemann, "Erinnerungen aus der Studienzeit," *Die Gemeinde* 10 (1911), [171–73, 180–82, 189–90, 196–98, 204–206, 212–14, 220–21, 227–29, 235–37, 243–44, 252–53, 259–60, 269–70, 275–77, 283–85, 292–93, 299–301, 308–309, 315–17, 323–24, 331–32, 337–39], 205; *Die Gemeinde* was founded by Pastor Battenberg and Superintendent Dr. Teichmann on behalf of the Protestant Association in Frankfurt am Main and edited by Pastor W. Veit in collaboration with Superintendent Dr. Bornemann and Pastor Dr. Foerster).

¹⁰⁰By gospel Harnack understands the preaching of Jesus, which encompasses three thematic circles, with each containing the whole proclamation (Harnack, *What is Christianity*, 55; GV = Harnack, *Wesen* 1900, 33; Harnack, *Wesen* 1999, 87):

"Firstly, the kingdom of God and its coming,

Secondly, God the Father and the infinite value of the human soul.

Thirdly, the higher righteousness and the commandment of love."

tial characteristics than you indicate, that cross and resurrection and supernaturalism have ultimately meant more here than the “gospel” itself. To this extent, I even find much that is accurate in the objections of your orthodox opponents, although they, if they would look honestly at the subject matter and not at school and party, would undoubtedly have to rejoice over the fact that your lectures are once again leading some, if not – according to *their* terms – *into* the sanctuary, then at least into its vicinity.

In the near future I hope to send you a gift in return, the fruit of my work since last October.¹⁰¹ It is not the work on 2 Thessalonians. It lies as good as finished in my desk for a year. It should also still come out; in what way is not yet entirely clear to me. Perhaps I will come back in some time with an enquiry for *Texte und Untersuchungen*.¹⁰² For now, the concern is with a piece of scholarship on the Gospels. I originally thought to bring it together with the study on 2 Thessalonians, but it has become a larger work, and it does not fit with the work on 2 Thessalonians. I do not dare to hope that the writing with its quite radical criticism will meet with your affirmation across the board, but I do hope that it will be of interest to you.

It must almost look like I have only written these lines to exonerate myself to you before sending you this work. In fact, it would indeed be unwelcome to me if you were to receive my work before I expressed my thanks to you. But I would have written to you even without sending it, probably much sooner. After all, I wanted to do so half a year ago and a year ago. This brings me back to the beginning. Warm greetings to you from your thankfully devoted W. Wrede.

¹⁰¹Wrede's book on the messianic secret (see note 2).

¹⁰²See notes 78 and 79 above.

9. [Letter of William Wrede to Wilhelm Ruprecht, Göttingen]

Breslau, Goethestr. 12
July 16, 1901

Very honored Sir Doctor!

I have just sent a self-review to D. Rade¹⁰³ and written to him that you had the intention, upon receipt of this message, to have a complimentary copy sent to him. I cannot say for sure whether Rade will accept the review. It would be possible that he could have misgivings due to the content. In any case, I wanted to do my part.

[...]

I am glad that the publication, according to your last lines, is now expected at the end of this week.¹⁰⁴ I hope to receive the rest of the proof-sheets already tomorrow. –

Now to the copies. I ask that you first send me twelve pieces here. The adjacent list of addresses provides information for the rest.

I ask that you would most kindly be willing to take over the task of sending these. Here, I am thinking everywhere of unbound copies.

Forgive the appearance of this paper. It came too close to the lamp.

In haste.

With best greetings

Your most devoted W. Wrede

1. Professor Lic. *A[lfred] Eichhorn* in Kiel, Lornsenstrasse 24 (please send him a copy as soon as possible)
2. Abt Professor Dr. H[ermann] Schultz, Göttingen, Geismar Str. 13
3. Prof. Dr. J[ulius] Wellhausen, Göttingen
4. Prof. Dr. [Emil] Schürer Göttingen
5. Prof. Dr. [Wilhelm] Bousset Göttingen
6. Professor Dr. [Adolf] Harnack, Berlin W. 50 Fasanenstr. (Rector of the University)
7. Professor Lic. H[ermann] Gunkel at the University of Berlin, Lorenzstr. 66
8. University Professor Dr. Oswald *Kölpe*, Würzburg
9. Oberlehrer Dr. Joh[annes] Geffcken, Hamburg-Hohenfelde, Ifflandstr. 55

¹⁰³Martin Rade, the editor of *Die Christliche Welt* (see note 35).

¹⁰⁴The letter of Wilhelm Ruprecht that accompanied the delivery of the free copies to Wrede is dated July 18, 1901 (Copy Book from June 5, 1901 – December 16, 1901, 119). The concluding sentence says: “However, you will ‘put your foot in it’ with many but the earnestness and dignity with which you present your conviction will be able to demand a calm evaluation.”

10. U. Professor Dr. E[rnst] Troeltsch, Heidelberg.
11. Professor Dr. F[riedrich] Loofs Halle a/S. Lafontaine str.
12. Prof. Dr. Ad[olf] Jülicher Marburg i. Hessen
13. Prof. Dr. Joh[annes] Weiss, Marburg i. Hessen
14. Prof. Dr. P[aul] Drews in Giessen
15. Prof. Dr. [Eduard] Grafe in Bonn ^a/Rh Kreuzbergerweg 5.
16. Prof. Dr. H[einrich] Julius Holtzmann, Strassburg ⁱ/E.
17. Prof. Dr. [Wilhelm] Bornemann, Basel
18. Prof. Lic. Paul Wernle, Basel
19. Pastor Stakemann, Wilstedt in Hannover.
20. Lic. Dr. [Hans] Lietzmann, Privatdozent at the University of Bonn ^a/Rh.
21. Prof. Dr. [Wilhelm] Baldensperger, Giessen
22. Cand. rev. min. Victor Falk Görbersdorf i. Schlesien (Sanatorium Dr. Römpler)
23. Pfarrer Lic. [Heinrich] Hackmann at the German Evangel[ical] Congregation in Shanghai (China)

10. [*William Wrede, Self-Review: Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien*]¹⁰⁵

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 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.

¹⁰⁵From W. Wrede, “Selbstanzeige: Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien,” *CbW* 15.34 (1901): 805–6 (previously translated as W. Wrede, “Self-Review of *The Messianic Secret*,” trans. W. Coppins, *AGNTS* 1 [2025], 1–2). The German term *Selbstanzeige* could also be translated with “Self-Announcement.”

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

II. [Letter of William Wrede to Wilhelm Ruprecht, Göttingen]

Breslau, Goethestr. 12,
July 21, 1901

Very honored Sir Doctor!

First, I thankfully confirm to you the receipt of the twelve complimentary copies along with the conclusion of the advance sheets and especially the sum of 520 marks 95 pfennig.

To this I add, after the whole is now completed, the expression of heartfelt thanks to you and your brother for the very worthy and attractive presentation of my writing, for the rapid production of the last part, and for the friendly accommodation that you have demonstrated to me in our negotiations. The course of things must, after all, teach us how the book will fare. My confidence is, in fact, not bad. I have not easily become so sure of my cause – with regard to the main things – in any literary publication as this time, as I, then also, have never before produced with such ease. That I will find no favor among our good orthodox (colleagues) is, of course, certain. Perhaps they will stir up the always desirable indignation of the ecclesial circles against me as well. I have therefore from the outset refrained from seeking a debate with this front. The fight for the general-scholarly principles is useless and only increases the bitterness. With people who work with scholarly presuppositions, however, I assume that it will not be so easy to shake my positions, and even if one has to concede only certain main points, then one recognizes thereby that my work has significance for scholarship. However, I would like to stop prophesying; I am certainly also preparing myself for opposition.

[...]

If you would like to do one last thing, then have a complimentary copy sent to the Academic-Theological Association in Göttingen,¹⁰⁶ of which I am an old member – I had to limit myself in the specification of the copies; otherwise I would have already mentioned it earlier.

With best greetings also to your brother and also from my wife

¹⁰⁶In 1878 an "Academic-Theological Association" (later "Thuringia") was established in Göttingen. Initially, it was open only to theologians. Its early members included Wrede and W. Bornemann (cf. A. Özen, "Die Göttinger Wurzeln der 'Religionsgeschichtlichen Schule,'" in *Die "Religionsgeschichtliche Schule." Facetten eines theologischen Umbruchs*, ed. G. Lüdemann, Studien und Texte zur religionsgeschichtlichen Schule I (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996), 23–64, here 41). In §1 of its bylaws, it is defined as "a fellowship of students of theology with the aim of common theological formation and the cultivation of friendly interaction," "in which one session each week was respectively devoted to the theologically scholarly portion and to the social portion" (Lüdemann/Schröder, *Die Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, 41–42). Wrede was the president of the association from summer 1880 to winter 1880/81 (cf. N. Janssen, *Theologie fürs Volk. Eine Untersuchung über den Einfluß der Religionsgeschichtlichen Schule auf die Popularisierung der theologischen Forschung vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des kirchlichen Liberalismus in der lutherischen Landeskirche Hannovers* [Göttingen: Söves, 1993], 17–18) and later was a member of the Altherren-association (*Geschichte der Thuringia* [1928], 8–9, 11).

I am

Your most devoted W. Wrede.

I can indeed ask you to send me reviews of my work that come to your attention as soon and as comprehensively as possible.

12. [Letter of William Wrede to Wilhelm Ruprecht, Göttingen]

Breslau XIII, Goethestr. 12

Dec[ember] 26, 1902

Very honored Sir Doctor!

I believe I wrote to you once before¹⁰⁷ that I wish to offer a small work on 2 Thessalonians to Harnack for "Texte und Untersuchungen." Since this work is being published in the coming days by Hinrichs,¹⁰⁸ I would like to take the opportunity beforehand to assure you explicitly that the publication in the Leipzig publishing house does not mean that I am turning away from you. Had I published the small book entirely for itself, then I would at least have offered the publication first to you. Decisive for me was simply that a collection such as "Texte und Untersuchungen" seemed to be the best place for such a work.

I would like to add another enquiry that I have already wanted to address to you for a longer amount of time. A number of discussions of my book (*Messiasgeheimnis*) have appeared, which have presumably not reached you because they are not exactly reviews in form, at least in part. Would you have any interest in looking at these discussions? I would send them to you with pleasure, with the request that you obligingly return them. As far as I can see, the following remarks would come into consideration:¹⁰⁹

1. *The Inquirer*, review of J. H. Weatherall¹¹⁰ (acknowledging, but without special significance)
2. *Theol[ogisch] Tijdschrift*, longer review from [G. A.] van den Bergh van Eysinga¹¹¹ (quite favorable)
3. Four anonymous articles of the *Allgemeine evangelisch-lutherischen Kirchenzeitung*¹¹² (delivered in a manner that is indeed fair and in a certain respect more affirming than was to be expected; not, of course, in agreement in the main thing)
4. An article by Oskar Holzmann in the New Testament journal against my book¹¹³
5. A Lecture by Oskar Holzmann against my book¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁷Cf. Wrede's letter to W. Ruprecht from April 11, 1901 (see Document 6 above).

¹⁰⁸J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, Leipzig.

¹⁰⁹Possibly Wrede had kept a part of the following discussions of W. Bousset, which emerges from his letter to Bousset from March 16, 1903 (Cod. Ms. W. Bousset 143:5, Niedersächsische Staats- u. Universitätsbibliothek, Göttingen): "Here, I also reach back to thank you for your article on my book, which you sent me and which naturally was of lively interest to me."

¹¹⁰J. H. Weatherall, "The Messianic Secret in the Gospels," *The Inquirer: A Weekly Journal of Liberal Religious Thought and Life* 61 (1902): 713–15.

¹¹¹G. A. van den Bergh van Eysinga, "Review of W. Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien*," *ThT* 36 (1902): 464–79.

¹¹²Anonymous Authors, "Das Zeugnis der Evangelien von der Messianität Jesu im Feuer der allerneuesten Kritik," *Allgemeine evangelisch-lutherische Kirchenzeitung* 35 (1902): 698–700, 722–25, 746–50, 770–72.

¹¹³O. Holzmann, "Der Messiasglaube Jesu," *ZNW* 2 (1901): 265–74.

¹¹⁴O. Holzmann, *Das Messiasbewusstsein Jesu und seine neueste Bestreitung. Vortrag* (Giessen: J. Ricker [Alfred Töpelmann], 1902).

6. An article by [Willy] Staerk in the *Protestantische Monatsheften*¹¹⁵ (stands on my side)
7. An article in the *Protestantenblatt*¹¹⁶ (not the criticism received earlier) (for me against O. Holtzmann)
8. An article by [Paul] Wernle in *Kirchenblatt für die refor[mierte] Schweiz*¹¹⁷ (adopts a rejecting stance toward much but speaks of my book as a whole in extremely acknowledging words at the end).

Perhaps it is, however, also enough for you that I mention these articles here or perhaps you want the one or the other. I certainly do not wish to convey the expectation that you read through them all.

In response to a request from the editor of the New Testament journal,¹¹⁸ I intend soon to defend myself against my critics.¹¹⁹ For precisely this reason I would perhaps have to request back what was sent to you soon. I will allow myself the time to let the article come to you.

With best greetings and wishes for the new year, also for your brother.

Your very devoted W. Wrede.

¹¹⁵W. Staerk, "Jesu Stellung zum jüdischen Messiasbegriff," *PrM* 6 (1902): 297–309.

¹¹⁶H. J. Holtzmann, "Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien," *PrBl* 35 (1902): 41–43 (abbreviated version of H. J. Holtzmann, "Review of Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien," *GGA* 1901 nr. 12 [1901]: 265–74).

¹¹⁷P. Wernle, "Hat Jesus sich für den Messias gehalten und ausgegeben?" *KBRs NF* 17 (1902): 183–84, 187–89.

¹¹⁸Edwin Preuschen (January 8, 1867 – May 25, 1920) established in 1900 the *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* (ZNW), which he edited until his death.

¹¹⁹There appeared only W. Wrede, "Zur Messiaserkenntnis der Dämonen bei Markus. Eine Erwiderung," *ZNW* 5 (1904): 169–77, in which Wrede engaged critically with Weiß 1903. This may also be connected to the state of Wrede's health. In his letter to W. Bousset from March 16, 1903 (see note 109), Wrede noted with respect to the article on his book on the messianic secret that Bousset sent him: "Unfortunately, I am also to date still not in a condition that animates me to discuss it in greater detail." And in the same letter, Wrede excuses his late thanks for the work of Bousset he received: "I have not been well the whole semester, I was quite down due to a nervous heart condition and too depressed to work on anything other than the daily requirement." Further remarks on Wrede's illness can be found in his letter to Adolf Jülicher from August 4, 1903 (*Nachlass* Adolf Jülicher, Ms. 695/1190, UB Marburg).

13. [Letter of William Wrede to Heinrich Weinle,¹²⁰ Bonn]¹²¹

Breslau XIII, Goethestr. 12,
Jan[uary] 31, 1903

Very esteemed Sir colleague!

Excuse me kindly that I have made you wait fourteen days for an answer. For a longer period of time I have been under the weather. While I do not have a serious illness, I nevertheless suffer from a nervous heart palpitation and as a result am so tired that I, except for the lecture hours, cannot work at all, at times must lie in bed during the day, etc. etc. Thus, it happens that my correspondence also suffers greatly, and I necessarily postpone letters, against my will, from day to day.

This is, at the same time, my answer with respect to your enquiry concerning Kalthoff.¹²² I can understand your considerations very well, but in the next months I cannot count on being able to carry out the work. Therefore, it appears to me, in any case, important not to take on the review.

Apart from that, I should believe that the book will not make a very big impression in the circles of *Die Christliche Welt*. It is, however, otherwise on the periphery of these circles.

I have read the small book and also read that I, too, must support Kalthoff as compurgator,¹²³ in the same way as Steudel¹²⁴ in *Das freie Wort*.¹²⁵

¹²⁰Born on April 29, 1874, in Vonhausen (Wetterau); 1899 private lecturer in Berlin; 1900 private lecturer and Inspector of the Protestant theological seminary in Bonn; 1904 secondary professor for New Testament in Jena; 1907 full professor for New Testament in Jena, since 1925 for systematic theology; died on September 29, 1936, in Jena.

¹²¹*Nachlass* Heinrich Weinle, Kasten 7b, Bl. 97r–98v, Thüringer Universitäts- u. Landesbibliothek Jena.

¹²²A. Kalthoff, *Das Christus-Problem. Grundlinien zu einer Sozialtheologie* (Leipzig: Eugen Diederichs, 1902). Albert Kalthoff (born on March 5, 1850, in Wuppertal-Barmen; 1874 assistant preacher in Berlin and thereafter pastor in Nickern [Südbrandenburg]; 1878 removed from office; 1879 founding of the "Protestant Reform Association" in Berlin; 1884–1888 pastor in Rheinfelden [Aargau/Schweiz]; from 1888 to his death [May 11, 1906, in Bremen] pastor in the Bremer Martinigemeinde); along with Oskar Mauritz and Friedrich Steudel, founded the direction of theological radicalism that was able to influence individual Bremer congregations in a lasting way. Kalthoff's transition from theological liberalism to an idealistic monism expressed itself in the assumption of the chairmanship in the German Monists Association founded in 1906 (cf. L. Zscharnack, "Kalthoff, Albert," *RGG*² 3 (1929), 592–93; G. Huntemann, "Kalthoff, Albert," *RGG*³ 3 (1959), 1102–3; J. Mehlhausen and D. Dunkel, "Monismus/Monistenbund," *TRE* 23 (1994), 212–19, here 215–16. Kalthoff "denied the historical existence of Jesus and understood the emergence of the Christ mythos as a sublimated expression of social and ethical powers and tensions of the Roman imperial period" (Huntemann, "Kalthoff," 1103).

¹²³Cf. Kalthoff, *Das Christus-Problem*, 39, 72–73.

¹²⁴Born on September 27, 1866, in Tuttlingen (Württemberg); 1891 pastor in Maienfels in Weinsberg; 1896 removed from office; 1897–1933 pastor at St. Remberti in Bremen; died on November 9, 1939, in Bremen. "Closely connected to the 'Bremer radicals' Kalthoff, [Richard Adelbert] Lipsius, [Emil Jakob] Felden, and [Oskar] Mauritz, [Steudel] strived, with a radical abandonment of the biblical-dogmatic foundations of Christianity, for a modern world-picture also in the church. With A[rthur] Drews he advocated a mythological understanding of Christianity and came into conflict thereover also with liberal theology" (H. Hohlwein, "Steudel, Friedrich," *RGG*³ 6 (1962), 364–65).

¹²⁵Cf. F. Steudel, "Das Leben Jesu Christi [Review of K. Furrer, *Vorträge über das Leben Jesu Christi*, 1902]," *Das freie Wort. Frankfurter Halbjahreszeitschrift für Fortschritt auf allen Gebieten des geistigen Lebens*

I admit that I am probably more disposed than other readers in relation to a series of comments in detail. But this does not hinder me from rejecting the whole. In any case, this criticism completely loses the ground beneath its feet and in the explanation of the things that are available is ultimately superficial and amateurish.

With great interest I read of your struggles in Solingen.¹²⁶ Truly from the heart, I wish that your openness and your courage may not make the path in your career all too difficult.

With heartfelt greetings in genuine high regard

Your W. Wrede

2 (1902/03): 30–31, here 30: “Since the Markan tradition still permits the recognition of something like historical development, they [sc. individual theologians] overestimate the historical value of this Gospel, whose meagerness and unreliability in this direction has recently been convincingly demonstrated by Wrede” (*Das frei Wort* was founded by C. Saenger and edited by M. Henning).

¹²⁶Weinel, “in order to regain the non-churched, especially the educated, starting from Bonn, ... in Solingen, Aachen, Cologne, and other locales, delivered apologetic lectures with an open presentation of the critical results of theology and thereby prompted fierce opposition from church authorities and yet also a strengthening of the movement of the ‘Friends of Ev[an]g[elical] Freedom in Rheinland and Westfalen” (A. Meyer, “Weinel, Heinrich,” *RGZ* 5 [1931], 1798). In the *Allgemeine evangelisch-lutherische Kirchenzeitung* from Nov 28, 1902 (*AELKZ* 35, nr. 48, 1160–1161), one could read: “In the casino to Solingen the private lecturer Lic. Dr. Weinel of Bonn gave a lecture on Oct 29, the first of a series of lectures, on ‘Dav[id] Friedr[ich] Strauß and the criticism of the Life of Jesus.’ The lecturer uncompromisingly professed views which are not far removed from those that Strauß once advocated. He disputes the supernatural origin of Jesus, the historicity of his miracles, his resurrection on the third day, the soteriological significance of his death. One of the Protestant pastors took the opportunity to speak a serious word on the subject in the Reformation feast sermon on Nov 2. Lic. Weinel replied in the ‘Solinger Zeitung’ and challenged the pastor to confront him ‘eye to eye.’ Thus, on Nov 12, after Weinel gave his second lecture on ‘Renan[’s Life of Jesus and Liberalism],’ there was a proper disputation, in which Lic. Weinel experienced that the Solinger blades are sharp.” Cf. H. Weinel, *Die Nichtkirchlichen und die freie Theologie. Meine Vorträge in Solingen, ihre Gegner und ihre Freunde* (Tübingen/Leipzig: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1903).

14. [Postcard of William Wrede to Paul Wernle,¹²⁷ Basel]¹²⁸

Breslau XIII, Goethestr. 12

July 26, 1903

Very esteemed Sir colleague!

Before another small work¹²⁹ comes into your hands, which my publisher is to send you, which for you, to be sure, says nothing new, I would like to thank you warmly both for your review of my work¹³⁰ and for your study on the kingdom of God.¹³¹ If the thanks comes so late, this is mainly due to the fact that my health has not been very good for a long time. I read, of course, your review with anticipation, though I naturally also marked it with some question marks. Occasionally you have reproduced my argument somewhat differently than it is. You say I denied all historical value to Peter's confession. This is, however, not, in fact, correct. It is not mere form when I ultimately hold back with my judgment about this. I wanted to place a powerful question mark. I do not entirely understand your comment on the quite cautionary example of my tendency criticism (Tendenzkritik) of Mark 10.13. I precisely do not bring Mark 10.13 into connection with the messianic secret (p. 279). Presumably you mean Mark 9.36?¹³² (p. 134). But there too I have not said anything about the value of this feature but only indicated that it does not fit the situation. But I must unfortunately break off. I add only that the tone of your review made me very glad.¹³³ – I can unfortunately not yet make a proper judgment about your work on the kingdom of God since I have been able to read it only in a cursory manner thus far. The approach of tackling the individual Gospels seems expedient to me – alongside other approaches. I had misgivings against that which you call the "presence" of the kingdom of God and what you say about its identity with the church¹³⁴ appears at the very least open to misunderstanding. In the Spring I was briefly in Basel and would have liked to have visited you. Unfortunately, I could not do so then due to the state of my health.

Heartfelt thanks and heartfelt greetings from your W. Wrede.

¹²⁷Born on May 1, 1872, in Zürich; 1897 private lecturer in Basel; 1900 full professor for New Testament in Basel, since 1901 for church history in Basel; died on April 11, 1939, in Basel.

¹²⁸*Nachlass* Paul Wernle IIIB 208, 4. Öffentliche Bibliothek der Universität Basel.

¹²⁹W. Wrede, *Charakter und Tendenz des Johannevangeliums*, SGV 37 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1903). (= W. Wrede, *Vorträge und Studien*, ed. A. Wrede [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1907], 178–231; for an English translation, see Wrede, *Lectures and Studies*).

¹³⁰Wernle, "Hat Jesus sich für den Messias gehalten und ausgegeben?" (see note 117)

¹³¹P. Wernle, *Die Reichgotteshoffnung in den ältesten christlichen Dokumenten und bei Jesus* (Tübingen/Leipzig: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1903).

¹³²The verse specification appears to be a mistake by Wrede; he presumably means Mark 9.33.

¹³³Cf. Wernle's conclusion (Wernle, "Hat Jesus sich für den Messias gehalten und ausgegeben?" 189): "Thus, it will probably provisionally remain the view, despite the brilliant attack of Wrede, that the messianic faith that gave Christianity its name goes back to Jesus himself. I gladly add that Wrede's book possesses a plethora of characteristics that secure its place in the very first rows of theological writings. It is a work no one will lay down without thankfulness since it deals with an important subject in a great, worthy way."

¹³⁴Cf. Wernle, *Reichgotteshoffnung*, 3–4, 6, 9–10, 19–21, 23–24, 37–38, 46–49, 51–52.

15. [Letter of William Wrede to Rudolf Otto,¹³⁵ Göttingen]¹³⁶

Breslau XIII, Goethestr. 12
December 27, 1903

Esteemed Sir colleague!

Your letter surprised me this morning to a great degree; it was, however, also a great joy, if also only τῇ ἐλπίδι; for I would like to warmly welcome you here.

Thus, initially, with regard to your person, I know to this day nothing at all. In the faculty there has not yet been able to be talk of a successor, since for the time being we know nothing certain about Schulze's¹³⁷ departure. Whether a confidant from the faculty – then probably Kawerau¹³⁸ – is better informed is beyond my knowledge.

I believe that Schulze is seriously considered for Königsberg. Two enquires about him have come here from the faculty there and, as far as I know, favorably answered. In addition, the arrangement Stange¹³⁹ – Greifswald, Schulze – Königsberg (as extra[ordinary] or ord[inary] [professor]?), which admittedly came from the side of Elster,¹⁴⁰ had already been suggested to Kaw[erau] during the general synod. It thus appears to be happening and presumably relatively soon.

I share with you another thing, which I, as everything else, ask you to regard as confidential information. After the professorship of Hahn¹⁴¹ was brought to an end by his death, we had sent a suggestion to Berlin, which started from the assumption that it did not concern a “New Test[ament]” Professor (I did not at that time actually receive the New Test[ament] position). Now Stöcker,¹⁴² at the general synod (in the

¹³⁵Born on September 25, 1869, in Peine (province Hannover); 1892/1893 vicar in the German congregation in Cannes; 1895–1897 inspector of the theological seminary (Stift) in Göttingen; 1904 secondary professor for philosophy of religion in Göttingen, 1913 representative of the democratic party in the Prussian House of Representatives, 1915 full professor for systematic theology in Breslau, 1917 in Marburg as successor of W. Hermann, 1929 pensioned due to illness, died on March 6, 1937, in Marburg.

¹³⁶*Nachlass* Rudolf Otto, Ms. 797/839, UB Marburg.

¹³⁷Martin Schulze (born on January 26, 1866, in See [Oberlausitz]; 1893 private lecturer in Breslau; 1899 secondary professor in Breslau; since 1904 full professor in Königsberg; died in 1943.

¹³⁸Gustav Kawerau (born on February 25, 1847, in Bunzlau [Schlesien]; 1871 pastor in Langheinersdorf [Neumark], 1876 in Klenzing; 1882 professor and spiritual inspector of the candidate seminary in Magdeburg, 1886 full professor for practical theology in Kiel, 1893 in Breslau; 1894 member of the consistory in Breslau; 1907 full honorary professor of church history and practical theology and provost in Berlin; died December 1, 1918, in Berlin.

¹³⁹Carl Stange (born on March 7, 1870, in Hamburg; 1895 private lecturer in Halle on the Salle; 1903 secondary professor for systematic theology in Königsberg; 1904 full professor in Greifswald, 1912 in Göttingen; 1935 retirement as emeritus professor; died on December 5, 1959, in Göttingen.

¹⁴⁰Ludwig Elster (born on March 26, 1856, in Frankfurt am Main; literature historian; 1880 private lecturer in Halle on the Salle; 1883 secondary professor in Aachen, 1883 in Königsberg; 1887 full professor in Breslau; 1897–1916 presiding councilor in the Prussian ministry of education and cultural affairs; 1922 honorary professor in Jena; died on Dec 30, 1935, in Jena.

¹⁴¹Ludwig Hahn (born in 1823 in Königsberg; 1848 private lecturer; 1857 secondary professor, 1867 full professor in Breslau; died in 1903.

¹⁴²Adolf Stroecker (born on December 11, 1835, in Halberstadt; 1874–1890 court preacher in Berlin; 1877 leadership in the city mission; 1878 founding of the Christian-social worker party, as main pillar of the

commission) of Prussian lecturers, had, alongside Weinel,¹⁴³ used me in particular (due to my messianic secret) as a paradigm. After this a message from the ministry came to Kawerau that we would be asked to make new proposals and that they wished that the ended professorship for New Testament would be “retained,” and that, alongside me, a positive lecturer would be called. I mention this because I do not regard it as entirely excluded that you could be asked whether you also want to read New Testament. For it had been thought that if Schulze departed, it would be best to propose someone who could read dogmatics and New Testament *concurrently*. I would like only to note that if you have no misgivings from your side about accepting a possible contract to share in the New Testament lectures, then nothing would stand in the way from my side at any rate. I do not, however, think such a query is likely in your case; for while suitable to be the professor, you will nevertheless not yet be good enough to be the punitive professor.¹⁴⁴ Most likely, in addition to the replacement for Schulze,¹⁴⁵ a full professor for New Testament or, after all, a secondary professor will be called¹⁴⁶ in order to blow out the light of life for me here.

[...]

Precisely for the sake of our students, I would be extremely pleased if you came here. This is not to say only for the sake of our students. In the first place, I think even of myself. I am, after all, isolated here, and a fresh, free conversation with a professional colleague is one of the rarities for me. I believe that you would also have a task there, although at present our number of listeners is quite modest (in total ca. sixty theolo-

antisemitic-conservative movement; 1879–1898 member of the Prussian state parliament; 1881–1883 and 1898–1908 member of the German Reichstag; 1890–1896 participation in Protestant Social Congress; died on February 7, 1909, in Gries in Bozen, buried in Berlin).

¹⁴³See note 120 above.

¹⁴⁴A consequence of the Apostolicum Controversy was that the Prussian ministry of culture established “another professorship as a counterweight against Harnack’s teaching activity in the Berlin theological faculty,” “which was filled with a theologian of the orthodox direction [namely in 1893 with Adolf Schlatter]” (see Agnes von Zahn-Harnack, *Der Apostolikumsstreit des Jahres 1892 und seine Bedeutung für die Gegenwart* [Marburg: N. G. Elwert, 1950], 7). “... Here the unwelcome word ‘Strafprofessor’ (punitive professor) cropped up for the first time” (Zahn-Harnack, *Apostolikumsstreit*, 7). Since then, use had been made of the establishment of such a punitive professor, namely in that one “placed an orthodox colleague with the same or similar teaching assignment alongside an unwanted or suspect professor” (Bornemann, “Erinnerungen aus der Studienzeit,” 213).

¹⁴⁵The successor of M. Schulze was Friedrich Kropatscheck (born in 1875 in Wismar; 1899 private lecturer in Greifswald) in 1904 initially as secondary professor and after 1907 as full professor of systematic theology. By contrast, R. Otto, on the basis of his work *Leben und Wirken Jesu nach historisch-kritischer Auffassung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901 [31902]), was regarded as liberal and was therefore rejected by the consistory in Berlin for Breslau as secondary professor (cf. C. H. Ratschow, “Rudolf Otto,” *TRE* 25 (1995), 559–563, here 559). In 1915 Otto finally received the third chair for systematic theology in Breslau with special teaching assignment for philosophy of religion, which Georg Wobermin had held first from 1907 to 1915 (cf. G. Hoffmann, “Breslau II. Universität.” *RGG*² 1 (1927), 1246–1249, here 1249).

¹⁴⁶The successor of Wrede in Breslau was the conservative New Testament scholar Paul Feine (born on September 9, 1859, in Golmsdorf in Jena; 1884 preparatory school teacher in Jena, 1889 in Göttingen; 1893 private lecturer for New Testament in Göttingen; 1894 full professor in Vienna, 1907 in Breslau, 1910 in Halle on the Salle; died on August 31, 1933, in Halle on the Salle), who declared the “history of religions” picture of primitive Christianity to be a distorted picture (cf. W. G. Kümmel, *Das Neue Testament. Geschichte der Erforschung seiner Probleme*, 2nd ed., OA III/3 [Freiburg im Breisgau: Karl Alber, 1970], 407).

gians). The collegial relationships among the different faculties are not bad here. At any rate, the gradation by the various ranks does not stand out unpleasantly.

[...]

Warm greetings from my wife. I am happily at your disposal for other possible questions.

Your devoted W. Wrede

16. [Letter of William Wrede to Friedrich Loofs,¹⁴⁷ Halle on the Salle, undated (end of 1903)]¹⁴⁸

Breslau, Goethestr. 12

Dear Friend!

I wish to thank you warmly for your lines. I had not expected that my letter would gladden you, and thus your letter did not bring me disappointment. By contrast, I can only say that such an honest addressing of existing differences is infinitely dearer to me than an announcement of more far-reaching agreement in which one feels personally offended by the fact that another person takes the liberty of denying one's own views (i.e., those of the offended party) the affirmation they deserve. I also grant you entirely and with inner approval the right to condemn my views with sharpness in relation to students. After all, I also assume this right in relation to views such as yours. Again, you will not, I believe, hold it against me that your letter reminded me of "the apologetic figs from critical thistles" – you yourself once mentioned the saying to me.

Apart from that, only one more thing. From my current standpoint, I would not at all be averse to recognizing the possibility of better tradition in John – if only John itself were different in character. For me the dilemma Synoptics or John exists at all only in a very restricted sense.¹⁴⁹ It is indeed possible that neither of them is correct in the differences between them. I reckon indeed very seriously with the possibility that the real knowledge of the events has been altogether lost in important points. In my opinion, one cannot gain a clear picture of how Jesus' death really came about from the four Gospels, and I do not at all want to take into consideration the question of the messianic claim of Jesus here.

But enough. I actually wanted only to say that I do feel the pulse of old friendship¹⁵⁰ in your letter and that I know myself to be bound to you in the same disposi-

¹⁴⁷See note 47.

¹⁴⁸*Nachlass* Friedrich Loofs, MS Yi 19 IX, 3558, Universitäts- u. Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt in Halle on the Salle.

¹⁴⁹Cf. Wrede, *Messianic Secret*, 144–45 (GV = Wrede, *Messiasgeheimnis*, 144–45): "I am naturally not thinking of eliminating the difference between him and John. It is undoubtedly a very great one. ... However, the relationship (*Verwandschaft*) in principle is far greater than is commonly supposed, simply because Mark too is already very far removed from the actual life of Jesus and is dominated by views of a dogmatic kind. If we look at Mark through a large magnifying glass, it may well be that we find a type of authorship such as exhibited in John." On the difference between the Gospel of John and the Synoptics for Wrede, see Wrede, *Charakter und Tendenz des Johannesevangeliums*, 4–9 (= Wrede, *Vorträge und Studien*, 181–85; for an English translation, see Wrede, *Lectures and Studies*); W. Wrede, *Die Entstehung der Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, Lebensfragen 18 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1907), 61–66.

¹⁵⁰Loofs and Wrede were student colleagues in Leipzig (WS 1877/1878) and belonged to the closer circle of friends around Harnack, which also included Rade and Bornemann (cf. Agnes von Zahn-Harnack, *Adolf von Harnack*, 2nd ed. [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1951], 49). Here "there was a glorious give and take that was unforgettable for all participants, a time of the first love, surrounded by all the splendor of youth, friendship, and the Spirit" (von Zahn-Harnack, *Adolf von Harnack*, 49). In Göttingen, Loofs and Wrede studied together in summer semester 1879 and winter semester 1879/1880 and were both members of the academic-theological association (cf. Özen, "Die Göttinger Wurzeln der 'Religionsgeschichtlichen Schule,'" 42–43).

tion. If our thoughts diverge widely in important, indeed solemn questions, so widely that the connection appears to cease entirely, I still maintain that we nevertheless have a common basis of feeling and thus, as little as I share your views, so firmly do I believe in the earnestness with which you represent them and in the fact that you never seek your own in them but the subject matter.

Warmly

Your W. Wrede

I would also like to say that seeing you again in April was a genuine joy. My best greetings to your esteemed wife; my wife returns most kindly that of yours.

17. [Letter of William Wrede to Adolf von Harnack, Berlin]¹⁵¹

Breslau XIII Goethestr. 12

Jan[uary] 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. 1,¹⁵² pp. 89–90 [ET = 93–94].¹⁵³ However, on p. 88 [ET = 92], I would make 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.

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

¹⁵¹ *Nachlass* Adolf von Harnack, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz. Previously translated as W. Wrede, “Letter to Adolf von Harnack on Jesus as Messiah and Paul as a New Beginning,” trans. W. Coppins, *AGNTS* 1 (2025): 3–6.

¹⁵² A. 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).

¹⁵³ Cf., e.g., Harnack, *Lehrbuch der 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 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.

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 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

18. [Letter of William Wrede to Gustav and Wilhelm Ruprecht, Göttingen]

Breslau XIII Goethestr. 12

February 18, 1906

Very honored Sirs!

Extremely piled up work has kept me from answering you until now.¹⁵⁴ I have also only recently been able to make the requested literature specifications to the bookshop of Groos in Heidelberg.

Unfortunately, I am far from being able to hold out the prospect of the publication of a "History of the Primitive Christian Religion and Theology."¹⁵⁵ For this, many preliminary works and long years will still be needed and for the time being I have not yet directly worked toward it, even though the goal floats before my eyes.

I have begun to develop another work, but for the time being I have been heavily interrupted by the dean's duties, which I have to manage this year. The theme is "Jesus as Son of David."¹⁵⁶ The work should be 4–5 folded sheets long, but I cannot yet estimate the size with certainty. I will possibly attach a series of other studies that will

¹⁵⁴In his letter from January 30, 1906 (Copy Book I from January 25, 1906, 9) Wilhelm Ruprecht had asked Wrede "whether the 'Geschichte der urchristlichen Religion' (History of the Primitive Christian Religion) had progressed" or whether he had "written something else in the meantime," "which is close to completion and suitable for publication in book form," and the brother Gustav Ruprecht already wrote on the next day (ibid., 14): "[...] Scarcely had our letter of yesterday left for you when we received J. C. B. Mohr's advance notice of the 'Handbuch zum Neuen Testament' ('Handbook to the New Testament'), edited by [Hans] Lietzmann, in which a presentation of 'Hellenistic-Roman Culture' is also planned as the third part of the first volume. An author for this part has not yet been named. That would make it even better if your '*urchristliche Religionsgeschichte*' (History of Primitive Christian Religion) were also soon to be expected. What do you think about the plan of the 'Handbuch'? Only one New Testament scholar involved! Niebergall's concluding volume appears to me to be a special point of attraction for pastors. [...]"

Wrede had first announced the project of a history of primitive Christian religion in the publishing correspondence with Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht in his letter to Carl Ruprecht from July 1, 1897 (Verlagsarchiv Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen), i.e., only ten days after submitting the manuscript *Über Aufgabe und Methode der sogenannten Neutestamentliche Theologie* (ET = "The Task and Methods of 'New Testament Theology'"; see note 69): "Will I ever write a New Testament Theology according to my program? The goal floats before my eyes, but much water will have to flow down the Leine and the Oder before it will be achieved."

¹⁵⁵On March 24, 1900, Wrede had already answered a related query regarding the realization of his programmatic writing from 1897: "I can, however, only respond that the history of primitive Christian religion is still a long way off. However, I do wish to write one someday, but with the nature of the task I can only accomplish it after many, many years. Such a work can only be a kind of culmination of a life's work, since most of the preliminary studies still need to be done."

¹⁵⁶Posthumously published in Wrede, *Vorträge und Studien*, 147–77 (for an English translation, see Wrede, *Lectures and Studies*). Reference may be made to the editorial foreword (p. 147): "The article 'Jesus als Davidsohn' arose from a lecture that was delivered on April 18, 1904, in Breslau on the occasion of the opening of the Protestant-theological section of the Vaterländische Gesellschaft für schlesische Kultur [the correct name is Schlesische Gesellschaft für väterlandische Cultur]. The emphasis lay predominantly on the second part ['II. The Contestation of the Davidic Sonship in Oldest Christianity']; the first part ['I. The Historicity of the Tradition of the Davidic Lineage of Jesus'] was only treated briefly. But when Professor Kawerau turned especially against the first part in an opposing lecture, which was soon published (see G. Kawerau, "Jesu Davidsohnschaft Wahrheit oder Dichtung?" *Deutsch-evangelische Blätter* 29 [NF 4] [1904]: 591–606),

also all circle around the messianic question; or at least a portion of the studies that I would like to write for this, so that a book of ca. 200 pages would then emerge. In any case, when I'm ready, I would offer you the manuscript. I ask that you please treat these communications as strictly confidential in relation to everyone.

The new plan for the Lietzmannian undertaking¹⁵⁷ surprised me. Volume I will bring a desirable enrichment to the literature; vols. II–IV must justify themselves through their quality. Vol. V will, however, attract practical scholars. On the whole, I fear that there is quite an abundance of such undertakings at present.

Would you not want to organize a new printing of the apparatus to the Wettsteinian New Testament,¹⁵⁸ which is held in increasingly high esteem? In the end, the text of the New Testament itself does not need to be printed; only the content-related parallels that are under the text. At present, one cannot obtain Wettstein for less than 60–70 marks second-hand. I do not turn a blind eye, however, to whether this would be profitable in terms of sales.¹⁵⁹ In any case, such an edition would have a lasting value.

It would even be much better if an up-to-date replacement of Wettstein could be undertaken.¹⁶⁰ A *Novum Testam[entum] Graece parallelis illustratum* (Greek New

the author undertook a reworking of the lecture into a treatise, in which precisely the first part experienced a substantial reshaping and expansion, whereas the second part remained almost unchanged. This reworking was not entirely completed – specifically, notes were intended to be added here and there; it was, however, completed to such an extent that the article in its present form probably comes very close to what the author intended to give it.”

¹⁵⁷According to the original plan of the “Handbuch zum Neuen Testament” (publisher J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck]), “the first volume is to contain the grammar of [Ludwig] Rademacher as well as two other parts worked on by Paul Wendland: ‘The Primitive Christian Literature Forms’ and ‘The Hellenistic-Roman Culture.’ All the Gospels were to be explained by E[rich] Klostermann (in the Synoptics with the collaboration of H[ugo] Großmann) in volume 2, in volume 3 the Pauline Hauptbriefe by [Hans] Lietzmann, ‘the nine remaining Pauline letters’ by Lietzmann and Klostermann together, likewise in volume 4 Acts, Catholic Letters, Hebrews, and Revelation. Thus, the whole exegetical part of the handbook was to be handled solely by Lietzmann and Klostermann. In a fifth volume a ‘Practical Interpretation of the New Testament’ was then to be offered, namely by F[riedrich] Niebergall” (Aland, *Glanz und Niedergang der deutschen Universität*, 30).

¹⁵⁸J. J. Wettstein, *Novum Testamentum Graecum editionis receptae cum lectionibus variantibus ... nec non commentario pleniore ex scriptoribus veteribus Hebraeis, Graecis et Latinis*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam: Dommer, 1751/1752). A new printing of the whole work followed in 1962 by Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, Graz.

¹⁵⁹On the letter there is a marginal note in pencil from the publisher: “Answer. A reprint is excluded by the size.” On this, see also note 161 below.

¹⁶⁰In the present, Wrede’s idea is, in fact, being implemented: *Neuer Wettstein. Texte zum Neuen Testament aus Griechentum und Hellenismus* (Berlin: de Gruyter). Thus far, volumes II/1 and 2 (Epistles and Revelation, 1996), I/2 (John, 2001), I/1.1 (Mark, 2008), and I/1.2-1 and I/1.2-2 (Matthew, 2013/2022): have been published. See G. Strecker and U. Schnelle, in collaboration with G. Sellig, eds., *Neuer Wettstein. Texte zum Neuen Testament aus Griechentum und Hellenismus*, vol. II/1 and 2: *Texte zur Briefliteratur und zur Johannesapokalypse* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996); U. Schnelle, in collaboration with M. Labahn and M. Lang, *Neuer Wettstein. Texte zum Neuen Testament aus Griechentum und Hellenismus*, vol. I/2: *Texte zum Johannesevangelium* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001); U. Schnelle, in collaboration with M. Labahn and M. Lang, *Neuer Wettstein. Texte zum Neuen Testament aus Griechentum und Hellenismus*, vol. I/1.1: *Texte zum Markusevangelium* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008); U. Schnelle, collaboration with M. Lang, *Neuer Wettstein. Texte zum Neuen Testament aus Griechentum und Hellenismus*, vol. I/1.2-1: *Texte zum Matthäusevangelium. Matthäus 1–10* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013); U. Schnelle and M. Lang, *Neuer Wettstein. Texte zum Neuen Testament aus*

Testament illustrated with parallels) that would preserve the valuable material from Wettstein and include rich additions from the literature of apocalyptic and of other kinds that have become known in the meantime would be a true gift to every theologian who works in a scholarly manner on the New Testament in all countries. To be sure, it would not be the work of a single person to create this; it would require time until it would be finished; this would not be able to be achieved without great expenditures. The idea has often come to me, and I would like to express it for once on this occasion; I know, of course, very well that such a thing is easily thought but not so easily thought through in terms of possibility and practical implementation. Please understand this remark in that sense. In any case, such a book would be a commentary work on the New Testament of unique value.¹⁶¹

With devoted greetings,

Your W. Wrede

Griechentum und Hellenismus, vol. I/1.2-2: *Texte zum Matthäusevangelium. Matthäus 11–28* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2022).

¹⁶¹Gustav Ruprecht answered Wrede's letter on March 12, 1906 (Copy Book I from January 25, 1906, 168): "[...] Forgive me that I answer your friendly writing from February 18 only today. Soon after its arrival I embarked on a business trip that led me also to Prof. [Adolf] Deissmann in Heidelberg and to Prof. [Johannes] Weiss in Marburg. With both I wanted, however, to speak first about your prompting to a revision or partial reprinting of the Wettsteinian *Novum Testamentum Graece parallelis illustratum*. Both gentlemen were very taken by the idea of reworking it but also did not know how such a work should be organized, since a single person would not be up to the task. An anastatic reprinting is not implementable due to the smallness and delicacy of the Greek letters and the extraordinarily great size of the work in relation to the second-hand price.

Although prices from 60–70 marks for the work may appear here and there, cheaper offers can also still be found today. Professor [Erwin] Nestle, whom I visited in Maulbronn, even showed me a copy that he had still purchased for 6 shillings from an inexpert antiquarian bookseller a few years ago in England. I have brought back addresses of English antiquarian booksellers from there for [Wilhelm] Heitmüller, who was also looking to acquire the work; thus we will indeed find out soon what prices are asked for there at present.

A new version would in itself indeed be able to be considered from a book sellers' perspective if only an organizer could be found who could manage a just distribution of the remuneration to the collaborators for which the publisher would lack any standard. The Greek text would probably be superfluous in light of the good and cheap textual editions that are available today. From the old material of the notes there would probably be at least as much that could be excluded as would need to be added anew. If you could find a way or a suitable personality for the organization of the work, then we would at least be grateful to you for further communications. We, too, will keep an eye on the matter.

Sincere thanks also for the confidential communication about your nascent works on the messianic question. This interests us very much, of course, and we will be happy to be the publisher as soon as you are ready. It is, though, somewhat disappointing to us that your history of the primitive Christian religion and theology is still so far away. With the strong undertakings in this direction, let's hope that someone from another side does not complete a systematic presentation before you. [...]"

If one disregards for a moment H. Weinel, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments. Die Religion Jesu und des Urchristentums*, GThW III (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1911; 41928), then Gerd Theißen has presented a history of primitive Christian religion (eine urchristliche Religionsgeschichte) for the first time in our days. See G. Theißen, *Die Religion der ersten Christen. Eine Theorie des Urchristentums* (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser/Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2000); G. Theißen, *A Theory of Primitive Christian Religion*, trans. J. Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1999). On this, cf. W. Zager, "Review of G. Theißen, *Die Religion der ersten Christen. Eine Theorie des Urchristentums*," *ThLZ* 126 (2001): 409–13.

19. [Postcard of William Wrede to Albert Schweitzer,¹⁶² *Straßburg*]¹⁶³

Breslau XIII, Goethestr. 12
May 11, 1906

Very esteemed Sir Colleague!

I hope soon to be able to write you the letter that you rightfully expect for a long time. In the meantime simply: heartfelt congratulations, heartfelt thanks,¹⁶⁴ heartfelt greetings – this heartily underlined!

Your W. Wrede

¹⁶²Born on January 1, 1875, in Kaysersberg (Alsace); 1900–1912 curate at the Church of St. Nicholas in Straßburg; 1902 private lecturer in Straßburg; 1913 founded the tropical hospital in Lambaréné (equatorial Africa); 1952 Nobel Peace Prize; died on September 4, 1965, in Lambaréné.

¹⁶³Archives Centrales Albert Schweitzer, Gunsbach.

¹⁶⁴Thanks for the free copy of A. Schweitzer's book *Von Reimarus zu Wrede. Eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (see note 30).

20. [*Correspondence Card of Elisabeth Wrede*¹⁶⁵ to Albert Schweitzer, *Straßburg*]¹⁶⁶

Breslau, December 24, 1906

Very esteemed Sir Licentiate!

I am sending you the words that our friend K[arl] Müller¹⁶⁷ spoke at the coffin of my husband.¹⁶⁸ From this you will get to know him as a person as he really was. I very much wish that you would then appreciate my husband not only as a scholar but also come to hold him dear as a human being. For while with him both were one, the human being was nevertheless still infinitely more. – Your book¹⁶⁹ and your letters brought my husband very much joy in this last year. He was truly not spoiled with recognition, and it is often now very bitter for me to see that it is now given to him in such full measure where he can no longer enjoy it. He has courageously gone his own straight way, but he felt the loneliness that was always connected with it. Thus, I am thankful with all my heart for the few who showed him what they thought of him during his lifetime. I will send you soon a picture of my husband, which must first be completed. While it was made fifteen years ago already, it is quite similar;¹⁷⁰ a later picture does not exist. – With sincere thankfulness

Your Elisabeth Wrede

¹⁶⁵See note 38.

¹⁶⁶ Archives Centrales Albert Schweitzer, Günsbach.

¹⁶⁷See note 37.

¹⁶⁸“Worte der Erinnerung an William Wrede gesprochen an seinem Sarge am 26. November 1906 von Karl Müller in Tübingen (Words of remembrance for William Wrede spoken by Karl Müller in Tübingen at Wrede’s coffin on November 26, 1906)” (partially printed in Wrede, *Vorträge und Studien*, X–XIII; for an English translation, see Wrede, *Lectures and Studies*); the whole text can be found in Archives Centrales Albert Schweitzer, Günsbach. Wrede died on Nov 23, 1906, in Breslau.

¹⁶⁹See note 164.

¹⁷⁰It is probably the photograph that was included as image 50 in the documentation of Lüdemann/Schröder, *Die Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, 90 (see note 38).

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“And she was serving them” (Mark 1.31): Exegetical Stories about Peter’s Mother-in-Law

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Abstract

One of the tasks of biblical studies is to explain and make biblical texts accessible for different audiences. In doing so, different exegetical approaches tell different stories about the same biblical text. This article analyses exegetical stories about Simon’s mother-in-law (Mk 1:29-31) from the perspectives of historical-critical, socio-historical, feminist, depth-psychological (*tiefenpsychologische*), and cultural-scientific (*kulturwissenschaftliche*) exegesis. Simon’s house as a place, the mother-in-law as a character, and the phrase “and she was serving them” (1:31) are examined within the narrative and in the context of the entire Gospel of Mark. It becomes clear that “serving” and “following” are not opposites, but two sides of the same coin.

The task of biblical scholarship is to bring people closer to the biblical texts. In doing so, biblical scholars often work narratively and tell stories about stories. At the same time, different biblical scholars tell quite different stories. For example, *historical-critical exegesis* tells a story about how texts emerged,² whereas *social-historical exegesis* constructs a narrative about the worlds in which the biblical texts take place. *Narrative exegesis* speaks about the story world in which biblical texts are embedded and *cultural-scientific exegesis* about the lifeworlds and experiences on which the biblical texts are based. Approaches that are oriented to reception, such as *feminist exegesis*, tell how the texts are understood by different readers, and in *biblical-pastoral approaches* and *catechesis* the concern is with inculturation: the same stories are retold for other lived realities.

¹For the German original, see S. Huebenthal, “‘Und sie diente ihnen’ (Mk 1,31). Exegetische Geschichten über die Schwiegermutter des Petrus,” *SNTUA* 49 (2024), 27–46.

²Ernst Käsemann once pointed out that these can sometimes be adventurous or even fantastic stories as follows: “The so-called introductions are for large stretches to be placed in the genre of fairy tale books, despite the extent to which their dry tone and content may give the illusion of factual reporting.” See E. Käsemann, *Jesu letzter Wille nach Johannes 17*, 4th ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1980), 12. Cf. idem, *The Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the Light of Chapter 17*, trans. G. Krodel (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 1.

1. Stories about Stories

In what follows, I would like to show what this can look like concretely with an example from the Gospel of Mark. At the beginning of the Gospel of Mark, after an opening of fifteen verses, Jesus passes along the shore of the Lake of Gennesaret and meets two pairs of brothers, whom he calls to follow him. Simon and Andrew and James and John leave everything and follow (after) Jesus. The way leads back to Capernaum, and on the Sabbath the following story takes place in their hometown: “As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.”

Thus, the biblical text in the understanding of the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition (NRSVUE). What stories can be told by exegetes here? From the perspective of social-historical exegesis, a picture of the fishing house of Simon in Capernaum arises: multiple generations, a fishing family business in economically ascendant Galilee at the beginning of the first century CE. At the Lake of Gennesaret fishing rights were leased out and fishing boats were taxed.³ Fresh fish is an important commodity; as salted fish, it is also exported. In this respect, Capernaum was in competition with Tarichea/Magdala with its famous fish sauce that was even exported to Rome.⁴ In the fishing business, men and women work both inside and outside the house. Mary Magdalene slides briefly into the picture – it is possible that she is a fisher daughter from that very same Magdala. This might better explain her relation to the Jesus group than the seven demons that Jesus is said to have cast out of her. On the other hand, demonic possession is one of the greatest anxieties of the time, cutting across all levels of society and cultural backgrounds. The question of how life conduct and sickness are connected is a concern for people.

In Galilee, people asked about what could grant protection from demons. Amulets? Magical papyri? And how will one get free again from demons? There are exorcists, but not all of them are good. Some are even possessed themselves. Whoever can bind demons reliably and with authority is able to grant security. After the people in the synagogue of Capernaum experience how Jesus cast out a demon (Mark 1.23–27), their view of him changes. Simon, the Galilean fisherman, not only becomes Jesus’ host; he also entrusts him with his mother-in-law. The presence of God in Jesus liberates. This is also perceived by Simon and his mother-in-law. These are the sort of perspectives that we can gain through social-historical exegesis.

With a few brushstrokes a picture emerges of the world in which Simon and his mother-in-law live; a picture that enables the reader to feel their way into the story.

³For fishing at the Lake of Gennesaret, cf. the summary of the social and material-historical background in G. Gäbel, “Einmal Fischer, immer Fischer? (Der wunderbare Fischfang). Lk 5,1–11,” in *Kompendium der frühchristlichen Wundererzählungen*, vol. 1: *Die Wunder Jesu*, ed. R. Zimmermann (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2013), 543–58, here 547–53. On the economic situation in Galilee, see also S. L. Mattila, “Revisiting Jesus’ Capernaum: A Village of Only Subsistence-Level Fishers and Farmers?,” in *The Galilean Economy in the Time of Jesus*, ed. D. A. Fiensy and R. K. Hawkins, ECIL 11 (Atlanta: SBL Press), 75–138; on the general situation in the Roman Empire, see K. Ruffing, *Wirtschaft in der griechisch-römischen Antike*, Geschichte kompakt (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2012).

⁴A. Merz, “Das ‘Meer von Galiläa’ und die Jesusbewegung,” *Welt und Umwelt der Bibel* 24 (2002): 32–39.

This is not the case for all exegetical stories. In comparison, others may appear rather dry. Historical-critical exegesis does not fix its eyes on the fisher house and the lifeworld of the characters in the story but rather looks through the story at its emergence. It recognizes a typical healing story with the traditional elements of *introduction*, *exposition*, *miracle action*, and *demonstration* of the healing.⁵ The historical core of the story is an event in the house of Simon,⁶ which serves to provide local color in the Gospel of Mark. It is regarded as very old, because christological titles of majesty and kerygmatic interests are largely absent from it. The fact that the mother-in-law cares for the group with a meal and serves them at table need not have a special significance but is a typical building block of an ancient miracle story.⁷ Above all, it intends to show that the woman is completely well,⁸ and simply belongs, as a conclusion, to a good healing story from this time.

In *feminist exegesis* things become livelier. Feminist exegesis asks about women's roles and women's work and about what it means to live as a mother-in-law in the house of the son-in-law in the patriarchal society of the first century CE. What loss of honor

⁵Interpreters usually refer here to R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. J. Marsh (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 209–15 (GV = *Die Geschichte der Synoptischen Tradition*. Mit einem Nachwort von Gerd Theißen, 10th ed., FRLANT 29 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995], 223–30); or G. Theißen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) (GV = idem, *Urchristliche Wundergeschichten. Ein Beitrag zur formgeschichtlichen Erforschung der synoptischen Evangelien*, StNT 8 [Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1974]), or G. Theißen and A. Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide*, trans. J. Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 291–315 (GV = idem, *Der historische Jesus. Ein Lehrbuch* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011], 265–84; idem, *Wer war Jesus? Der erinnerte Jesus in historischer Sicht* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2023], 271–94). On this, cf. also B. Kollmann, *Neutestamentliche Wundergeschichten. Biblisch-theologische Zugänge und Impulse für die Praxis*, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2011). Many interpreters take their orientation from R. Pesch, “In dubio pro traditione. Zur Überlieferungskritik von Erzählungen über Jesus,” *SNTUA* 34 (2009): 5–42.

⁶The remains of a house in Capernaum from the first century CE have often been connected with this story. For an appraisal, cf. C. Breytenbach, “Mark and Galilee: Text World and Historical World,” in *Galilee through the Centuries: Confluence of Cultures*, ed. E. M. Meyers, Duke Judaic Studies Series 1 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 75–80, here 80–81.

⁷In lesson plans and accompanying materials for the module “miracle” in the context of high school instruction in Germany (especially in Secondary Level II), insights from historical-critical exegesis are usually used exclusively and connected with religion-pedagogical approaches to miracle pedagogy. In this way, the potential of possible ways of understanding or approaches to New Testament miracle stories are unnecessarily restricted. On this, cf. <https://blogs.rpi-virtuell.de/stamerrusekz/modul-8-wunder/> with the “Conclusion (possibly TA/HE): Jesus' gift of healing is most reliably [sic!] attested. Jesus undoubtedly possessed uncommon powers of healing. Whether they broke through the boundaries of natural laws can neither be proven nor disproven. But this question is not decisive for our faith” (accessed on August 26, 2021).

⁸This, at least, is how it is viewed by the majority of historical-critical and, to some extent, also feminist approaches. Precisely also with respect to Mark 5.43, Monika Fander perceptively states: “At the end of a healing story one expects – if anything at all is said – that the one who is healed, to demonstrate her recovery, eats something, but not that the healer is served” (M. Fander, “Gospel of Mark: Women as True Disciples of Jesus,” in *Feminist Biblical Interpretation: A Compendium of Critical Commentary on the Books of the Bible and Related Literature*, ed. L. Schottroff and M.-T. Wacker, trans. L. E. Dahill, E. R. Kalin, N. Lukens, L. M. Maloney, B. Rumscheidt, M. Rumscheidt, and T. Steiner [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012], 626–44, here: 628; GV = eadem, “Das Evangelium nach Markus. Frauen als wahre Nachfolgerinnen Jesu,” in *Kompendium Feministische Bibelauslegung* [Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1998], 499–512, here 501).

threatens the house if she cannot fulfill her obligation to care for the guests.⁹ With the help of social-history, stories emerge about what the mother-in-law of Peter does and what this can mean for women today. Were women disciples of Jesus? What does it actually mean to be a disciple? Here, a role is played both by narrative observations on the Gospel of Mark as a whole and by the hermeneutic of suspicion that biblical texts marginalize women and other *non-persons*. When women turn up at the cross of Jesus and it says of them that they had already followed and served Jesus in Galilee, this is understood as a witness to the discipleship of women. An arc can be made from these women to the mother-in-law of Simon and beyond that to the female followers of Jesus and their roles in the early communities. They were possibly much more important than the word *serve* leads one to suspect. If the overlooked women and their charisms become visible again, this changes the picture of the early church – and this also has consequences for the role of women in the church today.¹⁰

Thus, quite different stories can be told about a biblical text. And in doing so, the situation quickly becomes confusing. And one is also faced with the question of whether all these stories can stand alongside one another as equals. Are they equally “correct,” equally “important,” and equally “true”? And who actually determines the correctness or importance of an exegetical story? Can each of us tell whatever story we want or are there certain rules? In what follows, I will consider these questions with the aid of a story about the mother-in-law of Simon that is developed from the perspective of cultural-scientific exegesis.¹¹ Here, what stands in the foreground is a synchronic analysis of the text, which is supplemented by observations on social history. The interpretation of this text in the context of the Gospel of Mark as a whole takes seriously the fact that this text is a memory text that is identity-concrete, i.e., “related to a specific group and relevant to its identity.”¹² Accordingly, we will not ask – from a historical or institution historical perspective – about what the texts say about the social history of

⁹W. Carter, *Mark*, Wisdom Commentary 42 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2019), 32 ascribes to her in the social role of mother-in-law “some authority, dignity, and agency in an androcentric world,” without thereby falling into a dichotomy: “... the alternative ‘honor rather than servitude’ is a false one since it fails to investigate how honor is achieved, namely through the conventional but submissive female role of domestic service.” On this, cf. also H. Kinukawa, *Women and Jesus: A Japanese Feminist Perspective* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2003).

¹⁰Taking its orientation from narrative exegesis, *performance criticism*, in which the biblical text itself is narratively staged, makes a connection between the service of the mother-in-law and the women under the cross (Mark 15.41). It tells stories about how, in the performance of the Gospel, the moment of surprise that the women who stand at the cross had already followed and served Jesus in Galilee can best be staged.

¹¹For an introduction to *kulturwissenschaftliche Exegese* (cultural-scientific exegesis or cultural science-informed exegesis), see S. Huebenthal, *Gedächtnistheorie und Neues Testament. Eine methodisch-hermeneutische Einführung*, UTB 5904 (Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto Verlag, 2022); ET = eadem, *Memory Theory and the New Testament: Methodological-Hermeneutic Introduction* (Eugene: Cascade, 2026). Cf. also eadem, *Memory Theory in New Testament Studies: Exploring New Perspectives*, Studies in Cultural Contexts of the Bible 10 (Leiden: Brill, 2023).

¹²The German term “identitätskonkret” (identity-concrete or identity-specific) is a term from Jan Assmann’s memory theory that means “related to a specific group and relevant to its identity.” See the glossary of Huebenthal, *Memory Theory and the New Testament*.

early Christianity and early forms of discipleship, community formation, and mission, but rather about what the story itself yields.

2. Cultural-Scientific Exegesis

The small narrative in Mark 1.29–31 offers many thought-provoking impulses. In what follows, we will consider three of them – the house of Simon as a place, the mother-in-law as narrative character, and the expression “and she was serving them.” Above all, this half-verse is especially significant. The question of how best to translate *kai diēkonei autois* (καὶ διηκόνει αὐτοῖς) and what this means for the (hi)story of discipleship is energetically and controversially discussed. In German versions of the Bible, one usually finds a translation such as “and she was serving them.”¹³ The great range of possible interpretations can be seen in two popular German translations. The *Gute Nachricht Bible* translates “and she prepared food for all,”¹⁴ while in the *Bibel in gerechter Sprache* it says “and she became, as the others, a disciple of Jesus.”¹⁵ A rule of thumb in comparing translations is as follows: *When translations diverge sharply from one another, there is a problem with the Greek text.* This problem does not necessarily have to be text-critical in nature. It can be a problem that involves choosing the meaning of a word from a spectrum of meanings or that concerns the appropriate translation in a certain context. In fact, the two translations anticipate the poles of the discussion – housework or discipleship. Since it is difficult to decide which viewpoint is more appropriate on the basis of the half-verse alone, the next step is to look more closely at the literary and historical context of the story.

3. The Story in Its Context

In the larger context of Mark 1.21–39, the reader experiences a Sabbath in the fishing town of Capernaum, the home of the two brother pairs whom Jesus called at the Lake of Gennesaret and who followed him.¹⁶ After Jesus heals a man possessed by a demon in the synagogue and those present are astonished by his authority, the five of them go a house further to Simon and Andrew. The action now changes from the public to the private sphere. There, the mother-in-law of Simon is lying ill with a fever. Made aware

¹³German: “und sie diente ihnen” (revidierte Einheitsübersetzung), which could also be translated with “and she served them.” In English versions, one often finds “and she served them” (RSV/NKJ/NASB/CEB) or “and she began to serve them” (NRSVUE/ESV/LEB/NET). The translation “and she was serving them” (DLNT/McKnight) is less common.

¹⁴German: “und sie bereitete für alle das Essen.” For comparable English translations, cf., e.g., GW/NOG/NLT (“and she prepared a meal for them”); EASY (“Immediately she prepared food for her visitors”); TLB (“and she got up and prepared dinner for them”); MSG (“she was up fixing dinner for them”); CEV (“and she served them a meal”).

¹⁵German: “und sie wurde wie die anderen eine Nachfolgerin Jesu.” From a cultural-scientific point of view, which is interested in contexts, it is quite interesting that there does not appear to be a counterpart to this translation in any of the major English translations.

¹⁶Expressed with *akolouthēō* (ἀκολουθεῖν); cf. Mark 1.16–20.

of the situation, Jesus goes to her and seizes¹⁷ her by the hand as she rises. The fever departs and the woman begins to care for the group. The Sabbath continues as a day of joy and rest (from work).¹⁸ After the sun has set and the Sabbath is over, the whole city appears before the house of Simon next to the synagogue and brings the sick and possessed in order that they may also be healed.

After so much excitement, a counterbalance is needed. Early in the morning, Jesus withdraws into solitude for prayer. But the place – which, in connection with the time in the wilderness (*eremos* / ἔρημος, Mark 1.12–13) is called a “desolate place” (*eremos topos* / ἔρημος τόπος, Mark 1.35) – does not remain desolate for long. Simon and his companions find him and say what is obvious: “all are looking for you” (1.37). Jesus, however, moves on, for the message from 1.15 – “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe the good news” (NRSVUE) – must also be proclaimed elsewhere. The short summary report in 1.39 indicates that it proceeds in the synagogues in all Galilee just as it had in Capernaum. After 1.21–39, the reader can imagine what things looked like in the other locales: Jesus proclaims his message in public and private places, men and women listen, are touched, and the authority of his message manifests itself in exorcisms, healings, and table fellowship.

Mark largely leaves the conception of these scenes to the reader’s imagination, but they are not given much time, for only seven verses later the group is back in Capernaum and Jesus is teaching in the house of Simon, which is now also considered the house of Jesus (Mark 2.1). The man from Nazareth appears to have been received into the fellowship of this house.¹⁹ This explains the special role of Simon: After all, it is *his* house that he places at the group’s disposal.

3.1 *The House of Simon as Place*

If we follow the narrative thread of the Gospel of Mark, the house as a place – and usually also precisely this house of Simon – plays a role time and again. It is not just a place

¹⁷Expressed with *krateō* (κρατέω); Mark 1.31

¹⁸Whether it involves a high fever (and thus a life-threatening sickness that overrides the prohibition of healing on the Sabbath) is not decisive. On the whole, the Sabbath and the questions that are associated with it in the exegetical secondary literature play a secondary role. What is usually discussed is less the question of whether the concern is with a healing that was or was not permitted on the Sabbath but solely that it happened at all. That the mother-in-law with her service (precisely if it involved cooking *and* hosting) could have broken the Sabbath rest (cooking, baking, and kneading belong to the thirty-nine melachot; cf. m.Sab. 7.2; whether this also includes waiting on tables would need to be clarified) is not addressed at any point, including in feminist exegesis. In traditional historical-critical interpretations we find the question of whether Jesus violated rabbinic conventions of his time, because he let himself be served by a woman. In the meantime, this line of argument has been rejected as anachronistic, because the rabbinic comparative literature from the Babylonian Talmud is much later and therefore does permit one to draw any conclusions about the first century.

¹⁹The idea that a firm group developed in the course of the healing and the table fellowship that followed it is already found in W. Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, ThHKNT 2 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1989 [1959]), who speaks here of the “house of Jesus.” B. Bosenius, *Der literarische Raum des Markusevangeliums*, WMANT 140 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 275 writes: “After her healing, the mother-in-law of Peter inaugurates a continuous table fellowship. Jesus of Nazareth becomes a ‘long-term or regular guest (Dauergast).’”

of teaching and fellowship at the beginning of the narrative, but a place for action in almost every chapter.²⁰ In other words, the group around Jesus and Simon – who is called Peter from Mark 3.16 onward – returns time and again to his house and thus also back to his mother-in-law. It gradually becomes understandable why the activity of the mother-in-law described in Mark 1.31 is expressed in the imperfect, which in Greek describes a continuous activity.²¹

Wait a minute, a careful reader might say, how can that be? Does it not say at the beginning that the two pairs of brothers left everything in order to follow Jesus?²² And do we not know from Mark 10.29 that everyone who has left house or brother, sister, mother, father, children, or field – thus family and security – will be rewarded?²³ Are Jesus and the twelve not travelling about as charismatic itinerant preachers?

If one reads the Gospel of Mark as a whole with special attention to the house as a place of action, a different story becomes visible. Jesus himself appears to have found reception in the house of Simon, and the mother-in-law of Simon, who, just like her son-in-law, had a life-changing encounter with Jesus and his message, takes over in this house the care for the group. The itinerant group thus has a fixed point of contact, and Jesus develops the group ethos there.²⁴ The teachings about the organization of the community of disciples in the Way-Section in the middle of the Gospel (Mark 8–10) usually takes place in this house. Here – unlike with Jesus himself – family and discipleship, itinerancy and being locally settled, are not played off against one another or placed in a hierarchy, so that itinerant preachers would be better than those who are locally settled, since they have all placed their life entirely in the *service* of the message of Jesus.

²⁰In the literature, there is agreement that a series of episodes in Mark take place in the house in Capernaum, though there is debate over the exact number. The largest number is advocated by Bosenius, *Der literarische Raum des Markusevangelium*, who finds eleven episodes situated in this house (1.29; 2.1, 15; 3.20; 4.10; 6.30; 7.17; 8.26; 9.28, 33; 10.10). Mark 2.15 and 8.26 are not mentioned by most interpreters. The mainstream of interpreters is well represented by R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

²¹C. Breitenbach, "Alternation between Aorist, Historical Present and Imperfect. Aspects of Markan Narrative Style," *ETL* 95 (2019): 529–65, states that the main action in the Gospel of Mark is usually narrated in the aorist and the imperfect describes a (secondary) action that continually takes place in the background. Kinuwaka, *Women and Jesus*, 103, refers explicitly to this distribution of tenses. In most interpretations, however, reference is made only to the imperfect in Mark 1.31c and not to the aorist forms in Mark 1.31ab.

²²Thus, A. Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2007), writes: "The fact that Jesus accompanies Simon and Andrew to their home is in tension with the impression created by their call (vv. 16–18) that they abandoned everyone and everything" (175). Yarbro Collins sees this tension released in vv. 35–39, which does not, however, fit the further episodes in the house in Capernaum.

²³Here one must read carefully: The logical connection takes place through "or" and not through "and." Thus, it is not the case that one must leave "everything." On this, cf. also M. Fander, *Die Stellung der Frau im Markusevangelium: unter besonderer Berücksichtigung kultur- und religionsgeschichtlicher Hintergründe*, MThA 8 (Altenberge: Telos Verlag, 1989).

²⁴In a comparison of Mark 1.29–31 and Acts 28.7–10, Fander, *Die Stellung der Frau im Markusevangelium*, 29 speaks of the house as "point of departure and support (Ausgangs- und 'Stützpunkt') for further healings" (thus also M. Lau, "Fieberfrei auf dem Weg Jesu [Die Heilung der Schwiegermutter des Petrus]. Mk 1.29–31 [Mt 8.14f.]," in *Kompendium der frühchristlichen Wundererzählungen*, vol. 1: *Die Wunder Jesu*, ed. R. Zimmermann [Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2013], 214–20) and views Mark 1.29–31 as the "founding legend (Gemeindegründungslegende)" (31) of the community of Capernaum, which is connected to the mother-in-law of Simon.

Service is the decisive keyword here, since the concern – especially in Mark 9 and 10 – is with questions of *discipleship* as *service*. In the house, Jesus impresses upon the group of disciples that “the Son of Man has not come to be served but to serve” (10.45), after they had once again been contemplating how roles and hierarchies, power and authority should be distributed in the group. And this indeed for a second time, for the same question had already been taken up in the previous chapter (Mark 9.33–37). In Mark 9.36 Jesus even places a child²⁵ in their midst to make clear that *serving* is what matters and not *ruling* or *dominating*. One can almost imagine how Jesus winked to the mother-in-law as he formulated this saying about service, for it appears that *she* had immediately understood this correctly.²⁶ The keyword *diakoneō* (διακονέω) connects the two stories with each other, just like the location, the house of Simon, does.

3.2 Following and Serving

With only five occurrences in the Gospel of Mark, *diakoneō* (διακονέω) is a relatively infrequent and yet nevertheless central term.²⁷ Right at the beginning, when Jesus, after his baptism, spends forty days in the wilderness and is led into temptation by Satan, it says that he was with the (wild) animals and angels *were serving* him (Mark 1.13). Twenty verses later, the healed mother-in-law begins to *serve* Jesus and the two pairs of brothers who now *follow* him.²⁸

In the further course of the narrative, *discipleship* or *following* then stands in the foreground and we do not hear any more of *serving* until chapter 10. This, however, is not yet the end of the story. Right after the death of Jesus, the two keywords *akolouthēō*

²⁵Could this even be a child of Peter? After all, the group is in Capernaum in the house again, and it is known of Peter that he was married. There is mention of a daughter of Peter in Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae 8502 (Acts Pet.).

²⁶The intuitive understanding of the mother-in-law and the immediate implementation of her knowledge is emphasized by a number of interpreters who usually also highlight the pragmatics of this text. On the level of the text as a whole, the mother-in-law of Simon thus becomes a “model of exemplary discipleship that invites the reader to identify with her and to engage critically with their own discipleship” (F. Lentzen-Deis, *Das Markus-Evangelium: ein Kommentar für die Praxis* [Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2014], 49). A similar line of argument is found in H.-J. Venetz, *Er geht euch voraus nach Galiläa. Mit dem Markusevangelium auf dem Weg* (Freiburg/Schweiz: Paulusverlag, 2005) and (without an emphasis on the pragmatics) in M. Ebner, *Das Markusevangelium*, Neu übersetzt und kommentiert, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2009). The opposite position is advocated by D. Krause, “Simon Peter’s Mother-in-Law – Disciple or Domestic Servant? Feminist Biblical Hermeneutics and the Interpretation of Mark 1.29–31,” in *A Feminist Companion to Mark*, ed. A.-J. Levine and M. Blickenstaff, Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings 2 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 37–53, with reference to the fact that service of the mother-in-law is not voluntary: “her role as servant is a previously existing condition” (46).

²⁷Forms of *diakoneō* (διακονέω) appear in Mark 1.13, 31; 10.45 (twice) and 15.41; beyond this, the noun *diákonos* occurs in Mark 9.35 and 10.43.

²⁸In the literature, one encounters time and again the argument that *diakoneō* (διακονέω) has a different meaning for the angels and the Son of Man than for the mother-in-law and the other women. The argument is not convincing precisely in a synchronic analysis of the text, and the argument of Krause, “Simon Peter’s Mother-in-Law,” 44: “The verb should be translated consistently in each case. The angels tend to Jesus’ needs in the wilderness. The woman tends to the needs of Jesus and his disciples,” should, with a view to Mark 10:45, be supplemented: “And the Son of Man tends to the needs of the people.”

(ἀκολουθεῖω) and *diakoneō* (διακονέω) appear again together (Mark 15.41)²⁹ and are connected – just like at the beginning – with the message of the kingdom of God (Mark 15.43). In Mark 15.40–41, there is talk of Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James the small and of Joses, Salome, and many other women, who, already in Galilee, followed Jesus and served him.

The idea that “the hour of the women strikes” when the disciples falter or that “the women slip into the place of the disciples” – a typical reflex not only in biblical application but also in sermons and in the work of lay ecclesial ministers³⁰ and exegetes who fall victim to the “what you see is all there is (WYSIATI)” bias – thinks in terms of a competitive relationship that is unbiblical. The women do not “take the place of the disciples” but were always already there and have, in the sense of a division of labor, done their portion of the tasks. These women are not just witnesses of the crucifixion who held out on the Mount of Calvary while the disciples fled on the Mount of Olives.³¹ They also bear witness to the fact that Joseph of Arimathea – of whom it says that he was likewise waiting for the kingdom of God – renders Jesus the service of burying him. Neither under the cross nor in the service of Joseph is the presence of the women free of danger. Flavius Josephus states that closeness to and sympathy for the crucified could lead to one’s own crucifixion and women were not excluded from this fate (*J.W.* 2.305). Thus, engagement for Jesus’ message of the kingdom of God can indeed be dangerous.

At the end, after Jesus’ death, the central themes, as in the beginning, are brought together again: kingdom of God, discipleship, and service – and if one also considers Mark 16.1–7, also the task to pass on the message. “But go and tell his disciples, especially Peter: He is going before you to Galilee: there you will see him, just as he told you” (Mark 16.7) is what the young man in the tomb says to the three women.³²

The commission to proclaim that is issued to the women only makes sense, however, if they also have a chance to proclaim the message. Mary Magdalene, the other

²⁹G. Guttenberger, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, ZBK.NT 2 (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 2017), 55, has recently pointed out this nexus and connected it to the healing story: “In the further course of the narrative, ‘serving’ is highlighted as a behavior that is closely connected with ‘following’ or ‘discipleship’ (10.35–45; 15.41–42). This is not yet known to the readership here. But through the choice of setting and the relationship of the sick person to the first person called the connection between three fundamental motifs of his narrative – healing, following, and serving – is already hinted at here. These motifs are closely connected to one another again at the end of the second part of the story (10.46–52): an arc of suspense thus begins here, whose central pillar stands at the concluding portion of the second part and which reaches to the end of the story.”

³⁰The German term “Pastoralreferenten” refers to “lay ecclesial ministers” or “pastoral associates” in the Roman Catholic Church in Germany who serve the Church but are not ordained. This new profession was introduced after Vatican II.

³¹G. O’Collins, “Peter’s Mother-in-Law (Mark 1:29–31): More to be Said,” *ABR* 68 (2020): 67–75, here 74 states without further explanation: “Peter failed to turn up at Calvary. It would be supremely ironical if his mother-in-law was there.”

³²Is this young man one of the angels who served Jesus after the baptism in the wilderness (cf. Mark 1.12–13)? It is not without reason that many interpreters view tomb and wilderness as parts of a parallel structure of the Gospel of Mark. The mention of Peter also fits here. The first one called is to experience as the first one the message of the resurrection and – especially if Mark is indeed oriented to a *lectio continua* – meet Jesus also again as the first one in everyday Galilean life. In that case, Peter, entirely along the line of 1 Cor 15 and Luke 24, would also be the one to whom the Risen One appears first.

Mary, and Salome are exactly the right people for this. In 1969, Maria-Luisa Rigato, the first woman who was able to study at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, concluded, in the first exegetical article by a woman in the journal *Rivista Biblica*, that the otherwise completely unknown Salome could be none other than the mother-in-law of Peter.³³ Even though tradition-critical and tradition-historical studies see this very differently and hardly anyone has followed Rigato, this is, on the level of the Markan narrative, not only a plausible assumption but also a sensible one.³⁴

3.3 *Roles and Discipleship as a Process that Involves a Division of Labor*

At the end of the Gospel of Mark, the readers are faced again with the question of what matters in the encounter with Jesus and his message. What matters is *discipleship* or *following* and this expresses itself in *serving*. Peter and his mother-in-law – who turn up at the beginning and end of the Gospel³⁵ – appear as two different models here. He is on the way with Jesus; she places his house at the group's disposal and cares for them. Peter listens to the proclamation of Jesus, proclaims the message himself, and must first learn what his mother-in-law understood immediately when Jesus seized her hand and pulled her back into life:³⁶ discipleship means subordination and service.³⁷ The concern here is not with male or female roles. The mainstream of scholarship is now in agreement that *diakoneō* (διακονέω) has a broad spectrum of meaning, which also includes the connotation “host” or “wait on”; however, based on the use of the imperfect tense in Mark 1.31, it is likely that the meaning here goes beyond table service.³⁸

³³M.-L. Rigato, “Tradizione e redazione in Mc. 1,29–31,” *RivB* 17 (1969), 139–74. Fander, *Die Stellung der Frau im Markusevangelium*, 301 reports the early church position that Salome was the first wife of Joseph, which arises in the course of the discussion concerning the perpetual virginity of Mary and does not contribute to a historical clarification, since it is stimulated by harmonizing tendencies and dogmatic discussions.

³⁴The identification of the mother of James the small and Joseph (15.41, 47; 16.1) with the mother of Jesus – in 6.3 James and Josés and Judas and Simon are listed as brothers of Jesus – proves to be just as difficult. On the level of the Markan narrative it is an equally plausible inference, which is, however, disputed by tradition-critical and tradition-historical studies (cf. L. Oberlinner, *Historische Überlieferung und christologische Aussage. Zur Frage der “Brüder Jesu” in der Synopse*, FzB 19 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1975) and therefore represents a minority position. Cf. C. Focant, *The Gospel according to Mark*, trans. L. R. Keylock (Eugene: Pickwick, 2012); S. Huebenthal, *Das Markusevangelium als kollektives Gedächtnis*, 2nd ed., FRLANT 153 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018); eadem, *Reading Mark's Gospel as a Text from Collective Memory* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020).

³⁵Thus also O'Collins, “Peter's Mother-in-Law,” 75, even though he does not explicitly express this last conclusion.

³⁶In the literature, reference is often made to the resurrection vocabulary in Mark 1.31. For example, Venetz, *Er gibt euch voraus nach Galiläa*, gives his interpretation the heading “Auferweckungen” (Resurrections). O'Collins, “Peter's Mother-in-Law,” 74 sees “a certain inclusion” in the inverse position of *diakoneō* (διακονέω) and *egeirō* (ἐγείρω) in Mark 1.31 and 15.41/16.6. On the word-field, cf. also J. Marcus, *Mark 1–8. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 199.

³⁷O'Collins, “Peter's Mother-in-Law,” 75, correctly observes that the mother-in-law of Simon is the only person in the Gospel of Mark who does something for Jesus after she is healed by him.

³⁸For this reading, cf. Bosenius, *Der literarische Raum des Markusevangeliums*, 275; W. Eckey, *Das Markusevangelium: Orientierung am Weg Jesu. Ein Kommentar*, 2nd ed. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2008); J. Ernst, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, RNT (Regensburg: Pustet, 1981), 69; Fander, *Die Stellung der Frau im Markusevangelium*, 371–72; France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 208; Focant, *The Gospel*

In general, the lexeme *diakoneō* (διακονέω) designates activities in which the subject, in the commission of another, brings news or objects from one place to another. This can be messages as well as baskets of bread so that an especially elevated or lowering activity cannot be derived from the term. In other words, in addition to intermediary and messenger activities of various kinds, the humble services in the ancient house, ranging from footwashing to providing food, can also be intended, which, in the absence of slaves, were carried out by free women and men.³⁹ In her dissertation on *diakonia* in the New Testament, Anni Hentschel has recently revisited the history of the term and concluded that *diakoneō* (διακονέω) is a term from elevated language that does not describe everyday activities but rather, precisely in the context of meals, suggests an especially stylish waiting on and thus a festive character of the meal.⁴⁰ Such an activity fits well with Jesus as an esteemed guest, whom the members of the house treat with appropriate respect and whose stay they experience as something special. A similarly reverential treatment also manifests itself in the anointing in Bethany and marks out Jesus as a special guest.

If one considers together the different shades of meaning, it becomes clear that *diakoneō* (διακονέω) does not designate a female-specific form of discipleship – for example, in opposition to *akolouthēō* (ἀκολουθέω) as a male form. Instead, with Simon and his mother-in-law, male and female, itinerant and locally-settled followers of Jesus appear as members of a team characterized by a division of labor, a team that jointly serves the kingdom of God through intermediary and messenger activities. None is played off against the other by the text.

Monika Fander describes the two groups as “itinerant-charismatics” and “settled sympathizers,”⁴¹ but evaluates the textual information historically. More specifically, through an extension of the text into reality, she attempts to make Simon an itinerant-charismatic and his mother-in-law a settled sympathizer. This works, of course, only if the house of Simon – contrary to what we find in the text – becomes the “house of a relative of Simon.”⁴² On the whole, this move reflects the widespread but hermeneutically problematic tendency to extend the textual world into the real world and to evaluate it for scenarios of the text’s origins. Rudolf Pesch keenly states “that every tradition transports ‘historical reality’; this applies even to science fiction novels that can say something about the research situation and author and his or her power of imagination.”⁴³

according to Mark, 72; Lau, “Fieberfrei auf dem Weg Jesu,” 218; Lentzen-Deis, *Das Markus-Evangelium*, 48; L. Schottroff, *Lydias ungeduldige Schwestern: feministische Sozialgeschichte des frühen Christentums* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1994) (ET = *Lydia's Impatient Sisters: A Feminist Social History of Early Christianity*, trans. B. and M. Rumscheidt [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999]).

³⁹ Thus, Schottroff, *Lydias ungeduldige Schwestern*, 299–313 (ET = *Lydia's Impatient Sisters*, 205–23).

⁴⁰ Cf. A. Hentschel, *Diakonia im Neuen Testament. Studien zur Semantik unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Rolle von Frauen*, WUNT 2/266 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 433–34, 439.

⁴¹ Fander, *Die Stellung der Frau im Markusevangelium*, 313–16 (Wandercharismatiker / itinerant-charismatics) and 316–323 (seßhafte Sympathisanten / settled sympathizers).

⁴² Fander, *Die Stellung der Frau im Markusevangelium*, 318–19.

⁴³ Pesch, “In dubio pro traditione,” 18. On the discussion of the hermeneutical problem, cf. Huebenthal, *Das Markusevangelium als kollektives Gedächtnis*, 355–72 (ET = *Reading Mark's Gospel as a Text from Collective Memory*, 398–417).

Through the fact that Jesus speaks the saying about service in Mark 10.45 in the house and the house of Simon plays a special role in the Gospel of Mark, the role of the mother-in-law also obtains clearer contours. She does not care for the group only on a single occasion but rather in her enduring care for the group, she is a part of the fellowship, and evidently a settled one. While Peter and his wife travel around with Jesus,⁴⁴ she remains in the house and cares for the house.⁴⁵ This also means that in the case of the Jesus followers in the Gospel of Mark we are dealing with a group characterized by a division of labor that has a fixed point of contact in the house of Simon. Accordingly, the Markan Jesus also does not say that he has no place where he could lay his tired head.⁴⁶ On the contrary, he even needs to distance himself from the group now and then, when things become too tight for him.⁴⁷

Alongside the Jesus story, the Gospel of Mark also tells a story about the constitution and organization of the fellowship of disciples. Here, a special emphasis is placed on the house of Simon, which plays a central role as a place for gathering, teaching, and fellowship, and amidst all turmoil and challenges becomes a place of refuge time and again. Here, it should not be overlooked that it is only the healthy mother-in-law, who is able to look after the house,⁴⁸ that makes the itinerant life and the return to the house possible for Simon and his wife.

The extent to which this was the case historically and whether and how it fits with the Johannine tradition that Simon comes from Bethsaida, which would make it more likely that the house of Simon in Capernaum was the house of the parents of his wife, is of secondary importance for a cultural-scientific approach.⁴⁹ The mother-in-law of Peter is not only woman and mother-in-law but also widow, which is even clearer if it is actually the house of Peter's parents in which she lives (and is provided for by daughter and son-in-law). Interestingly, this point is rarely discussed in the literature, and studies devoted to the question of the extent to which the Gospel of Mark is transparent for the development of early Christian social forms and offices give no attention at all to the

⁴⁴Cf. 1 Cor 9.5. S. Schreiber, *Begleiter durch das Neue Testament*, 3rd ed. (Osterfildern: Matthias Grünewald, 2014), 248 is to be affirmed in his conclusion that the group around Jesus was a team made up of men / husbands and their women / wives.

⁴⁵The management and organization of the house is not simply "women's work" but rather an equally valid service (unless one wishes to derive a hierarchy from itinerant and settled Jesus followers in which the itinerants have a higher rank. This would contradict the spirit of the gospel that change of mind (μετάνοια) can also take place at home.

⁴⁶As in Matthew 8.20 / Luke 9.50.

⁴⁷Fander, *Die Stellung der Frau im Markusevangelium*, 379 says that Jesus "fled into solitude" from the "misunderstanding" of the crowd and the first-called as their spokespersons. R. Schnackenburg, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, GSLNT 2.1 (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1966), speculates that Jesus wanted "to be in solitude" already in the house of Simon.

⁴⁸In her contemporizing story "Die Fischfrau" (The Fisherwoman), Ingeborg Kruse develops the idea of the healed mother-in-law who cares both for Jesus as a new member of the household and for all who knock on her door because of him into a small narrative. See I. Kruse, *Mädchen, wach auf! Frauengeschichten aus dem Neuen Testament* (Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1989).

⁴⁹This question, which is not decisive for a cultural-scientific investigation, is intensely discussed in historical-critical exegesis since it is relevant for the historical question and for the question of the growth of the text. Cf., e.g., A. Fuchs, "Entwicklungsgeschichtliche Studie zu Mk 1,29–31 par Mt 8,14–15 par Lk 4,38–39," *SNTU.A* 6/7 (1981–82): 21–76.

office of widow, which appears to have already developed in New Testament times.⁵⁰

The question of whether Mark recounts the founding legend of the community of Capernaum in Mark 1.29–31 also does not stand in the foreground for a cultural-scientific approach.⁵¹ Discipleship, which can have very different facets and roles, unites men and women, locally-settled followers and itinerants, but in a decisive point: After the encounter with Jesus and his message of the nearness of the kingdom of God what matters in discipleship is the attitude of *diakoneō* (διακονέω). And this has no echo of an office in the Gospel of Mark. Thus, the discussion of *diakoneō* (διακονέω) as a technical term for an early Christian office, which is repeatedly brought in from historical-critical and feminist perspectives, is not relevant, at least with respect to the Gospel of Mark. Fundamentally, it must be said regarding this discussion that it thinks less from the perspective of the New Testament text than from church history as the history of institutions and thus from the outset presses a question upon the text that is foreign to the subject matter.

4. Reading Exegetical Stories

If, after these reflections, we return to our starting point, it becomes clear that the seemingly completely contradictory translations “and she prepared food for all” / “and she became, as the others, a disciple of Jesus” are not so contradictory at all. The contradiction arises when one views the section 1.29–31 without context. In that case, the mother-in-law can indeed become one who serves in a subordinate women’s role and become a leading image for subordinated women’s roles in later communities – in part until today. As soon as the story – and with it the mother-in-law – is viewed in the context of the Gospel of Mark as a whole, the picture changes. In that case, Mark 1.29–31 is the key to a complete understanding of discipleship, which is limited neither to table service nor to women.⁵² On the contrary, in the Gospel of Mark discipleship consists very fundamentally in serving, and, shortly after the calling of Simon, Andrew, James, and John, our story concretizes wherein the appropriate response to the kingdom of God that has come near consists, namely, in the acceptance of service and responsibility. Receiving life as a gift makes it possible for one to put their life into action for others. Discipleship becomes a reciprocal event.⁵³

⁵⁰ In the secondary literature there is discussion time and again of the question of the extent to which it is unusual that the mother-in-law lives in the house of Simon and not the mother. See, e.g., Fander, *Die Stellung der Frau im Markusevangelium*, 21; Lau, “Fieberfrei auf dem Weg Jesu,” 216.

⁵¹ Thus in Fander, “Das Evangelium nach Markus. Frauen als wahre Nachfolgerinnen Jesu,” 501, based on her published dissertation, i.e., Fander, *Die Stellung der Frau im Markusevangelium*. On the archaeology and significance of the house in Capernaum, cf. Breitenbach, “Mark and Galilee,” 80–81 and Bosenius, *Der literarische Raum des Markusevangeliums*, Part III passim.

⁵² Kinukawa, *Women and Jesus*, 104 rightly maintains that in Mark *diakoneō* (διακονέω) is not reported in connection with men but only with women. The instructions of Jesus in the house, however, indicate that this behavior is equally required of the male followers of Jesus. The same view is found in A. Puttkammer, “Mach’s wie diese Frauen: Dient! Bibelarbeit zur Heilung der Schwiegermutter, Mk 1,29/31 und den dienenden Frauen aus Galiläa, Lk 8,1–3 und Mk 15,41,” in *Frauenbilder*, ed. B. Eltrop and A. Hecht, *Frauen-BibelArbeit 1* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1998), 40–45.

⁵³ Thus S. Miller, “The Healing of Simon’s Mother-in-Law: Mark 1:29–39,” *Expository Times* 117 (2006): 152–53, here 153: “She illustrates the reciprocity of discipleship by contributing to the well-being of others after receiving health from Jesus.” Cf. also Kinukawa, *Women and Jesus*, 105: “It is symbolic to see her raised

Interestingly, the discussion around the proper understanding of Mark 1.29–31 often goes in the same direction as the conversation in Mark 9 and 10: the concern is with power, hierarchy, and questions about roles.⁵⁴ In its effort to make women visible, feminist exegesis is prone to positive exaggeration just as traditional approaches are to negative exaggeration.⁵⁵ This fits in the context of the interpreters but not necessarily with the text. As differently as the *Gute Nachricht Bibel* (“and she prepared food for all”) and the *Bibel in gerechter Sprache* (“and she became, as the others, a disciple of Jesus”) translate, they are correct not on their own but together:⁵⁶ *Discipleship* or *following* means serving and in the first century *serving* also included the humble tasks of table service.

The topic of feminist exegesis is often women and their roles in the early church and less about human beings and their encounter with Jesus (and its consequences). The focus is placed thereby on institutional questions and not on the individual relationship of which Mark 1.29–31 speaks. In this way, the focus on power, hierarchy, and roles is almost already preprogrammed. Thus, in the words of Monika Fander: “Representatives of feminist theology have advocated, above all with reference to Mark 15.41 par., the thesis that there were female disciples of Jesus who accompanied him from Galilee to Jerusalem. In the meantime, this thesis has been adopted or no longer ruled out by some male exegetes, though most exegetes contest it.”⁵⁷ Whether there were female disciples and itinerant-charismatics and what this means for churches today is a reception-oriented question. Sometimes the modern discourse is only recognizable at second glance: In her study, A. Hentschl, critically considers the terminological history of the lexeme *diakoneō* (διακονέω) and rightly concludes that there is no specific “New Testament” usage.⁵⁸ This also means that the history of early Christian offices cannot simply be derived from the New Testament texts by extending the text into reality. The fact that questions regarding the diaconate as an office also play an important role in Hentschel’s work likewise shows an institution-historical perspective, which, despite its orientation to the linguistic usage in the Jewish and Hellenistic environment of the New Testament and early Christian texts, has a decidedly theological pragmatics.

The stories that scholars tell are often strongly shaped by the questions that arise from the contexts of the interpreters. This is something that they have in common with the stories that are told in the Bible. They too are formed by the questions of their con-

by the life-giving Jesus to her wholeness and to start following him. The reciprocity of the giving of life and the response works vigorously here again. It entails the community of living interactions.”

⁵⁴With her discussion of the “claim to ecclesial competence/authority” of women, the contribution of Barbara Mörtl is a good example of this tendency. See B. Mörtl, “Die Heilung der Schwiegermutter (Mk 1,29–31) – Freude und Ärgernis?,” in *Heilungen und Wunder. Theologische, historische und medizinische Zugänge*, ed. J. Pichler and C. Heil (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2007), 130–42.

⁵⁵Krause, “Mother-in-Law,” 37–42 has worked out this thesis and thereby sparked off an intense discussion. Even though Krause’s analysis is not on target in all points, it sketches out a realistic picture of the conflict.

⁵⁶H. Kinukawa, D. Krause, and W. Carter argue in this same direction. See Kinukawa, *Women and Jesus*, 104; Krause, “Simon Peter’s Mother-in-Law,” 50–51; Carter, *Mark*, 32.

⁵⁷Fander, *Die Stellung der Frau im Markusevangelium*, 308.

⁵⁸Cf. Hentschel, *Diakonia im Neuen Testament*.

texts. This double contextual bondedness of text and reader is one of the fundamental axioms of cultural-scientific exegesis and part of the task of responsible biblical scholarship consists in mediating between these two contexts. This is also made clear by the story that is told by *depth-psychological exegesis*.⁵⁹ When Eugen Drewermann surmises from the fever of the mother-in-law a passive attitude of rejection in relation to the discipleship project of her son-in-law,⁶⁰ this says more about his own experiences with family conflicts and psychosomatic sicknesses than about the biblical text. This key fits many situations in pastoral care and thus to the sphere of spiritual counselors, but this does not yet say anything about the mother-in-law of Simon. In other words, depth-psychological exegesis makes it possible for one to connect experiences from one's own context, from one's own life reality, with the biblical texts and thus to open points of access to the lifeworld and experience-world of the early followers of Jesus beyond dogmatic lines of questioning. The line that separates the appropriation of the experiences described in the text from the colonialization of the texts by one's own contexts and for one's own lines of questioning is, however, thin, and the danger of crossing it is great.

While the liberating experience of the healing story may be more strongly emphasized in the pastoral context of a bible study group and thus made into a story that generates courage and empowers the group, scholarly interpretation must stress that this is not the only aspect and that this by no means exhausts the possibilities for understanding the story. As partisan and contextual readers, Bible study groups are not only allowed to read the text in this way, but it is the right and the strength of an *emic* reading,⁶¹ i.e., from the perspective of a group member, to be partisan.

Correspondingly, biblical-pastoral approaches and catechesis as well as theological and identity-political readings ask about what a text can mean for their *own* group or interpretive community. This is not to be confused with an *etic* reading, i.e., an outside perspective that places the texts in their historical contexts and discloses potential understandings without making them one's own or specifying the "correct" interpretation. It always works only for a specific context and is not possible from the outside perspective, which the etic approach represents.

Here, New Testament exegesis, which oscillates between both poles, working *etically* as an scholarly discipline and *emically* as theology, can become conflicted. In the scholarly-etic reading, the biblical text determines the appropriateness of an interpretation, whereas in emic readings the respective discourse determines it.⁶² We must live with this Janus-faced character, and it does not even have to be something bad. On the contrary, the double perspective can make New Testament scholars especially helpful

⁵⁹The German designation for this approach is *tiefenpsychologische Exegese*.

⁶⁰E. Drewermann, *Das Markusevangelium*, 1. Teil. Mark 1,1–9,13 (Southern: Walter Verlag, 1993), 202–9.

⁶¹The terminological pair *etic* / *emic* comes from social-scientific scholarship and designates different perspectives or angles of vision upon the object of observation. The *emic* perspective designates the standpoint of an observer, culture-creator, or text structure from the internal perspective of the respective group, while the *etic* perspective is that of an outsider.

⁶²For this reason, discourse analysis is also important precisely for biblical scholarship, for it is not simply the adjudicator when there are competing interpretations, even if its primary task as a scholarly discipline is the outside perspective, the *etic* view.

conversation partners when the concern is to discover polyphony and learn to see from different perspectives with reference to the texts of the New Testament, the founding document of Christianity. Here, exegetical stories as narratives about the Bible and its interpretation play a decisive role.

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“὘ν τινι εἶναι as the Background to Paul’s Discourse on Being “in Christ”

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Abstract

Scholars have investigated Paul’s ἔν Χριστῷ phrases for some time, yet no consensus has been reached as to what they mean and how the apostle came to speak of the relationship between believers and Christ in this way. This brief survey shows that the philological background of Paul’s “being in Christ” phrases lies in the largely analogous Greek phrase ἔν τινι εἶναι which expresses dependency of something or someone on something or someone else. Various passages from the archaic up to the imperial period that have received no attention so far demonstrate this. In Paul, the concept of dependency in connection with ἔν Χριστῷ phrases particularly comes to play in Rom 1–8.

In his drama *Alcectis*, Euripides’s protagonist Admetus exclaims to his wife Alcectis: ἔν σοι δ’ ἐσμὲν καὶ ζῆν καὶ μὴ (“We depend on you for our life or death,” 278).² In fact, this remark bears some similarities to Paul’s ἔν Χριστῷ phrases:³ in both Euripides and Paul, a group of people is the subject,⁴ both authors use the verb εἶμι, and both use a construction consisting of ἔν and pronouns to express a relationship between a group and an individual. If, therefore, the phrase in Euripides describes the dependence of one group of people on another person, can the same be said of the Pauline expression ἔν Χριστῷ?

While there is certainly no shortage of investigations on ἔν Χριστῷ, the philological search for an analogous phrase in Greek literature has been unsuccessful so far. Adolf Deissmann wrote the first treatise on ἔν Χριστῷ and published it in 1892. Research opinions on the meaning of the phrase now cover a wide range: some advocate a local or spatial interpretation,⁵ others prefer an instrumental inter-

¹For the German version of the present essay, see Barbara Beyer, “὘ν τινι εἶναι als Hintergrund der paulinischen Rede vom Sein ‘in Christus,’” *ZNW* 114.1 (2023) 65–78. Beyer’s article itself is part of her fuller treatment of Pauline language about being “in Christ” found in Barbara Beyer, *Determined by Christ: The Pauline Metaphor “Being in Christ”*, NovTSup 191 (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

²Unless otherwise stated, all translations in this article are by the author.

³All variants of this expression (e.g., ἔν κυρίῳ) are also included here.

⁴According to Gustav Adolf Seeck, *Euripides. Alcectis (Griechische Dramen)* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 97, despite the poetic plural form, it can be assumed that the children were included.

⁵See Adolf Deissmann, *Die neutestamentliche Formel “in Christo Jesu”* (Marburg: Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1892), 97; Udo Schnelle, *Gerechtigkeit und Christusgegenwart. Vorpaulinische und paulinische Tauftheologie*, 2nd ed., GTA 24 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 110; Andrie du Toit, “‘In Christ,’ ‘in the Spirit’ and Related Prepositional Phrases: Their Relevance for a Discussion on Pauline Mysticism,” in *For-*

pretation,⁶ while still others consider a modal aspect to be dominant,⁷ and less often it is interpreted ecclesialogically,⁸ historically,⁹ or eschatologically.¹⁰ Its origin has also been lively debated, with no consensus on whether parallels can be found in Greco-Roman literature,¹¹ the writings of Greek mystery religions,¹² the language of the LXX,¹³ or Jewish wisdom traditions, especially in Philo.¹⁴

Teresa Morgan's more recent study takes a different approach here: she interprets Paul's phrases either instrumentally or with reference to the use of *ἐν* in Greek, which she calls "encheiristic" and broadly renders as "in the hands of." She lists evidence for this, some of which will be discussed below.¹⁵ Her interpretation is fundamentally correct, but replacing the difficult expression "in Christ"

using on Paul. *Persuasion and Theological Design in Romans and Galatians*, ed. Cilliers Breytenbach and David du Toit, BZNW 151 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 129–145, here 132.

⁶See Alexander J. M. Wedderburn, "Some Observations on Paul's Use of the Phrases 'in Christ' and 'with Christ,'" *JSNT* 8.25 (1985): 83–97, here 89.

⁷See Michael Wolter, *Paulus. Ein Grundriss seiner Theologie*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021), 244; Hans-Christoph Meier, *Mystik bei Paulus. Zur Phänomenologie religiöser Erfahrung im Neuen Testament*, TANZ 26 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 38–39.

⁸See Ernst Käsemann, *Leib und Leib Christi. Eine Untersuchung zur paulinischen Begrifflichkeit*, BHTh 9 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1933), 183–186.

⁹See Fritz Neugebauer, *In Christus EN ΧΡΙΣΤΩ. Eine Untersuchung zum Paulinischen Glaubensverständnis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), 36–39, 148–149. He advocated an instrumental and historical understanding.

¹⁰See Albert Schweitzer, *Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1930), 116–126; Rudolf Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 8th ed., UTB 630 (Tübingen: UTB, 1980), 311, 328. Both advocated an ecclesiological-eschatological understanding.

¹¹See Deissmann, *Formel*, 70: Paul is "the creator of the formula, not in the sense that he was the first to combine *ἐν* with the personal singular, but in the sense that he created a completely new terminus technicus by using an existing linguistic phrase" (italics original).

¹²See Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos. Geschichte des Christusglaubens von den Anfängen des Christentums bis Irenaeus*, 2nd ed., FRLANT 21 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1921), 104–120; Richard Reitzenstein, *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen. Nach ihren Grundgedanken und Wirkungen*, 3rd ed. (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1927), 91, 334; Käsemann, *Leib*, 168, 171.

¹³Johannes Weiß, "Paulinische Probleme II. Die Formel *ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ* (Zugleich Besprechung der Schrift von A. Deissmann, Die neutestamentliche Formel 'in Christo Jesu')," *ThStKr* 69 (1896): 7–33, here 10; Wedderburn, "Observations," 89; N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (London: T&T Clark International, 1991), 45–49. Deissmann himself changed his opinion in the second edition of his work *Paulus. Eine kultur- und religionsgeschichtliche Skizze*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1925), 116–117. A broader explanation of its origin within early Judaism has been offered by Klaus Berger, "Zum traditionsgeschichtlichen Hintergrund christologischer Hoheitstitel," *NTS* 17.4 (1971): 391–425, here 403–408; J. Thomas Hewitt, *Messiah and Scripture: Paul's 'In Christ' Idiom in Its Ancient Jewish Context*, WUNT 2/522 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 242–243.

¹⁴While Egon Brandenburger, *Fleisch und Geist. Paulus und die dualistische Weisheit*, WMANT 29 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1968), 26–28, 42–57, 225–228; Schnelle, *Gerechtigkeit*, 106–120, refer generally to Jewish wisdom traditions, Gerhard Sellin, "Die religionsgeschichtlichen Hintergründe der paulinischen 'Christusmystik,'" *ThQ* 176.1 (1996): 7–27, here 26–27, argues more specifically for Philo.

¹⁵See Teresa Morgan, *Being "in Christ" in the Letters of Paul: Saved through Christ and in His Hands*, WUNT 449 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), esp. 11–22, for references and a basic interpretation. The lexicons render these *ἐν* phrases differently. See *ΘΗΣΑΥΡΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗΣ ΓΛΩΣΣΗΣ. Thesaurus Graecae Linguae, ab Henrico Stephano constructus*, ed. Karl B. Hase, Wilhelm Dindorf, Ludwig Dindorf, 3rd ed., vol. 3 (Paris: Excudebat H. Stephanus, 1835), s.v. *ἐν* 962 B: "Ἐν ἐμοὶ ἐστι, In me est, pro In potestate mea est" as well as "Abs te pendemus"; Franz Passow, *Handwörterbuch der griechischen Sprache*, newly revised and updated by Val. Chr. Fr. Rost, Friedrich Palm, Otto Kreussler, 5th ed., vol. 1.2 (Darmstadt: WBG, 1847 [reprinted 1993], s.v. *ἐν* 2b): "This analogy explains the saying: *εἶναι* or *γίνεσθαι ἐν τινι*, to be in someone's hands or power, to depend on someone," or, for *ἐστιν ἐν τινι*, "it depends on someone for something to happen." Subsequent lexicons adopted much of Stephanus's and Passow's work.

with “in the hands of Christ” represents a rather problematic metaphorical shift. For this reason, the terms “dependent on,” “determined by,” and “ruled by Christ” are preferred in what follows.¹⁶ Furthermore, texts from Greek literature that have received little attention to date will be presented and their usefulness for the interpretation of the Pauline ἐν Χριστῷ will be examined.

Since Paul used his ἐν Χριστῷ phrases extremely flexibly, it is essential to consider the entire syntagma. This allows us to weed out some of the ninety-eight examples in which the verb is usually combined with an ἐν phrase.¹⁷ Of the remaining examples, those that refer to the *being* of one or more persons ἐν Χριστῷ stand out in particular: How can one person be completely¹⁸ *in* another person? Accordingly, the focus will be on Pauline evidence in which a personal subject and a verb of being (εἰμί, ζᾶω or ζῶῃ, γίνομαι) are encountered or implied (Rom 6.11; 8.1–2; 16.7, 11; 1 Cor 1.30; 2 Cor 5.17; Gal 3.26, 28; Phil 3.9). How should these examples of Paul’s phrase ἐν Χριστῷ be understood against the background of the Greek formulation ἐν τινι εἶναι?¹⁹

1. *Ἐν τινι εἶναι in Greek Literature

One of the oldest references to the phrase under investigation comes from Homer’s *Odyssey*: shortly before Odysseus reaches his homeland, his ship is once again driven far out to sea. On the floating island of Aeolia, he asks its inhabitants, Aeolus and his family, for help: ἀλλ’ ἀκέσασθε, φίλοι· δύναμις γὰρ ἐν ὑμῖν (“But friends, heal us! For the power lies with you,” 10.69). Odysseus’s hopeless situation leads him to acknowledge his dependence on the abilities of Aeolus and his family.

Hesiod also uses the phrase ἐν τινι εἶναι in the context of seafaring. The best time for sailing is late summer. If Poseidon, lord of the sea, and Zeus, lord of humankind, do not wish anyone to die, the voyage will be successful, for the sea will be calm. “For the outcome of both good and evil depends on them [sc. Poseidon and Zeus]” (ἐν τοῖς [Ποσειδάωνι καὶ Διὶ] γὰρ τέλος ἐστὶν ὁμῶς ἀγαθὸν τε κακὸν τε, *Op.* 669). The two gods have the power to decide whether someone’s sea voyage will be successful.

There is ample evidence of the phrase ἐν τινι εἶναι from classical times. Euripides, *Alc.* 278, was already mentioned at the beginning of this essay. This reference is also interesting because Admetos (and the couple’s children) are dependent on Alcestis, meaning that she, as a woman, plays a decisive role in her family. In contrast, other parallels express the hierarchical relationship between men and women in marriage. Euripides’s *Medea*, for example, is desperate because her husband Jason left her. Lamenting her misfortune, she cries out, “For to me he was everything, I know it well! The most depraved of all men, my husband” (ἐν ᾧ γὰρ ἦν μοι πάντα, γιγνώσκω καλῶς, κάκιστος ἀνδρῶν ἐκβέβηχ’ οὐμὸς πόσις, *Med.* 228–229). She then laments the fate of all women who, through marriage, obtain a δεσπότης σώματος (“a ruler over their bodies,” 233). Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus* describes a woman’s dependence on her husband in a similar way. She denies having any power. Instead, “everything is in you [sc. the husband]” (τίς δὲ ἢ ἐμὴ δύναμις· ἀλλ’ ἐν σοὶ πάντα ἐστίν, 7.14). Aristophanes reverses this aspect in his comedy *Lysistrata* and exaggerates it: in order to end the war between the Greek cities, the protagonist Lysistrata develops a plan whereby the abstinence of women toward their fighting husbands would end the war. Thus, “the salvation of all Greece depends on women” (ὅλης τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἐν ταῖς γυναιξίν ἐστὶν ἡ σωτηρία, 30).²⁰

¹⁶ Although these are also metaphorical expressions, this is less obvious in their case. They are to serve as examples of descriptive language in what follows and do not reflect the ideas directly associated with being ἐν Χριστῷ.

¹⁷ These include ἐλπίσω (1 Cor 15.19; Phil 2.19); καυχᾶμαι κτλ (Rom 15.17; 1 Cor 1.31; 15.31; 2 Cor 10.17; Phil 1.26; 3.3); χαίρω (Phil 3.1; 4.4, 10); πείθω (Phil 1.14; 2.24).

¹⁸ Through baptism into Christ (ἐβαπτίσθημεν εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν, Rom 6.3–4; Gal 3.27), believers are in the state of being in Christ (Rom 6.11; 8.1–2; Gal 3.26, 28; as already stated by Bousset, *Kyrios*; Schweitzer, *Mystik*, 118).

¹⁹ For additional references and a comprehensive discussion of the evidence, see Barbara Beyer, *Determined by Christ: The Pauline Metaphor “Being in Christ”*, NovTSup 191 (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

²⁰ See 2 Tim 2.10 for a similar construction involving the combination of σωτηρία and ἐν.

Interestingly, *Aristotle* already reflected on this use of the preposition *ἐν* and its ability to express a relationship of dependence: *ἔτι ὡς ἐν βασιλείᾳ τὰ τῶν Ἑλλήνων* (“one can also say ‘the affairs of the Greeks lie in the king,’” *Phys.* 4.3.21–24 [201a]).²¹ Aristotle goes on to explain this use of *ἐν* as follows: “the most important meaning, finally: something is in a vessel, generally, in a place.”²² It is clear, then, that Aristotle recognized both the fundamentally local meaning and the possibility of using *ἐν* to express the dependence of people’s fate on a king.

Deissmann had already examined evidence for the use of the phrase *ἐν τινι εἶναι* in archaic and classical times. However, due to the considerable time gap between this period and Paul, this evidence is only of limited use. The following evidence from the Hellenistic and imperial periods is therefore of particular importance.

Thus far, *ἐν τινι εἶναι* has often been encountered in connection with an outstanding decision or urgent situation. However, the phrase can also describe past actions, such as in Polybius. In his description of the organization of a Roman army, Polybius discusses patrol duties. If inconsistencies arise with the sentries, the matter must be investigated. “If, therefore, the disturbance lies with the guards” (*ἐὰν μὲν οὖν ἐν τοῖς φύλαξιν ἢ τὸ κακόν*, *Hist.* 6.36.9), consequences must be drawn.

Like the Pauline Epistles, the novel *The Life of Aesop*, with its distinctive use of *ἐν τινι εἶναι*, dates to the first century. It describes a dialogue between the slave Aesop and his future master Xanthos. The latter asks the slave whether he will run away if he buys him. But Aesop responds with a counter-question, asking which of the two this would depend on (*τὸ δὲ δραπτεῦναι ἐν τίνι ἐστίν, ἐν σοὶ ἢ ἐν ἐμοί, Vita Aesopi* G 26). He repeatedly emphasizes that it depends on Xanthos (*οὐ, ἀλλ’ ἐν σοὶ*), because if Xanthos mistreats his slave, Aesop will flee. But if he is treated well by his master, Aesop will stay with Xanthos. As a free man, Xanthos has the power to make this decision, whereas Aesop, as a slave, is subordinate to him.

The relationship of dependency between two individuals is similarly strong in the narrative about the life of the philosopher *Secundus*. Even when Emperor Hadrian threatens him with death, he refuses to speak, which greatly surprises Hadrian. In response to why he remains silent, *Secundus* writes: “But I, O Hadrian, will not fear you because of death. For it is yours alone to kill me, since you have been found to be the ruler of this age. But you have no power over my voice and my spoken word” (*Ἐγὼ μὲν, ὦ Ἀδριανέ, οὐ φοβηθήσομαι σε ἕνεκεν τοῦ ἀποθανεῖν. τὸ γὰρ με ἀποκτείνειν μόνον ἐν σοὶ ἐστίν. ἄρχων γὰρ τοῦ καιροῦ τούτου εὐρέθης. τῆς δ’ ἐμῆς φωνῆς καὶ τοῦ ἐμοῦ προφορητικοῦ λόγου οὐδεμία σοὶ ἐστὶν ἐξουσία, Vita et sententiae Secundi* 74.17–20).

One of *Dio Chrysostom*’s speeches is addressed to the inhabitants of Rhodes and contains two examples of *ἐν τινι εἶναι*. First, he criticizes the inhabitants for changing the inscriptions on statues by engraving new names.²³ This behavior will harm them in the future if they do not stop it. For if a deity announced an evil that would come as a result of misconduct, the inhabitants would seek to avoid it at all costs, if it were within their power (*οἶμαι δ’ ὑμᾶς, εἴ τις θεῶν φανερόν ὑμῖν ποιήσειε τὸ μέλλον αὐθὺς ποτε λυπήσειν τὴν πόλιν, πάντως φυλάξεσθαι τοῦτο, ἐν ὑμῖν γε ὄν, Rhod.* 145).²⁴ Later, *Dio Chrysostom* appeals to their honor and pride by comparing them to the sole male heir of a distinguished, wealthy family. This heir is now responsible for maintaining his family’s prominent position – “everything depends on him” (*ἐν ἐκείνῳ πάντα ἐστὶ, 159*). The inhabitants of Rhodes, he says, are also in a prominent

²¹See Hans Wagner, *Aristoteles. Physikvorlesung*, 5th ed., Werke in deutscher Übersetzung II (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 87, who translates the sentence as “das Schicksal der Griechen hängt am König”; ET: “the fate of the Greeks depends on the king.”

²²Translation by Wagner, *Physikvorlesung*, 87.

²³See the introduction in James Wilfred Cohoon and Henry Lamar Crosby, *Dio Chrysostom. Discourses* 31–36, LCL 358 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940), 4.

²⁴See Winfried Elliger, *Dion Chrysostomos. Sämtliche Reden*, BAW.GR (Zurich: Artemis, 1967), 412: “You yourselves would probably try to prevent a disaster that a god prophesied for your city in the future at all costs, if it were in your power.”

position among the Greeks and must defend the honor of all.

A passage from Josephus's *Antiquities* offers an interesting parallel to Paul: while the apostle of ten locates so-called salvific goods (*Heilsgüter*) ἐν Χριστῷ, such as God's calling (ἡ κλήσις τοῦ θεοῦ, Phil 3.14), Josephus writes that liberation is "in God." Thus, in a dire situation in the desert, Moses exclaims "For his deliverance depends on him and not on anyone else" (ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ εἶναι τὴν σωτηρίαν αὐτοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐν ἄλλῳ, *Ant.* 3.23).²⁵

Finally, it appears that the phrase ἐν τινι εἶναι was in use until late antiquity. In a letter from Libanius addressed to Modestus, an Alexandrian official, Libanius asks Modestus to return the money paid by the Arian bishop Georgius.²⁶ This depended on him – on his judgment and his position (ἐν σοὶ τε καὶ τῇ σῇ γνώμῃ καὶ τῇ σῇ χειρὶ, *Ep.* 70.2).

It has been demonstrated that the Greek construction ἐν τινι εἶναι occurs in texts from the eighth century BCE to the fourth century CE. These examples each express a form of dependence on a person or a thing.²⁷ The subject of the phrase can be a person,²⁸ an abstract concept such as the nouns δύναμις,²⁹ τέλος,³⁰ or σωτηρία,³¹ the adjective πάντα,³² an infinitive construction,³³ a substantivized verb,³⁴ or another subordinate clause.³⁵ While in Paul's letters a person – Christ – is the object of the ἐν construction, in examples from Greek literature this can also be an abstract concept.³⁶ The form εἶμι can be omitted or replaced by γίγνομαι.³⁷ In most cases, the phrase refers to a future outcome that depends on a present decision, especially in judicial contexts.³⁸ However, other passages also refer to past events.³⁹ Since the dative object of ἐν is capable of determining a situation, it often refers to deities⁴⁰ or people

²⁵Passages such as this from Jewish sources are rather rare; see Ps LXX 3.3: πολλοὶ λέγουσιν τῇ ψυχῇ μου Οὐκ ἔστιν σωτηρία αὐτῷ ἐν τῷ θεῷ αὐτοῦ, and Wis 5.15: Δίκαιοι δὲ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ζῶσιν, καὶ ἐν κυρίῳ ὁ μισθὸς αὐτῶν, καὶ ἡ φροντίς αὐτῶν παρὰ ὑψίστῳ.

²⁶See the note in Albert Francis Norman, *Libanius. Autobiography and Selected Letters*, vol. II: *Letters 51–193*, LCL 479 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 65 n. a.

²⁷With the help of insights from recent metaphor theories, it becomes clear why the spatial relation of being-in ultimately expresses dependence. According to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 29–30, humans experience the world exclusively as physical beings, so that their own skin separates the inside from the outside. Humans are therefore "containers" and communicate as if other, more abstract things also had boundaries. For example, states can be expressed using concrete, spatial relations such as "being in fear" (ἐν φόβῳ, 1 Cor 2:3) or "he saved us from such a great danger of death" (ἐκ τηλικούτου θανάτου ἐρρύσατο, 2 Cor 1:10), as Aristotle already noted in *Phys.* 4.3.21–44 [201a]. Such "container metaphors" are a subgroup of "ontological metaphors." Statements of this kind are often not perceived as metaphorical, as they are conventional components of language. At the same time, these spatial relations can express power relations – and in the case of ἐν, the dative object represents the determining entity, as is often the case in German ("in Angst sein" ["to be in fear"] or "in Sicherheit sein" ["to be in safety"]). While Lakoff and Johnson's theory can be criticized in many respects, these findings nevertheless help to better understand ἐν Χριστῷ statements.

²⁸Euripides, *Alc.* 278; Sophocles, *Oed. tyr.* 314.

²⁹Homer, *Od.* 10.69.

³⁰Hesiod, *Op.* 669; Demosthenes, *Cor.* 193; Andocides, *De pace* 3.41; Pindar, *Nem.* 10.29–30; Plutarch, *Art.* 18.3 [1020B].

³¹Aristophanes, *Lys.* 30; Herodotus, *Hist.* 8.118.

³²Euripides, *Med.* 228; Xenophon, *Oec.* 7.14; Herodotus, *Hist.* 3.80; Dio Chrysostomos, *Rhod.* 159.

³³Herodotus, *Hist.* 8.60; Antiphon, *In novercam* 22.

³⁴*Vita Aesopi* G 26.

³⁵Dio Chrysostomos, *Rhod.* 145.

³⁶Sophocles, *Oed. col.* 1443.

³⁷Plutarch, *Art.* 18.3 [1020B].

³⁸Antiphon, *In novercam* 22; Lysias, *Ep.* 1.34.

³⁹Herodotus, *Hist.* 8.100; Polybius, *Hist.* 6.36.9.

⁴⁰Hesiod, *Op.* 669; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.23.

in positions of power such as rulers,⁴¹ husbands,⁴² or slave owners.⁴³

On the basis of these findings, I will now show how Paul used this Greek construction to describe the current status of believers as determined by, dependent on, and ruled by Christ. This will be illustrated using Rom 1–8, a passage central to the ἐν Χριστῷ expressions.

2. Being ἐν Χριστῷ as a Relationship of Dependence in Rom 1–8

In Rom 1–8, Paul mentions three times that believers are ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.⁴⁴ Two of these references use either the verb ζῶω (6.11) or the noun ζωή (8.2) instead of εἰμί.⁴⁵ This deviation occurs only here and is based, on the one hand, on the motif of death and life, which appears frequently in Rom 6–8, and, on the other hand, on the contrast with life in sin in 6.2 (οἵτινες ἀπεθάνομεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ, πῶς ἔτι ζήσομεν ἐν αὐτῇ). The entire section of 6.1–14 implies that the addressees should follow their faith and baptism with a life pleasing to God: their co-burial with Christ took place for the purpose (ἵνα) of a new way of life (καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς περιπατήσωμεν, 6.4) and they should (imperative of λογίζομαι) consider themselves alive for God in Christ Jesus (ὑμεῖς λογίσεσθε ἑαυτοὺς ... ζώντας δὲ τῷ θεῷ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, 6.11). Romans 8.1–17 also refers to living in accordance with the Spirit (8.4), godly conduct (8.8), and putting to death the deeds of the flesh (8.13) as a consequence of the new existence, so that when ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ is mentioned in 8.2, just as in 6.11, it has a proactive connotation. At the same time, it is only through God's saving action that believers have been freed to lead a godly life instead of their former sinful life (8.2–4). While ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ in 8.2 could also be an adverbial modifier of ἡλευθέρωσεν and then be interpreted instrumentally, a connection with ὁ γὰρ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς is more plausible, not least because of its close relationship in content and terminology with 6.11. Furthermore, 8.1 briefly mentions τοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, such that the discourse on life ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ describes this existence in more detail.⁴⁶ The Spirit establishes a new norm (νόμος) that leads to life in dependence on Christ Jesus.⁴⁷

As with the references to εἶναι in Greek literature, the ἐν Χριστῷ phrases in Paul's writings are closely linked to the language and concepts of dominion. These statements of superiority and subordination often take the form of spatial determinations. One example worth mentioning here is the dominion of death over believers (ὁ θάνατος ἐβασίλευσεν, 5.14, 17). Once they remained or lived as those who were determined by sin (literally “were in sin”: ἐπιμένω/ζῶω ἐν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ, 6.1–2) and under the law (ὑπὸ νόμον, 6.14–15) as slaves of sin (δοῦλοι τῆς ἁμαρτίας, 6.17, 20). Sin dwelt in them as their slave master (ἡ οἰκοῦσα ἐν ἐμοὶ ἁμαρτία, 7.17, 20). This combination of hegemonic and spatial language also comes into play when Paul describes the present state of believers: when they were baptized

⁴¹ Aristotle, *Phys.* 4.3.21–24 [201a]; *Vita et sententiae Secundi* 74.17–20.

⁴² Euripides, *Med.* 228; Xenophon, *Oec.* 7.14.

⁴³ *Vita Aesopi* G 26.

⁴⁴ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ in Rom 3.24 is instrumental; ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν in 8.39 refers metonymically to God's saving action through Christ.

⁴⁵ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν in 6.23 is connected with ζωή, but because of the analogous instrumental phrases with διὰ and ἐν at the end of chapters 5–8 (5.21; 7.25; 8.39), it is also instrumental. Furthermore, Paul's ἐν Χριστῷ phrases refer to the present, while 6.23 speaks of eternal life (ζωὴ αἰώνιος).

⁴⁶ For the interpretation that ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ refers to ζωή and not to ἡλευθέρωω, see, for example, Theodor von Zahn, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer ausgelegt*, 3rd ed., KNT 6 (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1925), 375–376.

⁴⁷ In the case of τῆς ζωῆς (8.2), it is a genitive of direction and purpose; see Friedrich Blass, Albert Debrunner, and Friedrich Rehkopf, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*, 18th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001), § 166. Similarly, τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου also expresses the consequence of the opposite norm. On the interpretation of νόμος as “norm” or “principle” analogous to Rom 7.23–24, see Michael Wolter, *Der Brief an die Römer*, vol. 1: *Romans 1–8*, EKK 6.1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2014), 473–474.

into Christ Jesus, namely into his death (ἐβαπτίσθημεν εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν/τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ, 6.3–4).⁴⁸ These verses refer both to the ritual of baptism and, in a figurative sense, to immersion in the death of Christ.⁴⁹ According to Gal 3.29, baptism brought about a change of ownership. Believers were once under the rule of the personified powers of sin, law, and death, but now they have a new Lord and Master – Christ. Therefore, they are also called upon to live for God in dependence on Christ Jesus (literally “in Christ Jesus”: ζῶντες ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, 6.11) as a consequence of the change in lordship and ownership that has taken place. Sin no longer rules over them (ἁμαρτία ὑμῶν οὐ κυριεύσει, 6.14); instead, they are under grace (ὑπὸ χάριν, 6.14–15). Accordingly, they should now serve righteousness and God as their slaves (ἐδουλώθητε τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ/δουλωθέντες τῷ θεῷ, 6.18, 22).

Romans 1–8 therefore contains many statements from the realm of spatial and dominion imagery such that the passages containing ἐν Χριστῷ in Rom 6.1; 8.1–2 should be understood within this context. Particularly striking is the reference to the mutual indwelling of Christ or the Spirit in believers and vice versa in Rom 8: while verses 1–2 speak of those who are determined by Christ Jesus (literally “are in Christ Jesus”: τοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, v. 1) and who should now live their lives in accordance with this dependence (literally “life in Christ Jesus”: τῆς ζωῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, v. 2), verse 10 states that Christ is in them (Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν). Previously, there was already mention of believers being guided by the Spirit (literally “being in the Spirit”: ἐν πνεύματι, v. 9), while at the same time the Spirit dwells in them (πνεῦμα θεοῦ οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν, v. 9/τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ ἐγείραντος τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐκ νεκρῶν οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν, v. 11) – in contrast to those who are ruled by the flesh (οἱ δὲ ἐν σαρκὶ ὄντες, v. 8). This mutual indwelling is far removed from mystical ideas,⁵⁰ but becomes understandable against the background of Greek usage. For the control a spirit exercises over a person can be expressed by both formulations – either that the person is “in a spirit” or that “the spirit is in a person.” According to Josephus, the seer Balaam is controlled by the Spirit (literally “he is in the Spirit”: οὐκ ὦν ἐν ἑαυτῷ τῷ δὲ θεῷ πνεύματι, *Ant.* 4.118; cf. also Sib 12.297), whereas according to the LXX God’s Spirit is in Balaam and acts through him (ἐγένετο πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ, Num 24.2; cf. also Gen 41.38). Similarly, in the Gospel of Mark, both formulations occur in the context of an evil spirit dwelling in a person.⁵¹ The use of οἰκέω in Rom 8.9 (πνεῦμα θεοῦ οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν) makes it clear that this is a metaphor for a house, that is, believers are the house or temple in which Christ and his Spirit dwell (see also 1 Cor 3.16; 6.19; 2 Cor 6.16).⁵² These

⁴⁸For a metaphorical interpretation of baptism, which does not exclude literal immersion in the baptismal ritual, see Cilliers Breitenbach, “Taufen’ als Metapher in den Briefen des Paulus. Randbemerkungen zur Wendung βαπτισθῆναι εἰς τι/τινα,” in *Ethos und Theologie im Neuen Testament*, FS Michael Wolter, ed. Jochen Flebbe and Matthias Konradt (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2016), 263–288, here 275–281.

⁴⁹For this spatial interpretation of εἰς ἐν σῶμα in connection with 1 Cor 12.13, see Lars Hartman, “*Into the Name of the Lord Jesus*”: *Baptism in the Early Church*, SNTW (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 67; Wolfgang Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, vol. 3: *1Kor 11,17–14,40*, EKK 7,3 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1999), 216; Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 152.

⁵⁰It was particularly a tendency of the history of religions school to view ἐν Χριστῷ from the perspective of “Pauline mysticism” and, in part, under the influence of mystery religions, as was particularly the case with Reitzenstein, *Mysterienreligionen*; Alfred Wikenhauser, *Die Christenmystik des hl. Paulus*, BZfr 12,8–10 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1928); Schweitzer, *Mystik*. At the same time, the concept of “mysticism” in various (and mostly undefined) meanings has persisted to this day, at least since E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 453–456, also under the term “participation.”

⁵¹See Mark 1.23–26; 5.2–13. Among pagan references, Socrates’ δαιμόνιον is probably the best known. Dio Chrysostom, *Gen.* 1 states that a δαίμων has control over someone (τὸ κρατοῦν ἑκάστου) and that every human being lives accordingly (καθ’ ὅν ζῇ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἕκαστος), since this is their master (κύριον τὸν ἀνθρώπου). See also Marcus Aurelius, *Med.* 3.5; Plutarch, *Amat.* 18 [762E].

⁵²Furthermore, in Rom 6.1–2; 7.17–18, 20, sin is encountered as the (slave) master of human beings, who are determined by it and also have it within them.

overlapping statements about indwelling thus underscore the dominion of Christ and the Spirit over believers.

There are, therefore, significant overlaps between the Greek phrase *ἐν τινι εἶναι* and the *ἐν Χριστῷ* phrases in Rom 1–8. They each describe a hierarchical relationship between the subject of the *ἐν* construction, which is lower in authority (in this case, the believers), and the object of *ἐν*, which is higher in authority (Christ). Having conquered death through his resurrection, he is the supreme Lord to whom believers are subject (6.9; Phil 2.11). Therefore, their entire existence now depends on Christ and is determined by him. While in most Greek literature the decision or action is still pending, for Paul the decisive event has already taken place: Christ has chosen them (Rom 8.28). His death and resurrection now determine believers; they depend on him to live in their new existence. The parallel texts made it clear that the formulation was not rigid, but could be combined with different subjects, objects, and verbs because of the versatile meanings of *ἐν*, just as in Paul.⁵³ Accordingly, the two examples from Euripides, *Alc.* 78, and Sophocles, *Oed. tyr.* 314, which, like Paul, combine a personal subject and object, *ἐν*, and a verb of being, are a particular expression of a broader analogy between *ἐν τινι εἶναι* and the Pauline *ἐν Χριστῷ* formulations.

Other parts of the Pauline argumentation also provide evidence that *ἐν Χριστῷ* expresses a relationship of dependence. In Gal 3.26, 28, immediately following the reminder to believers of their being *ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*, that is, their dependence on Christ Jesus (*πάντες γὰρ υἱοὶ θεοῦ ἐστε διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ... πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἰς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*), we find the statement that they belong to Christ as his possession (*ὑμεῖς Χριστοῦ*, v. 29).⁵⁴ According to 2 Cor 5.14, Christ's love determines Paul and his current judgment (*ἡ γὰρ ἀγάπη τοῦ Χριστοῦ συνέχει ἡμᾶς*). If someone is now determined by Christ, he or she is a new creation (*ὥστε εἰ τις ἐν Χριστῷ, καινὴ κτίσις*, v. 17) – as the apostle himself experienced. Finally, in Phil 3.7–11 Paul contrasts his former life as a zealous Pharisee with his present existence in light of his knowledge of Christ. While he usually speaks of “Jesus Christ our Lord,” the use of the possessive pronoun in the first person singular (“my Lord”) is unique here (*τοῦ κυρίου μου*, v. 8). This is immediately followed by the desire to be found in the final judgment as someone who is determined by Christ (*ἵνα ... εὐρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ*, vv. 8–9).⁵⁵ Some attestations of the formulation *ἐν τινι εἶναι* were also encountered with this meaning in the context of court judgments and decisions. The present existence *ἐν Χριστῷ* therefore expresses a state of being determined and ruled by Christ, based on the hierarchy between the risen Lord Jesus Christ and those who believe in him.

3. Results

The Pauline *ἐν Χριστῷ* phrases are fundamentally versatile and should not be viewed in a generalized manner. Evidence from Greco-Roman literature now contributes to a better understanding of those formulations in Paul that speak of “being ‘in Christ,’” in which *ἐν Χριστῷ* is associated with a personal subject and an expression of being (Rom 6.11; 8.1–2; 16.7, 11; 1 Cor 1.30; 2 Cor 5.17; Gal 3.26, 28; Phil 3.9).⁵⁶ To be *ἐν Χριστῷ* then means that believers are determined by Christ – they depend on him as

⁵³For example, with *ζάω*: Rom 6.11; with *ισχύω*: Gal 5.6.

⁵⁴See also the attributions of possession in 1 Cor 1.12 with being *ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ* in v. 30.

⁵⁵For the use of *εὐρίσκω* in legal language, see Frederick W. Danker (ed.), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature. Based on the Sixth Edition of Walter Bauer's Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der übrigen urchristlichen Literatur*, ed. Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, with Viktor Reichmann and on previous English editions by W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F.W. Danker, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000), s.v. 2. See also Luke 23.4, 14, 22; John 18.38; 19.4; Acts 23.9; 24.20; Josephus, *Ant.* 2.133.

⁵⁶However, the interpretation of *ἐν Χριστῷ* as a matter of dependence does not exclude the “spatial interpretation”: since “being ‘in Christ’” is metaphorical language that is based on normal usage, is highly conven-

their ruler.⁵⁷ The apostle thus used a Greek phrase to metaphorically portray believers as being in the power of Christ. Thus, ἐν Χριστῷ already became one of Paul's most concise expressions for describing the relationship between believers and Christ – a development that has continued to this day.⁵⁸

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tional, and ultimately expresses the determination of Christ in words, both concepts are closely intertwined and interchangeable. See also n27.

⁵⁷See already Bultmann, *Theologie*, 328; Neugebauer, *Christus*, 42; du Toit, "Christ," 132; Christopher Tuckett, "The Church as the Body of Christ," in *Paul et l'unité des chrétiens*, ed. Jacques Schlosser, SMBN 19 (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 161–191, here 177; Udo Schnelle, *Paulus. Leben und Denken*, 2nd ed., De Gruyter Studium (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 520. Wolter, *Paulus*, 242–246, also concludes that ἐν Χριστῷ ultimately describes a dependence on Christ, but rejects the meaning of the Greek parallel expression and any spatial interpretation.

⁵⁸For example, the Deuteropauline letters contain sixty-eight references. Deissmann, *Formel*, 84, would describe the phrase today as a "chameleon" – "virtually meaningless, because it can mean anything."

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Der Römerbrief. Ein neuer Kommentar von Beverly Roberts Gaventa, gelesen aus einer deutschsprachigen exegetischen Perspektive

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Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *Romans: A Commentary*, The New Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2024).

1. Die Kommentarwelt des Römerbriefs

Die bereits sehr umfangreiche Römerbrief-Kommentarszene, die unseres Wissens mit Origenes beginnt¹, ist um eine weitere gewichtige Neuerscheinung bereichert worden: den knapp 500 Seiten umfassenden Kommentar von Beverly Gaventa. Gaventa legt von vornherein Wert darauf, den Text selbstständig durchgearbeitet zu haben. Der Kommentar ist das Ergebnis ihrer Lektüre. Sie versteht ihn nicht als „reference commentary“ (S. 2) und bezieht sich nur dort auf exegetische Diskussionen, wo sie es für unbedingt notwendig hält (S. 1). In ihrer klaren Einführung (S. 1-19) macht sie die Leserschaft mit ihren exegetischen Prämissen und den Grundzügen ihres Textverständnisses bekannt. Sie liest den Römerbrief (Röm) als „inherently theological“ (S. 1) im Sinne eines „talk about God and God's doings in the world“ (S. 1). Das impliziert, dass es für Paulus in Röm um „matters of life and death“ geht und dass diese Dimension auch für heutige Christen Bedeutung hat (S. 1). Gaventa hat also einen „theologischen“ Römerbriefkommentar geschrieben, der ihre eigene Auseinandersetzung mit dem Text wiedergibt. Sie bewegt sich im Rahmen der Kommentarreihe „The New Testament Library“ bei Westminster John Knox.

In welche größeren Zusammenhänge hinein hat Gaventa ihren Kommentar geschrieben? In der deutschsprachigen Kommentarliteratur wurde ein „theologischer“ Römerbriefkommentar prominent von Karl Barth vorgelegt (1919, ²1922). Gaventa bezieht sich häufiger auf Barth. Adolf Schlatter ist dieser systematisch-praktisch-theologischen Linie mit seinem Kommentar „Gottes Gerechtigkeit: Ein Kommentar zum Römerbrief“ (Stuttgart 1935; ³1975) gefolgt.

Andere deutsche Kommentare wie die einflussreichen exegetischen Reihenkommentare von

¹Ausgaben: Caroline Hammond Bammel: *Der Römerbriefkommentar des Origenes: kritische Ausgabe der Übersetzung Rufins*. Herder, Freiburg / Basel / Wien: Buch 1-3. Herder, Freiburg / Basel / Wien 1990; Buch 4-6. Herder, Freiburg / Basel / Wien 1997; Buch 7-10. Herder, Freiburg / Basel / Wien 1998.

Commentarii in epistolam ad Romanos: Lateinischer Text, griechische Fragmente und deutsche Übersetzung. 6 Bände, hrsg. von Theresia Heither. *Liber primus, liber secundus*. Herder, Freiburg / Basel / Wien 1990; *Liber tertius, liber quartus*. Herder, Freiburg / Basel / Wien 1992; *Liber quintus, liber sextus*. Herder, Freiburg / Basel / Wien 1993; *Liber septimus, liber octavus*. Herder, Freiburg / Basel / Wien 1994; *Liber nonus, liber decimus*. Herder, Freiburg / Basel / Wien 1996; *Fragmenta*. Herder, Freiburg / Basel / Wien 1999.

Ernst Käsemann (HNT, Tübingen 1973; 41980), Peter Stuhlmacher (NTD, Göttingen 1989) oder Eduard Lohse (KEK, Göttingen 2003) verstehen den Römerbrief ebenfalls als theologische Hauptschrift oder als theologisches Testament des Paulus, erklären den Text aber ausschließlich mit philologisch-historischen Mitteln und deuten die allgemeine theologische Dimension des Briefes und seine Bedeutung für die Kirche und für ihre Biographie nur in ihren Einleitungen an. Diesen hermeneutischen Hintergrund hat Ernst Käsemann in seiner unnachahmlich persönlich-radikalen Diktion im ersten Satz seines Kommentars besonders akzentuiert:

Als ich am dritten Tag meines ersten Semesters im Mai 1925 neugierig in Erik Petersons Vorlesung über den Römerbrief geriet, wurde damit über den Weg meines Studiums und, wie es einem Theologen ziemt, in gewisser Weise auch meines Lebens entschieden: *Das grundlegende Problem war gestellt*. In den nächsten Semestern habe ich dann H. v. Sodens und R. Bultmanns Auslegung gehört, in vielfachen Anläufen diejenige von K. Barth, A. Schlatter, Luther und Calvin hingerissen und kritisch studiert und mich von ihnen in alte und neue Interpretation einweisen lassen. Kein literarisches Dokument ist mir wichtiger geworden. So schließt sich folgerichtig der Kreis meiner theologischen Arbeit, wenn ich in meinem eigenen Kommentar darstelle, was ich mir vom Apostel habe sagen lassen und was das Ergebnis meiner Beschäftigung mit der sich zu Bergen türmenden wissenschaftlichen Produktion war.²

Hier findet sich der existentiell betroffene Ton, den diejenigen Exegeten und Exegetinnen – auch die Rezensentin – noch kennen, die bei neutestamentlichen Lehrern aus der Bultmannschule studiert haben: „der Text und ich“. Zugleich arbeitet sich Käsemann wie alle genannten Kommentatoren gemäß ihren Reihenvorgaben durch die wissenschaftliche Literatur hindurch und stellt die eigenen Interpretationen jeweils in den Zusammenhang der Breite der exegetischen Interpretationsmöglichkeiten. Die grundlegende theologische und anthropologische Bedeutung des Textes wird in diesen Kommentaren vorausgesetzt, nicht systematisch-theologisch diskutiert. Die mehrbändigen Kommentare von Ulrich Wilckens (EKK 3 Bde., 1978–2003) und zuletzt von Michael Wolter (EKK 2 Bde., 2019–2022) haben dieses Konzept vor allem nach der wissenschaftlichen Dokumentationsseite hin ausgeweitet. Besonders Wolter hat die Tradition des umfangreichen „reference commentary“ fortgeführt und durch gewichtige Exkurse vertieft. Der Vorgänger-Kommentar von Wilckens war dagegen in besonderer Weise der Dokumentation der Auslegungs- und Rezeptionsgeschichte verpflichtet.

Blicken wir aus der Perspektive der deutschsprachigen Exegese auf das anglo-amerikanische Feld, so ragen der zweibändige Kommentar von James D. G. Dunn (WBC 1988) sowie die großen Kommentare von Joseph Fitzmyer (AB 1993) und Robert Jewett (Hermeneia 2007) aus der Vielzahl der Kommentare heraus. Während Fitzmyer einen klassischen historisch-philologischen „reference commentary“ vorgelegt hat, ohne den jede Weiterarbeit am Römerbrief der Rezensentin nicht sinnvoll erscheint – Fitzmyer sollte in jedem denkbaren neuen Kommentarformat eine notwendige Referenzgröße bleiben –, sind die Kommentare von Dunn und später von Jewett bestimmten Interpretationskonzepten, der „new perspective on Paul“ und der rhetorischen Lektüre des Römerbriefes, verpflichtet, die zu Neuansätzen der Interpretation führten und ein erhebliches, nicht zu vernachlässigendes innovatives Potential in die Auslegung des Römerbriefes eingebracht haben, gleichzeitig aber auch eine gewisse methodische Einschränkung der exegetischen Textwahrnehmung darstellen. Dasselbe gilt für den sozialgeschichtlichen Kommentar von Ben Witherington III und Darlene Hyatt, „Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary“ (2004). Gerd Theißen und Petra von Gemünden haben in ihrem Kommentar: „Der Römerbrief. Rechenschaft eines Reformators“ (Göttingen 2016), auf die Vielfalt der interpretatorischen Ansätze mit einem eigenen Kommentarformat reagiert: Auf eine kursorische „textimmanente Lektüre“ (S. 59–88) folgen verschiedene methodisch fokussierte Lektüreformen: die historische, bildsemantische, theologische, sozialgeschichtliche und psychologische Lektüre.

²Käsemann, Römer, iii (Hervorhebung von O.W.)

Den Abschluss bildet eine psychologisch-mythisch unterlegte Einordnung des Briefes und ihres Verfassers in die Religions- und Theologiegeschichte. Der durchlaufende philologisch-historische Kommentar ist aufgegeben.

2. Beverly Gaventas Kommentar

In diesem hier nur grob skizzierten Feld nimmt Gaventa eine vermittelnde, methodisch vorsichtig konservative Position ein. Sie hält sich von einer dogmatisch fokussierten Hermeneutik ebenso fern wie von einer theoretisch determinierten Methodenwahl, die den Text im Sinne bestimmter kulturwissenschaftlicher Hermeneutiken für gegenwärtige kulturhermeneutische Modelle anschlussfähig machen will, indem entweder historische Parameter wie das antike Judentum, die Sozialgeschichte des antiken Mittelmeerraumes, die griechisch-römische Religions- und Kulturwelt und das Imperium Romanum als dominierende Interpretationsmodelle gewählt werden oder der Text hermeneutisch für antiimperiale, feministische oder postkoloniale Theorien adaptiert wird.

Stattdessen bekennt sie sich zu einer „hermeneutic of generosity“, und erläutert: „put directly, I attempt to read as I would wish to be read“, oder anders gesagt: Sie hat Freude an der Lektüre des Römerbriefes und möchte diese Lesehaltung weitergeben:

To be quite honest, I do not think I could have labored so long to teach and understand a text in which I did not take delight (S. 3).

Aus deutscher Sicht befindet sich Gaventa damit in sachlicher Nähe zur Hermeneutik des Einverständnisses, die prominent von Peter Stuhlmacher vertreten wurde („Vom Verstehen des Neuen Testaments. Eine Hermeneutik“, 1979; ²1986). Diese positive Lesehaltung unterscheidet sich von einer rein philologisch-historisch basierten Interpretation, die den Texten gegenüber immer distanziert bleibt und auf eigene Resonanzen verzichtet, ebenso wie von der hermeneutisch verstandenen materialen Sachkritik Rudolf Bultmanns. Dass die Hermeneutik Gaventas dennoch einen anderen Ton hat, weniger theoretisch pointiert ist und einen persönlichen und humanen Zug zeigt, macht die Widmung des Kommentars deutlich: „With gratitude for Phoebe of Cenchreae and all her sisters“. Gaventa verzichtet im Rahmen ihres Kommentars auf eine theoretische Explikation ihrer Hermeneutik, wie sie Stuhlmacher vornimmt:

Wir werden unserer Verantwortung gegenüber den biblischen Texten angesichts der Tradition, in der wir stehen, und inmitten des Wahrheitsbewußtseins der Gegenwart dann am besten gerecht, wenn wir uns bemühen, *eine methodologisch und wirkungsgeschichtlich reflektierte Hermeneutik des Einverständnisses mit den biblischen Texten zu praktizieren*.³

Sie befindet sich eher in der Nähe zu Joseph Ratzinger, der für seine Jesustrilogie lediglich um ein Maß an vorlaufender Sympathie gebeten hat (Joseph Ratzinger – Benedikt XVI., Jesus von Nazareth, Freiburg im Breisgau – Basel – Wien, 2007–2012):

Ich bitte die Leserinnen und Leser nur um jenen Vorschuss an Sympathie, ohne den es kein Verstehen gibt.⁴

Allerdings bezieht Gaventa die Sympathie in einer deutlichen Bescheidenheit nicht auf ihren eigenen Kommentar, sondern auf den Text, den sie kommentiert.

³Stuhlmacher, Verstehen, ²1986, 222 (Hervorhebung im Original).

⁴Ratzinger, Jesus, Bd. 1, 22 (Hervorhebung von O.W.).

Angesichts der enormen Gelehrsamkeit, die auf die Kommentierung des Römerbriefes verwendet worden ist – Michael Wolters Kommentar ist das jüngste beeindruckende Beispiel –, ist eine gewisse allgemeine Zurückhaltung im Ton und im Umfang der Exegese äußerst angebracht. Gaventa übt diese Zurückhaltung in hohem Maße, ohne unklar oder ungenau zu werden. Ihr Kommentarstil macht deutlich, dass es zumal bei einem Römerbriefkommentar nicht um ultimative Lösungen, sondern „nur“ um gut begründete Vorschläge gehen kann. Mehr noch: Der Römerbrief ist immer wieder als Schlüsseltext der paulinischen Theologie und damit auch der Person des Paulus gelesen worden. Gaventa versucht nicht, über den Text hinauszugehen und dem Brief kategoriale Lösungen für die Fragen nach der Person des Paulus, nach seiner Religion, seiner Theologie und seiner Psychologie zu entnehmen wie Gerd Theißen, sondern bleibt ganz *im* Text. Diese doppelte Zurückhaltung verdient besondere Anerkennung. Der Kommentar belehrt nicht über Paulus, sondern erklärt den Text des Römerbriefes sorgfältig und verantwortungsvoll. Das macht die Lektüre angenehm, da die Leser und Leserinnen nicht argumentativ oder sogar geschichtsideologisch bedrängt werden und die Fairness und Freiheit der Kommentatorin gegenüber verschiedenen Interpretationsmöglichkeiten nachvollziehen können. Hermeneutisch besonders wichtig ist der Hinweis Gaventas (S. 3):

However important the letter is for many of us, it was not originally written for us.

In der knappen, konzentrierten Einführung (1–19) weist Gaventa zunächst auf charakteristische Merkmale des Röm hin: (1) die „distinctiveness“ des Briefes (Länge des Schreibens, fremde Adressatenschaft, umfangreiche Schriftzitate, Diatribenstil, rhetorische Elemente), (2) „The Gospel as Intrusion“ („an unexpected event“). Gaventa schließt an diese Charakteristik des Evangeliums eine wichtige Bestimmung des umstrittenen Verhältnisses des Paulus zum Judentum an (S. 5):

Insisting that Paul remained a Jew is and should be utterly noncontroversial. At the same time, it is crucial to understand that this particular Jew had experienced an event and that event has left nothing untouched. It has not made him something other than a Jew, but it has produced a new way of thinking, assessing, and evaluating [...] He has been grasped by Jesus Christ.

Die sogenannten Einleitungsfragen („Circumstances“) behandelt Gaventa moderat im Sinne der exegetischen Mehrheitsmeinung. Bemerkungen zum Schriftgebrauch und zu Stil und Rhetorik schließen die Einleitung ab. Im Zentrum der Kommentierung steht nicht die umfangreiche Liste der Einleitungsfragen, sondern der Text des Briefes.

3. Einzelfragen

Es empfiehlt sich, sich bei der kritischen Lektüre der Kommentierung auf einige besonders wichtige und kontroverse Texte zu konzentrieren. Die Fülle exegetischer Einsichten und wertvoller Einzelurteile kann hier ebenso wenig dokumentiert werden wie alle Anfragen der Rezensentin. Die Auswahl entspricht den Interessen der Rezensentin. Fangen wir mit **Röm 1** an: Gaventa kommt zu dem sehr klaren Urteil, dass Paulus hier weibliche (ungewöhnlicherweise zuerst) und männliche Homosexualität verurteilt, und spricht von der „ferocity of Paul’s argument“ (S. 72), fügt aber sogleich aus der Hörerperspektive den wichtigen Hinweis hinzu, dass Paulus in Kap. 2 noch sehr viel umfassender über die Sünde sprechen werde. Falls also die römische christusgläubige Hörerschaft der sexuell aufgeladenen Heidenschelte von Kap. 1 zustimmen würde und sich nicht betroffen fühlen sollte, würde sich das mit Kap. 2 grundsätzlich ändern. Denn in Kap. 2 ist nach Gaventa der Unterschied zwischen Beschneidung und Nicht-Beschneidung untergraben (S. 72): Alle, Nichtjuden, wie Juden sind vor Gott schuldig. Dementsprechend behandelt Gaventa die umstrittene Frage, wer der Interlokutor von **2,17–24** sei, überzeugend von der Textlogik des gesamten Kapitels her als nachrangig (S. 85 und 87):

Whether Jews by birth or by affiliation, Paul addresses those who assume they have the law and who understand themselves accountable to it (unlike the „lawless“ in 2:12). [...] The final verses further destabilize the categories of Jew and gentile.

Besonders wichtig ist demgegenüber die Betonung der anthropologischen Perspektive für die beiden ersten Kapitel (89):

Both Jews and gentiles participate in the *anthrōpos* of 1:18, not because of some inherent flaw in Judaism [...] Together they are alike subjects of territory occupied by Sin and Death.

Die Frage nach urchristlichen Traditionen in 3,24–26 beantwortet Gaventa negativ. Sie liest den Abschnitt als „Paul’s own composition“ (S. 105). Das *hilastērion* in 3,25 versteht Gaventa überzeugend als Übersetzung von Hebräisch *kapporet* wie in LXX. Sie diskutiert diese Übersetzung ausführlich in pro und contra. Ausschlaggebend für sie ist zweierlei: Die kultische Metapher ist „powerful“ (S. 114) und stellt Jesus an den heiligsten Platz (S. 114):

Given the emphasis in the early chapters of Romans on the glory of God and of humanity’s refusal to acknowledge that glory, this reference to Jesus as the center of the holy of holies is significant.

In dem kleinen Exkurs „The Faith of Christ“ zu 3,26 (*pistis Iēsou*) plädiert Gaventa dafür, über die Alternative des Genitivus subjectivus und Genitivus objectivus hinauszugehen, und schlägt die englische Übersetzung „Jesus [Christ] faith“ vor, indem sie den Genitiv als Genitiv des Ursprungs bestimmt (S. 118f.) – eine Übersetzung, die lutherisch basierte Interpretationen herausfordert.

Für die Kapitel 5–8 des Briefes stellt Gaventa eine entscheidende Weiche. Anders als Dunn und Fitzmyer stellt sie die kosmische Dimension des Wirkens Christi heraus und formuliert in der Überschrift: „Romans 5:1–8:39: Christ, Cosmos, and Consequences“. Sie kommentiert diese Überschrift folgendermaßen (S. 137):

Now he returns to interpret the consequences of Christ’s death in ch. 5 by casting the problem in cosmic terms. The powers of Sin and Death had invaded the entire human cosmos and were defeated only through Jesus Christ and his life-giving work (6:1–7:6). Not even the holy law of God remained exempt from the enslaving grasp of Sin (7:7–25).

Dies ist eine entscheidende Interpretationsperspektive, die Kap. 5 (Adam) und die Themen Tod, Sünde und Gesetz als kosmologisch-anthropologische Größen versteht und zugleich die Kapitel 5–7 von der Schöpfungs-, Erlösungs- und Vollendungsperspektive in Kap. 8 her verständlich macht. Gaventa betont besonders die Macht der Sünde, die Paulus schon in 3,9 und dann in 5,12–21 als adamitisches Erbe für die Menschheit dargestellt hat (S. 214). Für **Kap. 8** gilt:

the cosmic – that is to say, the world-encompassing – character of the letter comes into clear view (S. 234).

Seit der *new perspective on Paul* und vor allem seit der *radical perspective/Paul within Judaism* konzentriert sich besonderes exegetisches Interesse auf **Kap. 9–11**. Gaventa gibt eine sorgfältige Einleitung in Stellung und Bedeutung der Kapitel im Gesamtbrief. Sie bezieht sich dabei nicht auf die religionsgeschichtlich kategorisierenden *perspectives* und die ihnen unterliegenden Rekonstruktionen des frühkaiserzeitlichen Judentums und der Biographie des Paulus, sondern beschränkt sich auf den exegetischen Hinweis (S. 265):

In more recent decades the tendency has been to attach an outsize importance to this passage, as when it is identified as the climax of the whole argument [...] or „the very center“ of the letter [...] Neither extreme accounts adequately for the letter as a whole.

Röm 9,5 hat die Kommentatoren immer vor besondere Schwierigkeiten gestellt. Soll die Phrase *ho ōn epi pantōn theos* auf Christus bezogen werden („Christ who is God over all“) oder zum letzten Teil des Satzes gezogen werden („May God who is over all be blessed forever“). Gaventa stellt die Problematik beider Möglichkeiten dar und wählt eine bemerkenswerte Zwischenposition „from them is the Christ, physically speaking, the one who is over all – God be blessed forever. Amen“ (S. 267). Sie erläutert diese Übersetzung so (S. 273):

The translation above seeks middle ground by inserting a dash between „the one who is over all“ and „God,“ leaving interpretation to the ear of the audience.

Die Rezensentin neigt weiterhin zu der syntaktischen Auflösung „May God who is over all be blessed forever“, hält aber auch Gaventas Vorschlag für möglich. Die gesamte Wendung bleibt schwierig, wie auch immer sie aufgelöst wird.

Für ein sachgemäßes Verständnis der drei Kapitel, besonders aber des 11. Kapitels, weist Gaventa mehrfach darauf hin, dass Paulus vor allem die nichtjüdischen Christusgläubigen anspricht und sich emphatisch als Apostel der Heiden in 11,13 bezeichnet (S. 311, Hervorhebung im Original):

Despite multitudinous depictions of Rom 9–11 as concerned with „God and Israel“ or even „Israel’s unbelief“ or some such, this direct address to gentiles [11,13] prompts the suspicion that Paul’s discussion about God and Israel has an immediate cause in gentile believers [...] Here [11,13b] the concern is not with *Jewish* resistance to gentile mission, however, but with *gentile* misunderstanding of Israel’s future.

Es geht dabei nach Gaventa um den Respekt, den der Heidenapostel Paulus von den vormaligen paganen Christusgläubigen in Rom für die Juden einfordert. Dass Paulus schließlich in Form eines apokalyptisch gefärbten *mysterion*-Wortes die Rettung aller, Nichtjuden wie Juden, verkündet, liegt für Gaventa auf dieser Linie (S. 330):

vv. 33–36 draw a veil across all of that, reminding all Paul’s readers – both ancient and modern – that no one knows God’s mind.

Die Rezensentin würde dieser wichtigen texthermeneutischen Perspektive – Paulus als jüdischer Heidenmissionar spricht die früher paganen christusgläubigen Römer auf das richtige Verhältnis zu den Juden an –, ausgedrückt vor allem in dem Ölbaumgleichnis und in dem Schlusspassus von der Rettung „aller“ (11,32) –, gern noch zwei weitere Interpretamente hinzufügen. Erstens steht neben der römischen Adresse auch bereits in Kap. 9–11 Jerusalem als nächstes Reiseziel des Paulus im Hintergrund und damit auch das Schicksal Israels, nicht nur der Juden in Rom. Damit hängt zweitens das Thema der relativ erfolglosen Judenmission der Jerusalemer Apostel und der Jerusalemer christusgläubigen Gemeinde unter Jakobus im Gegensatz zu der eigenen erfolgreichen Heidenmission des Paulus zusammen. Dabei konstruiert Paulus eine *heilsgeschichtliche* Logik in Gottes Handeln: Die Heidenmission muss *zeitlich* der Mission Israels vorangehen. Hätte sich ganz Israel sogleich zum Kyrios Jesus Christus bekehrt, hätte es keine Heidenmission gegeben. Jetzt aber kann Paulus sogar sein Amt als Heidenapostel preisen, weil er auch Juden zum Glauben an Christus bringt (11,13). Gaventa weist auf die Apostelgeschichte als historischen Referenztext hin (S. 310), bleibt dem Argument gegenüber aber eher skeptisch. Der Rezensentin scheint diese heilsgeschichtliche Konstruktion in 11,11–16 dagegen gerade auf den historischen Augenblick hinzuweisen, in dem sich Paulus selbst vor seiner Jerusalemreise sieht.

Für die Interpretation von **Röm 13,1–7** weicht Gaventa von der Regel ab, die Auslegungsgeschichte nicht eigens zu thematisieren (S. 355). Sie gibt einen ganz knappen Abriss der Interpretationen seit Polykarp von Smyrna bis in die aktuelle Gegenwart. Sehr wichtig ist dann ihre eigene texthermeneutische Weichenstellung (S. 357):

His [Paul's] instructions aim to shape the behavior of the addressees, who are believers, rather than their rulers. That means this is not a treatise on rulership, as is Seneca's *De Clementia*, which purports to advise the emperor Nero on the differences between a tyrant and a good ruler [...] far from providing rulers with unrestricted authority, however, Paul's assertion that God puts authority in place means that all their authority is derivative.

Und sie stellt klar (S. 366):

While Paul is not writing about „Rome“ as such or about „the empire,“ these authorities are agents of Rome, put in place by Rome, or more generally in service of Rome [...] for Paul, they are God's [agents].

Im Einzelnen betont sie zurecht das Thema der Steuern und Zölle, obgleich sie vor einer zu genauen sozialgeschichtlichen Konkretisierung warnt. Allerdings wäre hier (S. 367) noch einmal ein Hinweis auf die Bedeutung der Steuerproblematik in Judäa/Jerusalem zusätzlich hilfreich gewesen. Das Gesamturteil aber kann man nur unterstützen (S. 368):

This passage poses a significant challenge to anti-imperial interpretations of the letter. That is not to say that the gospel supports the empire, whether the empire of Rome or any other [...] But the emperor and his cronies remain God's creation.

Zum Verhältnis von Gesetz und Liebe in 13,8–14 macht Gaventa eine entscheidende Aussage (S. 380), die den faktischen Wechsel in der Begründung der Ethik bei Paulus formuliert:

Love fulfills the law, and that is good; nothing Paul writes here critiques the law. Nonetheless, the law does not shape Paul's instruction. To the contrary, it is Christ who shapes it [...] And when he writes that the „reign of God“ is not about diet, because the one who serves Christ pleases God, the law appears to have been eclipsed.

Schließlich **16,1,3 und 7**. Zu Phöbe bemerkt Gaventa (S. 428f.):

When Paul introduces Phoebe, he provides her with the most elaborate introduction found in any NT epistle [...] She requires this introduction, since she is the only one charged with delivering the letter, an action that is of utmost importance to Paul [...] Phoebe is the representative or emissary of the church in Cenchreae.

Des Weiteren zeichnet Gaventa das Bild von Phöbe als Wohltäterin, als diejenige, die den Paulusbrief in den römischen Versammlungen vorlas und wohl auch Auskünfte zum Verstehen des Briefes gab. Gaventa verortet sie sozialgeschichtlich nicht in der Elite, wohl aber in einem gesicherten Leben „above subsistence“ (S. 431).

Bei Aquila und Priska weist Gaventa besonders darauf hin, dass das jüdische Ehepaar Dank von allen nichtjüdischen Gemeinden empfängt: eine ungewöhnliche Auszeichnung. Auch Andronikus und Junia sind jüdische Christusgläubige, die von Paulus besonders hervorgehoben werden: Als Apostelpaar analog zu 1Kor 15,7 und als Mitgefangene, wobei Gaventa besonders auf das schwere Schicksal gefangener Frauen hinweist (S. 436). Gaventa hätte auch diskutieren können, ob beide aus der frühhesten *Jerusalem* Gemeinde stammen, da Paulus sie mit dem Aposteltitel auszeichnet.

Die Schlussdoxologie in 16,25–27 gehört nicht zum ursprünglichen Brief, der mit 16,24 schloss, wie Gaventa mit den meisten Exegeten vermutet (S. 444f.).

4. Fazit

Beverly Gaventa hat, soweit die Rezensentin sieht, als erste Frau einen umfassenden wissenschaftlichen Römerbriefkommentar geschrieben. Der Kommentar ist eine große Leistung und eine philologisch-hermeneutische Bereicherung der eingangs skizzierten Kommentarlanschaft zum Römerbrief. Gaventa setzt einen eigenen Ton und viele eigene Akzente, ist auf den Text konzentriert, philologisch genau, besonders sorgfältig in der Nachzeichnung der Argumentation, sicher im exegetischen Urteil, weder einseitig einer Ideologie noch einer theologischen Richtung verpflichtet, sympathisch in der Vermeidung übergroßer demonstrativer Gelehrsamkeit, die den Text zuschüttet, statt ihn zu erläutern. Ihr Akzent auf Phöbe ist nicht Ausdruck eines bemühten Feminismus, sondern Ergebnis einer klugen, sensiblen und dialogischen Lektüre. Die Rezensentin hat den Kommentar bis zum Schluss mit Spannung gelesen und hätte gern viele Texte mit Beverly Gaventa diskutiert. Der Kommentar sei nachdrücklich *allen* zur Lektüre empfohlen, denen, die bisher den Römerbrief noch nicht verstanden haben, und denen, die meinten, ihn schon zu kennen.

Romans: A New Commentary by Beverly Gaventa, Read from a German-Language Exegetical Perspective

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Translated by
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Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *Romans: A Commentary*, The New Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2024).

1. The Commentary World of Romans

The already very extensive scene of commentaries on Romans, which to our knowledge begins with Origen,¹ has been enriched with another important new publication: the nearly 500-page commentary by Beverly Gaventa. From the outset, Gaventa places value on the fact that she has independently worked through the text. The commentary is the result of *her* reading. She understands it not as a “reference commentary” (2) and refers to exegetical discussions only in places where she regards it as absolutely necessary (1). In her clear introduction (1–19), she makes readers aware of her exegetical premises and the basic features of her understanding of the text. She reads Romans (Rom) as “inherently theological” (1) in the sense of “talk about God and God’s doings in the world” (1). This implies that Paul is concerned with “matters of life and death” and that this dimension also has significance for today’s Christians (1). Gaventa has thus written a “theological” commentary on Romans that reflects her own engagement with the text. It moves within the framework of the commentary series “The New Testament Library,” which is published by Westminster John Knox.

Into which larger contexts has Gaventa written her commentary? In the German-language commentary literature, a “theological” commentary on Romans was prominently submitted by Karl Barth (1919 [ET = 2024], ²1922 [ET = 1933]). Gaventa refers rather frequently to Barth. Adolf Schlatter followed this systematic-practical-theological line with his commentary *Gottes Gerechtigkeit: Ein Kommentar zum Römerbrief* (Calwer, 1935; ³1975; ET = 1995).

Other German commentaries, such as the influential exegetical series commentaries by Ernst Käsemann (HNT, Mohr Siebeck, 1973; ⁴1980; ET = 1980), Peter Stuhlmacher (NTD, Vandenhoeck &

¹Editions: Caroline Hammond Bammel, ed., *Der Römerbriefkommentar des Origenes: kritische Ausgabe der Übersetzung Rufins* (Freiburg: Herder, 1990 [Books 1–3], 1997 [Books 4–6], 1997 [Books 7–10]). T. Heither, ed., *Commentarii in epistolam ad Romanos: Lateinischer Text, griechische Fragmente und deutsche Übersetzung*, 6 vols. (Freiburg: Herder, 1990 [*Liber primus, liber secundus*], 1992 [*Liber tertius, liber quartus*], 1993 [*Liber quintus, liber sextus*], 1994 [*Liber septimus, liber octavus*], 1996 [*Liber nonus, liber decimus*], 1999 [Fragmenta]). For an English translation, see T. P. Scheck, ed., *Origen, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols., The Fathers of the Church 103/104 (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2001/2002).

Ruprecht, 1989; ET = 1994), and Eduard Lohse (KEK, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003) also understand Romans as Paul's theological magnum opus or as his theological testament, but they explain the text exclusively with philological-historical methods and interpret the general theological dimension of the letter and its significance for the church and its biography only in their introductions. Ernst Käsemann especially emphasized this hermeneutical background in his inimitably personal-radical style in the first sentence of his commentary:

When on the third day of my semester in May, 1925, full of curiosity, I attended Erik Peterson's lecture on the Epistle to the Romans, the course of my study and in some sense, as befits a theologian, my life was decided. *The basic problem was posed*. In the following semesters I then listened to the expositions of H. von Soden and R. Bultmann. I then turned successively to the work of K. Barth, A. Schlatter, Luther, and Calvin, studied them critically, and was led by them into interpretation ancient and modern. No literary document has been more important for me. Thus the circle of my theological work closes logically as I now seek to show in my own commentary *what the apostle says to me* and what is the result of my preoccupation with the towering mountains of scholarly production.²

Here, one finds the existentially affected tone that is still familiar to those exegetes – including this reviewer – who studied with New Testament scholars from the Bultmann school: “the text and I.” At the same time, Käsemann and all the other commentators mentioned work, according to their series requirements, through the scholarly literature and place their own respective interpretations in the context of the breadth of exegetical interpretive possibilities. The fundamental theological and anthropological significance of the text is presupposed in these commentaries but not systematically-theologically discussed. The multi-volume commentary by Ulrich Wilckens (EKK, 3 vols., 1978–2003) and, most recently, by Michael Wolter (EKK, 2 vols., 2019–2022) have expanded this concept, above all with respect to the documentation of scholarship. In particular, Wolter has continued the tradition of the extensive “reference commentary” and deepened it through important excurses. By contrast, the predecessor commentary by Wilckens was especially devoted to documenting the history of interpretation and reception.

If we look from the perspective of German-language exegesis to the Anglo-American field, the two-volume commentary by James D. G. Dunn (WBC 1998) as well as the major commentaries by Joseph Fitzmyer (AB 1993) and Robert Jewett (Hermeneia 2007) stand out among the many commentaries. While Fitzmyer has presented a classic historical-philological “reference commentary,” without which any further work on Romans does not seem sensible to this reviewer,³ the commentaries by Dunn and, subsequently, Jewett are shaped by certain interpretive concepts – the new perspective on Paul and the rhetorical reading of Romans – that led to new interpretive approaches and have introduced a significant, not-to-be-neglected innovative potential into the interpretation of Romans, while simultaneously representing a certain methodological narrowing of the exegetical perception of the text. This also applies to the social-historical commentary by Ben Witherington III and Darlene Hyatt, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004). In their commentary *Der Römerbrief. Rechenschaft eines Reformators* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016), Gerd Theißen and Petra von Gemünden have reacted to the diversity of interpretive approaches with a commentary format of their own: a cursory “text-immanent reading” (59–88) is followed by forms of reading that are focused on different methods, namely, historical, image-semantic, theological, social-historical, and psychological readings. The conclusion consists of a psychologically-

²E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (London: SCM, 1980), vii (O.W.'s emphasis). German version: idem, *An die Römer*, HNT 8a, 4th ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1980), iii.

³Fitzmyer should remain a necessary point of reference for every conceivable new commentary format.

mythically determined placement of the letter and its author in the history of religion and theology. The continuous philological-historical commentary has been abandoned.

2. Beverly Gaventa's Commentary

In this field – which I have sketched only roughly here – Beverly Gaventa takes a mediating, methodologically careful, conservative position. She keeps herself just as far away from a dogmatically focused hermeneutic as from a theoretically determined choice of method that seeks to make the text capable of being connected to current cultural-hermeneutical models in the sense of specific cultural-scientific hermeneutics, for example, by selecting historical parameters such as ancient Judaism, the social history of the ancient Mediterranean region, the Greco-Roman religious and cultural world, or the *imperium Romanum* as dominant interpretive models or by hermeneutically adapting the text for anti-imperial, feminist, or postcolonial theories.

Instead, she declares her support for a “hermeneutic of generosity” and explains “put directly, I attempt to read as I would wish to be read” or, put differently: she finds joy in the reading of Romans and wishes to pass on this reading stance:

To be quite honest, I do not think I could have labored so long to teach and understand a text in which I did not take delight. (3)

From a German perspective, Gaventa is thus close in substance to the hermeneutics of *Einverständnis*,⁴ which was prominently advocated by Peter Stuhlmacher (*Von Verstehen des Neuen Testaments. Eine Hermeneutik* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979; ²1986]). This positive reading stance differs both from a purely philologically and historically based interpretation – which always maintains a distance from the texts and forgoes its own resonances – and from the hermeneutically understood material *Sachkritik* of Rudolf Bultmann.⁵ The dedication of the commentary, however, makes clear that Gaventa's hermeneutic has a different tone, is less theoretically focused, and exhibits a personal and humane character: “With gratitude for Phoebe of Cenchreae and all her sisters.” Within the framework of her commentary, Gaventa forgoes a theoretical explication of her hermeneutics, as Stuhlmacher presents it:

We will best do justice to our responsibility vis-à-vis the biblical texts in view of the tradition in which we stand and amid the consciousness of truth of the present when we strive to practice a *hermeneutics of Einverständnis with the biblical texts that is methodologically and reception-historically considered*.⁶

⁴Translator's note: In his translation of Stuhlmacher's work on hermeneutics, Roy A. Harrisville translated the German term *Einverständnis* with “consent.” See P. Stuhlmacher, *Historical Criticism and Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Toward a Hermeneutics of Consent*, trans. R. A. Harrisville (London: SPCK, 1979). Other proposed translations of *Einverständnis* include “agreement,” “common understanding,” “mutual understanding,” and “empathy.”

⁵Cf. Translator's note: Common proposals for translating *Sachkritik* into English include “theological criticism,” “content criticism,” and “material criticism.” In my judgment, it is best to retain the German technical term *Sachkritik* – or, if it must be translated, to render it with “theological criticism.” For further discussion of this term, see L. Bormann and M. Petzoldt, “Sache/Sachkritik,” in LBH (2009): 512–13. See 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.”

⁶Stuhlmacher, *Verstehen*, ²1986, 222 (emphasis in the original).

She can be more likely be placed in proximity to Joseph Ratzinger, who for his Jesus trilogy asked only for a measure of antecedent sympathy:

I would only ask my readers for *that initial goodwill* (*jenen Vorschluss an Sympathie*) without which there can be no understanding.⁷

However, she relates the sympathy, with evident modesty, not to her own commentary but to the text on which she comments.

In view of the enormous learning that has been applied to writing commentaries on Romans – Michael Wolter’s commentary is the most recent impressive example – a certain general restraint in the tone and scope of the exegesis is highly appropriate. Gaventa practices this restraint to a high degree without becoming unclear or imprecise. Her commentary style makes clear that – at least for a commentary on Romans – the concern cannot be with ultimate solutions but “only” with well-grounded proposals. Moreover, Romans has been read time and again as the key text of Pauline theology and thus also of the person of Paul. Gaventa does not attempt to go beyond the text and to derive from the letter categorical solutions for questions about the person of Paul and his religion, theology, and psychology, as Gerd Theißen does, but instead remains entirely *in* the text. This double restraint deserves special recognition. The commentary does not teach about Paul but rather explains the text of Romans in a careful and responsible way. This makes for an enjoyable reading experience, since readers are not pressured argumentatively or by an ideology of history and are able to perceive the fairness and freedom of the commentor vis-à-vis different possibilities of interpretation. The following remark of Gaventa is especially important from a hermeneutical perspective:

However important the letter is for many of us, it was not originally written for us. (3)

In the concise, focused introduction (1–19), Gaventa first highlights characteristic features of Romans: (1) the “distinctiveness” of the letter (length of the work, addressees he does not know well, extensive quotation of Scripture, diatribe style, rhetorical elements), (2) “The Gospel as Intrusion” (“an unexpected event”). Following this characterization of the gospel, Gaventa adds an important statement on the contested relation of Paul to Judaism:

Insisting that Paul remained a Jew is and should be utterly noncontroversial. At the same time, it is crucial to understand that this particular Jew had experienced an event and that event has left nothing untouched. It has not made him something other than a Jew, but it has produced a new way of thinking, assessing, and evaluating ... He has been grasped by Jesus Christ. (5)

Gaventa treats the so-called introductory questions (“Circumstances”) moderately in the sense of the exegetical majority opinion. The introduction concludes with observations on the use of Scripture and on style and rhetoric. What stands at the center of the commentary is not the extensive list of introductory questions but rather the text of the letter.

3. Individual Questions

For the critical reading of the commentary, it is advisable to focus on a few especially important and controversial texts. The abundance of exegetical insights and valuable individual judgments can just as

⁷Joseph Ratzinger – Bendikt XVI., *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, trans. A. J. Walker (New York: Doubleday, 2007), xxiv (O.W.’s emphasis); GV = idem., *Jesus von Nazareth*, vol. 1 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2007), 22.

little be documented here as all the questions of this reviewer. The selection corresponds to the interests of the reviewer. Let us begin with **Rom 1**: Gaventa reaches the very clear judgment that here Paul condemns female (unusually first) and male homosexuality and speaks of the “ferocity of Paul’s argument” (72), but immediately adds from the auditor’s perspective the important observation that Paul will speak much more comprehensively about sin in chapter 2. Thus, if the Roman Christ-believing auditors would affirm the sexually charged accusation of gentiles from chapter 1 and not feel implicated themselves, this would fundamentally change in chapter 2. For, according to Gaventa, the distinction between circumcision and uncircumcision is undercut in chapter 2 (72): All, non-Jews as well as Jews are guilty before God. Correspondingly, Gaventa convincingly treats the disputed question of the identity of the interlocutor in **2.17–24** as secondary on the basis of the textual logic of the entire chapter (85 and 87):

Whether Jews by birth or by affiliation, Paul addresses those who assume they have the law and who understand themselves accountable to it (unlike the “lawless” in 2:12). . . . The final verses further destabilize the categories of Jew and gentile.

In contrast, the emphasis on the anthropological perspective is particularly important for the first two chapters (89):

Both Jews and gentiles participate in the *anthrōpos* of 1:18, not because of some inherent flaw in Judaism . . . Together they are alike subjects of territory occupied by Sin and Death.

Gaventa answers the question of primitive Christian tradition in **3.24–36** negatively. She reads the section as “Paul’s own composition” (105). Gaventa convincingly understands the *bilastērion* in 3.25 as a translation of the Hebrew *kapporet* as in the LXX. She discusses the pros and cons of this translation at length. Two things are decisive for her: The cultic metaphor is “powerful” (114) and places Jesus at the most holy place:

Given the emphasis in the early chapters of Romans on the glory of God and of humanity’s refusal to acknowledge that glory, this reference to Jesus as the center of the holy of holies is significant (114).

In the small excursus “The Faith of Christ” at **3.26** (*pistis Iēsou*) Gaventa argues that we should go beyond the alternative between subjective and objective genitive and proposes the English translation “Jesus [Christ] faith,” specifying the genitive as a genitive of origin (118–119) – a translation that challenges Lutheran-based interpretations.

Gaventa sets a decisive course for chapters **5–8** of the letter. Differently from Dunn and Fitzmyer, she emphasizes the cosmic dimension of the activity of Christ and gives this section the heading: “Romans 5:1–8:39: Christ, Cosmos, and Consequences.” She comments on this heading as follows (137):

Now he returns to interpret the consequences of Christ’s death in ch. 5 by casting the problem in cosmic terms. The powers of Sin and Death had invaded the entire human cosmos and were defeated only through Jesus Christ and his life-giving work (6:1–7:6). Not even the holy law of God remained exempt from the enslaving grasp of Sin (7:7–25).

This is a decisive interpretive perspective that understands the themes of Death, Sin, and Law as cosmological-anthropological entities and at the same time makes chapters 5–7 comprehensible from the creation, redemption, and consummation perspective in chapter 8. Gaventa especially emphasizes the power of Sin, which Paul has presented already in 3.9 and then in 5.12–21 as the Adamic inheritance for humanity (214). For **chapter 8**, she states:

the cosmic – that is to say, the world-encompassing – character of the letter comes into clear view (234).

Since the new perspective on Paul and especially since the Radical Perspective / Paul within Judaism approach, exegetical interest is especially focused on **chapters 9–11**. Gaventa provides a careful introduction to the place and significance of the chapters in the letter as a whole. She does not refer here to the history of religions categorizing perspectives and the underlying reconstructions of Judaism in the early imperial period and of the biography of Paul but restricts herself to the following exegetical note (265):

In more recent decades the tendency has been to attach an outsize importance to this passage, as when it is identified as the climax of the whole argument ... or “the very center” of the letter ... Neither extreme accounts adequately for the letter as a whole.

Romans 9.5 has always presented special difficulties for commentators. Should the phrase *ho ōn epi pantōn theos* be related to Christ (“Christ who is God over all”) or be drawn to the last part of the sentence (“May God who is overall be blessed forever”). Gaventa presents the issues associated with both possibilities and chooses a notable intermediate position: “from them is the Christ, physically speaking, the one who is over all – God be blessed forever. Amen” (267). She explains this translation as follows (273):

The translation above seeks middle ground by inserting a dash between “the one who is over all” and “God,” leaving interpretation to the ear of the audience.

This reviewer continues to lean toward the syntactical resolution “May God who is over all be blessed forever,” while also regarding Gaventa’s proposal as possible. The entire phrase remains difficult, regardless of how it is resolved.

For an understanding of the three chapters but especially of chapter 11 that is appropriate to the subject matter, Gaventa points out multiple times that Paul especially addresses the non-Jewish Christ-believers and emphatically designates himself as apostle to the gentiles in 11.13 (311):

Despite multitudinous depictions of Rom 9–11 as concerned with “God and Israel” or even “Israel’s unbelief” or some such, this direct address to gentiles [11.13] prompts the suspicion that Paul’s discussion about God and Israel has an immediate cause in gentile believers ... Here [11.13b] the concern is not with *Jewish* resistance to gentile mission, however, but with *gentile* misunderstanding of Israel’s future.

For Gaventa the concern here is with the respect for the Jews that the apostle to the gentiles, Paul, demands from the formerly pagan Christ believers in Rome. The fact that Paul ultimately proclaims the salvation of all, non-Jews as well as Jews, in the form of an apocalyptically colored *mystērion*-saying lies on this same line for Gaventa (330):

vv. 33–36 draw a veil across all of that, reminding all Paul’s readers – both ancient and modern – that no one knows God’s mind.

This reviewer would like to add two other interpretive considerations to this important text-hermeneutical perspective – Paul as Jewish missionary to the gentiles addresses the formerly pagan Christ-believing Romans about the right relation to the Jews – that is expressed above all in the olive tree analogy and in the concluding passage about the salvation of “all” (Rom 11.32). First, alongside the Roman address, in chapters 9–11, Jerusalem, as Paul’s next travel destination, already stands in the background and thus the fate of Israel – and not only of the Jews in Rome – does as well. Second, the theme of the relatively unsuccessful mission to the Jews of the Jerusalem apostles and the Jerusalem Christ-believing

community under James in contrast to Paul's own successful mission to the gentiles is connected to this. Here, Paul constructs a *salvation-historical* logic in God's action: the mission to the gentiles must *temporally* precede the mission to Israel. Had Israel immediately confessed Jesus Christ as Lord, there would not have been a mission to the gentiles. Now, however, Paul can even praise his office as apostle to the gentiles, because he also brings Jews to believe in Christ (Rom 11.13). Gaventa points to Acts as a historical reference text (310) but remains rather skeptical toward the argument. To this reviewer, by contrast, this salvation-historical construction in Rom 11.11–16 seems to point precisely to the historical moment in which Paul sees himself prior to his journey to Jerusalem.

For the interpretation of Rom 13.1–7, Gaventa deviates from her rule of not explicitly thematizing the history of interpretation (355). She provides a very concise sketch of interpretations from Polycarp of Smyrna to the present day. Her own text-hermeneutical course setting is then very important (357):

His [Paul's] instructions aim to shape the behavior of the addressees, who are believers, rather than their rulers. That means this is not a treatise on rulership, as is Seneca's *De Clementia*, which purports to advise the emperor Nero on the differences between a tyrant and a good ruler ... far from providing rulers with unrestricted authority, however, Paul's assertion that God puts authority in place means that all their authority is derivative.

And she clarifies (366):

While Paul is not writing about "Rome" as such or about "the empire," these authorities are agents of Rome, put in place by Rome, or more generally in service of Rome ... for Paul, they are God's [agents].

In the details, she rightly stresses the theme of tribute and taxes (or taxes and customs), although she warns against an overly precise social-historical concretization. Here (367), however, an additional reference to the significance of the problem of taxes in Judea/Jerusalem would have been helpful. One can, however, only support the overall judgment (368):

This passage poses a significant challenge to anti-imperial interpretations of the letter. That is not to say that the gospel supports the empire, whether the empire of Rome or any other ... But the emperor and his cronies remain God's creation.

On the relationship of law and love in 13.8–14, Gaventa makes a decisive statement (380), which expresses the factual change in the grounding of ethics in Paul:

Love fulfills the law, and that is good; nothing Paul writes here critiques the law. Nonetheless, the law does not shape Paul's instruction. To the contrary, it is Christ who shapes it ... And when he writes that the "reign of God" is not about diet, because the one who serves Christ pleases God, the law appears to have been eclipsed.

Finally, **16.1, 3 and 7**. On Phoebe Gaventa states (428–429):

When Paul introduces Phoebe, he provides her with the most elaborate introduction found in any NT epistle ... She requires this introduction, since she is the only one charged with delivering the letter, an action that is of utmost importance to Paul ... Phoebe is the representative or emissary of the church in Cenchreae.

Furthermore, Gaventa portrays Phoebe as a benefactor, as the one who read Paul's letter in the Roman assembly and presumably also provided information about how to understand the letter. From a social-historical perspective, Gaventa places her not among the elite but indeed in a comfortable life

“above subsistence” (431).

With regard to Aquila and Prisca, Gaventa points especially to the fact that the married Jewish couple receives thanks from all non-Jewish churches – an unusual distinction. Andronicus and Junia are also Jewish Christ-believers who are especially elevated by Paul – as an apostle pair analogous to 1 Cor 15:7 and as fellow prisoners, with Gaventa placing special emphasis on the difficult fate of imprisoned women (436). Gaventa could also have discussed whether the two came from the earliest Jerusalem community, since Paul distinguishes them with the title of apostle.

The concluding doxology in **16.25–27** does not belong to the original letter, which concluded with 16.24, as Gaventa postulates in agreement with most exegetes (444–445).

4. Conclusion

As far as this reviewer can see, Beverly Gaventa is the first woman to write a comprehensive scholarly commentary on Romans. The commentary is a great achievement and a philological-hermeneutical enrichment of the landscape of commentaries on Romans sketched at the outset. Gaventa sets her own tone and places many distinct accents. She is focused on the text, philologically precise, and particularly careful in tracing the argumentation. She is confident in her exegetical judgments and is committed neither one-sidedly to an ideology nor to a theological school of thought. And she is congenial in her avoidance of excessively demonstrative erudition that buries the text rather than elucidates it. Her emphasis on Phoebe is not an expression of a belabored feminism but the result of an intelligent, sensitive, and dialogical reading. This reviewer read the commentary to the end with excitement and would have enjoyed discussing many texts with Beverly Gaventa. The commentary is highly recommended for *all* readers, for those who up to now have not yet understood Romans and for those who thought they already knew it.

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Original Publication Information

Rollmann, Hans and Werner Zager. “Unpublished Letters of William Wrede on the Problematicization of the Messianic Self-Understanding of Jesus”

Translated with permission from the German by Wayne Coppins. Original Publication: Rollmann, H., and W. Zager, eds. “Unveröffentlichte Briefe William Wredes zur Problematisierung des messianischen Selbstverständnisses Jesu,” *ZNTbG/JHMTb* 8 (2001): 274–322

Huebenthal, Sandra. “And she was serving them” (Mark 1.31): Exegetical Stories about Peter’s Mother-in-Law

Translated with permission from the German by Wayne Coppins. Original Publication: Huebenthal, S. “‘Und sie diente ihnen’ (Mk 1,31). Exegetische Geschichten über die Schwiegermutter des Petrus.” *SNTUA* 49 (2024), 27–46.

Beyer, Barbara. “Ἐν τινι εἶναι as the Background to Paul’s Discourse on Being “in Christ”

Translated with permission from the German by Jacob N. Cerone. Original Publication Beyer, B. “Ἐν τινι εἶναι als Hintergrund der paulinischen Rede vom Sein ‘in Christus,’” *ZNW* 114.1 (2023) 65–78.