

Protestant Reading of the Gospels of Mark and Matthew in the 20th Century

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The development of Roman-Catholic exegesis is influenced by official Church statements that reveal a renunciation of anti-rationalism in the document of 1893 (“Deus Providentissimus”), a cautious opening for form criticism in 1943 (“Divino afflante Spiritu”), and a new openness concerning narrative and structuralistic exegesis in the document of 1993 (“The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church”), which has no encyclical rank.¹ Within a Protestant context, biblical scholarship is widely independent from such documents of the Church. Nevertheless, we have to take into account developments within Protestant churches, which are split between liberal and conservative parties,² as well as experiences, e.g., in the so-called *Kirchenkampf*.

1. The 19th Century: Source Criticism and Historical Reading

The history of historical critical research with regard to the canonical biblical texts began in the 16th century with biblical philology in Spain, independent from inner-confessional controversy. The shift to modern criticism is characterized by the fact that no longer do questions about the so-called *regula fidei* dominate:³ Which sort of *regula fidei* should be considered valid, the Roman-Catholic, the Lutheran, the Reformed, the Socinian etc.? What criterion beyond human thought should be used to distinguish legitimate conclusions from illegitimate?

With regard to the Synoptic Gospels, the well-known anti-Christian attack made by Herman Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768) in his *Wolfenbuetteler* fragments was very important, especially in the last one, “The Aims of Jesus and His Disci-

¹ Compare D. Dormeyer’s contribution in this volume.

² Due to conservative regimes within the distinct Protestant congregations, it was difficult for some scholars to get tenure. Concerning W. Bousset, cf. O. Merk, “Wilhelm Bousset (1865–1920)/Theologe,” in idem, *Wissenschaftsgeschichte und Exegese: Gesammelte Aufsätze zum 65. Geburtstag* (ed. R. Gebauer et al.; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), 159–74, 159–60; concerning Ernst Fuchs, cf. W. Hüffmeier, “Ernst Fuchs (1903–1983),” in *Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft nach 1945: Hauptvertreter der deutschsprachigen Exegese in der Darstellung ihrer Schüler* (ed. C. Breytenbach and R. Hoppe; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 2008), 217–31, 220–1.

³ Compare M. Reiser, “Einführung,” in *Bibelkritik und Auslegung der Heiligen Schrift* (2nd ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 1–38, 19–20.

ples,” published after his death by his son-in-law Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781). Reimarus distinguishes between the teachings of Jesus and the teachings of his disciples (called “another system”). Not the content but the very fact of this distinction is of primary importance for our study. “Reimarus thinks it more reasonable to believe that the apostles freely invented much of what is reported in the Gospels than to assume that in every case they faithfully reported what Jesus said and did or what happened to him.”⁴ It was Protestant theologians who felt obliged to discuss such theses emerging from enlightenment philosophy; they regarded the enlightenment both as a help and a challenge.

The Gospel of Matthew was the first to be read from a literary-historical perspective. Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768–1834) regretted that Papias’ reports on the evangelists were highly underestimated, and he suggested that an Aramaic collection of sayings of Jesus were incorporated into the Gospel of Matthew as its main component.⁵ In the following era, the priority of the Gospel of Matthew was maintained by the Tübingen school, whereas the thesis of Markan priority was just in the making. But why did the history of New Testament research lead to the victory of this thesis?

David Friedrich Strauß (1808–1874) interpreted the Gospels as products of myth, which unintentionally transfer Old Testament concepts of messianism to Jesus Christ. This use of myth as a hermeneutical category is a progress in comparison to Reimarus,⁶ but Strauß’ work was limited to a critique of the narration of Jesus without any critique of the narrating texts.⁷ Therefore the further development of Gospel research should be seen as an answer to Strauß’ neglect of source criticism. The result of this development was the establishing of the so-called two-source hypothesis as the leading theory.

This hypothesis had certain predecessors. The priority of Mark was first stated by the English Deist Thomas Chubb (1697–1747)⁸ and by the German theologian Gottlob Christian Storr (1746–1805),⁹ but the leading theory until 1835 had been

⁴ C. R. Holladay, *A Critical Introduction to the New Testament: Interpreting the Message and Meaning of Jesus Christ* (Nashville: Abingdon Press 2005), 79–80.

⁵ F. D. E. Schleiermacher, “Über die Zeugnisse des Papias von unsern ersten beiden Evangelien (1832),” in idem, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe, im Auftrag der Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen ed. Hermann Fischer u.a., I,8: Exegetische Schriften* (ed. H. Patsch and D. Schmid; Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter 2001), 227–54, 227, 238.

⁶ Cf. Holladay, *Critical Introduction*, 81.

⁷ O. Merk, “Das Problem des Mythos zwischen Neologie und ‘religionsgeschichtlicher Schule’ in der neutestamentlichen Wissenschaft,” in *Wissenschaftsgeschichte und Exegese*, 24–46, 43. According to Merk (ibid.) Strauß’ neglect of source criticism was a point of critique even by his master Ferdinand Christian Baur: “Die größte Eigenthümlichkeit des Werks ist, daß es eine Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte ohne eine Kritik der Evangelien gibt” (Merk, ibid., quoting F. C. Baur: *Kritische Untersuchungen über die kanonischen Evangelien, ihr Verhältniß zueinander, ihren Charakter und Ursprung* [Tübingen: L. F. Fues, 1847], 141).

⁸ A. Yabro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 115.

⁹ According to W. G. Kümmel, *Das Neue Testament: Geschichte der Erforschung seiner Probleme* (2nd ed.; Freiburg: Alber, 1970), 89, Gottlob Christian Storr’s main argument was as follows: why

the Griesbach hypothesis. Well-known is the importance of Christian Gottlob Wilke (1796–1854), Christian Hermann Weisse (1801–1866), and Carl Lachmann (1793–1851) for Heinrich Julius Holtzmann's (1832–1910) benchmark work on the Synoptic Gospels, written in 1863.¹⁰ Yet this theory had implications for the interpretation of Mark's Gospel in another aspect as well.

In his commentary, Holtzmann not only understood the Gospel of Mark as the *Vorlage* for Matthew and Luke but also combined this literary-critical hypothesis with a historical one. He regarded the Gospel of Mark also as a historically true description of the main phases of Jesus' life: the appearance of John the Baptist, Jesus' first activities around the Sea of Galilee, the rise of his movement, and also of his adversaries, Peter's Messianic confession, Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, his last days in Jerusalem, and his death.¹¹ In some (not all!)¹² "Life of Jesus" books the historical reconstruction of Jesus' life followed Mark and inserted the sayings of Q. Mark had been read as a historically reliable source of the life of Jesus, to which the Gospels of Matthew and Luke added preaching material.¹³ Also after 1863, some exegetes still upheld the theory that Matthew was the oldest,¹⁴ but this theory was no longer influential; since Holtzmann the two-source theory has been the standard presupposition for many exegetes.

Since 1892 the historical usage of the Gospel of Mark as a frame for describing the life of Jesus of Nazareth has been challenged in different ways. According to Martin Kähler (1835–1912) the Gospels are to be interpreted not as historical documents but as witnesses of faith;¹⁵ historical facts are always overshadowed by the light of the Easter event, and there is no direct approach to the historical specifics concerning Jesus isolated from the interpretation of the first believers (though Kähler maintained the historical reliability of the synoptic tradition!). But in 1892 the goal of describing Jesus as a moral personality also came to an end. Johannes

should Mark have rejected so much material if the Gospels Matthew and Luke had been known to him?

¹⁰ H. J. Holtzmann, *Die synoptischen Evangelien: Ihr Ursprung und ihr geschichtlicher Charakter* (Leipzig: Engelmann, 1863).

¹¹ H. J. Holtzmann, *Hand-Commentar zum Neuen Testament* (Freiburg: Mohr Siebeck, 1889), 9. Holtzmann admitted that Mark arranged his material sometimes not according to history but according to issues of theology and the life of his own community (*ibid.*).

¹² A. Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (9th ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1984), 227, underlines that the success of the Two-Source Hypothesis did not totally influence research on the historical Jesus.

¹³ E.g. O. Holtzmann, *Leben Jesu* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1901), 25. In general cf. Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, 204–21.

¹⁴ T. Keim, *Geschichte Jesu von Nazara in ihrer Verkettung mit dem Gesamtleben seines Volkes frei untersucht und ausführlich erzählt. Band. I: Der Rüsttag* (Zürich: Orell, Füßli & Co., 1867), 45.

¹⁵ M. Kähler, *Der sogenannte historische Jesus und der geschichtliche, biblische Christus* (ed. E. Wolf; 4th ed.; München: Kaiser, 1969), 21; *idem*, *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic, Biblical Christ* (ed. and trans. C. E. Baraaten; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964), 43. Cf. Holladay, *Critical Introduction*, 86, describing Kähler: "The gospel neither derives its power from historical certitude nor can it be adequately grasped in purely historical terms. Christianity has an inescapably historical dimension since Jesus was a historical figure of the past, but history is neither its essence nor its power."

Weiß (1863–1914) interpreted the Gospels in terms of the apocalyptic theology re-discovered by Adolf Hilgenfeld (1823–1907). Jesus did not proclaim the moral perfection of men but the coming of supernatural catastrophe.¹⁶

In 1901, William Wrede (1859–1906) argued that Mark's Gospel was influenced by a pre-Markan theology that attempted to balance between the non-Messianic life of Jesus and the dogmatic faith of the first believers;¹⁷ the evangelist himself did not have a strictly historical concept of Jesus' life.¹⁸ Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965) emphasized that the so-called historical reconstructions of the life of Jesus were very often only a mirror of the mind of their inventors.¹⁹

Was there any notion of reading Mark and Matthew in the light of the history of religion approach in this period? For Albert Schweitzer's reconstruction of Jesus' eschatology, Matt 10:23 was a main point.²⁰ A New Commentary series published by Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht intended to spread the interpretation of the so-called *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* among laymen ("Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments übersetzt und erklärt"), who should be enabled to understand the beginnings of Christianity and to be sensitive to the vigorous religious life of the first Christians;²¹ Johannes Weiß wrote the commentaries on the Synoptic Gospels.²² Not for laymen but for students and priests the "Handbuch zum Neuen Testament," following the insight of the deep grounding of the New Testament texts in their cultural and religious environment, both Greco-Roman and Jewish, offered parallels from the history of religions as support for the academic lesson and as material for one's own thinking for priests and school teachers of religion.²³ Erich Klostermann commented on the Synoptic Gospels for this series.²⁴

Also important was the publication of Hermann Leberecht Strack's (1848–1922) and Paul Billerbeck's (1853–1932) monumental commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Midrash:²⁵ The Protestant priest Paul Billerbeck

¹⁶ J. Weiß, *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1892).

¹⁷ W. Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien: Zugleich ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Markusevangeliums* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901; 3rd ed. 1963), 145.

¹⁸ Wrede, *Messiasgeheimnis*, 129.

¹⁹ Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, 620.

²⁰ Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, 416–20.

²¹ J. Weiß, ed., *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments neu übersetzt und für die Gegenwart erklärt, Vol. I, Die drei älteren Evangelien* (3rd ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1917), v.

²² J. Weiß, *Das Matthäus-Evangelium* (2nd ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1907; 3rd ed. 1917), 226–392; *Das Markus-Evangelium*, 71–226.

²³ H. Lietzmann, *An die Römer* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1910), vii.

²⁴ E. Klostermann, *Die Synoptiker unter Mitwirkung von Hugo Greßmann erklärt* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1919), pp. 1–148 = *Mark* (originally published in 1907); pp. 149–357 = *Matthew* (originally published in 1909).

²⁵ H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch, Bd. I: Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (München: C. H. Beck, 1922); *Bd. II: Das Evangelium nach Markus, Lukas und Johannes und die Apostelgeschichte* (München: C. H. Beck, 1924); *Bd. III: Die Briefe des Neuen Testaments und die Offenbarung Johannis, erläutert aus Talmud und Midrasch von P. Billerbeck* (München: C. H. Beck, 1926 = 2nd ed. 1954); *Bd. IV: Exkurse zu einzelnen Stellen des Neuen Testaments. Abhandlungen zur neutestamentlichen Theologie und Archäologie, Erster Teil* (5th ed.; München: C. H. Beck, 1969), *Zweiter Teil* (5th ed.; München: C. H. Beck, 1969); *Bd. V/VI:*

collected parallels from Jewish literature before and (mostly) after 70 C. E. to almost every relevant passage in the New Testament; Hermann Leberecht Strack reassessed this material. On the one hand, this commentary has been criticized for methodological²⁶ and theological²⁷ reasons, but, on the other hand, it has enabled scholars to include Jewish texts for comparison in *Religionsgeschichte*.²⁸ With regard to *Religionsgeschichte*, the Gospel of Matthew was of special interest also for Adolf Schlatter, who collected parallels to Matthean phraseology from Josephus' writings.²⁹

2. The Beginning of the 20th Century: Protestant Exegesis between Historicism and Theology, between Liberalism and Conservatism

With Kähler and Wrede the purely historical reading of the Gospels had come to an end. The further development of interpretation can be classified with regard to emerging source-critical and form-critical research. The new source-criticism intended to discover the sources on which Mark based his Gospel, but the results of this research were not such to encourage scholarship to pursue this path – results diverged, criteria were obviously ambiguous.

Research related to *Formgeschichte* has been more influential. According to Karl Ludwig Schmidt (1891–1956) the introductory remarks framing distinct pericopes were secondary additions taken over by Mark without any historical interest.³⁰ Martin Dibelius (1883–1947) classified the Synoptic Gospels as folktales; the evangelists are not authors in the modern sense. The Gospels were shaped by the interests of Christian communities beyond individual needs. Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976) combined analytical form-criticism with research on the *Traditionsgeschichte* of distinct sayings and pericopes. Although not one of these scholars published a single commentary on any of the Synoptic Gospels, the interpretation of these New Testament texts was inspired by their work not only in the reconstruction of their *Traditionsgeschichte* but also with regard to the theological message of the New Testament in general.

Rabbinischer Index. Verzeichnis der Schriftgelehrten. Geographisches Register (3rd ed.; ed. J. Jeremias and K. Adolph; München: C. H. Beck, 1969).

²⁶ This critique is twofold: 1) Is it possible to use texts even from the fourth or fifth century in order to illuminate texts from the first century C. E.? 2) The quotations are often alienated from their context.

²⁷ This critique concerns his pejorative remarks on Judaism.

²⁸ After 1922, Rudolf Bultmann added many Jewish references to his lesson manuscripts on the Synoptic Gospels; cf. O. Merk, "Aus (unveröffentlichten) Aufzeichnungen Rudolf Bultmanns zur Synoptikerforschung," in *Wissenschaftsgeschichte und Exegese*, 130–42, 132.

²⁹ *Der Evangelist Matthäus: Seine Sprache, sein Ziel, seine Selbständigkeit* (2nd ed.; Stuttgart: Calwer Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1933).

³⁰ K. L. Schmidt, *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu: Eine literarkritische Untersuchung zur ältesten Jesusüberlieferung* (Berlin: Reimer, 1919; repr., Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964).

In the 19th century, the historical dimension of biblical texts was re-discovered, but after the breakdown of the German *Kaiserreich* this type of exegesis was judged to be one-sided. Karl Barth's (1886–1968) preface in the second edition of his *Römerbrief* was the loudest protest against the discordance between historical scrupulosity and theological disinterest.³¹ Rudolf Bultmann endorsed this criticism but wished to serve the heritage of liberal research, concerned with historical and theological truth.³² He emphasized that the New Testament texts were not historically oriented but centered on proclamation.

The promoters of these new concepts were conscious of their challenging character for the conservative Protestant milieu,³³ where Theodor Zahn (1838–1933) and Adolf Schlatter (1852–1938) revitalized the old thesis of Matthean priority.³⁴ Rudolf Bultmann has given the most famous statement on this topic: "Ich lasse es ruhig brennen."³⁵ The critique of Erich Fascher (1897–1978) had no real influence on the ongoing research.³⁶ But there is no intrinsic necessity concerning the provocative character of these concepts. Julius Schniewind (1883–1948) is an example of a scholar integrating the form-critical approach into a conservative historical frame – with surprising effectiveness (see below). The question whether Jesus' words and deeds recorded in the Gospels can actually be traced back to Jesus or are molded by the first believers poses no real threat to him.³⁷ The truth of the content of the Gospels is not based on external certainty but on their inherent veracity. The Gospels are not composed by a historian whose mind is influenced by indifference, doubt, or even hostility; they are proclamation.³⁸ John Mark (e.g., Act 12:12) was the author of the Gospel of Mark: uncontrolled legend would surely have chosen a more prominent figure in the first Christian generation if opportunity was given. Schniewind even concurs with the thesis that the Gospel of Mark is shaped by Peter's retrospection.³⁹

³¹ K. Barth, *Der Römerbrief* (2nd ed.; ed. C. van der Kooi and K. Tolstaja, 1922); K. Barth, *Gesamtausgabe. II. Akademische Werke 1922* (im Auftrag der Karl Barth-Stiftung; ed. H.-A. Drewes; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2010), 11–16.

³² R. Bultmann, *Glauben und Verstehen* (vol. 1; 2nd ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1954), 1–25, 2; repr. of "Die liberale Theologie und die jüngste theologische Bewegung."

³³ Cf. Wrede's preface in his *Messiasgeheimnis*, vi: "Es ist mir in mancher Stunde schmerzlich gewesen, dass meine Untersuchung so manches antastet, woran gute und fromme Menschen mit dem Herzen hängen. Ich gedachte alter Freunde, lieber Zuhörer, bekannter und auch unbekannter Gotteskinder, denen die Schrift vor Augen kommen könnte. Indessen ich konnte hier nichts ändern. Wir können die Evangelien nicht anders machen; wir müssen sie nehmen, wie sie sind."

³⁴ T. Zahn, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament II* (Leipzig: Deichert, 1899), 322; A. Schlatter, *Markus, Der Evangelist für die Griechen* (5th ed.; Stuttgart: Calwer, 1959), passim.

³⁵ R. Bultmann, *Glauben und Verstehen*, 85–113, 101; repr. of "Zur Frage der Christologie."

³⁶ E. Fascher, *Die formgeschichtliche Methode: Eine Darstellung und Kritik, Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des synoptischen Problems* (Gießen: Töpelmann, 1924).

³⁷ J. Schniewind, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (7th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956), 39.

³⁸ J. Schniewind, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (7th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1954), 1.

³⁹ Schniewind, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, 41.

Schniewind's commentaries on Mark and Matthew were part of a new series inaugurated by the publisher Gustav Ruprecht, the so-called "Neues Testament Deutsch." This series was intended to be complementary to the series "Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments übersetzt und erklärt,"⁴⁰ reflecting religious interests⁴¹ and (after 1918) the theological turn, but without neglecting the enduring results of the so-called *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*.

3. Pre-Nazi and Nazi-Times in Germany: Protestant Exegesis between Assimilation and Resistance

During World War I the Sermon on the Mount had been interpreted as justifying Germany's aggressive politics.⁴² The Nazi ideology was supported by not a few Protestant New Testament scholars; some of them were deeply involved in active support of the Nazi administration. Shamefully, we have to remember – to give just three examples – Johannes Leipoldt's (1880–1965) *Jesu Verhältnis zu Griechen und Juden*,⁴³ Emanuel Hirsch's (1888–1972) "*Bergpredigt*,"⁴⁴ and Gerhard Kittel's (1888–1948) *Judenfrage*.⁴⁵ In 1939, Walter Grundmann claimed that the original version of the Sermon on the Mount, extracted from Luke 6:20–49, did not include any Old Testament or Jewish material; it was the evangelist Matthew who included such material.⁴⁶

Theological resistance was sometimes hidden in indirect allusions. Julius Schniewind, a member of the so-called Confessing Church (*Bekennende Kirche*), characterized the Gospels in the following way: "Unsere Evangelien sind allesamt so gemeint, daß sie nicht eine erhabene menschliche Persönlichkeit schildern wollen, sondern die Taten Jesu als des allzeit gegenwärtigen Herrschers seiner

⁴⁰ Cf. M. Meiser, *Paul Althaus als Neutestamentler: Eine Untersuchung der Werke, Briefe, unveröffentlichten Manuskripte und Randbemerkungen* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1993), 153–4.

⁴¹ First attempts are to be traced back to 1906, but it was not until 1926 that the publisher was able to secure an editor-in-chief (Paul Althaus); cf. Meiser, *Althaus*, 154.

⁴² E. Le Seur, *Die Bergpredigt und der Krieg: Vier Kriegspredigten* (2nd ed.; Berlin, 1915), 18. T. Birt, "Was heißt 'Liebet eure Feinde'?" *Christliche Welt* 29 (1915): 475–83, 479, distinguishes *ἐχθρός*, used of a personal enemy, and *πολέμιος*, designating a political enemy, not used in Matt 5–7.

⁴³ J. Leipoldt, *Jesu Verhältnis zu Griechen und Juden* (Leipzig: Georg Wigand, 1941). Cf. pp. 183–5: Jesus has a position far away from Judaism – most other Jews rejected him – and he suppressed the Jewish thinking of his disciples; in the Gospel of Matthew he is portrayed as a Jew faithful to Torah; therefore the character of this Gospel is ambivalent.

⁴⁴ E. Hirsch, "Die Bergpredigt," *Deutsches Volkstum* 20 (1938): 820–6.

⁴⁵ G. Kittel, *Die Judenfrage* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1933).

⁴⁶ W. Grundmann, *Die Frage der ältesten Gestalt und des ursprünglichen Sinnes der Bergrede Jesu* (Weimar: Verlag Deutsche Christen, 1939). Concerning Walter Grundmann, cf., nowadays, R. Deines, ed., *Walter Grundmann: Ein Neutestamentler im Dritten Reich* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2007).

Gemeinde.”⁴⁷ This statement is both anti-liberal and anti-Nazi.⁴⁸ It is anti-liberal in its rejection of any classifying of Jesus among others in a series of esteemed human personalities such as founders of religions. It is anti-Nazi in its emphasizing of Jesus Christ as ruler within his community; this is an unveiled rejection of concepts that conceded influence of church developments to deceptively Christian factors and individuals.

Within Schniewind’s conservative theory on the origins of the Synoptic Gospels described above, a critical contemporary nuance is present: “Gerade das sehr Ungünstige, das über den Führer der ersten Gemeinde berichtet wird, kann nur auf Petrus selbst zurückgehn.”⁴⁹ In the years before 1933, when Schniewind worked on his commentary, many people in Germany wished the appearance of a so-called *Führer* who would restore the German *Kaiserreich*. Schniewind’s phrase is a subtle attack against such wishes. In 1933, when this commentary was published, everyone in Germany knew why the term *Führer* was used in this phrase, regardless of whether Schniewind himself had this actual reference in mind.

4. Post-Nazi Times in Germany: Protestant Exegesis between Returning to the Bible and Contemporary Relevance

Quarrels between extremely conservative circles on the one hand and moderate conservatives and liberals on the other shaped the situation within Protestant Churches in Eastern and Western Germany.⁵⁰ The extreme conservatives feared that an alteration of the theology would lead inevitably to apostasy from correct proclamation. Their opponents were influenced by the impression of radically changing times with regard to technical progress as well as to the history of ideas, and they already saw the loss of relevance of the biblical word in church and society as a possible consequence of extreme conservatism. In my view, this concern is prominent in the following statements of the moderate exegetes Günther Bornkamm (1905–1990) and Eduard Schweizer (1913–2006).

In his seminal study “Die Sturmstillung im Matthäus-Evangelium,” one of the founders of redaction-critical exegesis, Günther Bornkamm, at first revives Martin

⁴⁷ Schniewind, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, 36.

⁴⁸ Julius Schniewind was a leading member of the so-called “Confessing Church” and suffered for it; cf. O. Merk, “Die Evangelische Kriegsgeneration,” in *Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft nach 1945: Hauptvertreter der deutschsprachigen Exegese in der Darstellung ihrer Schüler* (ed. C. Breitenbach and R. Hoppe; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 2008), 1–58, 53–4.

⁴⁹ Schniewind, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, 42.

⁵⁰ In 1952, the synod of the “Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Deutschland” inaugurated a promulgation to be read in worship against Rudolf Bultmann and his program of “Entmythologisierung”; cf. O. Merk, “Kriegsgeneration,” 9. In 1973, this promulgation was revoked. Within the quarrel on the right of historical-critical exegesis, the “Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament” should underline that this type of exegesis leads to a deep understanding of biblical texts and supports preaching and catechesis (W. Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* [Berlin: Theologische Verlagsanstalt, 1968], vi).

Kähler's groundbreaking insight that Christian faith was not a later stratum in the tradition history of the gospel but its base. This implies that early Christian tradition was both attentive to and free in detail. He proceeds:

Die Evangelisten greifen eben nicht auf irgendein Gemeindearchiv zurück, wenn sie die Worte und Taten Jesu weitergeben, sondern sie schöpfen aus dem Kerygma der Gemeinde und dienen diesem Kerygma. Weil Jesus Christus nicht eine Gestalt der Vergangenheit ist und also ins Museum gehört, kann es für die urchristliche Überlieferung von ihm auch nicht ein ‚Archiv‘ geben, in dem sie gehütet wird.⁵¹

Eduard Schweizer names the dangerous loss of relevance more explicitly:

Weil Jesus für die Gemeinde nicht ein toter, sondern ein lebendiger Herr war, mußte sie seine Worte immer wieder in ihre Fragen hinein hören, also sie auch auf die sich ändernden Situation beziehen und sie ihnen anpassen, ... soll Jesu Wort nicht zu einer zwar ehrfürchtig verehrten, aber doch veralteten, nicht mehr wirklich in die Zeit hinein redenden Antiquität werden. Es ist dann sogar unausweichlich, daß man im Hören auf dieses Wort und in der Verbundenheit mit dem lebendigen Christus in neue Lagen hinein auch neue Worte in seinem Namen auszusprechen wagt ... Gewiß ist es ebenso notwendig, diese neuen Worte an den alten zu messen und sich von diesen zeigen zu lassen, wo man etwa irgehen wollte; doch hebt dies die Notwendigkeit dieses Wagnisses nicht auf. Gerade in der Neuformulierung wird oft das alte Wort Jesu erst wirklich lebendig.⁵²

Willi Marxsen (1919–1993) regarded the approach of redaction criticism as the prime method after the Second World War, inspired by the research of Gerhard von Rad (1901–1971) on the Pentateuch.⁵³ In his point of view, it is wrong to assume that the composition of the Gospels does not add any principally new features to the synoptic tradition, whose tendency, with regard to the so-called *Sitz im Leben*, is not unity but diversity.⁵⁴ To be sure, the technique of combining distinct traditions in specific places in a narrative is simple, but we should not conclude from this that the process was unaffected by motives representative of the evangelist's own thought rather than the content of the traditions.⁵⁵ With regard to Gerhard von Rad's membership in the so-called "Confessing Church," I interpret Marxsen's remark as evidence of an understanding of theology as necessarily bearing in mind external consequences for the life and doctrine of the church; the evangelists were models of theologians who saw themselves individually responsible in this way.

It is noteworthy that the application of redaction criticism was the first step in the development of New Testament research, which was no longer only the

⁵¹ G. Bornkamm, "Die Sturmstillung im Matthäus-Evangelium," in *Überlieferung und Auslegung im Matthäus-Evangelium* (7th ed.; ed. G. Bornkamm, G. Barth, and H. J. Held; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1975), 48–53, 48.

⁵² E. Schweizer, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (7th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 5.

⁵³ W. Marxsen, *Der Evangelist Markus: Studien zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Evangeliums* (2nd ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959), 5.

⁵⁴ Marxsen, *Der Evangelist Markus*, 8.

⁵⁵ Marxsen, *Der Evangelist Markus*, 10–11.

domain of Protestant Theology. One of the pioneers of this method was Wolfgang Trilling (1925–1993) with his important study on Matthew.⁵⁶ This leads us to the next point.

5. The Sixties: Ecumenical Development

A new openness of Roman-Catholic theologians to engage in discussion with their Protestant colleagues led to two commentary series where both Roman-Catholic and Protestant exegetes were engaged, the “Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum NT” and the “Ökumenischer Taschenbuchkommentar.” The first publication for the EKK, entitled “Vorarbeiten, Heft 1,” underlines the importance of mutual exchange of ideas, with integration of the points of disagreement between the Confessions.⁵⁷ The editors in chief of ÖTK intend to overcome by this series the misuse of the Bible as confessional boundary marker and tool of self-affirmation.⁵⁸

The rediscovery of distinct traditions of exegesis in the EKK led to the integration of *Wirkungsgeschichte*, which, according to Ulrich Luz, was both an enrichment and challenge for historical-critical research. There is more than one possible meaning of a text – the rediscovery of *Wirkungsgeschichte* converged with new literary criticism with regard to the inevitable plurality of the meaning of any given text. The historical-critical scholar had to learn that historical-critical exegesis was not the beginning of exegesis at all; other modes of exegesis, which are authentic in their own right, preceded it. The work of historical-critical exegesis would be irrelevant if there were no other modes of reception of a biblical text, in preaching, praying, singing, suffering, and other activities.⁵⁹ There are some new commentary projects on this topic.⁶⁰ The confessional identity of the scholar is at this point in the history of interpretation and exegesis beginning to fade into the background.

⁵⁶ W. Trilling, *Das wahre Israel: Studien zur Theologie des Matthäus-Evangeliums* (3rd ed.; München: Kösel, 1964).

⁵⁷ E. Schweizer, U. Wilckens, R. Schnackenburg, and J. Blank, eds., “Vorwort der Herausgeber,” in *Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament: Vorarbeiten Heft 1* (Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1969), 5.

⁵⁸ E. Gräßer and K. Kertelge, eds., foreword to *Das Evangelium nach Markus, Kapitel 1–9,1* by W. Schmithals (Gütersloh: G. Mohn, 1979), 5.

⁵⁹ U. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus, 1. Teilband, Mt 1–7* (Zürich: Neukirchener Verlag, 1985), 78–82.

⁶⁰ E.g., Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (editor in chief: T. C. Oden; cf. M. Simonetti, *Matthew 1–13* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001]; idem, *Matthew 14–28* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002]; T. C. Oden, C. A. Hall, [eds.], *Mark* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005]); The Church’s Bible (series editor: R. L. Wilken; the volumes on Matthew and Mark are not yet published); Blackwell’s Bible (editor in chief: J. Sawyer; the volumes on Matthew and Mark are not yet published); Novum Testamentum Patristicum (editors in chief: T. Nicklas, A. Merkt and J. Verheyden; the volumes on Matthew and Mark are not yet published). But cf.: J. Metzendorf, *Matthäus 19–22* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013).

6. The Seventies and Eighties I: Exegesis Influenced by the Dialogue between Christians and Jews

After the Second World War, critical reflection on German history between 1933 and 1945 was, at first, concentrated on political failure based on a flawed concept of political theology, but later, after 1959, broadened to involve the foundational problem of the relationship between Christian Churches and Israel. Following an increasing awareness of Christian responsibility for the agonizing fate of many Jews throughout history, not only since 1933, the issue of anti-Judaism began to be discussed not only with regard to church history but also with regard to the New Testament itself. In addition, a new reading of New Testament texts within their positively assessed Jewish background took place. A combination of readings of the texts and personal encounters between Christians and Jews⁶¹ were worked together to produce this new openness. Theologians and exegetes of both Roman-Catholic and Protestant confessions identified the Jewish roots of Christianity in the New Testament texts. Due to German history, this interpretive trajectory was of special concern to German-speaking countries. The Gospel of Matthew was the first to be read against the horizon of Jewish-Christian dialogue (since the seventies), but about 20 years later the interpretation of the Gospel of Mark was also influenced by this challenge for biblical theology.

Part of the older phase of purely historical-critically oriented scholarship on the Gospel of Matthew, according to the thesis of Georg Strecker and Wolfgang Trilling, this Gospel was of Gentile-Christian origin.⁶² This thesis has no relevance any more, but not only for historical reasons. In the seventies, the Roman-Catholic exegete Hubert Frankemölle was one of the first Christian scholars to read the Gospel of Matthew in light of this problem; nowadays, however, this issue is discussed beyond any Christian confessional borders. There is a lively debate⁶³ on the relationship between the Gospel of Matthew and the so-called “parting of the ways.” According to Ulrich Luz, Matthew wrote his book after the official break between church and synagogue,⁶⁴ but this point of view is nowadays⁶⁵ challenged. Hans-Jürgen Becker, J. Andrew Overman, Anthony Saldarini, and others describe

⁶¹ Cf. e.g. K. Wengst, “Das jüdische Profil des Neuen Testaments entdecken,” in *Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft: Autobiographische Essays aus der Evangelischen Theologie* (ed. E.-M. Becker; Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 2003), 81–9, 84–5.

⁶² G. Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit: Untersuchung zur Theologie des Matthäus* (2nd ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 15–35; Trilling, *Das wahre Israel*, 215.

⁶³ Cf. W. Kraus, “Zur Ekklesiologie des Matthäusevangeliums,” in *The Gospel of Matthew at the Crossroads of Early Christianity* (ed. D. Senior; Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 195–239, 197–202.

⁶⁴ Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 70–2.

⁶⁵ But, cf. already G. Bornkamm, “Enderwartung und Kirche im Matthäusevangelium,” in *Überlieferung und Auslegung*, 13–47 (36): “Auf Schritt und Tritt bestätigt das Matth.-Ev., daß die von ihm repräsentierte Gemeinde sich vom Judentum noch nicht gelöst hat. Die Messianität Jesu und die Gültigkeit seiner Lehre werden ... noch durchgängig im Rahmen des Judentums vertreten und verteidigt ... Der Kampf gegen Israel ist noch ein Kampf intra muros.”

Matthew's community as a minority group within Judaism and the conflict between Matthew and the Pharisees as an inner-Jewish conflict.⁶⁶ According to Martin Vahrenhorst, we have to interpret the Gospel of Matthew as embedded in the halachic discourse of post-70 C. E. Judaism.⁶⁷ Matthias Konradt emphasizes that the conflict between Matthew's community and Pharisaic groups is an actual and present conflict, not a conflict in the past.⁶⁸ Matthew 21:43 and 27:25 can no longer be interpreted as a basis for replacement theology; statements like "the church is the new / true Israel" are not used by the evangelist.

But also with regard to the Gospel of Mark the older thesis of the author's Jewish origin⁶⁹ has been broadened in the direction of hermeneutics.⁷⁰ The topic "Mark and the Jewish Law" yields ambiguous results: Whereas Heikki Sariola maintained that Mark's knowledge of the law was not very accurate,⁷¹ James Crossley concluded the opposite.⁷²

⁶⁶ H.-J. Becker, *Auf der Kathedra des Mose: Rabbinisch-theologisches Denken und antirabbinische Polemik in Matthäus 23,1–12* (Berlin: Institut Kirche und Judentum 1990); J. Andrew Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 35–8; A. J. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); cf. also K. Wengst, "Das Tun der Tora als Kriterium der Zugehörigkeit zur Gemeinde im Matthäusevangelium," in *Evangelium Ecclesiasticum: Matthäus und die Gestalt der Kirche*, FS C. Kähler (ed. C. Böttrich et al.; Frankfurt: Hansischer Druck, 2009), 427–43, emphasizing the importance of Matt 5:17–20 (427–34); Matt 23:2, 3a (the oral Torah of Scribes and Pharisees is seen as obligatory; 440). See also A. Runesson, "Re-Thinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations: Matthean Community History as Pharisaic Intragroup Conflict," *JBL* 127:1 (2008) 95–132.

⁶⁷ M. Vahrenhorst, *Ihr sollt überhaupt nicht schwören: Matthäus im halachischen Diskurs* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 2002).

⁶⁸ M. Konradt, *Israel, Kirche und die Völker im Matthäusevangelium* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 379–80. U. Luz, "Spaltung in Israel: Ein Gespräch mit Matthias Konradt," in *Evangelium Ecclesiasticum*, 285–301, modifies his former thesis of Israel's definitive rejection (295), but insists on his main thesis that the rejection of the Jesus-movement by the majority of Israel caused a traumatic experience for Matthew's community (301).

⁶⁹ R. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium. Teil 1: Einleitung und Kommentar zu Kap. 1,1–8,26* (Freiburg: Herder, 1976), 11; J. Gnllka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (2nd ed.; Zürich: Benziger, 1986), 33, Anm. 47; R. P. Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity: Tradition History and Legal History in Mark 7* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 220; U. Mell, *Die anderen Winzer: Eine exegetische Studie zur Vollmacht Jesu Christi nach Markus 11, 27–12,34* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 386.

⁷⁰ P. Dschulnigg, *Das Markusevangelium* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2007), 54; P. Pokorný and U. Heckel, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament: Seine Literatur und Theologie im Überblick* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 375; J. Majoros-Danowski, *Elia im Markusevangelium: Ein Buch im Kontext des Judentums* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2008), passim.

⁷¹ H. Sariola, *Markus und das Gesetz: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1990).

⁷² J. G. Crossley, *The Date of Mark's Gospel: Insight from the Law in Earliest Christianity* (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), dating Mark's Gospel between the mid to late thirties and the mid forties.

7. The Seventies and Eighties II: Modern Literary Criticism

The Seventies are characterized not only by the so-called “linguistic turn” but also by a geographic turn: German-speaking exegesis no longer dominated the field but had to concede its rank to English-speaking exegesis, especially in the USA. Furthermore, Roman-Catholic exegesis and exegesis undertaken by authors of distinct Protestant denominations, sometimes presented in joint publications, is now hard to be distinguished on the basis of the confessional identities of the authors;⁷³ irrevocably, international scientific discourse has replaced confessional commitments as the required framework for scholarly self-understanding.⁷⁴ Concerning the Gospel of Mark, this part of the history of recent interpretation is extensively documented in William R. Telford’s impressive *Writing on the Gospel of Mark*, including an exhaustive annotated bibliography.⁷⁵

There is not only a coincidence in time between the “linguistic turn” and the growing dissatisfaction with redaction criticism; these interpretive developments are also interdependent. The results of this diachronic method, especially with regard to the Gospel of Mark, have been too divergent to prove it to be a fruitful way to interpret the texts.⁷⁶ If anything, such an approach threatens the scientific character of New Testament exegesis.⁷⁷ Moreover, it is not possible to distinguish between Mark and pre-Markan tradition by means of phraseology.⁷⁸ On the other hand, readers of the Gospel of Matthew, likely not having the possibility of comparing his Gospel with that of Mark, had to understand it on its own. Moreover, form- and redaction criticism had been criticized for looking “through the text to what it

⁷³ To give just some examples: V.K. Robbins (*Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984]) and R. M. Fowler (*Let the Reader Understand: Reader-Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991]), are members of the Catholic Biblical Association, whereas M. A. Powell (*What is Narrative Criticism?* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990]) is Lutheran. The well-known *Mark as Story* (2nd ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1999) is written by three authors of three divergent denominations: David Rhoads is Lutheran, Donald M. Michie is teaching at a Methodist College, Joanna Dewey is Professor Emerita at Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass.

⁷⁴ Cf. R. Pesch, review of L. Schenke, *Der gekreuzigte Christus*, *ThRev* 22 (1976): 101 f., 102, quoted by M. Theobald, “Der Primat der Synchronie vor der Diachronie als Grundaxiom der Literarkritik: Methodische Erwägungen an Hand von Mk 2,13–17 / Mt 9,9–13,” *BZ* 22 (1978): 161–86, 161.

⁷⁵ W.R. Telford, *Writing on the Gospel of Mark* (Dorset: Deo Publishing 2009). This is the first volume of the new series “Guides to Advanced Biblical Research,” published by Deo Publishing (Dorset, UK); the volume on Matthew is not yet published.

⁷⁶ E. Güttgemanns, *Offene Fragen zur Formgeschichte des Evangeliums: Eine methodologische Skizze der Grundlagenproblematik der Form- und Redaktionsgeschichte* (München: Kaiser, 1970), 215.

⁷⁷ Cf. R. Pesch, review of L. Schenke, *Der gekreuzigte Christus*, *ThRev* 22 (1976): 101 f., 102.

⁷⁸ Cf. C. Breytenbach, “Das Markusevangelium als traditionsgebundene Erzählung? Anfragen an die Markusforschung der Achtziger Jahre,” in *The Synoptic Gospels: Source Criticism and the New Literary Criticism* (ed. C. Focant; Leuven: Peeters, 1993), 77–110, 87.

refers and points to,⁷⁹ and for concentrating on the evangelist's redactional activity instead of on the complete text as an "autosemantic unit which is in itself meaningful."⁸⁰ But there is no consensus whether the employment of linguistically oriented methods is to be seen as a continuation⁸¹ or a break with preceding scholarship.⁸²

New approaches to the Gospels use current theories relating to the interpretation of literary documents. Structural analysis is an umbrella term for distinct methods of analyzing texts;⁸³ these methods regard the text as an autonomous subject that produces its references by the interaction of distinct elements within the text.⁸⁴ Reader-response criticism stresses the fact that it is the readers who create an interpretation of a text by a combination and non-combination of elements within it, by inferring a distinct meaning of some text elements on the basis of previously read texts, and by inferring their own experience concerning issues dealt with in the text. Authors are unable to set guidelines for understanding texts in a final and fixed way; and the text only partially controls the reader's response.

Narrative criticism analyzes narrative units with regard to the story and the discourse. The analysis of the story describes the plot and the interaction of its figures; the analysis of the discourse describes the way in which the implicit author molds the reader's understanding; the author's omniscience, the distribution of sayings and actions to the distinct figures of the narrative, and comments on the figures reveal the author's point of view, which – in the author's intention – should also be the readers' point of view. "By narratively contrasting the appropriate groups and characters, the author constructs the story's meaning."⁸⁵ Mark 8:33b is the classic reference here, replicating its status in general in the history of research.

8. The Eighties and Nineties: Political Exegesis

For various reasons in the Eighties and Nineties political readings of the Gospels were influential. Due to the results of student protests in 1968, the predominance of hermeneutic theology, including its individualism, was broken; exegetically, the cosmic dimension of the Kingdom of God and his Justice⁸⁶ was rediscovered;

⁷⁹ D. O. Via, in N. R. Petersen, *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 5.

⁸⁰ W. S. Vorster, "Mark: Collector, Redactor, Author, Narrator?" *JTSA* 31 (1980): 46–61, 57.

⁸¹ Theobald, "Primat," 162.

⁸² Cf. D. Marguerat, "Strukturelle Textlektüren des Evangeliums," in *Methoden der Evangelien-Exegese* (ed. G. Schelbert et al.; Zürich: Benziger, 1985), 41–86, 41 f.

⁸³ For an overview cf. Marguerat, "Strukturelle Textlektüren," 54–81.

⁸⁴ Cf. Marguerat, "Strukturelle Textlektüren," 46.

⁸⁵ J. Blackwell, *The Passion as Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 91.

⁸⁶ Cf. E. Käsemann, "Gottesgerechtigkeit bei Paulus," in *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen Vol. II* (3rd ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 181–93, 187. Cf. also E. Käsemann, "Bergpredigt – eine Privatsache?" (1982), in *In der Nachfolge des gekreuzigten Nazareners: Aufsätze und Vorträge aus dem Nachlass* (ed. R. Landau and W. Kraus; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 117–29. Ernst Käsemann confesses that he is influenced by experiences in the so-called

a new acquaintance with sociological or socio-historical models⁸⁷ and Marxist thought inspired new ways of interpreting the Bible. This new emerged in different contexts: the postcolonial situation in Africa; the political pressure of the masses in Latin America as well as in Korea; the student protests in the USA and in Western Europe and the following debate on military defense; and in recent times the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.⁸⁸ Whereas the “Theology of Liberation” in Latin America was naturally a domain of Roman Catholic theologians, in other situations the confession of the authors does not have any relevance.

Within the so-called “Theology of Liberation,” the Gospel of Mark was to be read in a political rélecture. In 1980, Fernando Belo published his program for a materialistic reading of Mark’s Gospel; in 1988, Ched Myers combined Belo’s materialistic approach with narrative criticism. Concerning Korea, aspects of B.-M. Ahn’s theology of Minjung are the main points for Volker Kuester. According to him, the Gospel of Mark is a “herrschaftskritische Tendenzschrift”;⁸⁹ the so-called *Messiasgeheimnistheorie* is to be interpreted as protection against Jesus’ enemies; this theory was meant to conceal Jesus’ own self-understanding.⁹⁰ Experiences of colonialism and postcolonialism in Africa are the guiding influences for Hermann Waetjen.⁹¹

During the debate on the so-called NATO Double Track Decision, the Sermon on the Mount was particularly important within the Peace Movement; the obligatory nature of Matthew’s ethical radicalism was rediscovered. Most prominent were three studies by Protestant exegetes that intended to prevent too massive a usage of Matthew 5–7 for modern pacifism.⁹² But modern political interpretation of the Gospels in German-speaking countries is a concern for both Roman Catholic and Protestant exegetes.⁹³

Kirchenkampf (idem, *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen, Vol. I* [6th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970], 8).

⁸⁷ Influential was, e.g., J. C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990; 2nd ed. 2009), with his concept of distinguishing between public transcript and hidden transcript: Public transcript includes the statements of human beings when the emperor or king etc. is present; hidden transcript reveals the real thought of the oppressed human beings.

⁸⁸ Richard Horsley wrote his *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003) in order “to help Americans figure out why many people in the Middle East have a propensity to perceive the United States as a threat.” (B. Rocha, review of R. Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, <http://catholicbooksreview.org/2003/horsley.htm>).

⁸⁹ V. Küster, *Jesus und das Volk im Markusevangelium: Ein Beitrag zum interkulturellen Gespräch in der Exegese* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1996), 93.

⁹⁰ V. Küster, *Jesus und das Volk*, 79–84.

⁹¹ H. C. Waetjen, *A Reordering of Power: A Socio-Political Reading of Mark’s Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), xiii–xiv.

⁹² G. Strecker, *Die Bergpredigt: Ein exegetischer Kommentar* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984); H. D. Betz, *Studien zur Bergpredigt* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985); H. Weder, *“Die Rede der Reden”: Eine Auslegung der Bergpredigt heute* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1985).

⁹³ Roman Catholic exegetes are, e.g., Martin Ebner (Münster, Westphalia), Stefan Schreiber (Augsburg); Monika Fander (Singen); Protestant exegetes are Gerd Theißen (Heidelberg); Klaus Wengst (Bochum); Klaus Bünker (Wien); Eckart Reinmuth (Rostock); Christian Strecker (Neuendettelsau).

There are many elements within the Gospel of Mark that may provoke a political reading: the terms εὐαγγέλιον⁹⁴ and “Son of God”;⁹⁵ particular passages, such as Mark 5:9;⁹⁶ 6:17–29;⁹⁷ 10:42–5;⁹⁸ 12:17;⁹⁹ and 14:3–9;¹⁰⁰ and, in general, anthropology¹⁰¹ and Christology.¹⁰² In recent times the Gospel of Matthew has also been read as a politically subversive document, especially by North American Methodist scholar Warren Carter.¹⁰³

9. Conclusion

This book is foregrounding a comparative perspective, and the present contribution has taken into account scholars’ confessional background. This leads to a twofold suggestion for main points of further research. Exegetically, comparative

⁹⁴ G. Theißen, *Lokalkolorit und Zeitgeschichte in den Evangelien: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* (3rd ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 270–84; M. Ebner, “Evangelium contra Evangelium: Das Markusevangelium und der Aufstieg der Flavii,” *BN 16* (2003): 28–42; W. Carter, *The Roman Empire and the New Testament: An Essential Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 17; M. Ebner, “Das Markusevangelium und der Aufstieg der Flavii: Eine politische Lektüre des ältesten ‘Evangeliums,’” *BiKi* (2011): 64–9.

⁹⁵ Ebner, “Evangelium,” 34–5; E. Reinmuth, *Anthropologie im Neuen Testament* (Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 2006), 84–5.

⁹⁶ W. Carter, *Roman Empire*, 17. The pig was the heraldic animal of the Legio X Fretensis, which marked the troops conquering Jerusalem. “The scene shows Jesus’ power over Rome and the latter’s destruction ... declares God’s judgment on Rome’s imperial order” (17–8).

⁹⁷ C. Strecker, “Macht – Tod – Leben – Körper: Koordinaten einer Verortung der frühchristlichen Rituale Taufe und Abendmahl,” in *Erkennen und Erleben: Beiträge zur psychologischen Erforschung des frühen Christentums* (ed. G. Theißen and P. von Gemünden; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2007), 133–53.

⁹⁸ E. Reinmuth, *Anthropologie*, 83; S. Schreiber, “Caesar oder Gott,” *BZ* 48 (2004): 64–85, 82–3.

⁹⁹ K. Wengst, *Pax Romana: Anspruch und Wirklichkeit. Erfahrungen und Wahrnehmungen des Friedens bei Jesus und im Urchristentum* (München: Kaiser, 1986), 78–80; M. Bünker, “Gebt dem Kaiser, was des Kaisers ist! – Aber: Was ist des Kaisers? Überlegungen zur Perikope von der Kaisersteuer,” *Kairos* 29 (1987): 85–98, 95.

¹⁰⁰ M. Fander, “Das Evangelium nach Markus,” in *Kompendium Feministische Bibelauslegung* (ed. L. Schottroff and M.-T. Wacker; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1998), 499–512, 508.

¹⁰¹ C. Jochum-Bortfeld, *Die Verachteten stehen auf: Widersprüche und Gegenentwürfe des Markusevangeliums zu den Menschbildern seiner Zeit* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2008).

¹⁰² A. Winn, *The Purpose of Mark’s Gospel: An Early Christian Response to Roman Imperial Propaganda* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2008).

¹⁰³ W. Carter, *Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2001); idem, “Resisting and Imitating the Empire: Imperial Paradigms in two Matthean Parables,” *Int* 56 (2002): 260–72; idem, “Are there Imperial Texts in the Class? Intertextual Eagles and Matthean Eschatology as ‘lights out’ Time for Imperial Rome (Matthew 24:27–31),” *JBL* 122 (2003): 467–87; idem, “Matthew’s Gospel, Rome’s Empire, and the Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matt 13:31–32),” in *Hermeneutik der Gleichnisse Jesu: Methodische Neuansätze zum Verstehen urchristlicher Parabeltexte* (ed. R. Zimmermann; 2nd ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 181–201; idem, “Matthew Negotiates the Roman Empire,” in *In the Shadow of Empire: Reclaiming the Bible as a History of Faithful Resistance* (ed. R. A. Horsley; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 117–36; cf. also idem, *The Roman Empire and the New Testament: An Essential Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006).

studies can sharpen the distinct profiles of the evangelists. What is the social world in which the Gospels of Mark and Matthew (and Luke and John!) function best? What is the function of Jesus' words and deeds for the life of believers within their communities? How are we to describe the distinct anthropology of the Four Gospels?¹⁰⁴

Theologically, the results of this approach should be compared with the influence of biblical thought on Christian creed and life. Studies in reception history and hermeneutics should improve the connection with other disciplines of Theology, and help prevent the loss of relevance of exegesis for Theology and the Church(es). Such studies should include ancient as well as modern witnesses, and they should include cases of the misuse of biblical tradition. Investigation into the history of New Testament interpretation is, therefore, indispensable.

¹⁰⁴ Often in modern research the interests are concentrated on the anthropology of Jesus (cf. U. Schnelle, *Anthropologie: Jesus – Paulus – Johannes* [Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1991], 13–43) or on the anthropology of the synoptic tradition in general (cf. O. Wischmeyer, “Menschsein – Neues Testament,” in *Menschsein: Perspektiven des Alten und Neuen Testaments* [ed. C. Frevel and O. Wischmeyer; Würzburg: Echter, 2003], 61–117: 85–8). For the anthropology of Luke, cf. the seminal study by J.-W. Taeger, *Der Mensch und sein Heil: Studien zum Bild des Menschen und zur Sicht der Bekehrung bei Lukas* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1982); for Mark, cf. M. Meiser, “Anthropologie im Markusevangelium,” in *Christian Body, Christian Self: Concepts of Early Christian Personhood* (ed. C. K. Rothschild, T. V. Thompson, R. S. Kinney; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 125–48. E. Reinmuth, *Anthropologie im Neuen Testament* (Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 2006) offers distinct contributions for Matthew (47–71), Mark (71–103), Luke (103–25), and John (137–84).