

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament

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324



James A. Kelhoffer

Conceptions of “Gospel”
and Legitimacy
in Early Christianity

Mohr Siebeck

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ISBN 978-3-16-152636-7

ISSN 0512-1604 (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament)

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

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The book was printed by Gulde-Druck in Tübingen on non-aging paper and bound by Buchbinderei Spinner in Ottersweier.

Printed in Germany.

*To the Jesuits, the theologians and the students
of Saint Louis University,*

*with sincere thanks for ten years
of fruitful collaboration, dialogue and conviviality*

Acknowledgements

In 2009, Jörg Frey suggested that I eventually publish a volume of collected essays on *Second Clement*, a text on which I was, and still am, planning to write a commentary. I responded that, first, work on a different *Sammelband* – on the themes of “Gospel” and legitimacy – could be commenced straightaway. The result of that spontaneous counterproposal is the present volume. In the years subsequent to Jörg’s suggestion, a move from Munich back to St. Louis (2009) and, sixteen months later, from St. Louis to Uppsala (2010), along with other research projects, shifted my sanguinely hopeful “straightaway” to an “in the not-too-distant future.”

I would like to thank Dr. Henning Ziebritzki for accepting this volume for the WUNT series, as well as his staff at Mohr Siebeck for their assistance – in particular, Ilse König, who oversaw the volume’s production. Heartfelt thanks are due to Rosemary Jermann (St. Louis) for carefully reading the entire manuscript, catching innumerable infelicities and suggesting a myriad of more cogent phrasings. Any remaining errors are, of course, my responsibility. At the beginning of each chapter, I acknowledge those who gave feedback on a particular article. Two colleagues in particular – Troy W. Martin and Clare K. Rothschild – have my gratitude for offering comments on several of these studies. For granting permission to reprint these studies, I thank the journals *Biblical Research*; *Currents in Biblical Research*; *Early Christianity*; *Ex Auditu*; *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*; *Journal of Early Christian Studies*; *Svensk exegetisk årsbok*; *Vigiliae Christianae*; *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* and *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, as well as the publishers Brill, the Johns Hopkins University Press, SAGE Publications, Walter de Gruyter, and Wipf and Stock Publishers.

This volume is dedicated to all those with whom I worked at Saint Louis University, where, in 2001, I began my first tenure track appointment and where most of the articles in this volume were written. I will always be grateful to colleagues there for their trust in me (a Lutheran exegete), their emulation of the Ignatian humanistic and intellectual tradition, and their commitment to educating the whole person *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*.

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Preface: On Method, “Gospel” and Legitimacy

This volume comprises sixteen articles and essays originally published between 1998 and 2013. My initial idea to gather studies on conceptions of “gospel” (chapters 4–7) and legitimacy (chapters 9–14) in early Christianity evolved to include a section on method (chapters 1–3), an additional article on legitimacy (chapter 8), and papers on anger in the Pauline tradition and the origins of asceticism (chapters 15–16). For this volume, each study has been reworked and updated – half of them significantly so (chapters 1, 4, 5, 8, 10, 13, 15 and, above all, chapter 7).

The opening article is an English translation of my 2011 inaugural lecture at Uppsala University, a central argument of which is that biblical studies has become balkanized to the point that scholars too often talk past, rather than engage with, one another. An ill-founded discourse in our guild pits the so-called “historical-critical method” (which, in fact, is *not* a single method) against newer methods and approaches. I hold that the adjective “historical-critical” is better, and more accurately, used to describe a particular scholar’s *use* of one or more methods. After all, no method is, in and of itself, “historical-critical” – as opposed to being, if hypothetically, an “ahistorical-uncritical” method.

Some ideas in the aforementioned piece began in an essay prepared for a 2005 conference on “Early Christian Studies and the Academic Disciplines” at the Catholic University of America. In that study (chapter 2), I reflect on the unusual, yet fruitful, combination of philological, tradition-critical, socio-historical, anthropological and reception-historical methods along with data from modern nutritional science in my book *The Diet of John the Baptist* (2005). At that time, I had already questioned the positing of a dichotomy between socio-historical and historical-critical.

Chapter 3 is my response to a paper at a 1998 symposium on the theological significance of the earthly Jesus. My main critiques were that J. D. Kingsbury conflates the Matthean Jesus with the earthly Jesus and that his (singular) use of a theological-literary approach lacks critical acumen. I suggest that redactional observations would serve as a valuable complement to Kingsbury’s approach. Indeed, a narratological analysis would be ideally executed when, following a redactional analysis, one had a deeper understanding of an author’s tendencies and goals.

Part II (chapters 4–7) examines conceptions of “gospel” in early Christianity, commencing with a study of when εὐαγγέλιον first came to designate a writing (a “Gospel”), rather than oral proclamation of the “gospel.” In Spring 2001, I assigned students at McCormick Theological Seminary (Chicago) to read H. Koester’s *Ancient Christian Gospels*, which I found unsatisfactory on that subject but to which I did not have an adequate rejoinder. Perhaps the article’s most significant observation is that three early- to mid-second century authors – the Didachist, the author of *Second Clement* and Marcion – assume their audiences *already* are familiar with εὐαγγέλιον as a literary designation, an observation that suggests *none* of those authors innovated a redefinition of εὐαγγέλιον to designate *evangelium scriptum*. In regard to the earliest attestation to when “Gospel” was used for a writing, my suggestion of a point after the composition of Matthew and prior to the use of Matthew in the *Didache* is a novel attempt to solve a tricky problem.

While researching for the aforementioned article, I noticed that several prominent scholars had remarked, usually in passing, on a Gospel commentary – or even a Gospel – composed by Basilides of Alexandria (fl. 120–140 C.E.). Initially, I planned to add to the article on εὐαγγέλιον a couple paragraphs on Basilides, but it soon became apparent that Basilides’s use, or production, of gospel materials merited a separate examination (chapter 5). A pervasive misstep in scholarship has been that the title Clement of Alexandria gives for Basilides’s writing – *Exegetica* (Ἐξηγητικά) – supports the notion that Basilides wrote an “exegetical” Gospel commentary. But an analysis of the titles Ἐξηγητικά and Ἐξηγητικόν, as used by Galen and numerous other ancient authors prior to Origen, shows that *Exegetica* designated an “explanation.” A construal of Clement’s title (*Exegetica*) as predicating an *explanatory*, rather than an exegetical, writing by Basilides would be consistent with the surviving fragments that reflect Basilides’s theological-philosophical system of thought.

The posing, refining and, sometimes, rejecting of common explanations about origins may be a fundamental component of any shared human consciousness, relationship or religious community. Chapter 6 examines Paul’s struggles to define *Heilsgeschichte* amidst competing views of other Christ-believers. Although the Acts of the Apostles is the earliest narrative of Christian origins, Paul’s occasional letters attest to an even earlier point in the Jesus movement, when accounts of origins had already become part of a contested and evolving tradition. Understanding how Paul and his Christ-believing opponents defined the *past* sheds light on how they addressed issues that they and their communities faced in the *present*.

My first published article (chapter 7) examines late-ancient and Byzantine debates about the “(more) accurate” copies of Mark’s Gospel, and

whether those copies included Mark 16:9–20. (My doctoral advisor A. Y. Collins suggested that this piece would be better as an article on reception history than as a chapter in my dissertation on Mark’s “Longer Ending” in its early-second century milieu.) The ways that patristic (and later) authors approached ‘textual criticism’ shed much light on how a harmonizing principle for the sake of preserving disparate parts of Scripture could contribute to the eventual incorporation of 16:9–20 into nearly all MSS of the Second Gospel. For this volume, the translations of, notes on, and analyses of Eusebius’s *ad Marinum* I.1–II.1 and other patristic and Byzantine literature have been significantly augmented and revised.

Part III, on constructions of legitimacy (chapters 8–14), begins with a comparative analysis of prayer in First and Second Maccabees. Does Judas Maccabaeus belong to a legacy of Israelite leaders sent by the Lord to liberate the covenant people (so First Maccabees), or are the Maccabean military conquests merely a byproduct of the people’s repentance from sin and divine intervention (so Second Maccabees)? To a remarkable extent, the authors’ ideologically constructed prayers reflect their dueling agendas in regard to the legitimacy, or the illegitimacy, of the eventual Hasmonean rulers.

Given the rise of different, and competing, constructions of authority among, and within, early Christ congregations, it is easy to understand why a need would arise for additional criteria to authenticate an apostle. Chapters 9 and 10 explore two such criteria in Paul’s writings – the readiness to withstand persecution and the working of miracles. When visiting Uppsala University in Spring 2009 (before I was invited to apply for a position here), I gave a paper on the withstanding of persecution as integral to Paul’s defense of his apostolic authority (chapter 9). In his readiness to suffer for Christ and the sake of the mission, Paul boasted a distinct advantage over his Christ-believing opponents. Significantly, neither Paul nor his opponents would have accepted the other’s accusation of having oppressed, maligned or otherwise unjustly treated the other party, since each side defied the other out of loyalty to its own conception of fidelity to Christ and the Scriptures.

Chapter 10 points out that, whereas Paul is usually concerned with defending his authority by virtue of his own miracles, Justin Martyr maintains that healings performed by others validate dogmatic claims in Justin’s apologetic endeavors. The article demonstrates a significant shift in the discussion of miracles as illustrated by representative figures of the first century (Paul) and second century (Justin). A newly added excursus examines the possible text-critical implications of Justin’s distinctive version of Luke 10:19 (*Dial.* 76.6a), a version mentioned by neither the NA²⁸ nor Reuben J. Swanson.

If Paul's readiness to withstand persecution was a source for corroborating his legitimacy (see chapter 9), his past as a persecutor could, *mutatis mutandis*, give his critics an opportunity to *question* his legitimacy (cf. 1 Cor 15:9–10; Phil 3:2–7; Gal 1:13–24). Chapter 11 traces, in the Acts of the Apostles, the *gradual* disclosure of the extent of Paul's violence against Christians. Luke's choice to make the fullest admission about the severity of Paul's persecutions toward the end of Acts (22:4; 26:9–11) is consistent with an apologetic agenda of presenting Paul as a sympathetic figure and of defending Paul's legacy. As Luke would have it, Paul suffered mistreatment from "the Jews" as Christ's loyal servant, not as one who had caused the same sorts of suffering for other followers of Christ.

The next three chapters examine the legitimacy of Christ-believers who, according to Revelation 1–3, must be prepared to resist participating in the imperial cult (chapter 12); the denigration of 'heretics' who utilize magical tricks to gain followers according to Hippolytus's *Refutatio* (chapter 13); and the enhanced authority that was (in my view, belatedly) ascribed to maimed "confessors" at the Council of Nicaea (chapter 14). The force of the argument in chapter 12 is that Antipas's faithful witness, resistance and death (Rev 2:13) are emblematic of the commitment John expects of all believers. A fresh analysis of Tacitus's statement about an earthquake in 60/61 C.E. strengthens the argument for a later date for Revelation and, as a corollary, increases the likelihood that the imperial cult was *already* integrated into the polytheistic milieu that, John warns, was perilous to believers who must endure and remain faithful to Christ.

Chapter 13 began at the University of Chicago in H. D. Betz's seminar on the *Greek Magical Papyri*. A detailed comparison of Hippolytus of Rome's treatise on magic (*Haer.* IV.28–42) with the *PGM* bespeaks an author who had a detailed understanding of actual magical terms (if not also some magical practices). Hippolytus is not primarily interested in magic per se; rather, he ridicules the folly of pagan magicians so that, later in his work, he will have a precedent for excluding recent and contemporary (Christian) 'heretics,' who, he alleges, use magical tricks to amaze gullible believers.

A fundamental problem with the notion that maimed "confessors" were accorded great authority at the Council of Nicaea (325 C.E.) is the harmonizing principle that scholars, such as T. D. Barnes and R. MacMullen, have applied to the sundry snippets about confessors at the Council written a century or more after the fact (chapter 14). Nevertheless, the apparent growth of traditions about confessors at Nicaea in several later witnesses shows the acknowledgement of some confessors' standing even in the post-Constantinian church.

Part IV, on the practice of early Christian virtues (chapters 15–16), examines anger and asceticism. Chapter 15 builds on, and attempts to correct faults in, the important monograph by classicist W. V. Harris on the ideology of anger control in antiquity. Application of Harris's four increasing levels of restraining anger facilitates the observation of several intriguing developments in terminology and *heightened expectations for restraining anger* from the time of the undisputed Pauline Letters to the Deuteropauline Letters. Those developments correlate with Harris's conclusion that appeals for greater and more complete suppression of anger began in the Roman period.

Finally, in a brief *hommage* to D. E. Aune, I probe remarks by Galen and Tatian for clues about the origins of Christian asceticism. Galen's reluctant acknowledgement of Christians' moderation and Tatian's equation of meat eating with murder show that, already in the second century, asceticism had attained a firm foothold in some Christian circles.

Scholarly discussions of method, "gospel" and legitimacy deserve to, and undoubtedly will, continue. I hope that the collection and updating of the studies in this volume will contribute to those discussions.

I. Methodological Observations

Chapter 1

New Testament Exegesis as an Academic Discipline with Relevance for Other Disciplines*

Distinguished colleagues of the Faculty of Theology
Professor emeritus Hartman
Honored guests
Students
Dearest sisters, Gretchen and Beth
Dear friends
Ladies and gentlemen

Uppsala University lays claim to an esteemed tradition in biblical exegesis.¹ It is therefore a great honor to join the Faculty of Theology at Uppsala

* Original publication: *Currents in Biblical Research* 11/2 (2013): 218–33. The Swedish original of this article appeared as “Nya testamentets exegetik som akademiskt ämne med relevans för andra ämnen,” *Svensk exegetisk årsbok* 77 (2012): 55–70. Since *CurBR* uses parenthetical citation but not footnotes, in this version I have translated and restored the footnotes of the Swedish original. For non-Scandinavian readers, I have also added the occasional clarification and, within brackets [], translations of Swedish terms. For critical feedback and suggestions I am indebted to Erik Birath, Jonas Holmstrand, Clare K. Rothschild, Hanna Stenström, Mia Wälsten and Cecilia Wassén.

¹ For a brief history about the professorship in New Testament Exegesis at Uppsala University, see *Nya professorer: Installation hösten 2011* [*New Professors: Installation Fall 2011*] (ed. Per Ström; Skrifter rörande Uppsala universitet. B, Inbjudningar 165; Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2011), 41–46. See further, on biblical exegesis in Uppsala and on Swedish biblical scholarship in general, Helmer Ringgren and Lars Hartman, “The Scandinavian School,” art. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 5:1001–1004; Harald Riesenfeld, “Varmed sysslar Nya testamentets exegetik?” [“With What Does New Testament Exegesis Work?”], *SEÅ* 33 (1968): 179–84; Lars Hartman, “New Testament Exegesis,” in Helmer Ringgren (ed.), *Uppsala University 500 Years*. Vol. 1: *Faculty of Theology at Uppsala University* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1976), 51–65; Birger Gerhardsson, *Fridrichsen, Odeberg, Aulén, Nygren: Fyra teologer* [*Fridrichsen, Odeberg, Aulén, Nygren: Four Theologians*] (Lund: Novapress, 1994); idem, “Anton Fridrichsens bild av den judiska fromheten och dess företrädare” [“Anton Fridrichsen’s View of Jewish Piety and Its Predecessors”], *SEÅ* 65 (2000): 19–32; idem, “Uppsalaexegetiken” [“Uppsala Exegetes”], in Ingmar Brohed (ed.), *Sveriges kyrkohistoria 8. Religionsfrihetens och ekumenikens tid* (Stockholm: Verbum, 2005), 392–95; Ernst Baasland, “Neutestamentliche Forschung in Skandinavien (und Finnland),” *BTZ* 12 (1995): 146–66; Birger Olsson, “Förändringar inom svensk bibelforskning under 1900-talet” [“Transformations within Swedish Biblical Scholarship during the Twentieth Century”], in Håkan

University and to be given the professorship in New Testament Exegesis that has been held by internationally renowned scholars such as Anton Friedrichsen (1888–1953) and Lars Hartman (b. 1930). In this lecture, I raise six questions:

1. What is New Testament Exegesis?
2. What is my research profile in this area?
3. What does it mean to call New Testament Exegesis an *academic* discipline?
4. How can this discipline be relevant for other disciplines?
5. What is the relationship between newer and more traditional methods in New Testament Exegesis?
6. How can I say that New Testament Exegesis can have relevance for all people?

I conclude with a brief reflection on academic disciplines in general in the past and present.

A. What Is New Testament Exegesis?

In Greek, the verb ἐξηγέομαι (*eksēgeomai*) means “to lead out, describe, or expound.” Our modern English word “exegesis” – or, in Swedish, “exegetik”; German: “Exegese”; French: “exégèse” – refers to retrieving *from* (cf. ἐκ, “from, out of” from ἐξ– in ἐξηγέομαι) a text what it meant in its context. The antonym of *exegesis* is *eisegesis* (cf. εἰς “into, toward, to”), which dysphemistically denotes coming *to* a text with a modern and possibly theologically or ideologically constructed notion about its meaning. Those who practice the former – or, in our case in the present postmodern *zeitgeist*,² those who make this their goal – may be called *exegetes*.

New Testament Exegesis focuses above all on the twenty-seven diverse books written between *ca.* 50 and 120 CE that eventually came to be included in the early church’s collection of writings, known today as “the New Testament.” Exegetes also include in this discipline *other* Christian texts composed roughly contemporaneously with, or a little later than, the

Eilert et al. (eds.), *Modern svensk teologi* (Stockholm: Verbum, 1999), 68–135; Samuel Byrskog, “Bibelvetenskap i Sverige” [“Biblical Scholarship in Sweden”], *Tro och Liv* 5 (2005): 15–21; Jesper Svartvik, *Bibeltolkningens bakgator: Synen på judar, slavar och homosexuella i historia och nutid* [Biblical Interpretation’s Alleys: The View of Jews, Slaves and Homosexuals in History and Nowadays] (Stockholm: Verbum, 2006), 108–45 (on Hugo Odeberg); Hanna Stenström, “Tidsspeglar: Ett bidrag till samtalet om forskarnas ansvar” [“Mirrors of Time: A Contribution to the Conversation about Scholars’ Responsibility”], in Peter Lundborg and Jonny Karlsson (eds.), *Människan är alltid större: Vänbok till biskop Martin Lind* (Linköping: Linköpings stift, 2011), 119–44.

² On the problem and challenge facing biblical scholarship in a postmodern *Zeitgeist*, see John J. Collins, *The Bible after Babel: Historical Criticism in a Postmodern Age* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

New Testament – for example, those of the apologist Justin Martyr and those referred to as “the Apostolic Fathers” (which include Ignatius of Antioch’s seven letters, the *First Letter of Clement*, and the so-called *Second Letter of Clement*).

Scholarship on this assorted literature deals primarily with three foci – historical, philological, and theological. In regard to *history*, one can, for example, ask about the author’s and the readers’/listeners’ situation and about their relationship to other Christian congregations and to their Jewish, Greek, and Roman neighbors. Given the Jewish roots of the nascent Jesus movement, one can also ask if there actually was a clearly demarcated boundary between Christian and Jewish (and even between Christian and other) groups. In regard to *philology*, competency is needed in Classical Greek and other relevant languages (for example, Hebrew, Aramaic, Latin and Syriac), so one can compare New Testament ideas and expressions with those in other ancient literature.³ In regard to *theology*, scholars must recognize that the discipline of New Testament Exegesis exists because the writings of the New Testament have contributed to a living tradition – in fact, to *many* living traditions – for nearly 2,000 years. Explorations of the NT authors’ theologies, of the history of interpretation and reception, and of how biblical interpretation has affected ideas and values in later contexts also come within the exegete’s purview. Exegetes thus also give attention, for example, to feminist, postcolonial, and queer hermeneutics in a critical analysis of early Christian literature. As an exegete who engages questions of later reception and interpretation, my task is not to say what the text must (or should) mean for you, but I can at least challenge you to reflect critically and constructively from your tradition, ideology, and situation. And I am thankful if you do the same for me.

B. What Is My Research Profile?

I have just presented New Testament Exegesis in general and will now share a little about my research profile within this discipline. For those who are interested in the origins and development of early Christian beliefs and praxes, scholarly studies of biblical (*and* extrabiblical) literature can deepen and even change how the past is understood – thereby playing a role in contemporary discussions about biblical interpretation, religious identity, and possibilities for interreligious dialogue. I have come to see that the literature eventually included in the New Testament reflects attempts to confirm and defend various *constructions of legitimacy* within

³ All relevant secondary literature must also be taken into account, whether in English, German or French.

the early Christ communities. My research, to a large extent, has dealt with how legitimacy is construed. In a dissertation on Mark 16:9–20, I studied, for example, miracle working and its place as a basis for legitimacy in the first three centuries.⁴ In *The Diet of John the Baptist*, I highlight, among other things, how food, biblical interpretation and asceticism can play important roles in the formation of religious identity.⁵ My latest monograph, *Persecution, Persuasion and Power*, delineates the view in many of the New Testament’s writings that a readiness to be persecuted for Christ offers a basis for authority, standing and legitimacy in the Christian community.⁶

Today, my research has turned to the so-called *Second Letter of Clement*, one of “the Apostolic Fathers.” With its many admonitions, *Second Clement* emphasizes how Christians must render “payback” (ἀντιμισθία, *antimisthia*) to Christ or God in return for the gift of salvation (2 *Clem.* 1:3, 5; 9:7; 15:2; cf. 11:6). An analysis of the work reveals a distinctive understanding of legitimacy and Christian religious identity in the second century, construing Christ as patron of salvation and believers as clients indebted to Christ, their heavenly patron.⁷

I contribute also to the international scholarly discussion of early Christian literature as an associate editor for the monograph series *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* (Verlag Mohr Siebeck) and, within the Society of New Testament Studies, as co-chair of the group that examines *Christliche Literatur des späten ersten Jahrhunderts und des zweiten Jahrhunderts / Christian Literature of the Late First Century and the Second Century*. At Uppsala University, I am honored to have as my colleagues in New Testament Senior Lecturer Jonas Holmstrand and Senior Lecturer Cecilia Wassén. We have much to offer – both to students (including English-language exchange students) in the way of quality instruction and to researchers from other institutions in the way of scholarly collaboration.

⁴ Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission: The Authentication of Missionaries and Their Message in the Longer Ending of Mark* (WUNT 2:112; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

⁵ Kelhoffer, *The Diet of John the Baptist: “Locusts and Wild Honey” in Synoptic and Patristic Interpretation* (WUNT 176; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

⁶ Kelhoffer, *Persecution, Persuasion and Power: Readiness to Withstand Hardship as a Corroboration of Legitimacy in the New Testament* (WUNT 270; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

⁷ *Second Clement* was presumably written ca. 150 C.E. On the theme that the believer must give some form of “payback” (ἀντιμισθία) to Christ or God, see 2 *Clem.* 1:3, 5; 9:7; 15:2; cf. 11:6, on “paybacks” that God will give to believers. See also now Kelhoffer, “Reciprocity as Salvation: Christ as Salvific Patron and the Corresponding ‘Payback’ Expected of Christ’s Earthly Clients according to the *Second Letter of Clement*,” *NTS* 59/2 (2013): 433–56.

C. Neither Theology's Handmaiden nor Theology's *advocatus diaboli*: What Does It Mean To Call New Testament Exegesis an *Academic Discipline*?

In (many) previous generations, biblical exegesis was understood to serve as “theology’s handmaiden.” An exegete’s task was simply to clarify what the Bible meant and to hand the result over to constructive, dogmatic or systematic theologians, who would then make pronouncements about orthodoxy for the church (note: singular) at that time.

It is fortunate that, within the academy and in ecumenically oriented churches, we are in a completely different situation today. A university shall not allow discrimination based on religious confession or other factors. Opportunities to study and conduct research in theology and religious studies shall be open not just to liberal Lutherans, (liberal) Catholics, and (liberal?) agnostics but, indeed, *to all* who value critical examination and scholarly methods of inquiry.^{7a}

The arrival of the so-called “historical-critical method” in the nineteenth century meant that New Testament Exegesis often formed its identity in contradistinction to traditional dogmas that had been based on dubious interpretations of the Bible. Nowadays, scholarship recognizes that the New Testament reflects many different points of view. Encapsulating various traditions, four different Gospels attest to sundry interpretations of Jesus. The “Paul” whom one can (more or less) ascertain from the apostle’s seven authentic letters contrasts with the “Pauls” (plural) who emerge from the Acts of the Apostles and from the six pseudepigraphic NT letters ascribed to Paul (for example, Second Thessalonians and First Timothy). Additionally, whereas Paul and the pseudepigraphic author of First Peter require that Christians submit to the governing authorities within the Roman Empire (Rom 13:1–7; 1 Pet 2:13–17), the John who wrote Revelation demands that his congregations set themselves apart from the Roman Empire, because after three and a half years “with such violence Babylon the great city [i.e. Rome⁸] will be thrown down, and will be found no more.”⁹ Beyond the diversity within the New Testament, an even greater variety is to be found in the *reception and interpretation* of the New Testament, both in the sundry and sometimes fascinating interpretations of the church fathers and in interpretations made today in various developing

^{7a} In Sweden, a very secular yet traditionally Lutheran country, approximately three-fourths of the population belongs to the (Lutheran) Church of Sweden.

⁸ On the identification of the city Rome with Israel’s archetypal persecutor Babylon, see esp. Rev 18:10; cf. 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2; 1 Pet 5:13.

⁹ Rev 18:21; cf. 12:14; see further Kelhoffer, *Persecution, Persuasion and Power*, 96, 104, 109, 152–56.

countries which have never been dominated, or are no longer dominated, by a Christian culture.

To take a somewhat recent example of how (most) exegetes have extricated themselves from being “theology’s handmaiden,” we may turn to the legacy of the “Lutheran Paul.” At the time of the Reformation, and for several centuries, Paul’s concept of “righteousness” was often interpreted in accordance with the comparison that Paul was to Judaism as the Reformation was to Roman Catholicism – an illustration of exegesis serving, if subtly, dogmatic (Reformation) theology. But since the emergence of “Paul and the New Perspective” in the 1980s,¹⁰ it is clear that Paul did not criticize a different religion (that is, Judaism) but, rather, some of his Christ-believing brethren who had an irreconcilably different perspective from the one he had on the role of the Mosaic Law in the life of non-Jewish Christ-believers. From this discourse, we have gained a much better understanding of Paul’s theology, of his Christian opponents’ theology, and of the competition for influence in the earliest church. The improved understanding of Paul’s theology in its original context has had the welcome side-effect of facilitating better dialogue and relationship between ecumenically minded Lutherans and Roman Catholics.¹¹

New Testament Exegesis cannot do its real work if it is a handmaiden to theology. But neither can it forge its identity and *raison d’être* merely as an *advocatus diaboli*, in opposition to modern, possibly anachronistic, interpretations and receptions. No, I say: as an academic discipline, New Testament Exegesis must be neither theology’s handmaiden nor theology’s *advocatus diaboli*. How, then, can we move forward as an academic discipline with relevance for other disciplines? I shall now begin to address this question with reference to “the linguistic turn.”

¹⁰ See, e.g., E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977); James D. G. Dunn, “The New Perspective on Paul,” *BJRS* 65 (1983): 95–122; idem, *Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990); N. T. Wright, “The Paul of History and the Apostle of Faith,” *TynBul* 29 (1978): 61–88; idem, “The Messiah and the People of God: A Study in Pauline Theology with Particular Reference to the Argument of the Epistle to the Romans” (Dissertation, Oxford University, 1980); idem, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); idem, *What St. Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997); Magnus Zetterholm, *Approaches to Paul: A Student’s Guide to Recent Scholarship* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 33–67.

¹¹ See esp. the 1999 “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” between the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Lutheran World Federation: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-official-statement_en.html (on 10. February 2013), as well as, e.g., David E. Aune (ed.), *Rereading Paul Together: Protestant and Catholic Perspectives on Justification* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006).

D. How Can New Testament Exegesis Have Relevance for Other Disciplines?

In her book *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn*, Elizabeth Clark addresses the problem that the discipline of “history,” and, in particular, her own specialty of “late ancient Christianity” (that is, early church history)

became mired in scientific and literary paradigms that were rapidly being abandoned by practitioners of those disciplines. . . . [F]or the better part of the twentieth century historians either ignored or rejected the assistance that philosophers and theorists offered in their attempt to render the historical discipline scientific. . . .¹²

As a promising possibility for moving beyond this impasse, Clark recommends a poststructuralist approach: “Rejecting earlier critics’ desire to uncover a text’s unity and harmony, these theorists, by contrast, explore the ways in which texts incorporate within themselves seemingly contradictory and heterogeneous elements, aporias and ‘splicings’ that trip readers up so as to invite a more complex reading” of premodern texts, including early Christian literature.¹³

In an attempt to give such “a more complex reading” to texts on John the Baptist’s diet of “grasshoppers and wild honey” (Mark 1:6||Matt 3:4), I used philological, sociological, anthropological, and history-of-interpretation methods, in order to uncover the most likely meanings of these foods for the historical Baptist, for the evangelists Mark and Matthew, and for the Greek, Syriac and Latin church fathers. At the end of this study, I proposed the following for our discipline:

Students of early Christianity need not only be the beneficiaries of philologists’, classicists’ and ancient historians’ hard work. We too can advance these (and other) areas. Indeed, we should make such contributions, lest our scholarship be considered derivative rather than equal in stature to the highest standards of these and other Humanities disciplines. Furthermore, at times we can (and should) bring our work into conversation with the social, and even the natural, sciences.¹⁴

In the following section, I return to the relationship between newer and more traditional methodologies.

In her article “The Politics of Patronage and the Politics of Kinship: The Meeting of the Ways,” Carolyn Osiek likewise exemplifies how New Testament Exegesis can provide insights to other disciplines.¹⁵ The Roman

¹² Elizabeth A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2004), 17.

¹³ Clark, *History, Theory, Text*, 132.

¹⁴ Kelhoffer, *Diet of John the Baptist*, 199.

¹⁵ Carolyn Osiek, “The Politics of Patronage and the Politics of Kinship: The Meeting of the Ways,” *BTB* 39 (2009): 143–52; see further eadem, “Diakonos and prostatis:

patronage system of relationships, she observes, was based on reciprocal giving and taking between patrons and clients. Our sources from the ancient world preserve good information on how patronage relationships functioned among the elites – above all, between the emperor and his elite clients.¹⁶ But if classicists and ancient historians want to understand how this system functioned among ordinary people of the lower classes, a critical analysis of early Christian literature (for example, Paul’s letters) is essential:

[W]hile patronage and benefaction among Roman elites has been well studied, little has been done to study the same social structures among non-elites. . . . [W]hat we have in the literary remains of the early Jesus followers is some of the best evidence for the social relations of non-elites in the early Empire, granted, with certain peculiarities not shared with their other contemporaries, but probably having more in common with [than differences from] them. . . .¹⁷

For my current research on *Second Clement*, the description of Christ as patron of salvation and of Christians’ obligations to Christ their heavenly patron is of particular interest.¹⁸

E. What Is the Relationship between Newer and More Traditional Methods in New Testament Exegesis, and Is the So-Called “Historical-Critical Method” Just *One* Method?

Contemporary scholarship does not speak of “*the* scholarly method” for research on the New Testament and other early Christian literature but, more accurately, of a diversity among the methods currently in use. In what follows, I defend two theses: first, that historically oriented methods are fundamental for scholarly studies of the New Testament. Second, while the explosion of various approaches in the last half-century offers a multitude

Women’s Patronage in Early Christianity,” *HvTSt* 61 (2005): 347–70; eadem and Margaret MacDonald, *A Woman’s Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 194–219.

¹⁶ See, e.g., Jeremy Boissevain, “Patronage in Sicily,” *Man* n.s. 1/1 (Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 1966): 18–33; Richard P. Saller, *Personal Patronage under the Early Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1982); Jerome H. Neyrey, “God, Benefactor and Patron: The Major Cultural Model for Interpreting the Deity in Greco-Roman Antiquity,” *JSNT* 27 (2005): 465–92.

¹⁷ Osiek, “Politics of Patronage,” 146.

¹⁸ See above on 2 *Clem.* 1:3, 5; 9:7; 15:2; cf. 11:6.

of possibilities to researchers,¹⁹ an unfortunate byproduct has been the balkanization of biblical studies. That development points to an urgent need for a more meaningful exchange of ideas and approaches among exegetes. In practice, scholars who use different methods rarely come together in order to consider seriously the advantages (*and* disadvantages) of different methods. How can we try to move beyond the current conundrum?

It is worth beginning with attentive reflection on the language we use. It is preferable, I would submit, to say that “the historical-critical method” *is not just one method*. The expression is an umbrella term for a number of historically oriented, comparative and (most often) tradition-critical methods. None of these methods is necessarily critical or uncritical. In the investigation of early Christian literature, the *use* of any particular method or reading strategy can be, to a lesser or greater extent (or not at all), historical-critical. This is because methods are only a means for answering particular questions or solving particular problems and because a solution to a particular problem can be sought in a variety of more (or less) critical ways. This principle applies not only to tradition-historical methods (for example, source criticism, form criticism and redaction criticism) but also to newer methods and perspectives – for example, narratological, sociological and anthropological studies, as well as various special interest hermeneutics (including feminist, queer theory, and disability studies).

In this lecture, I can consider only briefly when, in the history of biblical scholarship, the adjective “historical-critical” (German: “historisch-kritisch”) came to be so closely associated with the substantive “method” that it came to be understood as *a* method – “the historical-critical method” (“die historisch-kritische Methode”). The roots of this development can be traced to the German Protestant theologian Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923), who distinguished between “historical” and “dogmatic” method.²⁰ Conservative (Lutheran) theologians, such as Gerhard Maier, protested that the historical method did not yield a “canon within the canon,” and, for this reason, welcomed “the end of the historical-critical method.”²¹ Instead of

¹⁹ For an overview, see, e.g., Anders Gerdmar and Kari Syreeni, *Vägar till Nya Testamentet: Metoder, tekniker och verktyg för nytestamentlig exegetik* [*Paths to the New Testament: Methods, Techniques and Instruments for New Testament Exegesis*] (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2006).

²⁰ Troeltsch, “Über historische und dogmatische Methode in der Theologie,” in idem, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1913), 2:729–53.

²¹ Maier, *Das Ende der historisch-kritischen Methode* (Wuppertal: Theologischer Verlag Brockhaus, 1974); ET: *The End of the Historical-Critical Method* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1977). Instead of “the historical-critical method,” Maier advocated for a return to a (pre-critical) biblicism. Cf. W. Vogels, “Les limites de la méthode historico-critique,” *LTP* 36 (1980): 173–94; Martin H. Franzmann, “The Historical-Critical Method,” *Concordia Journal* 6 (1980): 101–102; Alan F. Johnson, “The

trying to use “the historical-critical method,” Maier advocated a return to a (pre-critical) biblicist theological method (which he called “the historical-biblical method”). It should give scholars pause that Maier, an outspoken *opponent* of “the historical-critical method,” contributed to the use of this expression by incorporating its nomenclature into an argument against it.

In Anglophone scholarship, the influence of the book *The Historical-Critical Method*, by my friend and erstwhile colleague at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago Edgar Krentz, is not to be underestimated.²² Krentz offers a wonderfully concise (and dense) explanation of the need for “the historical-critical method,” as well as its benefits for the church today. Dedicated to the president of the Christ-Seminex Seminary (St. Louis, Missouri) and written to answer objections, above all from conservative pastors and theologians within the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS), Krentz’s book emerged within a bitterly polemical context. The 1977 publication of Gerhard Maier’s book in English translation by Concordia Publishing House (see note 21) was apparently the LCMS’s response to Krentz. Even as late as 2008, the distinguished American scholar Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J. published a book with the subtitle *In Defense of the Historical-Critical Method*.²³

An unhappy result of such nomenclature is that it divides interpreters into “haves” and “have-nots,” depending on whether they “have” the sym-

Historical-Critical Method: Egyptian Gold or Pagan Precipice?” *JETS* 26 (1983): 3–15; Willard M. Swartley, “Beyond the Historical-Critical Method,” in Swartley (ed.), *Essays on Biblical Interpretation: Anabaptist-Mennonite Perspectives* (Text-Reader Series 1; Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1984), 1:237–64; Nico S. L. Fryer, “The Historical-Critical Method: Yes or No?” *Scriptura* 20 (1987): 41–70; Donald A. Hagner, “The New Testament, History, and the Historical-Critical Method,” in David A. Black and David S. Dockery (eds.), *New Testament Criticism and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 71–96; and, especially, Eta Linnemann, *Wissenschaft oder Meinung? Anfragen und Alternativen* (Neuhausen: Hänssler, 1986); ET: *Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology? Reflections of a Bultmannian Turned Evangelical* (trans. Robert W. Yarborough; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990); R. W. Yarborough, “Eta Linnemann: Friend or Foe of Scholarship?” *Master’s Seminary Journal* 8 (1997): 163–89.

²² Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975; reprint: Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002). See also Paul Achtemeier, “On the Historical-Critical Method in New Testament Studies: Apologia pro Vita Sua,” *Perspective* 11 (1970): 289–304; Roland M. Frye, “On the Historical-Critical Method in New Testament Study: A Reply to Professor Achtemeier,” *Perspective* 14 (1973): 28–33; Hans M. Barstad, “The Historical-Critical Method and the Problem of Old Testament Theology: A Few Marginal Remarks,” *SEÅ* 45 (1980): 7–18.

²³ Fitzmyer, *The Interpretation of Scripture: In Defense of the Historical-Critical Method* (New York: Paulist, 2008).

bolic capital and, possibly based upon this, a heightened stature²⁴ because they use “the historical-critical method.” When a scholar’s standing within our discipline is thus classified, both sides will be prone to assume defensive positions and to be suspicious of one another. To say the least, this can make it more difficult to engage in a dialogue among those who use various methods.

It is indeed unfortunate that rather few students and, apparently, relatively few scholars see that when we speak of “the historical-critical method,” we perpetuate a methodological nomenclature originally advocated by *its opponents*.²⁵ I find it more helpful – and more accurate – to speak not of one particular method as “historical-critical” (i.e. “eine [sogenannte] historisch-kritische Methode”) but to speak of the goal of doing “historical-critical exegesis” (“historisch-kritische Exegese”). With rare exception,²⁶ “historisch-kritische Exegese” has been the standard terminology of German-language scholarship.²⁷ The difference between the two expressions lies primarily in how “historical-critical” is used – whether to describe ex-

²⁴ On the possible “transfer” of non-economic capital (including “symbolic capital”) to power, see Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” in John G. Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (New York: Greenwood, 1986), 241–58 at 252–55; see further Kelhoffer, *Persecution, Persuasion and Power*, 9–24, esp. 14–16.

²⁵ See note 21 above on Maier, *Das Ende der historisch-kritischen Methode* and similar studies, as well as the most recent critique from Michael C. Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies* (Oxford Studies in Historical Theology; Oxford: Oxford University, 2010). According to Legaspi, the historical-critical method bears a large share of the blame for the supposed “death of Scripture” in many churches today. Rhetorically, it is difficult to escape Legaspi’s polemical critique without promising to resuscitate “his” Bible. Scholars usually, however, do not tolerate such ultimatums – and rightly so. Appearing in a series for Historical Theology (*not* for biblical scholarship), Legaspi’s book betrays a dogmatic agenda that is, nonetheless, eloquently swaddled in postmodern and even anti-nationalist discourses.

²⁶ Gerhard Ebeling, “Die Bedeutung der Historisch-kritischen Methode für die Protestantische Theologie und Kirche,” *ZTK* 47 (1950): 1–46; ET: “The Significance of the Critical Historical Method for Church and Theology,” in idem, *Word and Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963), 17–61; Heinrich Zimmermann, *Neutestamentliche Methodenlehre: Darstellung der historisch-kritischen Methode* (Stuttgart: Kath. Bibelwerk, 4th ed. 1974).

²⁷ E.g., Hermann Gunkel, “Ziele und Methoden der Alttestamentlichen Exegese,” in idem, *Reden und Aufsätze* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913), 11–29; Robert Preus, “Offenbarungsverständnis und historisch-kritische Methode,” *Lutherischer Rundblick* 11 (1963): 170–87; Ernst Käsemann, “Vom theologischen Recht historisch-kritischer Exegese,” *ZTK* 64 (1967): 259–81; Martin Hengel, “Historische Methoden und theologische Auslegung des Neuen Testaments,” *KD* 19 (1973): 85–90; Wilhelm Egger, *Methodenlehre zum Neuen Testament: Einführung in linguistische und historisch-kritische Methoden* (Freiburg: Herder, 1987).

egesis in general (German-language) or to denote a purported method (Anglophone).

In an earlier publication, I suggested what, I hope, offers a way forward:

Unfortunately, certain scholars tout that newer methodologies have somehow superseded traditio-historical analyses or “the historical-critical method,” however construed.²⁸ The future of early Christian studies lies not in antipathy between older and newer approaches but in dynamic interaction between them. Historians of religion have acknowledged as much for decades. It is time that the over-balkanized discipline of biblical studies move beyond such a short-sighted and unnecessary dichotomy.²⁹

If one aims to do something interesting and worthwhile in biblical studies, it is woefully inadequate merely to hype the use of a newer method. And the mere translation of earlier results into a trendy terminology (from one of the social sciences, for example) does not deserve to be called “scholarship.” Apropos of such translation, Troy W. Martin offers a pointed and just warning in his review of a sociologically oriented study of First Peter:

The strength of this monograph resides in its sensitivity to modern hermeneutical theory . . . and in its reformulation of prior exegetical insights in the language of the social sciences (e.g., “temporal liminality” instead of “eschatological journey”). It offers, however, few new exegetical insights of its own, and, at times, the social-scientific model controls the text rather than vice versa.³⁰

In all scholarship, regardless of the discipline, the important question is not which method(s) are used. What scholars want to know is whether a colleague has something new, interesting and instructive to present from his or her research. In the classroom, I have found it rather easy to explain this principle to students. We can hope that, among scholars, there will be better possibilities for meaningful conversation and interdisciplinary collaboration in the future.

²⁸ See, e.g., Richard A. Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark's Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), p. ix; David M. Rhoads, “Narrative Criticism: Practices and Prospects,” in D. M. Rhoads and Kari Syreeni (eds.), *Characterization in the Gospels: Reconceiving Narrative Criticism* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 264–85, esp. 265–66. Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1997), 1–5, offers a more balanced analysis.

²⁹ Kelhoffer, *Diet of John the Baptist*, 199; see further idem, “Early Christian Studies among the Academic Disciplines: Reflections on John the Baptist’s ‘Locusts and Wild Honey,’” *BR* 50 (2007): 5–17 (see chapter 2 in the present volume).

³⁰ Troy W. Martin, review of Steven R. Bechtler, *Following in His Steps: Suffering, Community, and Christology in 1 Peter* (SBLDS 162; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), in *RBL* (26 May 2000): http://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/2198_1315.pdf (accessed 25 November 2011); the citation of Martin’s review is from §7 (p. 2).

F. How Can New Testament Exegesis Have Relevance for All People?

I now turn to the relevance of New Testament Exegesis for all people.³¹ Because biblical scholarship shares much in common with other disciplines within the Humanities – above all, with history, literature, and philosophy – every educated person ought to be acquainted with the main insights of biblical scholarship in the last 200 years. Additionally, a basic knowledge of biblical literature is important for comprehending the myriad allusions to the Bible in modern literature, including modern fiction, and for understanding how the Bible has influenced constructions of identity in religious movements through the centuries. Sociologists and historians cannot afford to ignore the fact that biblical mythologies can still play a significant role in the creation of modern mythologies and constructions of identity. I therefore take it as an unintended oversight that our university's large interdisciplinary research project, "The Impact of Religion,"³² does not have a specialist in biblical studies or reception history.

Sometimes – and, we hope, not infrequently – an insight from New Testament Exegesis can have relevance not only for other disciplines but for all people. In *The Diet of John the Baptist*, I point out how food, biblical interpretation, and asceticism have played a role in the formation of religious identity.³³ And in *Persecution, Persuasion and Power*, I call attention to how a readiness to be persecuted can serve as a basis for standing and legitimacy in many religious traditions:

In terms of the philosophy of religion, one may ask which comes first – an experience of persecution, or the concept of salvation history (or salvation mythology³⁴) that persecu-

³¹ See, above, that a (public Swedish) university must not tolerate discrimination but must be open to all who embrace principles of critical research and scholarly methods.

³² See <http://www.crs.uu.se/Forskning/impactofreligion/> (on 10. February 2013).

³³ Kelhoffer, *The Diet of John the Baptist*, e.g., 203–205.

³⁴ On this problem, see, e.g., Jörg Frey et al. (eds.), *Heil und Geschichte: Die Geschichtsbezogenheit des Heils und das Problem der Heilsgeschichte in der biblischen Tradition und in der theologischen Deutung* (WUNT 248; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009). In regard to the consequences of one's choice of terminology, see also Christoph W. Stenschke, review of J. Frey et al. (eds.), *Heil und Geschichte*, in *RBL* (20. June 2010): http://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/7570_8272.pdf (accessed 25. November 2011): "It will be difficult for scholars to reappropriate a concept of salvation *history* when they are at the same time convinced that most of the foundation of this concept, namely, God's interventions in history for salvation, did not happen and could not have happened in the way that they are recounted in the biblical tradition. In addition to the staunch opponents of salvation history (for this and other reasons), a notion of *salvation and myth* or *salvation mythology* is argued for in many quarters of biblical studies, in which the discipline is understood in terms of examining how this myth was formed (by drawing on historical notions and ideas) and how it functioned for the communities that created it."

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