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Régis Burnet

Exegesis and History of Reception

Reading the New Testament Today with the Readers of the Past

Mohr Siebeck

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Louvain-la-Neuve, 30th September 2020 Régis Burnet

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Abbreviations

AASS	*Acta Sanctorum Quotquot Toto Orbe Coluntur*. Antwerp, 1643–
AB	Anchor Bible
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
ACCS	Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
AJP	*American Journal of Philology*
AnBib	*Analecta Biblica*
AnBoll	*Analecta Bollandiana*
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
Bib	*Biblica*
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BZ	*Biblische Zeitschrift*
BZNW	Beihefte zur *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis
CCSG	Corpus Christianorum: Series Graeca
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina
CCT	Corpus Christianorum in Translation
CNT	Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
DACL	*Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*. Edited by Fernand Cabrol. 15 vols. Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1907–1953
EBib	Études bibliques
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
ETR	*Études théologiques et religieuses*
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
ICC	International Critical Commentary
JAOC	Judaïsme antique et origines du christianisme
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSup	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament* Supplement Series
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
LD	Lectio Divina
MdB	Le Monde de la Bible
NIBCNT	New International Biblical Commentary on the New Testament

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NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGNTC	New International Greek New Testament Commentary
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NTS	New Testament Studies
PG	Patrologia Graeca [= *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*: Series Graeca]. Edited by Jacques-Paul Migne. 162 vols. Paris, 1857–1886
PL	Patrologia Latina [= *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*: Series Latina]. Edited by Jacques-Paul Migne. 217 vols. Paris, 1844–1864
PO	*Patrologia Orientalis*
RB	*Revue Biblique*
RSR	*Recherches de science religieuse*
SBLHBS	Society of Biblical Literature History of Biblical Study
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SC	Sources chrétiennes. Paris: Cerf, 1943–
SP	Sacra Pagina
TAPA	Transactions of the American Philological Association
THKNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZPE	*Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*

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Introduction

Since the end of the 20th century, a common understanding seems to have been emerging about the roles and missions of exegesis. Grant Osborne's introductory book *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, written in 1991 and reprinted several times,[1] declared peace between biblical methods; he proposed an "integrated" approach starting with the historical context (chap. 1) and progressing to biblical theology (chap. 15), systematic theology (chap. 16) and homiletics (chap. 17 and 18). He advocated for a continuity between historical-critical methods (included in what he called "general hermeneutics") and historical methods ("genre analysis"), between what is usually called exegesis and what is usually called theology ("applied hermeneutics"). In the Catholic world, the Pontifical Biblical Commission's document *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*[2] recommended the same harmonious dialogue between Bible reading methods (except for its fundamentalist interpretation, vigorously rejected).

The 2000s, however, challenged this beautiful and ecumenical consensus. Not only did the relationship of exegesis to history tend to become more problematic, but its divorce from theology became more pronounced.

A Problematic Relationship to Theology

Since the 19th century, exegesis has maintained complex and sometimes conflicting relationships with dogmatic discourse as well as with fundamental theology. Benoît Bourgine claims that both disciplines have conflicting interactions, despite all the assertions to the contrary and notwithstanding all irenic statements. "Whoever has any contact with exegetes and theologians knows that, in reality, their worlds are moving further apart every day, and their approaches have ever less in common. There is no reason to worry, they say, because exegesis explains the Bible with greater ease when it keeps

[1] Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010).

[2] Available online: http://catholic-resources.org

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its distance from theology, and theology continues its work successfully by leaving the Bible to the exegetes."[3]

The reason for this divorce is twofold. The upsurge of fragmentary studies, the "division of labour" between the Old and New Testaments, the "specialisation" of the exegetical task has led the theologian to favour the relationships with philosophy.[4] On the exegetes' side, the constitution of their discipline led them to be wary of dialogue. Their historical-critical method was partly built in opposition to the theological tradition. Not to mention their attitude if they engage in a postmodern approach: to them, theology is the very name of oppression, since as a language it is still controlled by institutions seeking to ensure their supremacy, as well as the domination of a very select class of white and predominantly European men. Their rejection is widely explained by the founding act of these theories, inspired by Michel Foucault's thought on social control through ideology. The mere fact that theological methods have been exercising absolute sovereignty over biblical studies for so many years is enough to make them symbols of domination.

Should they engage in a more literary approach, the exegetes abstain from any external interpretation. The famous "principle of immanence" has postulated since Hjemslev that meaning can only reside within the language itself, and therefore that the sense of the text must be found within itself. If a theological discourse is to exist, then it is up to the reader of the exegete to come up with it. Making a clear diagnosis of the situation, James Barr stated:

> Literary scholars, far from supporting the theological use of the Bible, were interested in taking the Bible over as a basically literary body of material. It could be and should be read and understood "as literature," and the doing of this, it often appeared, was something quite independent of what synagogues, churches or theologians might think or desire.[5]

A Problematic Relationship to History

If the relationship between exegesis and theology is problematic, the former's relationship to history is not much better.

In a stunning resurgence, historical positivism, that seemingly disappeared in the mid-twentieth century, made a spectacular comeback from the late

[3] Benoît Bourgine, *Bible oblige, essai sur la théologie biblique*, LD 308 (Paris: Cerf, 2019), 9.

[4] Bourgine, *Bible oblige*, 15.

[5] James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (London: SCM Press, 1999), 238.

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1990s onwards. The distant origin of this revival may be the work of Ernst Käsemann. Contesting Bultmann's position,[6] this German scholar held the following opinion: since the Christian community wanted to express its faith in the form of a narrative about Jesus' preaching and action in the world, the narrative elements provided necessarily have some historicity.[7]

In Käsemann's mind, this was a far cry from historical positivism. Rather than exploring the differences between the "Jesus of History" and the "Christ of Faith," he suggested looking for their continuity. However, as Pierre Gisel acknowledges,[8] "shifts" were possible, and the temptation to come back to a certain form of positivism was strong. Käsemann's position facilitated the return of an aspiration for historical "irrefutability." The exegetical world tended to atomise, beginning a "Third quest of the historical Jesus" difficult to define with precision.[9] The various aspects of this quest are so ramified that they completely escape characterisation. Nowadays, the scenery, gradually populated by *postmodern* approaches, would be even more complex. In such a confusing nexus, the surreptitious revitalisation of the idea inherited from the 19th century – that one can, on the model of physics, reach definitive knowledge – was possible.

Some of the clearest evidence of this rebirth is the return of the usage of "criteria of historicity." Their most famous advocate is John Paul Meier's celebrated book *A Marginal Jew.*[10] There is no doubt J. Meier himself is very cautious, stating that "the use of the valid criteria is more an art than a science, requiring sensitivity to the individual case rather than mechanical implementation. It can never be said too many times that such an art usually yields only varying degrees of probability, not absolute certitude."[11] However, many scholars see this work as a kind of starting point for new reflections

[6] For instance in Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963).

[7] Ernst Käsemann, "Das Problem des historischen Jesus," in *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), 187–214. Ernst Käsemann, "Sackgassen im Streit um den historischen Jesus," in *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), 31–82.

[8] Pierre Gisel, *Vérité et histoire,* Théologie historique 41 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1977), 120–22. Pierre Gisel, "La question du Jésus historique chez Ernst Käsemann revisitée à partir de la 'troisième quête'," *ETR* 79 (2004): 451–63.

[9] Daniel Marguerat, "La 'Troisième Quête' du Jésus de l'histoire," in *Le Cas Jésus Christ: Exégètes, historiens et théologiens en confrontation,* ed. Pierre Gibert and Christoph Theobald (Paris: Bayard, 2002), 105–40.

[10] John Paul Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, ABRL (New York/New Haven: Doubleday/Yale University Press, 1991–2016).

[11] John Paul Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, ABRL (vol. 1; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 184.

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on Jesus:[12] its historical methodology being so "perfect," how could its conclusions not reach an irrefutable historical truth?

This claim of "objectivity" may be a surprise. Admittedly, the consequences that some would like to draw from it to prove the "historicity" of the results of this method are appalling. With Joseph Moingt,[13] we must recall the words of Jocelyn Benoist: the reality of history is only the "contingent, this weak being who is a power that is not to be," a "being always ready to erase itself" that forces us to think of history as "irreducible to any universality, irremediably bound to the singular, and thus distant from any scientific truth."[14] What is the application of criteria, if not a desire to have a "strong discourse" on reality? What is this claim, if not a surprising return of the idea of objectivity in history, perhaps slightly watered down, yet widely asserted, notably by John Barton?

> Biblical Criticism strives to be "objective" in the sense that it tries to attend to what the text actually says and not to read alien meanings into it. But it does not claim a degree of objectivity higher than is possible in humanistic study generally. Biblical critics have often been less objective than they have claimed to be, but this does not mean that all biblical criticism is hopelessly compromised. Equally, it does not mean that objectivity should not be an ideal at all.[15]

We should never tire of questioning this ideal of objectivity that the whole historical tradition of the 20th century – from Lucien Febvre to Stephen Greenblatt – tried to dismantle. Moreover, while J. Barton ingenuously proclaims this confidence in objectivity, which perhaps sounds somewhat like the certainty of holding the truth, postmodern approaches – feminist, postcolonial, queer, etc. – declare with no less candour that they have completely ceased to believe in it. In a provocative article, George Aichele, Peter Miscall, and Richard Walsh explained that historical-critical methods may seek to produce assertive and consensual theories about the author's intention of the text, the original audience or references to actual historical events, no one cares, since postmodernism vigorously rejects the idea that an assured and consensual theory can exist.[16]

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[12] See the critical remarks expressed by Dale Allison: Dale C. Allison, "It Don't Come Easy: A History of Desillusionment," in *Jesus, Criteria, and the Demise of Authenticity,* ed. Chris Keith and Anthony Le Donne (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 186–98.

[13] Joseph Moingt, "Note à l'issue du colloque de RSR," *RSR* 99 (2011): 31–35.

[14] Jocelyn Benoist, "L'écriture de la contingence. Sur le sens et l'objet du discours historique," *RSR* 84 (1996): 253–66 (here: 253–55).

[15] John Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 6.

[16] George Aichele, Peter Miscall, and Richard Walsh, "An Elephant in the Room: Historical-Critical and Postmodern Interpretations of the Bible," *JBL* 128 (2009): 383–404.

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Among those who believe fairly too much in the results of history and those who declare in advance that they will not believe in them in the name of "anti-essentialism,"[17] what nuanced position can one adopt?

Reading with the Readers of the Past to Overcome the Gap

The consequence of this double malaise is the isolation, even the confinement, of the exegesis surrounded by a gap. On the one hand, by cutting itself off from theology, exegesis deprives itself of the "natural" partner who stimulated it. Theologians' interventions may have seemed annoying to exegetes, or even downright fatal to freedom, especially in the Catholic world, but they nevertheless allowed the latter to refine their ideas and to question the knowledge they were building. In epistemology, the ability to interact with its limits validates the scientificity of a theory. A theory's ability to enter dialogue with what contests it is the proof of its solidity. On the other hand, by refusing to take history into account or by making history the place of absolute certainty, the exegete condemns himself to a kind of solitary dialogue with the text (if he rejects any relationship to history) or to construct an immobile image of the text because he considers it "true" (if he considers that history can produce certainty). Simply put, exegesis is condemned in the short term to become a self-referential and therefore hyperspecialised discipline, accessible to those who will accept to "enter exegesis" as one enters the monastery, i. e., in a closed world, governed by its own rules and customs, whose relations with the outside world are limited and codified.

The approach I am proposing consists of renewing the dialogue with tradition, i. e., with the readings of the past – from the Fathers of the Church to the 21st-century exegetes – with a definition of the term "reading" broad enough to include literary and poetic works, plastic works, music, and even popular culture.

My goal is twofold. First, reading the interpreters allows to find another person with whom one can enter into dialogue within the discipline itself. The distance between the previous interpreters and us is always greater than we think, as if their voices came from a foreign country. Second, considering the former readings opens up a world shared with the theologian, a common reference base, and thus the only way to foster dialogue.

A presentation of the debate generated by the article: William John Lyons, "Hope for a Troubled Discipline? Contributions to New Testament Studies from Reception History," *JSNT* 33 (2010): 207–20.

[17] Aichele, Miscall, and Walsh, "An Elephant," 384.

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To advocate for this option of reading in tradition, this book is composed of two parts. In the first theoretical part, I will begin by examining why there has been a break in tradition and why this suggestion of "reading in tradition" seems so iconoclastic nowadays. Then I will show that this claim to *tabula rasa* is utterly illusory and that we must revive Hans-Georg Gadamer's proposal for hermeneutics rooted in history. The second part is more practical, insofar as it progresses with examples. I will start with a chapter directly inspired by Gadamer on the issue of preconceptions. The following two chapters will illustrate the complementarity of reading in tradition with historical reading, on the one hand, and with literary analysis on the other. Finally, I will show through three examples that reading in tradition is a way towards a theology genuinely reflective of readers.

This book is therefore not a textbook that would propose a new method which would be called "history of reception" or *Wirkungsgeschichte*. It makes use of a series of diverse and already tried and tested methods or methodologies and does not seek to forge new concepts. More modestly, it demonstrates that exegesis should take note of this impassable fact: the historicity of all understanding.

One last clarification. The subtitle of this book is *Reading the Bible Today with the Readers of the Past* and not *Reading the Bible*, because my field of competence is the New Testament. It seems to me that many elements might also concern the Old Testament, but I do not venture to elaborate on this theme.

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Chapter 1

Exegesis: A Field Going From Rupture to Rupture

The fact that exegesis is at odds with tradition should be no surprise, the discipline owing its very existence to this rupture. Biblical criticism stemmed from a refusal of the reading tradition in order to offer a "new" interpretation. This conviction caused three successive separations, during which three interpretative theories were built against what preceded them.

I. The Critical Turn: The Figure of the Objective Reader

The first break in the interpretation of the Bible was the "critical turn" that gave rise to the so-called historical-critical method. Often traced back to the 19th century, its emergence is the result of a series of several ruptures with tradition.

1. A Rupture Made of Ruptures

Invented by historians for historians, the historical-critical method naturally brought about historians to create its history.[1] Georges Tavard[2] recalled that the consensus established since the patristic period, according to which predecessors' opinions were stated before being synthesised and eventually endorsed, was challenged before the Reformation. As early as the 13th century, Henry of Ghent (1217–93), the *doctor solennis*, dared ask the question: "should we believe more in the authority [of Scripture] than in the one of the Church, or the other way round?"[3] His answer is surprising: "although

[1] Henning Graf Reventlow, *Epochen der Bibelauslegung* (vol. 1–4; München: C. H. Beck, 1990–2001). English transl.: Henning Graf Reventlow, *History of Biblical Interpretation*, Resources for Biblical Study 50, 61, 62, 63 (Leiden: Brill, 2010–2011).

[2] George H. Tavard, *Holy Writ or Holy Church: The Crisis of the Protestant Reformation* (London: Burns & Oates, 1959).

[3] Utrus magis credendum est auctoritate huius scientiæ quam ecclesiæ, aut e converso? Henricus a Gandano, *Summæ quæstionum ordinarium*, art. 10, q. 1, f. 73r in Henricus a Gandano, *Summæ quæstionum ordinariarum*, Republication of the edition from 1520 (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1953).

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both of them are in perfect accord, we must nevertheless identify which of the two we should prefer to believe in matters of faith, should it happen that the community held to be the Church disagree on any aspect with the Scripture."[4] He explained that, naturally, the Church and the Scripture always agree, but the weaknesses of the human spirit may create "a community held to be the Church", disconnected from Scripture. In this case, "it is simpler and more appropriate to believe the Scripture rather than the Church, for the truth is preserved more steadfastly and immutably in Scripture and no one is allowed to remove or change anything from it."[5] Considering that these arguments would be used by the Reformers to reject the ecclesial institution they repute guilty of conflict with the Gospel, Henry of Ghent launches a sort of premonitory reflection.

Hypothesized in the 13th century, the possibility of revoking the legacy of the Church in case of doubt became effective two centuries later. As Anne-Marie Pelletier pointed out,[6] the organic link between Scripture, Tradition and the Institution entails that when one is challenged, the others are contested. Thus, protesters slipped imperceptibly from denunciation of "indulgences" to this alleged abuse of power: confiscating a text and appropriating its meaning. Under the early slogan *sola scriptura* lies a brand-new understanding of the act of reading, now perceived as an individual face-to-face of a subject with the text, which implies three presuppositions. (1) the uselessness (even harmfulness) of institutional regulations, and thus the rejection of tradition. (2) the affirmation of the transparency of the text based on the confidence that everyone can access it personally. (3) the construction of a new figure of the reader, henceforth alone and no longer collective, universal and no more an elite legitimised by the institution (the Church and, its extension, the University).

The 16th century was far from the objective 19th-century reader: many nuances exist from Luther to Sebastian Franck, Calvin, Melanchthon, and Zwingli.[7] Two centuries of various definitions and formulations made it pos-

[4] Videndum est ergo cui eorum magis in eis quæ sunt fidei credendum sit, quamvis omnino concordent, ut si forte communitatem quæ reputabitur fore ecclesia et sacram scripturam discordare in aliquo aliquando contingeret, scire poterimus cui eorum securius adhærendum sit. Henricus a Gandano, *ibid*., f. 73r.

[5] Secundo autem modo dicendum quod simpliciter et absolute magis credendum est sacræ scripturæ quam ecclesiæ, quia veritas ipsa in scriptura immobiliter et impermutabiliter semper custoditur, nec permittitur cuiquam addere subtrahere vel mutare, Henricus a Gandano, *ibid*., f. 73r.

[6] Anne-Marie Pelletier, *Lectures du Cantique des cantiques: De l'énigme du sens aux figures du lecteur*, AnBib 121 (Roma: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1989), 82.

[7] Henning Graf Reventlow, *History of Biblical Interpretation III*, Resources for Biblical Study 62 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 65–98.

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sible to specify a hermeneutic method. The milestones were diverse, starting with Matthias Flaccius Illyricus,[8] then Richard Simon and Baruch Spinoza,[9] continuing with the pietists and the German *Aufklärung* (Reimarus, Lessing, Herder)[10] until the foundation in Germany of "biblical studies" (de Wette, Strauss).[11]

2. Thinking against Tradition

Barthold Georg Niebuhr (1776–1831), Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886), and Johann Gustav Droysen (1808–1884) distinguished themselves in this school of biblical studies. Their conceptions are summarised in the famous words from the young Ranke, repeated *ad nauseam*: "to history was given the task of judging the past, of instructing the present for the benefit of future times. The present endeavour does not strive for such high tasks: it only wants to say what really happened."[12]

Repeating the quotation in its entirety, and not only the phrase "*wie es eigentlich gewesen*", allows for a little more nuance. Ranke is indeed issuing a warning. He is trying to confine history to a humble task (*bloß*). History should not be a lesson to be learned. However, this modesty pairs up with a certain presumption: Ranke is contending that history can strive for objectivity in order to tell what really (*eigentlich*) happened.

The conceptions of the historist school are clear. Since its purpose is to elevate history to the rank of "rigorous" science, it rejects subjectivity: the historian must establish the facts as they happened, without any value judgement. He needs to banish generalisations and intend to grasp the past events in their singularity, separately from other periods and giving priority to the search for their immediate causes. In this way, he must apply Schleiermacher's words, according to whom no artwork can be understood without its context of production: "an artwork is therefore truly rooted in its soil and its terrain, in its environment. It already loses its meaning when it is torn from this environment and put into circulation: it is like something that

[8] Graf Reventlow, *History of Biblical Interpretation IV*, 3–12.
[9] Graf Reventlow, *History IV*, 83–109.
[10] Graf Reventlow, *History IV*, 155–201.
[11] Graf Reventlow, *History IV*, 231–334.
[12] Man hat der Historie das Amt, die Vergangenheit zu richten, die Mitwelt zum Nutzen zukünftiger Jahre zu belehren beygemessen: so hoher Ämter unterwindet sich gegenwärtiger Versuch nicht: er will bloß sagen, wie es eigentlich gewesen. Leopold von Ranke, *Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1535* (Leipzig: Reimer, 1894), v–vi.

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has been saved from fire and now bears the mark of its burns."[13] Rejecting any teleological philosophy of history *à la* Hegel,[14] historicism is nothing more than the extension of the positivist method to history. It is one of the various facets of what Karl Popper labelled "scientism," i. e., the naive use of the methods of exact sciences in human sciences by people who only perceive limited practical application to them.[15] Conceived by German-speaking thinkers, this method succeeded in Germany, especially in Prussia.[16] Historism was initially a Prussian positivism, as evidenced by the most representative work of the movement, Theodor Mommsen's *Römische Geschichte*. It later extended its influence to Great Britain, Italy, and Poland, thereby becoming a "European phenomenon."[17]

In the world of texts, where do the facts come from? The application of the historicist method to biblical texts could not be done without a general theory of meaning. As Hans W. Frei has shown, this theory was based on identification between the meaning of the text and its reference. Referring back to the English philosopher Anthony Collins (1676–1729), Frei shows that this identification is part of the debate on typological meaning, present since the Church Fathers. When Isaiah announces the birth of the Messiah by a young woman (Is 7:14), does it mean the birth of an heir in the house of Ahaz or the birth of Christ? Collins replies that there can be no other meaning to this text and that it is to be found in the words and grammar: "to suppose passages cited, explained and argued from in any other method, seems very extraordinary and difficult to understand, and to reduce to rules."[18] This presupposes, says Frei, the rejection of the primacy of explanation over historical meaning, the conviction that grammatical and log-

[13] So also ist eigentlich ein Kunstwerk auch eingewurzelt in seinem Grund und Boden, in seine Umgebung. Es verliert schon seine Bedeutung, wenn es aus dieser Umgebung herausgerissen wird und in den Verkehr übergeht. Es ist wie etwas, das aus dem Feuer gerettet ist und nun Brandflecken trägt. Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, *Ästhetik* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1931), 86.

[14] Christophe Bouton, *Le Procès de l'histoire: Fondements et postérité de l'idéalisme historique de Hegel*, Bibliothèque d'histoire de la philosophie temps modernes (Paris: J. Vrin, 2004), 254.

[15] Robert Nadeau, "Contre le scientisme. Pour l'ouverture d'un nouveau front," *Philosophiques* 13 (1986): 353–68.

[16] Friedrich Jaeger and Jörn Rüsen, *Geschichte des Historismus: Eine Einführung* (München: C. H. Beck, 1992), 86–90.

[17] Jaeger and Rüsen, *Historismus*, 79.

[18] Anthony Collins, *A Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion* (London: [n. c.], 1737), 45. Cited in Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), 84.

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ical rules are invariable in time, and above all the identification between the theory of meaning and the theory of knowledge: "finally is the fact that ideas of sensation and the words expressing them, including statements about history, always represent states of affairs in the external world. That is to say, theory of meaning is equivalent to theory of knowledge, and to understand is identical with being able to distinguish between what is true and what is false."[19]

The arguments of the English deist were echoed in the debates between German supernaturalists, pietists, and conservatives and shaped the doctrine of the German *Aufklärung*. Despite all their differences, all the protagonists of the discussion reached the idea that the explanatory meaning could be identified with the reference. Henceforth, the meaning of the text resided in its reference, or as Frei says: "everything conspired to confine explicative hermeneutics to meaning as reference – to equate meaning with knowledge of potential or actual reality and to make the primary reference historic rather than ideal."[20]

In this framework, tradition is inevitably devalued and seen as prey in the "hunt of prejudice." The *Aufklärung* redesigned the concept: whereas in the Middle Ages the word described all the things of prestige in the eyes of men of the past, i. e., the things that have authority,[21] "prejudice" was reduced to a somewhat expeditious judgement. Past interpretations became prejudices, and thus prejudicial. Identifying the Bible as a historical document, critical theory revoked all tradition and basically made a *tabula rasa*.[22] Kant's famous phrase found in *What is the Enlightenment?* (1784) turned into a motto: have the courage to use your *own* understanding. The intention is explicit: understanding should become an individual initiative, not a collective process operated through tradition.

This critical theory generated, therefore, the figure of the *objective reader*, who eliminates his prejudice (in the conventional sense) and reads the biblical text in a new and pure way. His main characteristic is to be an interchangeable reader whose goal is to produce a universal reading, so reliable by means of a method, that any other reader would reach the same conclusions simply by following the same procedure.

Unfortunately, if the 19th-century scholars intended to break with the prejudice inherited from the past, they did not break with prejudice itself. It

[19] Frei, *Eclipse*, 85.
[20] Frei, *Eclipse*, 103.
[21] Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Continuum Impacts (transl. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall; London: Continuum, 2004), 273.
[22] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 274–75.

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is a law in human history that those who reject tradition tend to establish themselves as tradition. The historical-critical approach was no exception. It slowly branched into schools that challenged each other and crowned their own monarchs. In a paradox that finally affected all 19th-century-born sciences – biblical studies were no exception to the rule – the repudiation of the traditional *auctoritas* left an empty space that institutions hastened to fill. As Gérard Leclerc shows in his two luminous books,[23] new regulatory structures arose to separate the wheat from the chaff, i.e., good and bad interpretations: journals and university publishers. New organisations – different from traditional ones, of course, but perhaps even more powerful – differentiated between authors; these were the scientific societies and universities. The old principle of authority attached to a name struck back. Honoured by fellows, celebrated by journals and book series, some names became priceless. The signature that usually fulfils a simple referential function ("who produced the text?") became a "normative reference." Once again, this movement did not only affect biblical studies. It is particularly noticeable in the natural sciences, reinforced by a practice introduced since the late 1990s that the citation indexes that multiply by two the authority effect of the citation, since to the prestige of the name is bound a duly measured quantity of reference celebrating it.[24]

II. The Linguistic Turn: The Figure of the Reader Witnessing Himself Reading

History repeated itself. Biblical criticism, henceforth established as a tradition, was in turn challenged by exegetes who, like their forefathers, refused to submit to institutional regulations. Anchored in the linguistic turn inherited from Wittgenstein, who described the world through the functioning of language, these modernists put forward two principles.

The first one is the *mort de l'auteur*, the death of the author, coined by Roland Barthes who proclaimed loudly that the author remains forever evanescent, hidden by a text that serves more as a screen than as a telltale.[25]

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[23] Gérard Leclerc, *Histoire de l'autorité: L'assignation des énoncés culturels et la généalogie de la croyance*, Sociologie d'aujourd'hui (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1996). Gérard Leclerc, *Le Sceau de l'œuvre*, Poétique (Paris: Seuil, 1998).

[24] David Pontille, "La signature scientifique. Authentification et valeur marchande," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 141–142 (2002): 72–78.

[25] Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *The Rustle of Language* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), 49–55.

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The second is the famous semiotic "principle of immanence," which assumes that the meaning lies in the text itself.[26] As Roland Barthes himself wrote: "just as linguistics stops at the sentence, the analysis of narrative stops at the analysis of discourse: from that point on, it is necessary to resort to another semiotics."[27]

By quoting Barthes and Greimas, I acknowledge my standpoint of a "continental" researcher, for whom the linguistic turn was achieved through semiotics. In the United States one would rather cite the New Critics of the 1940s. The program of Wimsatt and Beardley is indeed congruent. Their manifesto article, "The Intentional Fallacy" contains an identical declaration of the author's death: "the poem is not the critic's own and not the author's (it is detached from the author at birth and goes about the world beyond his power [...] to control it)".[28]

Like the historical turn, the linguistic turn offers a hypothesis about meaning. In it, there can be no distinction between meaning and referent. On the contrary, the meaning of a text is neither found in historical events nor in philosophical theories; it is situated in the heart of the text, in the narrative. Frei, once again, expresses it well: "The story's meaning is not illustrated but constituted through narrative."[29]

Whether it was semiotics, or the approach centred on the text of the New Critics, the same thing occurred. The conviction that literary compositions could not be understood without their historical and cultural environment eventually won. Since the *diktat* of the author's death was still too strong, the context finally burst into the field through the reader. This was done with the implacability, but also the discretion, of a coup. While New Criticism and Semiotics had broken with the "old criticism," the Reader's response theories emerged more gradually. Yet they were characterised by the same radicalism: a challenge to the privileged status of the text and an exaltation of the reader's role, and a profound significance of the reading experience. While the New Critics had altogether rejected the reader's response, deemed subjective and

[26] Algirdas-Julien Greimas and Joseph Courtès, *Sémiotique: Dictionnaire raisonné de la théorie du langage*, Linguistique (Paris: Hachette Université, 1992), 181–82.

[27] Roland Barthes, "An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative," *New Literary History* 6 (1975): 237–72 (here: 265).

[28] William K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," *The Sewanee Review* 54 (1946): 468–88. Republished in William K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1954), 5.

[29] Frei, *Eclipse*, 280.

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desperately relativistic, the Reader-response theories asserted that it was the only condition for the possibility of reading.[30]

Such is precisely the program that was implemented. James Resseguie summarized three decades of literary criticism:

> New Critics insisted that the proper concern for literary analysis was the text itself and not the external circumstances that gave rise to the text; similarly, the influence of the text upon readers was considered a distraction from the work itself. If a literary work is viewed as having three main components, Author → Text → Reader, New Critics stressed the text over the role of the author and the reader. This is the dismissal of any historical endeavour. No external information on biblical authors, no attempt to reconstruct the context, only the study of the condensation of writing effects perceptible by the reader.[31]

Neither external information on biblical authors, nor any attempt to reconstruct the context, Resseguie argues. A new figure of readers enters the stage: a reader watching himself reading. The goal is to highlight, and then systematise in a "scientific" method, the way a reader perceives the meaning of texts: what are the minimal elements he puts together to reach an understanding of a narrative (the purpose of semiotics)? To which plot does he react and how (the aim of narrative analysis)? By which argumentative strategy is he convinced by the text (the purpose of rhetoric analysis)? The linguistic turn eventually produces a meta-discourse that depicts how a reader reads texts.

Like historical-critical analysis, this process has been fruitful, as evidenced by several syntheses having enough hindsight (some forty years since the first studies) to provide a picture of the method's results. One can mention the *Handbook of Biblical Narrative*,[32] which demonstrates the variety of perspectives that have emerged: new themes (relationship to death, memory, identity, etc.), gender issues (relationship to femininity and masculinity, parenting, animality, sexuality), questions on the relationship between narrative and history, questions on the various environments (ecological, political, social), and methodological questions on the reader and on the act of reading.

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[30] Eryl W. Davies, *Biblical Criticism: A Guide for the Perplexed*, Guides for the Perplexed (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 13–15.

[31] James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 22.

[32] Danna Nolan Fewell, *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Narrative*, Oxford Handbooks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

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III. The Postmodern Turn: The Figure of the Subjective Reader

Through a process like the challenge of historical-critical analysis by literary analysis, the latter – which has become a new orthodoxy – is challenged by its heterodox members. They, too, refuse tradition and try to design a new theory. They reject both the historical-critical tradition and its contestation. To them, all previous methodologies serve the same purpose: speaking of an objective reader or an ideal reader; in short, of a universal reader. For them, however, an imperialist desire of control is hidden behind this claim to universality – often the domination of men over women, of Europeans over the rest of the world, of heterosexuality over other forms of sexuality. In her presidential address to the 1988 Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) congress, one of the founders of postmodern studies, Elisabeth Schlüsser Fiorenza, defined the new agenda of Bible commentary:

> Not detached value-neutrality but an explicit articulation of one's rhetorical strategies, interested prospects, ethical criteria, theoretical frameworks, religious presuppositions, and socio-political locations for critical public discussion are appropriate in such a rhetorical paradigm of biblical scholarship.[33]

The message is clear: only the interpreter's subjective position has value. Assumptions must be explicit, with no taboos; what is at stake is no longer ethics and theory, but religion, political opinions, and so on. Another foundation stone of postmodernism, George Aichele's *The Postmodern Bible*, details the fields:[34] reader-response, poststructuralism and deconstruction, rhetoric, psychoanalysis, feminism, criticism of ideologies (postcolonialism, liberation theory, etc.). Dating back to 1995, this nomenclature might be fairly outdated. Three ironic articles by Stephen Moore and Yvonne Sherwood[35] claim that after the uncontrolled emergence of theories in postmodernity, we now live in a state of "post-theory" in which the definition of particularisms

[33] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: Decentering Biblical Scholarship," *JBL* 107 (1988): 3–17 (here: 15).

[34] George Aichele, *The Postmodern Bible* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995).

[35] Stephen D. Moore and Yvonne Sherwood, "Biblical Studies 'after' Theory: Onwards Towards the Past. Part One: After 'after Theory', and Other Apocalyptic Conceits," *BibInt* 18 (2010): 1–27. Stephen D. Moore and Yvonne Sherwood, "Biblical Studies 'after' Theory: Onwards Towards the Past. Part Two: The Secret Vices of the Biblical God," *BibInt* 18 (2010): 87–113. Stephen D. Moore and Yvonne Sherwood, "Biblical Studies 'after' Theory: Onwards Towards the Past. Part Three: Theory in the First and Second Waves," *BibInt* 18 (2010): 191–225.

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becomes less critical. According to Ananda Anderson's insights, all converge to find an alternative to a voracious identity policy designed to invade the entire intellectual and ethico-political space available.[36]

Narrative criticism, once part of postmodernism, is also fiercely criticised. With a mischievous grin, the same S. Moore and Y. Sherwood explain that literary analysis methods tend to dissolve into history.

> Since its arrival in biblical studies, reader-oriented theory had tended to assimilate automatically with the discipline's inbred obsession with the historical author and the historical reader, who, even when ceremoniously renamed the Implied Author and the Implied Reader, are still implicitly shackled to their putative historical contexts, causing reader-response criticism in biblical studies to become an exercise in historical criticism performed in a wig and dark sunglasses.[37]

Next follows the interpreter, who reveals sexual preferences and talks about faith, all considered preposterous in previous theories. For example, S. Tamar Kamionkowski begins an article by stating: "as a lesbian and a strongly identified Jewish biblicist, I find myself queer identified in that I embody or perform identities that would seem to be at odds with one another from the perspective of heteronormative culture."[38] Can we imagine for a second Rudolf Bultmann introducing his wife Helene and his three daughters as a preface of his commentary of John? Of this golden age for the reader, what is left to the text? Can we say that meaning exists outside the interpreter? Some statements, such as this by Fernando Segovia, raise doubts even about this:

> I would eschew any type of formulation that would imply or suggest, no matter how lightly or unintentionally, the presence of a pre-existing, independent, and stable meaning in the text, the mind of the author, or the world of the text – formulations along the lines of the meaning "back then," being true to the past, or achieving a fuller meaning of the text.[39]

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[36] Amanda Anderson, *The Way We Argue Now: A Study in the Cultures of Theory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 5.

[37] Moore and Sherwood, "Biblical Studies … Part Three," 203–04.

[38] S. Tamar Kamionkowski, "Queer Theory and Historical-Critical Exegesis: Queering Biblicists – A Response," in *Bible Trouble: Queer Reading at the Boundaries of Biblical Scholarship,* ed. Teresa J. Hornsby and Ken Stone, Semeia Studies 67 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 131–36 (here: 131).

[39] Fernando F. Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 91.

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IV. Illustration: History of the Interpretation of the Character of Judas

Can this history of interpretations explain actual changes in the reading of texts? To determine this, let us use a clear example, chosen because it has always been difficult for the interpreters: the case of Judas. What changes in perception induce the tradition breaks for the understanding of the Iscariot?[40]

1. Judas in the Tradition: The Guilty Apostle

The traditional interpretation of Judas is utterly negative. It comes from a progressive worsening in the deptiction of his figure carried out since the Gospels. If Mark does not give reasons for his behaviour, Matthew suggests that his real motive could have been money (Matt 26:14–16), an explanation John confirms, adding that the Iscariot was a thief and that he stole everything in the purse (John 12:6). Luke goes further: the apostle, although chosen by Jesus himself, is possessed by the Devil who eventually enters him (Luke 22:2). John, who always presents the bleakest interpretation, stages this demonic takeover: it is during the last meal that Satan enters him (John 1:27). This is not surprising since he had identified him with the devil twice before (John 6:70; 13:2). The death of Judas, on the other hand, introduces a specific difficulty of interpretation, not only because of its uncertainty – hanging in Matthew (Matt 27:3–10); bursting in Luke (Acts 1:15–26) – but also because it seems to be the fruit of the divine curse in Luke while Matthew discloses remorse.

If comments are rare before the 4th century and somewhat controverted among scholars – what is, for instance, the portent of Judas in the *Gospel of Judas* of the Codex Tchacos?[41] Did Origen support an interpretation that tried to explain the conduct of the Iscariot?[42] – the interpretation is codified in the 4th century. Augustine demonstrated the apostle's malignancy by three arguments: 1) Jesus' famous word, "what you are about to do, do quickly"

[40] Sources of this part: *Judas*, Supplément Cahiers Évangile 184 (Paris: Cerf, 2018). See also: Régis Burnet, *L'Évangile de la trahison: Une biographie de Judas* (Paris: Seuil, 2008).

[41] Einar Thomassen, "Is Judas Really the Hero of the Gospel of Judas?," in *The Gospel of Judas in Context,* ed. Madeleine Scopello, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 62 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 155–70. Jonathan Cahana, "Salvific Dissolution: The Mystery of the Betrayal between the New Testament and the Gospel of Judas," *NTS* 63 (2016): 111–24.

[42] Samuel Laeuchli, "Origen's Interpretation of Judas Iscariot," *Church History* 22 (1953): 253–68.

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(John 1:27), is no permission to betray him, but a prediction (*Treatises on John* 62:3–4); 2) even though his actions led to the Passion and therefore to the Resurrection, Judas remains guilty, because an act is not meted by its results but by its intentions (*Epistle to the Parthians* 7); 3) by taking his own life, Judas closed himself to penance and added a new crime to his first crime (*Civitate Dei* 1:17). John Chrysostom envisages the moral version of the deeds of Judas, thusly: 1) denouncing Jesus to the high priests is an immense ingratitude for the good Jesus has done to him (*First Homily on the Treason of Judas* 3); 2) Judas eventually may have tried to redeem himself, but remorse came too late because the damage was done (*First Homily on the Treason of Judas* 3); 3) Judas' sin is greed, the worst of all sins (*Homilies on John* 47:5; *Homilies on Matthew* 81:3–4). With the double condemnation of the greatest of the Greek Fathers and the greatest of the Latin ones, Judas' reputation was sealed for centuries.

As time progressed, more people added to Judas's sentence. On the one hand, a long tradition of anti-Judaism began, incorporating the Jews in the condemnation of Judas – as in, for instance, the terrifying exclamation of Leo the Great in his sermon of March 19, 441 (*Sermon* 52), *Mors igitur Christi nos liberat, vos accusat*, Christ's death sets us free and charges you. On the other hand, theologians sought to "soothe" the torments that the Iscariot was admittedly to undergo in Hell, a refinement Dante capitalised on. For nearly a thousand years, the same considerations and ideas were belaboured. For example, a thousand years after Augustine, Nicholas of Lyra repeated the same arguments:

> *He withdrew and hung himself.* From despair. In this, he sinned more than he did when he handed over Christ, as Jerome says. The reason is that in Christ's betrayal, Judas sinned directly against his humanity, but in his despair, he sinned directly against his divinity because it was against the infinity of divine mercy.[43]

This traditional construal of the Iscariot as a cursed or damned man relates to many images that eventually form a "type": the ugly and devious apostle who betrays his master. Until the Crusades, however, Judas was not distinguished from the other disciples in his depiction. Sometimes he could even be beautiful. How could the traitor be the traitor if everyone was able to identify him by his hideousness? Artists in the past seem to have been more skilled psychologists than modern film directors are, who usually choose the most bizarre faces to play the villain.

[43] Nicolaus de Lira, *Postilla* on Matt 27:5 in *Biblia sacra cum Glossa ordinaria et Postilla Nicolai Lyrani*, Antwerp, 1634, t. VI, col. 982.

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The turning point in Judas' depiction came in the 12th century. At the beginning of the 11th century, the introduction of Aristotelian *corpora* valorised the observation of nature, which was of crucial consequence in that the consideration of the human physique followed the theories of *Physiognomy*, a short book dealing with facial appearance and attributed to Aristotle. The observation of faces triggered the development of lifelike portraiture, or at least the personalisation of visages.

Thus, European 13th-century painting singled out the Jews, according to a specific physical "type" based on a slightly darker complexion, a thick and bushy nose, a solid neck, and with distinctive clothing, yellow and green, the colours of crime. The apostle, little by little, became uglier and uglier. The repulsiveness of Judas in art is an excellent way to assess anti-Judaism in the countries where the images were produced; the history of Judas is often the history of antisemitism.[44]

2. Judas in the Historical Turn: A Human Judas

The historical-critical turn dismissed all these previous supernatural considerations. For Judas, it represented a clear improvement. No mention of damnation or demonic irruption; Judas ceased to be the figure of incarnate evil and became simply a man. One of the great pioneers of the "lives of Jesus", dealing with the latter from a historical point of view, Heinrich Eberhardt Gottlob Paulus offers, for instance, two explanations of Judas' behaviour. The first one resumes the traditional, purely human ground, which is greed. During the anointing in Bethany, Judas "evaluates with competence how much there was to gain."[45] Paulus also expresses a new idea, borrowed from the poet Klopstock (in his *Messias*): the political miscalculation. Paulus makes the hypothesis that Judas delivers Jesus to the high priests so that he can become the Messiah:

> If Jesus were arrested after the feast, then the influx of foreigners could no longer protect him and the entire messianic plan, which must make me a joint ruler (*Mitregent*), is lost. Come on, come on! I have to get them grab him during the feast. Then the people will rise up, and since he wants no violence, he will be saved by the violence of the people and will have to become a guide for the people.[46]

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[44] Jeanne Raynaud-Teychenné and Régis Burnet, *Judas, le disciple tragique* (Toulouse: Privat, 2010), 74–88.

[45] Heinrich Eberhard Gottlob Paulus, *Das Leben Jesu, als Grundlage einer reinen Geschichte des Urchristentums* (vol. 2; Heidelberg: Winter, 1828), 89.

[46] Paulus, *Leben Jesu*, 89.

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All the followers take up these two explanations of greed and political miscalculation. Ernest Renan's depiction, full of psychology and social contempt, is a prime example:

> We would rather ascribe it to some feeling of jealousy or to some dissension among the disciples. The peculiar hatred John manifests towards Judas confirms this hypothesis. Less pure in heart than the others, Judas had, from the very nature of his office, become unconsciously narrow-minded. By a caprice very common to men engaged in active duties, he had come to regard the interests of the treasury as superior even to those of the intended work. The treasurer had overcome the Apostle.[47]

Jesus eventually succumbed to the mean cupidity of a shopkeeper, a sad end for the Son of God.

For centuries, Judas's conduct could not be entirely elucidated by human motives. The hand of the devil always remained attached to his act. However, with the historical-critical shift, not only does treason become explicable, but also understandable. Finally, from understandable to excusable, there is only one step. Voices soon rose to make Judas the perfect disciple of Jesus. Leonid Andreyev (1871–1919), who enjoyed a brief but spectacular literary glory during the First Russian Revolution (1905), was one of the first to propose this new vision by making Judas his most radical apostle.

> – Judas! betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?
>
> And He saw how the whole of that monstrous chaos shuddered and came into motion. Silent and stern, as death in its austere greatness, stood Judas Iscariot, while within he was all a groan, and roaring and howling with a thousand tumultuous and fiery voices.
>
> – Yes! with the kiss of love we betray Thee! with the kiss of love we betray Thee to insult, to torture, to death! With the voice of love we call out the executioners from their dark holes, we set up a cross, and high above the dark earth we lift up upon the cross Love crucified by love.[48]

In this stunning evocation of betrayal, Andreyev leaves the reader wondering. Is the multitude of voices an indication of demonic possession? Like the possessed of Gerasa (Mark 5:1–13), is Judas possessed by Legion? At the same time, how can we explain that love triggered the desperate act? Andreyev portrays a fanatic, who then reproaches the other apostles for their passivity: "You ought to have fallen on the road, to have seized the soldiers by the sword, by the hands, and drowned them in a sea of your own blood –

[47] Ernest Renan, *The Life of Jesus*, The Thinker's Library 53 (London: Watts, 1935), 194.
[48] Leonid Andreyev, *Judas Iscariot* (transl. W. H. Lowe; London: Francis Griffiths, 1910), 105–06.

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yes, die, die! Better had it been, that His Father should have cause to cry out with horror when you all enter there!"[49]

A few years later, this image of Jesus's "best disciple" became attractive in Níkos Kazantzákis's famous novel, *The Last Temptation* (Ὁ τελευταίος πειρασμός, 1954). The Greek novelist hypothesised that Jesus entered into agreement with Judas to have him betray to hasten the coming of Salvation:

> The end of the world is here. This world, this kingdom of the Devil, will be destroyed and the kingdom of heaven will come. I shall bring it. How? By dying. There is no other way. Do not quiver, Judas, my brother. In three days I shall rise again. […] We two must save the world. Help me."
>
> Judas bowed his head. After a moment he asked, "If you had to betray your master, would you do it?" Jesus reflected for a long time. Finally, he said, "No, I do not think I would be able to. That is why God pitied me and gave me the easier task: to be crucified."[50]

The idea became so widespread that even the declared enemies of Christianity have been taking it up. Philosopher Slavoj Žižek put it bluntly: "betrayal was part of the plan. Jesus ordered Judas to betray."[51]

3. The Narrative Figure: An "Extra" in the Story

If the historical figure of Judas was redeemed in the historical-critical turn, this redemption became meaningless during the linguistic turn. The literary character of Judas took part in "actantial" models and intrigues as a mere narrative function.

Michael W. Martin provided an excellent example of this trend. Noting, after many others, that the accounts of the Passion systematically put Judas and Peter in opposition,[52] he proposed to understand the staging of the apostle within the framework of a σύγκρισις. This comparison between characters was cherished in ancient rhetoric schools, which praised to the skies Plutarch's famous book, *Parallel Lives*. Among the προγυμνάσματα (pedagogical exercises) the σύγκρισις sketches the conduct of two characters to contrast them. This exercise, embedded in a didactic progression, came just after two exercises pupils used to perform: praise (ἐγκώμιον) and

[49] Andreyev, *Judas Iscariot*, 147.

[50] Nikos Kazantzakis, *The Last Temptation: A Novel*, Scribner Paperback (transl. Peter A. Bien; New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 421.

[51] Slavoj Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity*, Short Circuits (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2003), 17.

[52] With Catherine Bizot, we suggested to consider a triad: Peter, the Disciple and Judas, Régis Burnet and Catherine Bizot, "Pierre, apôtre entre Judas et le disciple bien-aimé," *ETR* 77 (2002): 105–11.

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invective (ψόγος). Widespread in the literature, σύγκρισις followed precise rules respected at the time of John's Gospel. In this text, the two characters are compared according to their learning, their individual actions (concealment vs. proclaimed enthusiasm, betrayal by language vs. active betrayal, questioning the master vs. silence …) and their death (considered by two oracles of Jesus announcing the loss of one, chap. 17, and the martyrdom of the other, chap. 21).[53] This investigation redefines Judas's role: he is now a moral example for the reader.

Martin goes further, in an approach that reconciles literary analysis and history. Following Robert Alan Culpepper and James Brownson,[54] he hypothesised that the different characters could be representatives of subgroups within the community. Drawing a comparison with the *Prima Iohannis*, he asserts that Judas could be the spokesman of a "separationist theology," in other words, a form of Docetism that did not deny Jesus could have a body, but pretending it was a mere envelope taken at baptism and left before the Passion. The author of the letter reprobated such theology.[55] These "separationists" were also "secessionists" since they wanted to leave John's community. Judas, betraying the body of Jesus, practising an ethic that does not put love first (as 1 John indicates) and receiving the devil at the same time as the Eucharist, would, therefore, be the literary incarnation of these secessionists.[56]

This proposal has something fascinating because if it follows the historical method, i. e., a discourse on the past reality, it unrealised the narrative. Ultimately, the very existence of Judas is irrelevant, because the apostle only stands for this mythical figure of rejection. The conclusion of the book is emblematic:

> What the elder has done in epistolary discourse, when he polemically relates the secessionists theologically and ethically to Cain (1 John 3:11–17), the evangelist does so in biographical narrative, associating them with Judas.[57]

As Cain himself, Judas become a mythical figure, a pure concept.

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[53] Michael W. Martin, *Judas and the Rhetoric of Comparison in the Fourth Gospel*, New Testament Monographs 25 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2010), 124–31.

[54] R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design*, Foundations and Facets: New Testament (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1983), 124–25. James V. Brownson, "Neutralizing the Intimate Enemy: The Portrayal of Judas in the Fourth Gospel," in *SBL Seminar Papers,* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1992), 49–60.

[55] Martin, *Judas*, 133–39.

[56] Martin, *Judas*, 139–49.

[57] Martin, *Judas*, 139–40.

To be used for corrections only.

4. Judas in Postmodernity

Which figure of Judas stands for postmodernity? The answer is somewhat difficult, since, by construction, postmodernity refuses to agree on a single and unambiguous approach. Perhaps Christfried Böttrich's article in a *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* issue entitled *Das Böse* and devoted to the figures of evil provides the most "postmodern answer" to this interrogation.[58] Starting from the assumption that Judas is an enigma (*Rätsel*), he lists no less than twenty "possible figures" for the Iscariot: the outsider (*Außenseiter*) of the circle of disciples, the intimate apostate, the tragic figure, the failed strategist, the paragon of fallibility (*der exemplarisch Fehlbare*), the instrument of Satan, the depraved character (der *verdorbene Charakter*), the devious companion, God's enemy, the true Gnostic, the favourite disciple, the inflexible righteous, the God-cursed, the victim of fate, the betrayed traitor, the theatrical figure of hatred, the cunning villain (*der durchtriebene Erzschelm* – Böttrich here alludes to Abraham a Sancta Clara's *Judas der Erzschelm*), the easily recognised scoundrel, the dreadful man who killed himself, and finally the manipulated name. Given the multiplicity of points of view, no one can have a complete conception of the Iscariot, and the research must resolve itself to record fragmentary identities without synthesising them.

Equally fragmentary is the attempt to read the figure of Judas through Borges's short story "Three Versions of Judas" by Richard Walsh.[59] This narrative is told in the collection *Fictions*. Nils Runeberg, a Danish scientist invented by the Argentine author, wrote three successive books to describe Judas: the first one sees him as the human counterpart to divine redemption; the second one as the one who chooses abjection so that the glory of God shines out of him; the third one presents him as the incarnated God himself. On the basis of the fiction, Walsh recognises these three Judas in the gospels. He concludes by showing that Judas – or rather, as he says, *Judases* – fulfil an essential function in Christianity. In all myths, the good deity kills a monster symbolising evil. Here, this evil, this snake, is both external (he is not Jesus) and internal (he is his disciple). By focusing on Judas, the monster excluded by Christian discourse, Borges establishes the incompleteness of the Christian myth, compelled to produce an intimate evil.[60]

[58] Christfried Böttrich, "Die Rätsel der Judasgestalt," *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 26 (2011): 151–202.

[59] Richard G. Walsh, *Three Versions of Judas*, Bibleworld (London: Equinox, 2010).

[60] Walsh, *Three Versions of Judas*, 158.

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V. Summary and Question

The history of the interpretation of the character of Judas shows that exegesis is apparently a repeatedly rupturing discipline. Four periods in the history of text interpretation methods are usually distinguished. The first is theological and favours a collective reader, under the influence of a tradition of reading; it extends until the end of the 18th century, with multiple nuances and multiple challenges to the elaboration of a common interpretation. The second is historical, with the aim of creating a universal reader; it began at the end of the 18th century. The third, born in the 1970s, is narrative and promotes the figure of a reader watching himself reading. The fourth calls itself "postmodern" and values the figure of a purely individual reader; it has been growing in power since the late 1990s. Each of these methods produced a different understanding of the 12th Apostle. This variety proves that each method has its effectiveness and that each one creates a diverse and exciting vision of texts.

Each of the said methods claims to constitute a definitive break with what preceded. Four invariants (whatever the methods) convey this persuasion of novelty: they create their vocabulary, incompatible with the previous methods; they never miss an opportunity to sneer at the results of the previous scholars (at least when they are still influent); they pay particular attention to studying everything that caused problems for their predecessors and even often make their difficulties the core of their investigations, in the process of inversion in which the boundaries of the one become the centre of the other; they absolutely refuse to quote their predecessors.

Is this *tabula rasa* obsession a simple rhetorical or methodological device? A necessary step in the creation of a new identity for researchers? Or is it a reality? These changing methods apply to texts that do not change. Can we radically reshape our vision of texts by switching the methods? Are the texts like weathervanes indicating a new direction as the wind changes? The next chapter questions the actuality of these ruptures.

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Chapter 2

The *Tabula Rasa* Illusion

Going from rupture to rupture, exegetical science gives each scholar the impression that, they can say: "behold, I make all things new" (Rev 21:5). This impression was never stronger than in the 19th century, when it was accompanied by an intellectual and cultural context known as "Second Modernity," fostering this very sense of rupture. It drew an opposition between an obscurantist past, burdened with prejudice, and accused of being "prescientific" and "premodern," and a glorious present, free from the weight of the past. Once again, Kant's famous article, *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?* was a landmark for this new spirit. The erection of the Bible commentary as "biblical science" was based on an absolute rejection of previous knowledge.

Two examples are particularly characteristic.[1] Robert Henry Charles (1855–1931) penned one of the most significant commentaries on the Apocalypse of the early 20th century and is still often quoted by contemporary interpreters. In a series of lectures given at the University of London in 1912, he developed a history of the interpretation of the Apocalypse. After reviewing the old interpretations, he concludes:

> Such was the prevailing attitude towards the Apocalypse until the middle of the eighteenth century. However, the time was ripe for better things. The World-Historical and Church-Historical Methods [the two types of interpretations preceding the historical-critical method Charles has just distinguished] had run their course, and so far from reaching any impregnable or generally accepted results, had established their incompetence on this field by their hopeless arbitrariness and unprofitableness.[2]

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[1] Both are given in Moisés Mayordomo, "Was heisst und zu welchem Ende studiert man Wirkungsgeschichte? Hermeneutische Überlegungen mit einem Seitenblick auf Borges und die Seligpreisungen (Mt 5,3–12)," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 72 (2016): 42–67 (here: 45–46).

[2] Robert Henry Charles, "History of the Interpretation of the Apocalypse," in *Studies in the Apocalypse: Being Lectures Delivered before the University of London,* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1913), 1–49 (here: 43–44).

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Another example is provided by Jülicher (1857–1938) in his major book on Jesus's parables. In his chapter on the history of interpretations, after a presentation of Origen's interpretation, he concludes with this lapidary judgement: "the scientific failure of the previous conception of the parable is most evident in Origen."[3]

I. The Double Illusion of the *Tabula Rasa*

However, one may wonder about the reality of this rejection. Isn't this desire for *tabula rasa* from all prior knowledge a bit too straightforward to be sincere? Let us begin with minor examples showing that the belief of being the first to understand a text correctly is an illusion, in terms of the novelty of the present and the estrangement of the past.

1. Illusion about the Newness of Accepted Ideas

An illusion about the present, the myth of the *tabula rasa* attempts to have persuade readers that none of its opinions was produced by the tradition it rejects. Each interpretative turn may well be convinced of being an absolute beginning, it cannot get away from the facts.

A particularly clear example of this illusion is the "discovery" by the historical-critical method of "Judeo-Christianity" and more generally of Christians of Jewish origin. The question of the survival of a community of Jewish Christians initiated a large body of research since the end of the 19th century and the work of Hort and Hoennicke: they were reactivated in the late 1940s by Schoeps, Simon and Daniélou and since the 1990s by Boyarin and many other researchers.[4] All of them recognise a foundation to their inquiry about Christians of Jewish origin: an 1831 article by Friedrich Christian Baur (1792–

[3] Adolf Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu* (vol. 1; Freiburg im B.: Mohr, 1899), 224.

[4] Fenton John Anthony Hort, *Judaistic Christianity* (Cambridge, UK: Macmillan, 1894). Gustav Hoennicke, *Das Judenchristentum im ersten und zweiten Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Trowitzsch & Sohn, 1908). Marcel Simon, *Verus Israël: Étude sur les relations entre chrétiens et Juifs dans l'Empire romain, 135–425* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1948). Hans Joachim Schoeps, *Das Judenchristentum, Untersuchungen über Gruppenbildungen und Parteikämpfe in der frühen Christenheit* (Bern: A. Francke, 1964). Jean Daniélou, *Théologie du judéo-christianisme*, Histoire des doctrines chrétiennes avant Nicée 1 (Paris: Desclée, 1958). Simon Claude Mimouni, *Les Chrétiens d'origine juive dans l'Antiquité*, Présences du judaïsme poche 29 (Paris: Albin Michel, 2004). Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*, Divinations (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

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1860) about the "parties" in Corinth.[5] Hort, somewhat cautious, generally referred to the "Tübingen school,"[6] Hoennicke, better informed, mentioned the 1845 book, *Paulus Apostel Jesus Christi*,[7] but his followers, less inspired, went back to the 1831 article. A. J. F. Klijn does not hesitate to declare in 1974: "modern studies of Jewish Christianity began with F. C. Baur in 1831."[8]

However, it is not difficult to study the article and realise that the term "judaeo-christian" is found several times in the text, but that Baur explicitly quotes Johann Christian Schmidt's 1797 book.[9] He is not the author of it! Actually, the idea was *en vogue* at that time. A remarkable theological thesis defended in Latin in 1828 by David van Heyst before the Leiden University, not only uses the term, but also writes the history of the Judean Christian community until the 4th century, and reveals, as do modern interpreters, the link with the Nazoreans in Jerusalem, the Elkasaites, etc.[10] Van Heyst clarifies the notion much more extensively than Baur does in his entire work. Alas, David van Heyst is not very well known. A few posthumous homilies were published; their preface states that he died on August 20, 1837, as a minister in Gouda at the young age of 34.[11] Schmidt – whom van Heyst also referred to – did not innovate either: Semler in 1771 accurately described the various parties in Corinth and identified one of them as a Jewish-Christian party.[12]

The term can be traced back further; we leave the second modernity for the first one. As early as 1709, John Toland used the discovery of the Gospel of Barnabas attributed to Muslims as a pretext to demonstrate that those he called the Nazarenes (*Nazarens*) were the first Christians. He explains:

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[5] Ferdinand Christian Baur, "Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen Gemeinde," *Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie* 5 (1831): 61–206.

[6] Hort, *Judaistic Christianity*, 7.

[7] Hoennicke, *Judenchristentum*, 1.

[8] Albertus Frederik Johannes Klijn, "The Study of Jewish Christianity," *NTS* 20 (1974): 419–31 (here: 419).

[9] Johann Christian Schmidt, *Bibliothek für Kritik und Exegese des neuen Testaments und älteste Christengeschichte* (Hadamar: Neue Gelehrtenbuchhandlung, 1797). Cited by Baur, "Christuspartei," 76.

[10] David Van Heyst, *Dissertatio theologica inauguralis, de Judaeo-Christianismo ejusque vi et efficacitate, quam exseruit in rem Christianam, seculo primo* (Lugduni Batavorum [Leiden]: Vidua D. du Saar, 1828).

[11] David Van Heyst, *Nagelatene Leerredenen door D. van Heyst* (Leyden: Van der Hoek, 1837), ii.

[12] Johann Salomo Semler, *D. Joh. Salomo Semlers Abhandlung von freier Untersuchung des Canon* (vol. 4; Halle: C. H. Hemmerde, 1775), 8. Cited by David Lincicum, "F. C. Baur's Place in the Study of Jewish Christianity," in *The Rediscovery of Jewish Christianity: From Toland to Baur,* ed. F. Stanley Jones, SBLHBS 5 (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2012), 137–66 (here: 144).

To be used for corrections only.

I was naturally led by the Gospel of Barnabas to resume some former considerations I had about the Nazarens, as being the Primitive Christians so call had and the onely Christians for some time.[13]

Starting from this Gospel of Barnabas, he goes back to the Ebionites, criticises Paul's position and ends up expressing the idea he intended to put forward since the beginning. For him, the great mistake of the 4th-century Fathers (especially Jerome) was to seek the unification of the Church, "as if the Jews and Gentiles were not to have their Churches apart, and as if the former would not perform their own ceremonies in their own churches."[14] Toland intends to argue against the Church of England. He is a Unitarian and claims the right of everyone to practise one's religion as one sees fit. He is the heir to a tradition linked to the English Reformation which relied on the existence of these Christians of Jewish origin to make room for the new way of conceiving the faith.[15] Under the name of "Mahometan Christianity," he claims the recognition of a Unitarian doctrine.[16] On the one hand, through the history of the Mohammedan gospel, he contributes to a questioning of the scriptural canon, and of the history of Christian origins, which will find its continuation in the German exegesis of the following century. On the other hand, in the precise context of a polemic specific to England at the beginning of the 18th century, he reinforces the arguments of the partisans of tolerance.[17]

Hella Lemke pointed out the work of a German philologist, Jacob Rhenferd (1654–1712).[18] In his *Dissertation de fictis Judæorum et Judaizantium*

[13] John Toland, *Nazarenus: or, Jewish, Gentile, and Mahometan Christianity: Containing the History of the Antient Gospel of Barnabas* (London: J. Brotherton, J. Roberts, & A. Dodd, 1718), iii.

[14] Toland, *Nazarenus*, 59.

[15] Matti Myllykoski, "'Christian Jews' and 'Jewish Christians': The Jewish Origins of Christianity in English Literature from Elizabeth I to Toland's *Nazarenus*," in *The Rediscovery of Jewish Christianity: From Toland to Baur,* ed. F. Stanley Jones, SBLHBS 5 (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2012), 3–41. See also: F. Stanley Jones, "Jewish Christianity and the Judeo-Christian Tradition in Toland and Baur" in *Is there a Judeo-Christian Tradition? A European Perspective,* ed. Emmanuel Nathan and Anya Topolski, Perspectives in Jewish Texts and Contexts 4 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 17–30.

[16] Matt Jackson-McCabe, "The Invention of Jewish Christianity in John Toland's *Nazarenus*," in *The Rediscovery of Jewish Christianity: From Toland to Baur,* ed. F. Stanley Jones, SBLHBS 5 (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2012), 67–90.

[17] Pierre Lurbe, "Le christianisme au miroir de l'islam dans le *Nazarenus* de John Toland," *Dix-Huitième Siècle* 27 (1995): 335–47.

[18] Hella Lemke, *Judenchristentum zwischen Ausgrenzung und Integration: Zur Geschichte eines exegetischen Begriffes*, Hamburger theologische Studien 25 (Münster: Lit, 2001). Cited by Jörg Frey, "Die Fragmente judenchristlicher Evangelien," in *Antike christliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung,* ed. Christoph Markschies et al. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 560–91.

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Hæresibus, he writes the history of Christians of Jewish origin before Toland.[19] Beginning with the Ebionites, he traces them back to the Christians mentioned by Paul. He eventually refers to them as *ex Judæo Christianus* (Christian from Judaism) and then *Judaei-Christiani*.[20]

Admittedly, there is no such advanced elaboration of the concept of Judeo-Christianity before Rhenferd. However, the idea of coexistence between Christians of Jewish origin and Christians of pagan origin in the early days of Christianity did exist in the Middle Ages and can be found in Thomas Aquinas.

In his commentary to the Galatians, Thomas comments on Paul's version of the Jerusalem accord (Gal 2:9):

> A bond and union were made among us to the effect that just as the faithful obey Peter among the circumcision, i. e., in the Church of the Jewish believers, so all the Gentiles converted to Christ should obey Paul and Barnabas.[21]

Aquinas, preceding Schmidt's meditations on the Judeo-Christian party, states that an *Ecclesia Iudæorum*, the community of Jews to which he recognises the status of *ecclesia*, is governed by Peter.

A few paragraphs later, Thomas comments on Paul's statement in Gal 2:10 where the Apostle said that he had always remembered the poor of the Church in Jerusalem.

> Now the reason why the custom prevailed in the early Church for those in the Church of the circumcision to sell their goods and not those in the Church of the Gentiles was that the believing Jews were congregated in Jerusalem and in Judea, which was soon to be destroyed by the Romans, as later events proved. Hence the Lord willed that no possessions were to be kept in a place not destined to endure.[22]

Linking the apostle's statement to the episode of the sharing of the goods of Acts 4:34–35, Thomas gives his explanation. Here again, we find an "ecclesial" expression, this time more traditional: *ecclesia ex circumcisione*.

In his commentary on John, reflecting on the running to the tomb in chap. 20, we find the same vocabulary:

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[19] Jacob Rhenferd, "De fictis Judæorum et Judaizantium hæresibus," in *Jacobi Rhenferdii Opera philologica …*, (Trajecti ad Rhenum [Utrecht]: C. van de Water, 1722), 125–93 (here: 140).

[20] Rhenferd, "Fictis," 140.

[21] Thomas Aquinas, *Super Ad Galatas reportatio* II, lectio 2,74, transl. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, Aquinas Scripture 1 (transl. Fabian R. Larcher; Albany, NY: Magi Books, 1966).

[22] Thomas Aquinas, *Super Ad Galatas reportatio* II, lectio 2,75.

To be used for corrections only.

Now the Evangelist recounts the arrival of Peter. As for the literal meaning [*secundum litteram*], the fact that they ran together was a sign of their passionate devotion. John arrived first because he was a younger man than Peter. However, considering the mystical sense [*secundum mysterium*], Peter follows John because the Gentiles converted to Christ were not joined to another church different from the Church of the Jews, but were grafted on to the already existing olive tree and church. The Apostle praises them saying, "For you brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus which are in Judea" (1 Thess 2:14).[23]

Thomas uses the same vocabulary and displays the same concerns: Peter is the representative of the Church of the Jews, which is an exact parallel to the more modern expression, "Judeo-Christian." And the *Doctor communis* goes further than many medieval commentators by recalling Rom 9–11 and the comparison of the wild olive tree and the farmed one. We are obviously not in the same context as Baur's, nor with the same perspective, but the overall meaning given to Galatians is not really different, and despite differences in vocabulary, the idea of duality within communities (between "pagan-Christian" and "Judeo-Christian" churches) does already exist.

2. Illusion about the Antiquity of Rejected Ideas

Also an illusion about the past too, the myth of the *tabula rasa* takes for granted that none of the opinions of the past makes sense. It assumes that the interpreters of the past believed absurd things, in accordance with the image of dogmatic underdevelopment that has been constructed of them. On the contrary, modern interpreters describe their ideas as entirely new.

An excellent example of this illusion about past interpretations is provided by the identification of the Sun-clad Woman in Revelation chapter 12. Many commentators consider, on the one hand, that "everyone," had "always," thought that this figure was the Virgin Mary and, on the other hand, that the contemporary interpretation that portrays her as an image of the community is a deafening and breathtakingly modern one. The identification of this community is not consistent among modern interpreters. Is she the eschatological people, the Bride of the Lamb who will then be represented in the form of a city, the Celestial Jerusalem as Daniel Harrington proposes?[24] Is she an image of the persecuted people giving birth to the Messiah, inscribed

[23] Thomas Aquinas, *Super Euangelium Iohannis reportatio* xx, lectio 1,2481, transl. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*, Aquinas Scripture 6 (transl. Fabian R. Larcher; Albany, NY: Magi Books, 1998).

[24] Daniel J. Harrington, *Understanding the Apocalypse* (Washington: Corpus Book, 1969), 128.

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in the tradition of the prophets of Israel, as Adela Yarbro Collins and Georges Beasley-Murray claimed?[25] On the contrary, is the Woman a representation of faithful Israel, of the "Little Remain," whose ultimate avatar is the Christian community according to Akira Satake or Pierre Prigent?[26] Opinions may differ on the modern interpretation, but not on the ancient one: all think that the past commentators identified the Woman crowned with stars as Mary. Two representative scholars can be cited:

Akira Satake. – "Especially among Catholic researchers until recently, the interpretation was that the woman is Mary."[27]

David Aune. – "Throughout the history of Christian biblical interpretation, particularly in the patristic and medieval periods, the woman of Rev 12 has often, though not exclusively, been interpreted as Mary, the mother of Jesus."[28]

Nothing could be more wrong than the idea that the old interpretation was essentially Mariological, as Jörg Frey insightfully demonstrated.[29] The oldest partially preserved commentary of the text, by Hippolytus of Rome (c. 170–235), clearly indicates that the first-ever interpretation explored the ecclesial path. A quotation preserved in an Arabic commentary on the Apocalypse, *P. Parisinus arabus christianus* 67, is as clear as can be:

Hippolytus, the bishop of Rome, is of the opinion, in his explanation of his verses, that the woman means the Church, and the Sun, in which she is clothed, means Our Lord Jesus Christ, because he was named Sun of piety, and the moon under his feet means John the Baptist and the crown on his twelve star head means the Twelve Apostles.[30]

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[25] Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, Harvard Dissertations in Religion 9 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 107. G. R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, New Century Bible (London: HarperBible, 1978), 198.

[26] Akira Satake, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, KEK 16 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 282. Pierre Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John* (transl. Wendy Pradels; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 378.

[27] Satake, *Offenbarung*, 281.

[28] David Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, Word Biblical Commentary 52B (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 680.

[29] Jörg Frey, "Die Himmelskönigin, die Sonnenfrau und die Johannesapokalypse. Zum mythologischen Hintergrund und zur textpragmatischen Funktion eines wirkmächtigen Bildmotivs," *Wiener Jahrbuch für Theologie* 5 (2004): 95–112. See also: Michael Koch, *Drachenkampf und Sonnenfrau: zur Funktion des Mythischen in der Johannesapokalypse am Beispiel von Apk 12*, WUNT 2.184 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 160–210.

[30] *P. Parisinus arab. Christ.* 67, f .163^{v}, xv^{e} s., edited by Paul de Lagarde, *P. Lagardii Analecta syriaca* (Lipsiæ: Teubner, 1858), 25. Translation in Gottlieb Nathanael Bonwetsch and Hans Achelis, *Hippolytus Werke Erster Band Exegetische und homiletische Schriften*, Griechische Christliche Schriftsteller 1 (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1897), 232.

To be used for corrections only.

A century after Hippolytus, the bishop of Poetovio in Pannonia, Victorinus, who died a martyr during the persecution of Diocletian in 304, shares the same opinion:

> It is the ancient Church, those of the patriarchs, prophets and holy apostles, because she experienced the groans and torments of desire, until the promise that was made to her in the past, to see the Incarnation of Christ from this same people in the flesh, was fulfilled.[31]

The interpretation is literal and bears the traces of the millenarianism that Jerome de Stridon accused Victorin of professing:[32] after the time of the patriarchs and the time of the prophets comes the time of the apostles, which will end with the reign of Christ. Around the same period, Methodius of Olympus (died circa 312), although he practised a spiritualist and moralising interpretation, did not think differently[33] nor did the commentary of Andreas of Caesarea, based on Methodius, did not mention the idea that the woman could be the Virgin.[34] Tyconius Afer,[35] finally, followed in their tracks, pulling behind him his imitators, whose influence was considerable throughout the West, Bede the Venerable and Beatus of Liébana.[36]

This Marian interpretation was put forward by Epiphanius of Salamis during his controversy against Antidicomarians, but he clearly seems unable to take it on board.[37] Pierre Prigent suggests the forerunner could be Quodvultdeus, a bishop of Carthage and a disciple of Augustine, who died before 454.[38]

> In the Apocalypse of the apostle John, it is written that the dragon stands in full view of the woman who is about to give birth so that as soon as she has given birth, he can eat her child. May the dragon be the devil, none of you is ignorant of it. [Know

[31] Victorinus Poetovionensis, *Commentarii in Apocalypsin* xi, 5–xii, 6.

[32] Martine Dulaey, "Jérôme, Victorin de Poetovio et le millénarisme," in *Jérôme entre l'Occident et l'Orient, xvie centenaire du départ de saint Jérôme de Rome et de son installation à Bethléem: Actes du colloque de Chantilly (septembre 1986),* ed. Yves-Marie Duval, Collection des Études augustiniennes Série Antiquité 122 (Paris: Institut d'Études augustiniennes, 1988), 83–98.

[33] Methodius Olympius, *Symposium*, 8th discourse, iv–x, § 183–196, ed. V.-H. Debidour (SC 83, 1963), 213–225.

[34] Andreas Cæsariensis, *Commentarius in Apocalypsin* 23, PG 106, 320–321.

[35] Tyconius Afer, *Commentarius in Apocalypsin*, ed. Roger Gryson, *Commentaire de l'Apocalypse de Tyconius Afer*, CCT 10 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 153–56.

[36] Beda Venerabilis, *Explanatio Apocalypsis* ii, 19, ed. R. Gryson (CCSL 121A, 2001), 387; Beatus Liebanensis, *Tractatus de Apocalipsin* 6, ed. R. Gryson (CCSL 107.3, 2012), 657–661.

[37] Epiphanius Salamis, *Panarion* 78,11,4.

[38] Pierre Prigent, *Apocalypse 12: Histoire de l'exégèse*, Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1959), 23.

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that] this Virgin means Mary, who, integer, gave birth to our head, integer. And this is how she showed herself to be the figure of the Holy Church: in the same way that she remained a virgin as she gave birth, the Church, throughout the ages, gave birth to her members, without losing her virginity.[39]

Quodvultdeus adds a new slant: The Virgin becomes the figure of the virginity of the Church itself. The Woman is the image of the Virgin who is the image of the Church. The ecclesial interpretation remains valid but is somehow veiled by the Marian comparison. This new explanation is taken up by Œcumenius,[40] but did not really set a precedent for the following centuries.

Indeed, if Marian interpretation may have spread during the Middle Ages in theological discourse, it was not to the extent one might think.[41] Above all, biblical commentators kept their distance from the identification of the woman as Mary, as if Marian discourse and exegetical discourse worked on different interpretative regimes. The three great names who dominated the exegesis of the Middle Ages *did* mention it but confined it to a simple *figura*. Ambrose Autpert (c. 730–784), who relies heavily on Tyconius, considers it with only one sentence, and then develops Tyconius's theory: the Church gives birth to the body of Christ by undergoing constant hostility from the devil and his satellites, especially false prophets.[42] Haimo of Auxerre (died circa 840), adds to Ambrose with the idea that the 1260 days of verse 12:6 refer not only to the present epoch but also to the future reign of the Antichrist. Rupert of Deutz (1075–1129), finally, gives a long commentary to the text, but dedicates only a few sentences to Marian interpretation.[43] This

[39] In apocalypsi iohannis apostoli scriptum est hoc, quod staret draco in conspectu mulieris quæ paritura erat, ut cum peperisset, natum eius comederet. Draconem diabolum esse, nullus uestrum ignorat; mulierem illam uirginem mariam significasse, quæ caput nostrum integra integrum peperit. Quæ etiam ipsa figuram in se sanctæ ecclesiæ demonstrauit: ut quomodo filium pariens uirgo permansit, ita et hæc omni tempore membra eius pariat et uirginitatem non amittat. Quodvultdeus, *De Symbolo* III, 1, 18, ed. R. Braun (CCSL 60, 1976), 351.

[40] Œcumenius, *Œcumeni commentarius in Apocalypsin* 11–12, ed. M. de Groote (Traditio Exegetica Græca 8, 1998), 135–140.

[41] On the history of this interpretation: E. Ann Matter, "The Apocalypse in Early Medieval Exegesis," in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages,* ed. Richard Kenneth Emmerson and Bernard McGinn (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 38–50.

[42] Angelo Valastro Canale, "Il Commentario all' Apocalisse di Ambrogio Autperto: l'autore, le fonti, il metodo esegetico," *Cuadernos de Filología Clásica: Estudios Latinos* 11 (1996): 115–59. Sebastiano Bovo, "Le fonti del commento di Ambrogio Autperto sull'Apocalisse," in *Miscellanea biblica et orientalia.,* ed. Adalberti Metzinger (Romæ: Herder, 1951), 372–403.

[43] Rupertus Tuitiensis, *Commentaria in Apocalypsim* VII, PL 169, 1044–1046.

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relative lack of interest in the Marian reading is reflected by the *Glossa ordinaria*, produced by the school of Laon (12th century), perhaps by Anselm of Laon, and wrongly attributed to Walafrid Strabon (808–849).[44] The *Glossa* served as a reference for interpreting Scripture throughout the Middle Ages. The prestigious commentator Nicholas of Lyra (1270–1349), whose *postilles* are often attached to this same *Glossa*, does not take up this assimilation either: it would contradict his historical interpretation. For him, the text must be read as an announcement of the history of the Church.

After describing the assault on the Church led by heretics in particular, the attack on the same Church led by heretics in general is reported here, under which one can recognise the expedition of the pagans, Saracens, schismatic disciples of the Antichrist and other unfaithful heretics. It was, first of them, the assault by the heathens and the one made under the king of the Persians Chosroes and then under his successors. This first sign is twofold because it describes firstly the state of the Church and then the persecution of Chosroes, here "I saw another sign." Concerning the first, it should be noted that under the reign of Emperor Phocas, who began to rule in A. D. 605, the Persians, engaging in the fiercest wars behind King Chosroes, invaded many provinces, and Jerusalem itself. They destroyed churches, desecrated the holy place, removed the sacraments from the ornaments, carried the banner of the Lord's Cross: we find this in the accounts of the exaltation of the Holy Cross. Therefore, the afflicted Church will suffer until it begets the son of Christians who will free it from the affliction of Chosroes and his company.[45]

This text discloses the *zeitgeist* of that period. The Crusades prompted the former history of Palestine and its invasions. The Saracens, i. e., the Muslims, are perceived as a new incarnation of the Dragon, whose avatar was Khos-

[44] Lesley Smith, *The Glossa Ordinaria: The Making of a Medieval Bible Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2009). See also: Jean de Blic, "L'œuvre exégétique de Walafrid Strabon et la Glossa ordinaria," *RTAM* 16 (1949): 5–28. Robert Wielockx, "Autour de la Glossa ordinaria," *RTAM* 49 (1982): 222–28. Karlfried Froehlich, "Walafrid Strabo and the Glossa Ordinaria: the Making of a Myth," *Studia Patristica* 28 (1993): 192–6.

[45] Descripta impugnatione ecclesiæ ab hereticis dictis proprie, hic consequenter describitur eiusdem impugnatio ab hæreticis large dictis, per quem motum pagani, Saraceni, schismatici, discipuli Antichristi et infideles alii hæretici dici possunt, et secundum hoc partes principales huius libri in sequentibus apparebunt. Igitur primo agitur de impugnatione a paganis et primo sub Cosdroe Persarum rege, secundo sub eius successore. Prima adhuc in duas, quia primo discribitur ecclesiæ dispositio, secundo Cosdroe persecutio. Ibi *et visum est alium signum*. Circa primum sciendum quod Phoca imperante, qui cœpit imperare anno Domini 605, Persæ sub Cosdroe rege gravissima bella gerentes, multas Romanorum prouincias et ipsam Iero. invaserunt, et destruentes ecclesias sanctaque loca prophanantes, inter ornamenta sacramenta abstulerunt, uexillum dominici crucis exportauerunt ut habetur in legenda exaltationis sanctæ crucis. Igitur ecclesia sic afflicta cruciabatur donec pareret filium Christianum qui liberaret eam ab afflictione Cosdroe et suorum. Nicolaus Lyranus, *Postilla super Apocalypsim 12,2* in *Bibliorum sacrorum, cum glossa ordinaria* (vol. 6; Venetiis [Venezia]: apud Iuntas, 1601), 1571–72.

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row II, a Sassanid emperor who ruled from 590 to 628. During the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Phocas, in 614, he ransacked the holy city. He was defeated in 627 by Emperor Heraclius I, who recovered the relics as another Michael. Nicholas of Lyra, who was born in the year of the catastrophic last crusade of Saint Louis of France, expresses the hope that a final victorious operation will free the woman-Church from her sufferings and will find the True Cross, lost in the terrible defeat of the Horns of Hattin against Saladin in 1187.

More than Marian elucidations, questions about the history of the Church fascinated the Middle Ages. Therefore, the old commentaries did not focus on the Marian interpretation. More than the Woman, the Dragon enthralled them, and the assimilation with Mary would have hindered the speculations of these concordance seekers – even if they all recognized that Mary could be figuratively mentioned as *Mater Ecclesiæ*. In the following centuries, interest in the Dragon did not wane, as Henri de Lubac showed in his book about the spiritual posterity of Joachim de Flore.[46] It persisted and strengthened at the Reformation, undergoing many readings, to the point of identifying the dragon with the Pope and the Woman with the Lutheran Church.[47]

Where does this illusion of Marian omnipresence come from and why does contemporary exegesis fight against a windmill? The answer probably lies in iconography; it reminds us that the history of texts reading is broader than the history of critical or academic reading. Indeed, if the Marian interpretation is somewhat rare in the texts, the representation of the Virgin as *mulier amicta sole* been common since the 13th century, as Frey reminds us.[48] This iconographic type is found in such famous images as the Virgin of Guadalupe and the crowned Virgin of Lourdes, not to mention the "miraculous medal" of Rue du Bac. Indeed, through still detours[49] which remain obscure, the image of the Woman of the Apocalypse has been assimilated to the Immaculate Conception. Ironically, the origin could be a sermon by one of the most fervent opponents of the idea, Saint Bernard.[50] In

[46] Henri de Lubac, *La Postérité spirituelle de Joachim de Flore*, Le Sycomore 3 (Paris/Namur: Lethielleux/Culture et vérité, 1979).

[47] Prigent, *Apocalypse 12*, 68–71.

[48] Frey, "Himmelskönigin," 100–05.

[49] See Éléonore Fournié and Séverine Lepape, "Dévotions et représentations de l'Immaculée Conception dans les cours royales et princières du Nord de l'Europe (1380–1420)," *Atelier du Centre de recherches historiques* 10 (2012): 1–46.

[50] In 1139, he had written a famous letter to the Canons of Lyon who wished to celebrate the Immaculate Conception by outlining to them all the arguments for which this celebration was useless: text in Bernardus Clarævallensis, *Epistola clxxiv ad canonicos lugdunenses de Conceptione s. Mariæ*, in J. Leclercq *et al.* (ed.), *Epistolæ*

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a sermon on the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, the Abbot of Clairvaux had identified the Woman with Mary by assimilating the twelve stars around her head with the twelve privileges of Mary, which he divided into three groups: celestial privileges, bodily privileges and the privileges of the heart.[51] This idea was taken up by Cistercians such as Ælred of Rievaulx (1110–1167),[52] then by Franciscans such as Bonaventure[53] and Dominicans such as Albertus Magnus.[54] The Marian discourse thus launches the iconography of the *mulier amicta sole* whose images multiply with the debates on the Immaculate Conception. This iconography spread during the 15th century in books of hours (see for example the Hours of Jean de Boucicaut or the Hours of Anjou).[55] It became famous thanks to the *Speculum Humanæ Saluationis*, a religious book from the Late Middle Ages, thousands of copies of which were reproduced by xylography,[56] or by fiery sermons such as those of Lawrence of Brindisi.[57] Very famous paintings were then produced, which have since been imprinted in memories such as those of the Cavaliere d'Arpino (ca 1602, Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando), Rubens (main altarpiece of the high altar at Freising Cathedral, 1623–1624, Alte Pinakothek, Munich) or Tiepolo (1786, Prado, Madrid).[58] Their omnipresence in popular piety may have suggested a pre-eminent role for the Marian interpretation of the text of Revelation 12, even though very few people are able to link these representations to the biblical text.

(S. Bernardi Opera, 7), Romæ, Editiones Cistercienses, 1974, t. 1, 388–392, See PL 182, 333–336.

[51] Bernardus Claræ vallensis, *Sermo in Domnica infra octavam Assumptionis BVM*, in J. Leclercq *et al.* (ed.), *Sermones* (S. Bernardi Opera, 5), Romæ, Editiones Cistercienses, 1968,. 266–267, see also PL 183, 429–436.

[52] *Ælredus Rievallensis, Sermo 75 in natiuitate sanctæ Mariæ* (coll. Dunelmensis), ed. G. Raciti (CCCM 2B, 2001), 270.

[53] See *De Purificatione b. Mariæ Virginis* (sermon 41), le *De Annuntiatione b. Mariæ Virginis* (sermon 42), and mainly *De Assumptione b. Mariæ Virginis* (sermon 50) edited in Jacques-Guy Bougerol, *Bonaventure, sermons 'de diversis'*, Bibliothèque bonaventurienne, Textes (vol. 2; Paris: Éd. franciscaines, 1993).

[54] Albertus Magnus, *Commentarii in secundum librum Sententiarum*, distinctio 2H, art. 8, ed. A. Borgnet (*Opera omnia* 27, 1893), 58.

[55] Fournié and Lepape, "Dévotions et représentations."

[56] The text explicitly identifies the *Mulier amicta sole* with the Virgin: Jean Miélot, Jules Lutz, and Paul Perdrizet, *Speculum humanæ salvationis: Kritische Ausgabe* (Mühlhausen: Meininger, 1907), 75.

[57] See the edition of the Marian sermons of Lawrence of Brindisi who gave a long commentary on the image of the Apocalypse: Mariano d'Alatri, *Lorenzo da Brindisi: La Vergine nella Bibbia* (Roma: Libreria mariana, 1958).

[58] Jean Fournée, "Immaculata Conceptio," in *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie,* ed. Engelbert Kirschbaum (Darmstadt: WBG [Herder], 2015), 338–44 (here: 342).

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II. Tipping Points Are *Not* Where You Expect Them

The previous section could suggest that the tradition of interpretations is a strong conservatism in which nothing changes, but this would be erroneous. We have already observed in the "Judas case" how far the interpretation of the texts can diverge. The tradition of interpretation records as many ruptures as continuities. To consider tradition is in no way nostalgia for immutability. On the contrary, the immersion in interpretations of the past makes us aware of the historicity of any interpretation, and therefore of their necessarily transient nature. But, unfortunately, interpretative changes do not always coincide as well with methodological changes as already mentioned in the "Judas case". Tipping points are not where you expect them.

1. Conceptual Definition: What is a "Tipping Point?"

The tipping point refers to the moment when the overall meaning of a text shifts. To clarify this change, the famous image of the rabbit-duck remains helpful. This illusion, published on 23 October 1892 in the German magazine *Fliegende Blätter*,[59] was popularised by Joseph Jastrow as a case study for *Gestalttheorie*.[60] Commented on by Wittgenstein and Gombrich, it illustrates three different things:[61] (1) the possibility of seeing two different things in the same meaning set; (2) the *impossibility* of seeing both at the same time; (3) the importance of the precise moment when the switch from one to the other occurs. The notion of tipping point recalls what Thomas Kuhn said about scientific revolutions; they are relatively sudden and structured events, similar to the brutal change of perception of the duck-rabbit image.[62] According to Kuhn, they are "a displacement of the conceptual network through which scientists view the world."[63] The same can be said of texts. For example, the transition in the 19th century from a guilty Judas to an inconceivable traitor is a tipping point for the figure of the Iscariot.

[59] „Welche Thiere gleichen einander am meisten? Kaninchen und Ente" in *Fliegende Blätter*, 23 Oct. 1892, 147.

[60] Joseph Jastrow, "The Mind's Eye," *Popular Science Monthly* 54 (1899): 299–312.

[61] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958). Ernst Hans Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, Bollingen Series 35.5 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1960), 256. William G. Lycan, "Gombrich, Wittgenstein, and the Duck-Rabbit," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 30 (1971).

[62] Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 111.

[63] Kuhn, *Structure*, 102.

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The example of Judas enables us to understand that, unlike the scientific revolutions described by Kuhn, it is possible to "go back" to the first image seen. If in the history of natural sciences, paradigms do not follow one another but replace one another (Kuhn's famous thesis of the incommensurability of paradigms),[64] reading is a cumulative process.

What could explain the occurrence of such a change in interpretation? How might the occurrence of such a change in interpretation be explained? Here again, we must move away from the structure of scientific revolutions. In the case highlighted by Kuhn, the acknowledgement of an anomaly that scientific theory does not explain opens a crisis[65] – in textual interpretation, the acknowledgement of an internal element of the text that had so far been underestimated, is very rare. One can perhaps mention Chapter VIII of Spinoza's *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, where the latter "discovers" (Hobbes and Isaac de la Peyrère probably made the discovery with him)[66] that Moses cannot be the author of the Pentateuch since he could not have described his own death. Most of the time, only elements extrinsic to the text can explain the shift: global ideological context changes, cultural evolution.

Unlike scientific revolutions, it is also uncommon that a single cause triggers the shift. We must instead adopt a more dynamic image of the process and envision cumulative effects leading to rapid but *prepared* change. This is the reason why we can borrow the concept of the "tipping point" from Morton Grodzins.[67] This professor of political science had found that in popular American suburbs, most white families remained in a neighbourhood as long as the corresponding number of black families remained very low. However, at one point, when "one too many" black families arrived, the remaining white families moved *en masse* in a process known as "white flight." This threshold effect can aptly describe the history of text interpretations: forerunners support an opinion, then an increasing number of interpreters relay it before all commentators adopt the new analysis.

Thanks to this definition, we can understand that tipping points of textual interpretations do not always follow methodological turns, but instead follow expansive ideological movements; they do not necessarily have the temporality of the exegetes. To illustrate this, we can oppose two female figures, Mary Magdalene and Bathsheba. For once, let us venture into the

[64] Kuhn, *Structure*, 103.

[65] Kuhn, *Structure*, 52–76.

[66] Ghislain Waterlot, "Science de la Bible chez Spinoza," *Philosophique* 1 (1998): 99–123.

[67] Morton Grodzins, "Metropolitan Segregation," *Scientific American* 197 (1957): 33–41.

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Old Testament to explain how, on this question of female characters, the tipping points can be different, but always significant.

2. First Test Case: Mary Magdalene

Mary Magdalene, first of all, is a most interesting character because it is a hybrid one, created from scratch through the combination of several characters in the Gospels. The tipping points therefore try precisely to deconstruct this composite figure.[68]

2.1. The Traditional Figure

The traditional figure of Mary Magdalene is composed of three characters who were merged during the first six centuries of the Church's history, a combination in a way "officialised" by Gregory the Great.

1. Mary of Magdala. – The first character is Mary Magdalene. The texts disclose three key facts about her. First, she was a woman on a certain social level because she was part of a group of women who had been supporting the apostolic group with their property (Luke 8:1–3). Her name, Magdalene, comes from a large village on the shores of the Sea of Galilee known in Antiquity as Taricheia, "where the fish is dried."[69] Large fisheries were established there, covering the entire Mediterranean region. She was possessed by seven demons, from whom she was freed. This detail entails no moral judgement. In the Jewish conception, demons are intermediate beings hostile to man and "specialised" in the ability to inflict hardships.[70] The individuals possessed by them are not responsible for what the demons make them do, and their actions escape moral characterisation.[71] Consequently, Luke does not claim that Mary Magdalene's demons are vices: on the contrary, he describes her as a woman tortured by a destructive power that surpasses her. Finally, she was a disciple of an exemplary fidelity since she is one of the women who remained at the foot of the Cross while the disciples abandoned Jesus (John 7:25) and she is the first to the tomb on Easter morning. This

[68] Source of this paragraph: Régis Burnet, *Marie-Madeleine de la pécheresse repentie à l'épouse de Jésus: Histoire de la réception d'une figure biblique*, Figures bibliques 2 (Paris: Cerf, 2008).

[69] A recent synthesis on Magdala: Richard Bauckham, *Magdala of Galilee: A Jewish City in the Hellenistic and Roman period* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2018).

[70] Edward Langton, *Essentials of Demonology* (London: Epworth Press, 1949), lf.

[71] Richard Atwood, *Mary Magdalene in the New Testament Gospels and Early Tradition*, European University Studies Series XXIII – Theology 457 (Bern: P. Lang, 1993), 36.

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fidelity is rewarded in an apparition narrated by the Fourth Gospel (John 8:11–18).

2. Mary of Bethany. – The second woman who became part of the composite, probably because of the similarity of her name, was Mary of Bethany. She is also characterised by her assiduity in Jesus's teaching, which earned her rebukes from her sister and commendation from the Master (Luke 10:38–42). With Lazarus and this same sister, she belonged to the loving household of Bethany where Jesus often rested before going up to Jerusalem. In John's account, her brother Lazarus has risen, and she performs this spectacular act of "anointing at Bethany" deciphered by Jesus as an announcement of his imminent death (John 12:1–8).

3. The sinner. – Finally, Luke's anonymous sinner (Luke 7:36–50) enters the compound figure, probably by identification with her almost identical act of anointing at Simon's meal in Mark's and Matthew's Gospel.

The amalgam is much more vibrant than the historical figures. Mary of Magdala on her own is a high-ranking woman who follows Jesus until his agony on the cross. Her fidelity is rewarded. She is one of the first to hear the good news of the Resurrection, and according to John, she is gratified by an apparition of the risen Christ who converts the earthly affection she felt into a call to evangelism. However, the conflation of women "bolsters" the figure. Before she became the faithful disciple at the tomb, the composite figure could have lived a life of immorality, which made her a woman of bad reputation. Eventually, she experienced conversion. From then on, she became a close friend of Jesus's, who did not hesitate to perform an incredible miracle for her and her brother Lazarus: to recall from the dead a corpse that was already smelling. She knows her friend so well that she senses his impending end and anoints his body with precious perfume, as a final expression of affection and reverence.

The actual birth certificate of this multifarious character was signed by Pope Gregory the Great († 604) at the cost of an indisputable "*coup de force*."[72] Homilies 25 and 33 on the Gospel[73] gave identity and functions to Mary; she kept them for almost a millennium. The tone is set: "this woman whom Luke calls 'the sinner' and John 'Mary,' we believe that she is this Mary whom Mark attests that seven demons were taken from her."[74] The three women are one. And Gregory immediately identified the seven

[72] Pierre-Emmanuel Dauzat, *L'Invention de Marie-Madeleine* (Paris: Bayard, 2001), 76.

[73] *PL* 7, col. 1189–1196 and 1239–1246.

[74] Hanc vero quam Lucas peccatricem mulierem, Ioannes Mariam nominat, illam esse Mariam credimus, de qua Marcus septem dæmonia ejecta fuisse testatur. Gregorius Magnus, *Homiliæ in euangelia* 33,1 ed. R. Étaix (CCSL, 1999), 288. See also: Michael

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demons: "what is designated by the seven demons, if not all the vices?"[75] Mary Magdalene was born.

> We seek the beloved on our bed when in the brief rest of this present life, we sigh with desire after our redeemer. We look for him at night, because even if the soul is already awake for him, the eye is still smoky. But he who does not find his beloved, let him rise, let him go around the city, that is, let him explore with his mind and his intelligence the holy Church of the chosen ones. Let him search for it through the streets and squares, that is, he examines the wide and narrow streets so that if there is something good in them, he finds it. […] In the search, we will meet watchers who protect the city: the holy fathers preserve the state of the Church.[76]

The Church walks in search of her Lord; she must return to him. So Magdalene shows the way: "it is us, therefore, whom this woman represents, if with all our heart we return to the Lord after our sins if we imitate the sorrow of her penance."[77]

According to a technique that Jacques Le Goff had observed in his dialogues,[78] Gregory makes the saint a positive model, a *pre-examplum* and not just an illustration of a theory. Mary Magdalene *actualises* the power of penance; she does not *illustrate* it. Indeed, her power resides in her love, which purifies her like a burning fire. Gregory invents here a metaphor that will blossom in Magdalenian literature: the metaphor of the goldsmith who purifies gold with fire. The fiery flame of love purifies his soul as if in a crucible. "by such a fire in the mind, the rust of the fault is burned,"[79] he says. All Christians, in imitation of him, must throw themselves into the fire: "another one, ignited

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Fiedrowicz, *Gregor der Große: Homiliæ in Evangelia*, Fontes Christiani 28 (vol. 2; Freiburg im B.: Herder, 1997).

[75] Et quid septem dæmonia, nisi universa vitia designantur? Gregorius Magnus, *Homiliæ in euangelia* 33,1, ed. R. Étaix (CCSL, 1999), 288.

[76] Dilectum namque in lectulo quærimus, quando in præsentis vitæ aliquantula requie Redemptoris nostri desiderio suspiramus. Per noctem quærimus, quia etsi jam in illo mens vigilat, tamen adhuc oculus caligat. Sed qui dilectum suum non invenit, restat ut surgat, et civitatem circumeat, id est sanctam electorum Ecclesiam mente et inquisitione percurrat: per vicos eum et plateas quærat, id est per angusta et lata gradientes aspiciat, ut si qui in est valeat, invenit. […] Quærentes autem nos vigiles inveniunt, qui custodiunt civitatem quia sancti patres, qui Ecclesiæ statum custodiunt. Gregorius Magnus, *Homiliæ in euangelia* 25,1, ed. R. Étaix (CCSL, 1999), 206.

[77] Nos ergo, nos illa mulier expressit, si toto corde ad Dominum post peccata redeamus, si ejus pœnitentiæ luctus imitemur.

[78] Jacques Le Goff, "'Vita' et 'pre-exemplum' dans le deuxième livre des *Dialogues* de Grégoire le Grand," in *Hagiographie, cultures et sociétés: Colloque de Nanterre (1979),* ed. Centre de recherche sur l'Antiquité tardive et le haut Moyen-âge (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1981), 105–20.

[79] Talique igne in mente decoquitur rubigo culpæ. Gregorius Magnus, *Homiliæ in euangelia* 25,2, ed. R. Étaix (CCSL, 1999), 207.

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by the fire of carnal desire, has lost the purity of his flesh: let him contemplate Mary, who in her consumed the love of the flesh in the fire of divine love."[80]

This traditional figure had a long career in the Western Church. It merged with the character of Mary the Egyptian to serve as a monastic muse of repentance, and call to imitate her, to other "harlots of the desert":[81] a first text, the *uita eremetica*, glorifies her. She then moved to France. First in Vézelay where the energetic abbot Geoffroy (1037–1052) intended to make her the cornerstone of the upward rise of his monastery. So it worked out: a century later, at Easter 1146, Bernard of Clairvaux († 1153) launched the Second Crusade in Vézelay in the presence of the King of France, Louis VII († 1180), his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine and a crowd of crusaders.

The legend goes on with a *uita apostolica* that relates her preaching around Marseille. Accompanied by Martha and her brother Lazarus, she teaches the gospel and converts the region. This *uita apostolica* is linked to the emergence of a second sanctuary in the Sainte-Baume Mountains. Mary Magdalene became a model of conversion for laypersons, as well as a typically feminine heroine invoked to protect difficult maternity wards, childbirth, unwed mothers, etc. Hence two shrines in Saint-Maximin and the Sainte-Baume, dedicated to the poor and entrusted to the Dominicans. This cult was supported and encouraged by the house of Anjou, which at the time ruled the kingdom of Provence.

2.2. Three Tipping Points for Three Deconstructions

1. First tipping point: dismantling the composite figure. – This consensus persisted without any real questioning for a thousand years. The Magdalenian issue did not reappear until January 1516, on the occasion of a pilgrimage by the energetic Louise of Savoy (1476–1531), the mother of King Francis I of France, to the Sainte-Baume.[82] Faithful to her reputation of being curious, Louise wanted to know more about the saint: she turned to the king's chaplain, François du Moulin de Rochefort, who wrote a book published in 1517, *Vie de Saincte Magdeleine*. For his research, Du Moulin consulted Jacques

[80] Alius libidinis igne succensus, carnis munditiam perdidit; aspiciat Mariam, quæ in se amorem carnis igne divini amoris excoxit. Gregorius Magnus, *Homiliæ in euangelia* 25,10, ed. R. Étaix (CCSL, 1999), 216.

[81] Benedicta Ward, *Harlots of the Desert: A Study of Repentance in Early Monastic Sources*, Cistercian Studies 106 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1987).

[82] Marie-Madeleine Fontaine, "Marie-Madeleine, une sainte courtisane pour les dames de cour," in *Female Saints and Sinner: Saintes et mondaines, France 1450–1650,* ed. Jennifer Britnell and Ann Moss, Durham Modern Languages 21 (Durham, UK: University of Durham, 2002), 1–37.

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Lefèvre d'Étaples (1450–1537), the mathematician and philosopher who had devoted himself to biblical commentaries since 1508. The question the former asked the latter: is there one or more Mary?

Disappointed with Du Moulin's book, Lefèvre got to work and compiled a voluminous scholarly dossier, gathered in *De Maria Magdalena disceptatio* published by Henri Estienne in 1518.[83] He compiled patristic opinions and listed the Fathers of the Church who are in favour of the multiplicity Marys. He then lists those who are in favour of uniqueness. Showing that none of the arguments can definitively convince, he relies on the evangelical text: nothing, he says, justifies Gregory the Great's *coup de force*. He therefore finally decides on multiplicity.

Lefèvre d'Étaples's work is at least as interesting for the reactions it elicited as for its content. On the side of the Reformation, it was praised: the position of the Parisian humanist was entirely in line with the disdain for the saints. Zwingli († 1531) considered Mary Magdalene as a clear proof of the absurdity of Catholic doctrine,[84] while Calvin († 1564) frontally attacked the Gregorian position.[85] On the Catholic side, the opposition was fierce: as early as 1519, John Fisher († 1535), Bishop of Rochester, refuted the positions of the French theologian in *De Unica Magdalena libri tres*, followed by Noël Beda in S*cholastica Declaratio sententiæ et ritus Ecclesiæ de unica Magdalena* (1519). In 1521, Lefèvre was condemned by the Sorbonne, which ordered him to teach the thesis contrary to his own. The rot had set in: Bossuet declared himself in favour of triplicity in his booklet *Sur les trois Magdeleine* and criticisms against identification proliferated. They were taken up by the authors of the historical bent who, with few exceptions, carefully distinguished the three literary characters from the Gospels. The chronology of interpretation here is somewhat out of step with the chronology of methods. Humanist reflections anticipate the historical turning point.

2. Second shift: giving another meaning to the love for Jesus. – The second tipping point is also outside the chronology of exegetical methods succession. It occurred in the middle of the 19th century, and its effects lasted until the beginning of the 21st century.[86] Which kind of love unites Mary and

[83] Anselm Hufstader, "Lefèvre d'Étaples and the Magdalen," *Studies in the Renaissance* 9 (1962): 126–60.

[84] U. Zwingli, "De Vera et Falso Religione," *Opera D. Huldrychi Zwingli*, t. 11, f° 240. Cited by Étienne-Michel Faillon, *Monuments inédits sur l'apostolat de sainte Marie-Madeleine en Provence* (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1848), iv.

[85] J. Calvin, "Admonitio Reliquiis," *Tractatus theologici*, Genève, 1612, 236. Faillon, *Monuments*, v.

[86] Jean-Pierre Laurant, "De Marie-Madeleine au Messie féminin dans la littérature occultiste du XIXe siècle," in *Marie Madeleine dans la mystique, les arts et les lettres:*

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Jesus in the Gospels? In the 19th century, this affection could no longer be perceived as a disciple's fondness for her master, but as a much more mystical communion of the soul. Occultist literature was fond of the Magdalene and merged love and initiation: Édouard Schuré suggests this in one of the references of this literature, *The Great Initiates*:

> It was in the farm of Bethany, near Martha, Mary and Mary Magdalene, that Jesus loved to rest from the labours of his mission and prepare himself for supreme tests. There he lavished his tenderest words of comfort, and in sweet discourse spoke of the divine mysteries he dared not yet confide to his disciples.[87]

This initiation anticipates the resurrection: Anna Kingsford (1886–1888) in *The Perfect Way* identifies the soul with the feminine aspect of the divinity and sees in Mary Magdalene one of the stages in the realisation of the union between male and female in God. This union will be made as a great act of love between the sinful soul on the way to redemption and the male God:

> And for the sake of this Love, her sins – how many and grievous soever they may have been – will be forgiven to her, and she herself in her turn will be dearly loved of Him – the Man Regenerate – since he will recognise in her past the indispensable prelude to his own present. And thus will she become ministrant to him of her substance, – he unhesitatingly accepts, notwithstanding the mode of its acquisition; while the very passionateness of her nature, which has led to her past self-abandonment, serves but to endear her to him the more as betokening her capacity for self-surrender in the opposite direction. And only by him are her acts of devotion towards him not deemed extravagant, because he, and he alone, comprehends their source and significance. The name given in the Gospels to the representative of the Soul in this state is Mary Magdalen, whom tradition identifies with Mary of Bethany.[88]

Under the influence of the Gnostic texts discovered in 1945 in Nag Hammadi, and particularly the Gospel of Philip and the Gospel of Mary, this intuition was refocused to make Mary Magdalene the new foundress of a Gnostic Christianity. This reading inspired Margaret Starbird in her many works.[89] Mary Magdalene, co-Messiah, wife of God by *hieros gamos* (divine marriage), becomes the second person of a divine couple, Christ and his consort. The somewhat trivialised version of this thesis is found in Baigent

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Actes du colloque international, Avignon, 20–21–22 juillet 1988, ed. Ève Duperray (Paris: Beauchesne, 1989), 137–51.

[87] Edouard Schuré, *The Great Initiates: Sketch of the Secret History of Religions* (vol. 2; London: William Rider & Son, 1920), 324–25.

[88] Anna Bonus Kingsford and Edward Maitland, *The Perfect Way; Or, The Finding of Christ* (London: John M. Watkins, 1909), 237.

[89] Margaret Starbird, *The Goddess in the Gospels: Reclaiming the Sacred Feminine* (Santa Fe, NM: Bear & Co., 1998). Margaret Starbird, *Mary Magdalene, Bride in Exile* (Rochester, VT: Bear, 2005).

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and others or Laurence Gardner; both serving as sources for the famous *Da Vinci Code*.[90] This union was not only mystical, but it was also carnal, and the famous Grail of the Arthurian Cycle is nothing more than Jesus's descent. Curiously enough, this belief is similar to an ancient belief expressed by the Cathars, if we believe the Cistercian chronicler Pierre des Vaux de Cernay:

> They also say, in their secret doctrine, that Christ who was born in the visible and terrestrial Bethlehem and crucified in Jerusalem was a bad man, and that Mary Magdalene was his concubine; and that she was the woman taken in adultery, of whom we read in the gospel. For the good Christ, as they said, never ate, nor drank, nor took upon him true flesh, nor ever was in this world.[91]

Here again, this surprising resurgence of a medieval idea in our contemporaneity must question the chronologies.

3. Third tipping point: a feminist muse. – Many exegetes had made it their mission to rehabilitate Mary Magdalene; the feminist movements seized this reconstructed figure to make her a protest icon and a support for their demands. As early as 1975, Elizabeth Carrol pioneered this approach: there was nothing to prevent women from gaining access to consecrated ministries.[92] On the contrary, the gospels show that Jesus gave them a great place, as evidenced by the role played by Mary of Magdala. Quickly, the woman from Magdala and not the composite Mary Magdalene became the champion of their demands, both among evangelical Christians (most of whom ordained women) and among Catholics. Magdalene became the emblem of women's liberation in the Church.

In the United States, Mary Magdalene emerged as one of the leading figures of the feminist biblical studies movement, which aims to highlight the role of women in the history of the Church and particularly in the Bible. This trend, which stemmed from the feminist movements of the 1970s, usually recognises Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza as one of its founders, and her book *In Memory of Her* (1983) as a cornerstone.[93] In this book, Jesus's friend is surrounded by eminent female characters whose every single occurrence in

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[90] Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1982). Laurence Gardner, *Bloodline of the Holy Grail: The Hidden Lineage of Jesus Revealed* (Shaftesbury, UK: Element, 1998). Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (New York: Doubleday, 2003).

[91] Petrus Vallium Monachus, *Historia Albigensis* 2, transl. in Edward Peters, *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe: Documents in Translation* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980), 123.

[92] Elizabeth Carroll, "Women and Ministry," *Theological Studies* 36 (1975): 660–87.

[93] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (London: SCM Press, 1983).

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the Bible is being scrutinised to exhume the role they may have played, but also the oppression they may have suffered.

Based on the work of feminist academics such as Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, April DeConik and Karen King,[94] relayed by more militant historians such as Esther De Boer[95] and popularised by statements in feminist religious gatherings,[96] the argumentation runs as follows: Mary of Magdala, who clearly occupied a prominent place in the circle of Jesus's disciples, who received the honour of being the first of the apostles (*apostola apostolorum*), and who was revered in many Christian circles as evidenced by the texts of Nag Hammadi, eventually lost her rank because of the patriarchal ideology of the Christian leaders. Christian books reduced her role, the Fathers ignored her, and identification with the prostitute devalued her. It is, therefore, necessary to rehabilitate her, which will *ipso facto* restore her role in the Church.

Among Catholics, the struggle is fierce because of the highly controversial issue of the ordination of women to the priesthood. In the United States, the FutureChurch movement makes Magdalene its herald: its most massive demonstrations are held on the feast of the saint, on July 22. These services are an opportunity to highlight women in their liturgical role and to draw the public's attention to contemporary works on the Magdalene. For Christine Schenk, President Emeritus of FutureChurch, these events are only a means: they seek to promote the movement to support the ordination of women. In this perspective, the association publishes numerous brochures to rehabilitate the image of Mary Magdalene whose subtitles are quite clear: "not a prostitute," "first witness to the resurrection," "suppressed female leaders."[97] Other communities led by women priests also place themselves under the patronage of the Magdalene. An example of such a community of worship is the Mary Magdalene Apostolic Catholic Community of San Diego, Califor-

[94] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Empowering Memory and Movement: Thinking and Working across Borders* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014). Karen Leigh King, *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala: Jesus and the First Woman Apostle* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2003). April D. De Conick, *Holy Misogyny: Why the Sex and Gender Conflicts in the Early Church Still Matter* (New York: Continuum, 2011).

[95] Esther De Boer and John Bowden, *Mary Magdalene: Beyond the Myth* (London: SCM, 1997). Esther De Boer and John Bowden, *The Mary Magdalene Cover-Up: The Sources behind the Myth* (London: T&T Clark, 2007). Esther De Boer, *The Gospel of Mary: Beyond A Gnostic and A Biblical Mary Magdalene*, JSNTSup 260 (London: T&T Clark, 2004).

[96] Lucy Winkett, "Go Tell! Thinking About Mary Magdalene," *Feminist Theology* 10 (2002): 19–31.

[97] www.FutureChurch.org

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nia, studied by Rosemary Radford Ruether.[98] This denomination was created by Jane Via, a Christian educator, a lawyer and an ordained priestess who regularly presides at the Eucharist.

1517–1518, mid-19th century and the late 1970s: we see that the tipping points of the figure of Mary Magdalene have nothing to do with the aforementioned methodological changes – namely the end of the 18th century, the end of the 1960s and the end of the 1990s. The reception of Mary of Magdala seems to follow a chronology of its own, quite different from the chronology of the methods. This discrepancy will prove even more obvious for the other figure we will study, Bathsheba.

3. Second Test Case: Bathsheba

In the history of Israel, David is the king *par excellence*.[99] However, at the centre of his perfect portrait is a stain: his affair with Bathsheba. In this sorry debacle, David makes a serious starting error. Instead of devoting himself entirely to the conduct of the war, he lazes on his bed until noon.[100] He also allows himself to throw his eyes on the "property" of others in violation of the 9th commandment (Exod 8:17), inappropriate behaviour aggravated by the fact that Uriah is a member of his elite squad and acts like a hero. Finally, as some scholars have noted, Bathsheba could be impure, as she seems to practise the bath taken by women at the end of their periods (although some criticise this interpretation: it might be a simple purification bath).[101]

Perhaps this initial serious mischief would not have had so many consequences had David not multiplied gross errors by trying to save his reputation after having reached the point of no return. The king is not at risk: he is far too important to be threatened. More than his own life, he seeks to preserve his image, and herein lay the roots of all evil.[102] David finds himself caught in a downward spiral that pushes him ever further into ignominy. The

[98] Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Should Women Want Women Priests or Women-Church?," *Feminist Theology* 20 (2011): 63–72. Website: http://www.mmacc.org/

[99] Régis Burnet and Régis Courtray, "David et Bethsabée ou que faire d'un 'bon roi' criminel?," in *Figures de David, d'hier à aujourd'hui,* ed. Bruno Béthouart et al., Cahiers du Littoral 2.18 (Boulogne-sur-Mer: Université du Littoral, 2018), 45–69.

[100] Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 250.

[101] J. D'Ror Chankin-Gould et al., "The Sanctified 'Adulteress' and her Circumstantial Clause: Bathsheba's Bath and Self-Consecration in 2 Samuel 11," *JSOT* 32 (2008): 339–52. A. Graeme Auld, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 456.

[102] Tony W. Cartledge, *1 & 2 Samuel*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2001), 502.

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first step is the manipulation of a flawless soldier who wants to keep himself pure during a war, according to the prescriptions of Deut 11:10–15 prohibiting sexual intercourse while in combat. The king presses his limits, makes him drink, perhaps to have him executed or to have him assume the child's paternity[103] and Uriah suddenly realises this.[104] Then comes the treacherous idea of sending the good innocent soldier to his untimely death. This guilty resolution is aggravated by the cynical message to Joab.[105] Finally, the fault is amplified by Joab who has the whole cohort killed.[106]

The divine disavowal is blatant: while David writes to Joab that what he has done is not wrong (2 Sam 11:25), the narrator immediately declares to the reader that all David's action is wrong in the eyes of God (2 Sam 11:27b): "but the thing David had done displeased the Lord."

The king's behaviour is so shocking that the text has always been problematic. A few centuries after Samuel's books were written, the books of the Chronicles rewrite them without any mention of the episode. Even today, some comments refuse to believe that such a disgraceful story comes from the same tradition as the rest of the text.[107]

3.1. Save the King at All Costs

As Pierre Hadot summarises in his introduction to the *Apology of David* by Ambrose of Milan, "in this case, it is not possible to deny the reality of the facts or their criminal nature. David had Uriah killed, and he committed adultery with Bathsheba. The solicitor is therefore in the worst of the 'states of the case,' the *qualitas assumptiua*, in which he must look beyond the litigious fact itself to find arguments able to defend his client, since in any case it cannot be denied that he is guilty."[108] That is precisely what the centuries that follow will do: clear the king of any charges.[109]

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[103] Randall C. Bailey, *David in Love and War: The Pursuit of Power in 2 Samuel 10–12*, JSOTSup 75 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 98.

[104] George G. Nicol, "David, Abigail and Bathsheba, Nabal and Uriah: Transformations within a Triangle," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 12 (1998): 130–45.

[105] Alter, *David Story*, 255.

[106] Alter, *David Story*, 254.

[107] P. Kyle McCarter, *II Samuel*, AB 9 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1986), 285.

[108] P. Hadot, introduction to Ambroise de Milan, *Apologie de David*, SC 239 (Paris: Cerf, 1977), 7–8.

[109] Martine Dulaey, "L'histoire de David lue par les écrivains des premiers siècles chrétiens. (III) Heurs et malheurs d'un roi," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 61 (2015): 197–237.

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The arguments coined by the Fathers cover three levels. Concerning the literal meaning, two arguments can be found in Ambrose: on the one hand, David has committed only this single fault in his entire life whereas he has been continuously exposed to wealth and women,[110] on the other hand, he has shown a remarkable penance for a king. Kings have the habit of sinning and very few that of repenting.[111] Concerning the moral sense, David's penance shows that even the king is not immune. As Augustine says, "let the fault of the great ones be not the pleasure of the little ones, but let the fault of the great ones be the quivering of the little ones."[112] This failure urges everyone to be cautious, as Gregory the Great says: "it is not because he had desired her that David looked carefully at Uriah's wife, but rather because he looked at her carelessly that he desired her."[113] Finally, the Fathers launched a reading that today seems curious to us, but would last throughout the Middle Ages, a typological interpretation. David is, of course, the figure of Christ; by the etymology of his name, "well of satiation," Bathsheba is a figure of the Church. As for Uriah, his nickname "the Chettite" (Χετταίος or *Hethæus*, Hittite) means "entrenched" and is well suited to him who has entrenched himself from the light of God and dared, in his fall, to transform himself into an angel of light (cf. 2 Cor 11:14).[114] With this identification, the typological reading can begin. The first marriage of Bathsheba and Uriah represents the union of the pagan nations with the devil.[115] Now Christ was seduced by these pagan people who, like Bathsheba in her bath, sought to purify themselves from the uncleanness of the world through spiritual contemplation;[116] he united himself with her to free it: the people thus became the Church of the nations.[117] Gregory the Great, for his part, proposed a slightly different allegorical rereading, marked by a frequent anti-Judaism among the Fathers. If David represents Christ well for him, Uriah becomes the figure of the Jewish people, the "carnal people."[118]

A few investigations in medieval literature convince the reader of the permanence of patristic reading. The allegorical exegesis of Augustine and Gregory was carried on throughout Antiquity. Seeing the Jewish people in

[110] Ambrosius Mediolanensis, *Apologia Dauid* 1, 4.
[111] Ambrosius Mediolanensis, *Apologia Dauid* 1, 4–4, 15.
[112] Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarratio in Psalmum 50*, 3.
[113] Gregorius Magnus, *Moralia in Iob* 21,8,13.
[114] Augustinus Hipponensis, *Contra Faustum* 22, 87: p. 692, l. 18–23.
[115] Augustinus Hipponensis, *Contra Faustum* 22, 87; Ambrosius Mediolanensis, *Expositio Euangelii secundum Lucam* III, 38.
[116] Augustinus Hipponensis, *Contra Faustum* 22, 87.
[117] Augustinus Hipponensis, *Contra Faustum* 22, 87.
[118] Gregorius Magnus, *Moralia in Iob* 3, 28, 55.

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Uriah is the interpretation of Paschasius Radbertus (790–860)[119] or Rupert of Deutz (1076–1129).[120] Likewise, the power of repentance was exalted for centuries. One can quote the formula of Gottfried of Admont in Austria (1100–1165): *Tam fragilis herba fuit David. Sed lignum forte postea factus est*, "he was such a fragile herb, David, but he later turned into solid wood,"[121] which allows a comparison with Peter's tears. This *topos* will be perpetuated until modern times, based on a meditation on the seven psalms of penance.[122] This aspect of repentance is also kept in the Qur'an (*Sura* 38:17–38).[123]

Finally, the propensity to accuse women is found in an 8th-century text, the *Book of Questions on the Gospels*.

> It is written that Bathsheba, who consented to the king's adultery, was neither first accused of the crime nor blotted out her transgression by public penance. And, because of her sin, which the penance did not purge, she seems excluded from the genealogy [of Christ].[124]

The most surprising part of this reception is that no one dared to accuse the king frontally for more than two thousand years. Much later, the *Mystery of the Old Testament*, which was given at the end of the Middle Ages, presents a mundane Bathsheba in a bath scene that includes the use of a mirror.[125]

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[119] Paschasius Radbertus, *Expositio in Matheo* I, 1644, B. Paulus ed. (CCCM 56, 1984). Bersabee autem ut prefati sumus puteus septimus dicitur quia nimirum per cognitionem legis infusion spiritalis gratiæ perfecta nobis sapientia monstratur. Quem uero Vrias? Nisi Iudaicum populum signat cuius nomen interpretatum diximus lux mea Dei.

[120] Rupertus Tuitiensis, *De Sancta Trinitate et operibus eius*, l. XXIII, *In libros Regum II*, R. Haacke ed. (CCCM 22, 1974), 1285. Quid ergo est dauid bethsabee coniugem uriæ ad se perducere nisi legem litteræ carnali populo iudaico coniunctam qui quasi de dei luce gloriatur spirituali sibi intellectu sociare.

[121] Godefridus Admontensis, *Homiliæ dominicales* 68 (PL 174,476).

[122] Charles A. Huttar, "Frail Grass and Firm Tree: David as a Model of Repentance in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance," in *The David Myth in Western Literature,* ed. Raymond-Jean Frontain and Jan Wojcik (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1980), 38–55.

[123] Karel Steenbrink, "Reading the Bible Together with Muslims: David as Sinner King and Repentant Prophet," *Exchange* 35 (2006): 347–59. Complete history of the surah in Khaleel Mohammed, *David in the Muslim Tradition: The Bathsheba Affair* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015).

[124] *Liber questionum in euangeliis. De interpretatione nominum*, J. Rittmueller ed. (CCSL 108F, 2003), 22.

[125] James de Rothschild, *Le Mistère du viel testament*, Société des anciens textes français (vol. 6; Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1891), 168–213. The text is analysed in Olivier Millet and Philippe de Robert, "David et Batsheba dans la littérature française. Sens spirituel et littérature d'imagination," in *König David: biblische Schlüsselfigur und europäische Leitgestalt,* ed. Walter Dietrich and Hubert Herkommer, Kolloquien der Schweizerischen

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The Protestant Pierre Bayle (1647–1706) in one of his notes from his *Historical and Critical Dictionary* is utterly noncritical:

> His amour with the wife of Uriah and the orders he gave to destroy her husband are two enormous crimes, but he was so grieved for them and expiated them by so admirable a repentance that this is not the passage of his life wherein he contributes least to the instruction and edification of faithful souls. We therein learn the frailty of the Saint, and it is a precept of vigilance we therein learn in what manner we ought to lament our sins, and it is an excellent model.[126]

Dom Calmet, while often caustic, is quite embarrassed here:

> We do not recognise here David, this prince so merciful, who had spared Saul his persecutor, when Providence allowed him to fall into his hands. What kind of change can cause a shameful and deranged passion, and how a step towards crime often leads to the abyss![127]

In the middle of the 19th century, Delitzsch wavers. He does not hesitate to acknowledge David's fault, but mitigates it by explaining that Uriah does nothing to resist it, even if he ends up recognising that the blame still falls on David, because on him God's grace rested.[128] Delitzsch himself did not escape the misogyny of his time and the myth of the "loose woman!" Édouard Dhorme in his commentary, which nevertheless appeared in Fr. Lagrange's prestigious collection "Études bibliques," quotes Dom Calmet two centuries before to exonerate David.[129] Around the same time, Henry P. Smith was already talking about David's sin and describing Uriah's death as a "murder," but did not go any further.[130]

3.2. Putting an End to the Woman-Object Prejudice

Only with the emergence of feminism did the debates become more important. In the 1960s, Whybray would say that Bathsheba is an foolish and naive character and Hertzberger would attenuate the king's complicity

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Akademie der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften 19 (Freiburg im B./Stuttgart: Universitätsverlag/W. Kohlhammer, 2003), 777–93.

[126] Pierre Bayle, *A General Dictionary, Historical and Critical* (transl. John Peter Bernard et al.; vol. 4; London: Strahan et al., 1736), 542.

[127] Augustin Calmet, *Commentaire littéral sur tous les livres de l'Ancien et du Nouveau testament* (vol. 5; Paris: Emery/Saugrain/Martin, 1720), 511.

[128] Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *On the Books of Samuel*, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1866), 382–83.

[129] Paul Dhorme, *Les Livres de Samuel*, Paris, J. Gabalda, Études bibliques, 1910, 353.

[130] Henry Preserved Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1899), 317–19.

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by talking about "feminine flirtation."[131] Twenty years later, George Nicol would still argue that Bathsheba was an enticing woman.[132]

Cheryl Exum was outraged by this position and stated that since the reader did not know the point of view of Bathsheba, he symbolically raped her: rape is also depriving a woman of her voice. By making Bathsheba appear in her nakedness, the narrator is the real molester, and we are all his accomplices.[133] In this wake, exegetes finally noticed that the text centres on David, the core of the former being the king.[134] Bathsheba is reduced to an object, and even her child has no name.[135]

Nicol, explicitly attacked by Exum, had trouble defending himself. He noticed that David did not use force, that Bathsheba may be silent about her fertility, and that perhaps she had undressed before the king on purpose.[136] Other contemporaries, and even women, maintain that she is consenting, even an accomplice.[137] In the 2000s, the debate grew: some argued that there was clearly an abuse of a dominant position here, because the social distance was far too significant for Bathsheba to refuse anything;[138] others made it clear that the fault could only be on David, because he was the one in charge and thus had the greatest responsibility.[139]

After Bill Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky, management specialists began to reflect on the mistakes of the leaders. They named "Bathsheba syndrome" this ethical fault, which could not be explained by ignorance (real or voluntary) of the wrongdoing, but by an organisational context that gives

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[131] Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary*, OTL (London: SCMC, 1964), 309. Robert Norman Whybray, *The Succession Narrative: A Study of 1 Samuel 9–20; 1 Kings 1 and 2*, Studies in Biblical Theology II.9 (SCM Press, 1968), 40.

[132] George G. Nicol, "Bathsheba, a Clever Woman?," *The Expository Times* 99 (1988): 360–63.

[133] J. Cheryl Exum, *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1993), 170–201.

[134] Richard M. Davidson, "Did King David Rape Bathsheba? A Case Study in Narrative Theology," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 17 (2006): 81–95.

[135] Bailey, *David*, 101.

[136] George G. Nicol, "The Alleged Rape of Bathsheba: Some Observations on Ambiguity in Biblical Narrative," *JSOT* 22 (1997): 43–54.

[137] Bailey, *David*, 86. Lillian R. Klein, *From Deborah to Esther: Sexual Politics in the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 56. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, "Slingshots, Ships, and Personal Psychosis: Murder, Sexual Intrigue, and Power in the Lives of David and Othello," in *Pregnant Passion: Gender, Sex and Violence in the Bible,* ed. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, Semeia Studies 44 (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2003), 37–70 (here: 59).

[138] David E. Garland and Diana S. Garland, *Flawed Families of the Bible: How God's Grace Works through Imperfect Relationships* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 25.

[139] Larry W. Spielman, "David's Abuse of Power," *Word & World* 19 (1999): 251–59.

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the leader the impression of being above all morality because he is not prepared for success, because he has better access to information than others and especially because he believes he can control the consequences of his actions.[140] The name is obviously anachronistic. What we call "rape" in our modern time can be defined as non-consensual sexual relations, whereas the Bible had a much more restrictive definition, limited to violent sexual relations.[141] It is nevertheless true that the interpretation of the episode of Bathsheba reflects the perspective each period has on femininity. The very late nature of the rejection of the traditional reading of an event focused on the gaze of a man raises questions about this issue. This story of reception is parallel to the story of rape, which was considered exceptionally late.[142]

III. Summary and Implications

The history of Mary Magdalene's reception, like that of Bathsheba, sufficiently proves that the chronology of the history of reception does not follow the same temporalities as the history of the methods. In other words, a methodological change does not necessarily introduce a tipping point in the interpretation of an element of the biblical text.

The two examples from the history of the interpretation of the figures of Mary Magdalene and Bathsheba are particularly clear on this point: more than the method, the ideology forges our interpretations. The chronology of Mary Magdalene and Bathsheba's interpretations follows the history of the perception of women and femininity. The extremely late condemnation of David and the rehabilitation of Bathsheba is a piece of striking evidence: despite the claim of all methods to elicit the "truth" of a text, what is so obvious for our world was not even noticed before.

In the light of these historical trajectories, I propose the following thesis: *while exegesis is understood as a discipline that has undergone many changes in the manner texts are interpreted, these mutations have only concerned the*

[140] Dean C. Ludwig and Clinton O. Longenecker, "The Bathsheba Syndrome: The Ethical Failure of Successful Leaders," *Journal of Business Ethics* 12 (1993): 265–73. Terry L. Price, "Explaining Ethical Failures of Leadership," *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 21 (2000): 177–84.

[141] In the narrative, rape must be expressed through screaming and beating. Alexander Izuchukwu Abasili, "Was it Rape? The David and Bathsheba Pericope Re-examined," *Vetus Testamentum* 61 (2011): 1–15.

[142] Georges Vigarello, *Histoire du viol, XVIe-XXe siècle*, L'Univers historique (Paris: Seuil, 1998).

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commentary and have preserved most of the interpretations from traditional reading and explanation.

To formulate this thesis, I use a basic conceptual distinction regarding the interpretation of texts. This is only a provisional, *ad hoc* distinction and does not claim to be a global hermeneutic theory. From Origen to the refinements of postmodernity, everyone is aware of how difficult it is to propose an exhaustive vision of the complex process of text interpretation.

Nevertheless, there is widespread agree on three levels of meaning: the level of language, the level of text and the level of worldviews. To identify the process of interpretation of these three levels, I propose respectively three terms: "reading," "explanation" and "commentary."

1. Reading: literal meaning. – The level of language is the level of understanding the words in the text. What do they mean? What is their reference? This first level was called "literal meaning" by the medieval people. The reader's interpretation at this level provides an answer to the question: what is the text about? To characterise this process of giving meaning to words and sentences, one can use the word "reading," which describes the action of getting to know the content.

2. The explanation: global meaning. – The level of explanation is the operation that integrates the different elements of meaning collected in the reading into a global vision of the text. It moves from the level of the word to the level of the framework of the text. It answers the global question: what does the text say?

3. The commentary: directional sense or reading paradigm. – The act of commenting the text combines the results produced by the explanation with a global vision of the world. This vague term "global vision" allows us to avoid giving too precise an extension to the latter level. Social, religious, philosophical, political and other ideologies intertwine in complex knots. The interpreter's positioning in the face of these ideologies brings about many individual inflections. This global vision likens the famous "paradigm" concept borrowed from Thomas Kuhn, who defined it as the "same rule and practices"[143] of scientific research according to the following definition:

> Any integrated set of ideas that shapes our scientific work by influencing perceptions, setting research agendas, determining what will count as evidence and setting the basic frame for explanation. A paradigm is more general than a theory but narrower and more focused than a worldview.[144]

[143] Kuhn, *Structure*, 11.

[144] Steve Bruce and Steven Yearley, *The Sage Dictionary of Sociology* (London: Sage, 2006), 224.

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The insertion of the text into this worldview polarises the explanatory elements in a particular direction to align with it. In this sense, we can speak, like Jean-Emmanuel de Ena, of "directional sense," which could be defined as follows: "the directional meaning of a text is the orientation with which one or more readers interpret(s) the text, taking into account their positioning, whether conscious or not, in relation to the text, i. e., their intentionality and purpose: pre-comprehension, personal interests, historical situation, reading methods, recipients of the interpretation, etc."[145] The commentary is the resulting speech; it therefore bridges two worlds: the world of the text and the world of its reader.

The aforementioned thesis can be rephrased in several ways:

1. The history of the readings and explanations of biblical texts follows a different timeline from the history of commentaries;

2. The presence of traditional elements is much more important in contemporary interpretations than the rupture ideology claims;

3. It would be absurd to refuse to consult a commentary written before the current turn, under the pretext that the interpretations it contains would be outdated.

A brief example illustrates this point. In 2017, Stephen D. Moore proposed a "post-poststructural" reading of the Gospel trying to adopt the point of view of "non-humans," i. e., to challenge the theory of the centrality of humankind attributed to the Enlightenment.[146] In an essay entitled "Why the Risen Body Weeps," Moore refuses to see in the tears that Jesus let flow before Lazarus's tomb (John 11:35) the expression of his deep sorrow over the death of his friend, although this explanation is suggested by the following sentence, where the Judaeans say: "see how he loved him" (John 11:36). On the contrary, he proposes to interpret it as a kind of holy horror of decomposition. Moore links the smell that emerges from the tomb (John 11:39) with the crying of Jesus. The scent, *par excellence* the human sense that the written medium excludes – the text does not smell and cannot make you smell – conveys an extraordinary power of representation: "it represents the ultimate irrepresentability of the object of disgust around which the Fourth Gospel is organized."[147] Jesus rejects, therefore, the putrefaction of Lazarus, and also

[145] Jean Emmanuel de Ena, *Sens et interprétations du Cantique des Cantiques: Sens textuel, sens directionnels et cadre du texte*, LD 194 (Paris: Cerf, 2004), 87.

[146] Stephen D. Moore, *Gospel Jesuses and other Nonhumans: Biblical Criticism Post-poststructuralism*, Semeia Studies 89 (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2017), 2.

[147] Stephen D. Moore, "Why the Risen Body Weeps," in *Gospel Jesuses and other Nonhumans: Biblical Criticism Post-Poststructuralism*, Semeia Studies 89 (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2017), 15–39 (here: 32).

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his own. Indeed, Moore argues, the whole gospel is in tension between the threat of the putrefaction of the flesh and its absolute refusal.

> Even when Jesus is engaged in his long, meandering journey to that tomb, the flesh he has become ("And the Word became flesh …") is rotting flesh and rot-resistant flesh at one and the same time; for the pre-Easter Johannine Jesus is not risen, yet always already risen.[148]

Lazarus will rise to die again. Jesus will give his body to eat (through the Lord's Supper) for already decaying bodies. The resurrection of his friend will not be entirely a success – the death has not released his grip on Lazarus's body – Jesus is crying over this never-ending corruption:

> The scent of death sits lightly on the Johannine Jesus; it is not the stench of Lazarus. But it is a scent that cannot be scrubbed clean.[149]

Nothing is more postmodern than this reading which, as Moore says, is "a meditation on meat, the common condition of all animals, whether human or nonhuman, and that meditation is conducted through the medium of affect theory."[150] Nothing more contemporary than this conclusion on the incompleteness of the resurrection.

However, the French bishop Bossuet, who cannot be blamed for being postmodern, says:

> Lazare est mort, enseveli, enterré, déjà pourri et puant. On craint de lever la pierre de son tombeau, de peur d'infecter le lieu et la personne de Jésus par cette insupportable odeur. Voilà un spectacle horrible; Jésus en frémit; Jésus en pleure; dans la mort de Lazare, son ami, il déplore le commun supplice de tous les hommes; il regarde la nature humaine comme créée dans l'immortalité et comme condamnée à mort pour son péché; il est l'ami de tout le genre humain; il vient le rétablir; il commence par en pleurer le désastre; par en frémir; par se troubler lui-même à la vue de son supplice. Ce qui lui paraît si horrible dans la mort, c'est principalement qu'elle est causée par le péché; et c'est plutôt le péché que la mort qui lui cause ce frémissement, ce trouble, ces pleurs.[151]
>
> Lazarus is dead, entombed, buried, already rotten and stinking. People are frightened to remove the stone from his tomb, for fear of infecting the place and the person of Jesus with this unbearable smell. This is a horrible vision; Jesus shudders; Jesus cries; through the death of his friend Lazarus, he mourns the familiar torment of all men; he considers human nature as created in immortality and as condemned to death for its sin; he is the friend of the whole human race; he comes to restore it;

[148] Moore, "Why the Risen Body Weeps," 35.
[149] Moore, "Why the Risen Body Weeps," 38–39.
[150] Moore, *Gospel Jesuses*, 10.
[151] Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, *Méditations sur l'Évangile*, Œuvres complètes de Bossuet 6 (Paris: L. Vivès, 1862), 74–75.

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he begins by crying out the disaster; he starts by quivering; by disturbing himself in the face of this suffering. What seems so horrible to him in death is the sin; and it is rather sin than death that elicits his shivering, his disturbance, his tears.

The same link between smell and crying; the same refusal to consider that Jesus is crying over the death of his friend; the same attention to the torment. The critical difference is that Bossuet sees the text through the prism of a theology of sin. However, he assimilates decomposition with sin: *nec dabis sanctum tuum videre corruptionem* (Ps 15/16:10, "neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption"). Only the perception of the "rot" of Lazarus, the contemplation of the "torment," that is, the torment inflicted on the flesh, make Jesus cry. The smell of rot is for the bishop of Meaux the mark of sin and the cause of Jesus's tears. The worldviews may be divergent, the commentaries may vary, but the same explanation of the text is at work.

An immediate consequence must be drawn. We must definitely abandon any idea of *tabula rasa*. For a contemporary scholar, refusing to quote a 19th-century author is absurd, since many of his views have been invented before. Also, similarly, to claim that exegesis only begins with Baur, Schweitzer, Bultmann, Robert Alter, etc., is nonsensical. In practice, it is also necessary to read the Fathers of the Church, medieval theologians and even the authors of the Catholic and Protestant Reforms to extend its reading.

However, there is also another, probably more dramatic, consequence. If tipping points do not have the same chronology as methodologies, this means that they are not dependent on them. In other words, one cannot rely on the method to produce a "correct" interpretation of the text, since it is not the implementation of a new approach that would not provide any new argument. No method can produce any truth about the text.

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Chapter 3

What Does "Reading with Tradition" Mean?

Since the *tabula rasa* turned out to be a myth, the very notion of rupture must be reassessed: this too could be a fiction. To call it "fiction" is not judgemental. This illusion may be imperative, either for methodological clarity to dodge institutional regulations, or out of psychological necessity, to stimulate emulation thanks to the promise of newfound land clearing. Whatever the reason, the demonstration of its irrelevance enables the proposal to reconnect with tradition and makes it inescapable. How, otherwise, could we know where our theories come from? We must now define what is meant by reading with tradition.

I. A Part of the Hermeneutical Philosophy

The project of "reading in tradition" stemmed from the hermeneutics formulated by Hans-Georg Gadamer in *Truth and Method*. It is pointless to present this influential book, especially since many publications do so skilfully,[1] including that of D. Parris, who put it into perspective with the interpretation of biblical texts.[2] Hermeneutics is rooted in the philosophical tradition of interpretation initiated by Philo and Origen, then grounded in Heidegger's philosophy.[3] The Gadamerian approach begins with the problem of aesthetic experience and ends up focusing on what it means to understand. Here is a selection of some hermeneutic outcomes relevant to the biblical sciences.

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[1] For instance Marlène Zarader, *Lire 'Vérité et méthode' de Gadamer: Une introduction à l'herméneutique*, Bibliothèque d'histoire de la philosophie (Paris: J. Vrin, 2016). Karl Simms, *Gadamer*, Routledge Critical Thinkers (London: Routledge, 2015). Chris Lawn and Niall Keane, *The Gadamer Dictionary* (London: Continuum, 2011). Chris Lawn, *Gadamer: A Guide for the Perplexed*, The Guides for the Perplexed Series (London: Continuum, 2006). Jean Grondin, *Introduction à Hans-Georg Gadamer*, La Nuit surveillée (Paris: Cerf, 1999).

[2] David Paul Parris, *Reception Theory and Biblical Hermeneutics*, Princeton Theological Monograph 107 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009).

[3] Jean Grondin, *L'Universalité de l'herméneutique*, Épiméthée (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1993).

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1. The Historicity of Understanding

Speaking out against the claim to objectivity of the critical method, Gadamer strongly asserts the historicity of understanding. In the Walberberg Conference, he said: "It could very well be that only insignificant things in historical scholarship permit us to approximate this ideal of extinguishing individuality, while the great productive achievements of scholarship always preserve something of the splendid magic of immediately mirroring the present in the past and the past in the present."[4] In other words, no one can skip over one's time.

Gadamer borrows this idea from Martin Heidegger who argued that interpretation begins with the *Vorstruktur des Verstehens,* "fore-structure of understanding".[5] The latter having borrowed from Hegel and his famous Preface to *Philosophy of Right*: "as for the individual, everyone is a son of his time; so philosophy also is its time apprehended in thoughts."[6] There are several ways to react to this assumption.[7] (1) The most straightforward approach is to represent the individual as someone who does not think about his or her situation. Trapped in preconceived ideas, he or she thinks the way his or her time does and merely repeats the thoughts of what Hegel calls *der gesunde Menschenverstand*, "common sense." This attitude, which Hegel attributes to the pre-Socratic city, is the government of prejudice. (2) Another possibility is to become aware of one's prejudices and try to shatter them by deliberately breaking with tradition. Hegel criticises the Kantian vision of the Enlightenment, arguing that when someone critiques traditional assumptions, he or she may appear to have "power" (*Gewalt*) over them. But this criticism is not the "actualisation" (*Verwirklichung*) of a tendency to change. Gadamer goes in the same direction when he describes historism as an effect of the process that makes distancing from tradition inevitable, rather than a real break. (3) The last possibility is to "transcend time," as Hegel says (*geht drüber hinaus* or *überspringen*). This is what Gadamer intends to achieve with his hermeneutic method.

These prejudices must be taken seriously and made into a hermeneutic principle. Rather than deliberately seeking to break with tradition in order to

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[4] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem (1966)," in *Philosophical Hermeneutics,* ed. David E. Linge (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), 3–17 (here: 6).

[5] Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2006), 142–47.

[6] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Philosophy of Right* (transl. S.W. Dyde; London: George Bell, 1896), xxviii.

[7] We follow Anders Odenstedt, *Gadamer on Tradition: Historical Context and the Limits of Reflection* (New York: Springer, 2017), 191–216.

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return to the time of the text's production (as do the proponents of objectivity in trying to reconstruct the world in which the text was crafted); rather than breaking with history by studying only the effect that the text has on a contemporary reader (as more recent methods would argue), it is fitting to see in the history of the reception of the text the very condition of the possibility of understanding. "In fact, the important thing is to recognise temporal distance as a positive and productive condition enabling understanding. It is not a yawning abyss but is filled with the continuity of custom and tradition, in the light of which everything handed down presents itself to us."[8] The historical gap is fruitful, and mediation is the key to understanding. Following a Heideggerian habit of manipulating German words according to a more or less fanciful etymology, Gadamer recalls that *Innerung* (interiority) lies in *Erinnerung* (memory). Remembering is interiorising, making things past one's own identity.

2. A Series of Operational Concepts

In addition to the philosopher's his fundamental intuition of the productivity of the historical gap, hermeneutics implements highly productive concepts.

1. Prejudice. – Based on Heidegger's philosophy, Gadamer gives a more precise and not merely negative description of prejudice. His major assertion is that (contrary to what Enlightenment thinkers believed) we cannot escape our prejudices: they are the consequence of our historical condition, and they are the reason why we are interested in a text. Who would read a book if he or she had no prior idea of what it contained? But these prejudices should not be understood only as a drawback since they never remain static. As Heidegger shows, they are the condition of understanding, which can be aptly described as a constant adjustment of prejudice. Approaching a text, we begin with a "fore-projection," and then we gradually rectify our preconception, while progressing in the reading.[9] The projections on the text are therefore continuously renewed.

The requirement for this prejudice adjustment is that the reader shall be "open to the meaning of the text."[10] The more aware of the process of reading he or she is, the greater this openness. "The important thing is to be aware of one's own bias so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one's own fore-meaning."[11]

[8] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 297.
[9] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 269.
[10] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 271.
[11] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 271–72.

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How can these prejudices be seen as such? By the confrontation with the tradition that gave birth to them.

> It is impossible to make ourselves aware of prejudice while it is continuously operating unnoticed, but only when it is, so to speak, provoked. The encounter with a text can provide this provocation. For what leads to understanding must be something that has already asserted itself in its separate validity.[12]

Reading with tradition thus allows a refinement in understanding, thanks to the highlighting of prejudices.

2. The history of the reception and the horizons. – Hence the need to consider the history of the effects of a text (or the history of its reception), what Gadamer calls *Wirkungsgeschichte*.[13] "History of the reception" can be defined as the interpretation flow, into which we are immersed. Each reading or interpretation is preceded by other readings and interpretations, which are context-dependent and highlight particular aspects of the text. The meaning of a text goes far beyond what the author meant or what the original audience read. It unfolds step by step, through different layers of meaning related to the historical situation. This series of readings codetermine more or less straightforwardly the interpretive process of today.

To describe the intertwining of the past interpretations, the global vision of the world and the actual reading, Gadamer drew a comparison with the photographic concept of the horizon,[14] which should more accurately be translated as "background." The meaning of the text is like a figure standing out against a background: it reveals itself by distinction and takes on prominence through what lies behind him or her. All prejudices create this background of thought. The horizon of the present does not exist at all without the past: it is the product of it, precisely through the history of effects.

3. The horizon of expectation. – Hans-Robert Jauss[15] clarified this intuition for literature. The starting point of his work is to be found in the structuralism of the Prague School (Jan Mukařovský and Felix Vodička) which combines structural and historical analysis. For them, the essence of artwork only manifests itself in the run of the different historical figures taken in the work's successive receptions. As a consequence, the meaning is never graspable as a permanent substance. "A literary work is not an object that stands

[12] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 298.
[13] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 283–84.
[14] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 301–02.
[15] Hans Robert Jauss, "Der Leser als Instanz einer neuen Geschichte der Literatur," *Poetica* 7 (1975): 325–44.

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by itself and that offers the same view to each reader in each period."[16] The literary work must be approached dynamically according to the various settings in which it is received: from the production context to the many and mutually influenced situations of reception.

In his *Struktura vývoje*, Vodička names these different contexts "horizons of expectation".[17] He borrows the concept from Karl Mannheim's *Erwartungshorizont*.[18] Mannheim defined it in the 1920s as the overall historical context in which texts are read, interpreted and actualised to contemporary problems and needs. For Vodička, the reconstruction of the horizon of expectation of the first public of the work was a tactic to heal interpreters from any psychology and historicism by discerning the gap between the artwork and its first reception. Jauss comments: "the distance between the horizon of expectation and the work, between the familiarity of previous aesthetic experience and the 'horizonal change' demanded by the reception of the new work, determines the artistic character of a literary work, according to an aesthetic of reception."[19]

4. The fertility of the temporal distance. – This reconstruction of the expectation horizon is only a first step, for it is necessary to grasp the meaning and form of the work according to the understanding process throughout history. To summarise the thought of Jauss, "the work" is not only the semiotic content enclosed in the text, but also all the meaning constructed throughout its reception process.[20] The meaning of the text is not a substantial property or a by-product of reception; it comes out of an intersubjective dialogue between the subjectivity of the author who proposes content and the subjectivity of successive readers over time, influencing each other in their reception, who co-elaborate the understanding of this content. The work can therefore only be perceived through its reception throughout the ages as a succession of decontextualisation and recontextualization. This distanciation, as Paul Ricœur said, "is not the product of methodology and hence something superfluous and parasitic; rather it is constitutive of the phenomenon of the text as writing. At the same time, it is the condition of

[16] Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Æsthetic of Reception*, Theory and History of Literature 2 (Brighton: Harvester, 1982), 21.

[17] Felix Vodička, *Struktura vývoje*, Studie Literárněhistorické (Praha: Odeon, 1969), 35.

[18] Karl Mannheim, *Strukturen des Denkens*, Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft 298 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980), 230.

[19] Jauss, *Æsthetic*, 25.

[20] Jauss, *Æsthetic*, 20.

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interpretation: *Verfremdung* is not only what understanding must overcome, but also what conditions it."[21]

This temporal distance, as Ricœur points out, does not only allow us to understand it; it also lets us understand ourselves better. Indeed, the human being does not know him or herself immediately, but only through the detour of the written word.

> In contrast to the tradition of the *cogito* and to the pretension of the subject to know itself by immediate intuition, it must be said that we understand ourselves only by the long detour of the signs of humanity deposited in cultural works. What would we know of love and hate, of moral feelings and, generally, of all that we call the *self* if these had not been brought to language and articulated by literature? Thus what seems most contrary to subjectivity, and what structural analysis discloses as the texture of the text, is the very medium within which we can understand ourselves […] Henceforth, to understand is to understand oneself in front of the text.[22]

There would undoubtedly be much to say about the highly situated nature of this declaration, which implies a particular culture and – admittedly – a specific social milieu, centred on books, and more generally on the classics. It could thus be argued that literature, and "great literature," does not constitute the entire experience of self-knowledge – and perhaps less and less of it. Nevertheless, the substance remains: the temporal distance and the detour through the "signs of humanity" are the prerequisite for being able to know ourselves.

II. A Well-Known Undertaking in Biblical Studies

1. Taking the Wirkungsgeschichte *into Account*

Several years after the publication of *Truth and Method*, exegetes, mostly German, seized upon the hermeneutic ideas developed by Gadamer. In the early 1970s, Alex Stock, Karl Lehmann and Joachim Gnilka called for an ecumenical commentary that would consider the history of the reception:

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[21] Paul Ricœur, "La fonction herméneutique de la distanciation " in *Exegesis: Problèmes de méthode et exercices de lecture, Genèse 22 et Luc 15,* ed. François Bovon and Grégoire Rouiller, Bibliothèque théologique (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1975), 201–15 (here: 210). Paul Ricœur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action, and Interpretation* (transl. John B. Thompson; Cambridge, UK/Paris: Cambridge University Press/Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1981), 102. See also a first version of this paper: Paul Ricœur, "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation," *Philosophy Today* 17 (1973): 129–41.

[22] Ricœur, *Hermeneutics*, 105–06.

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this is the project of the *Evangelisch-Katholischen Kommentars zum Neuen Testament*, printed by Benzinger.[23] Of all the books of this series, the commentaries of Ulrich Luz on the Gospel of Matthew[24] are still universally celebrated thirty years later as the very example of what has to be done.[25]

In the English-speaking world, it took more than twenty years for major projects to emerge, such as the *New Blackwell Bible Commentaries* series, the *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception* (since 2009), or the *Journal of the Bible and its Reception* (since 2014). Synthesis books have also been published such as *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible*.

In the French-speaking world, a journal named *Suppléments aux Cahiers Évangile* offers excerpts from biblical commentaries and literary texts about pericopes since 1995. Collections such as the *Graphè* series (published by the University of Artois Press) or the *Études d'histoire de l'exégèse* (éditions du Cerf) also focus on the history of the reception of a biblical passage. Finally, we must mention the monumental dictionary of the Bible in the world's literature (*La Bible dans les littératures du monde*) edited by Sylvie Parizet.[26]

On the side of historical disciplines, many initiatives were born. Among patrologists, specialists of the Middle Ages or of the modern era, the use of reception provided above all an opportunity to organise and systematically edit, translate and comment on forgotten exegetical texts from the past. Among literature specialists, it created a means of bringing together many works focused on the influence of the Christian religion on literature.

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[23] Joachim Gnilka, "Methodik und Hermeneutik. Gedanken zur Situation der Exegese," in *Neues Testament und Kirche: Für Rudolf Schnackenburg,* ed. Joachim Gnilka (Freiburg im B.: Herder, 1974), 458–75. Karl Lehmann, "Der hermeneutische Horizont der historisch-kritischen Exegese," in *Einführung in die Methoden der biblischen Exegese,* ed. Josef Schreiner (Würzburg: Echter-Verlag, 1971), 40–80. Alex Stock, "Überlegungen zur Methode eines Theologischen Kommentars" in *EKK Vorarbeiten Heft 4,* (Zürich: Benziger, 1972), 75–96. See also Thomas Schmeller, "Écrire aujourd'hui un commentaire (sur 2 Co)," *Revue des sciences religieuses* 80 (2006): 243–52.

[24] Ulrich Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, EKKNT 1.1 (vol. 1: Matth. 1–7; Düsseldorf/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Benziger/Neukirchener Verl., 1985). Ulrich Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, EKKNT 1.2 (vol. 2: Matth. 8–17; Neukirchen-Vluyn/Einsiedeln/Zürich: Neukirchener/Benziger, 1990). Ulrich Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, EKKNT 1.3 (vol. 3: Matth. 18–25; Neukirchen-Vluyn/Einsiedeln/Zürich: Neukirchener/Benziger, 1997). Ulrich Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, EKKNT 1.4 (vol. 4: Matth. 26–28; Neukirchen-Vluyn/Düsseldorf/Zürich: Neukirchener/Benziger, 2002). See Mark W. Elliott, "Effective-History and the Hermeneutics of Ulrich Luz," *JSNT* 33 (2010): 161–73.

[25] Jonathan Roberts and Christopher Rowland, "Introduction," *JSNT* 33 (2010): 131–36 (here: 3).

[26] Sylvie Parizet, *La Bible dans les littératures du monde* (Paris: Cerf, 2016).

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Finally, thanks to this idea of reception, the relationship between the Old and New Testaments have been reformulated. The notions of "source," "rewriting" and "dependence" could be supplemented, even subsumed, by the broader concept of reception to describe the links between books of the Bible or both Testaments.[27] This concept has also been used to account for the literary effects of the person of Jesus: the gospels have thus been characterised as a reception of Jesus.[28]

2. Uses and Misuses of Wirkungsgeschichte

The consensus on the *Wirkungsgeschichte*, therefore, seems unambiguous and widespread. However, has the Gadamerian project been correctly understood?

A decade after the foundation of the *Evangelisch-Katholischen Kommentars zum Neuen Testament*, Joachim Gnilka reflected on his editorial undertaking and justified it most of all as an ecumenical necessity. "Taking tradition into account" means allowing a dialogue between Catholics and Protestants:

> Apart from the fact that neutrality or impartiality in the humanities has been seen for a long time as an unrealistic postulate, it would be a pity if our own point of view of faith or that of our own Church were not included in the commentary. A special place for the identification of this point of view might be the demonstration of the history of the effects of New Testament texts.[29]

The declaration is noteworthy because it reveals above all the ecclesiological dimension of the project. The aim is not to consider the history of reception as such, but to find a possible place in the commentary for the positions of the churches to be stated.

Indeed, as Mark Knight noted,[30] the history of reception is addressed in separate sections in Luz's commentary, after a fairly traditional exegesis

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[27] See, for instance, Jesper Høgenhaven, Jesper Tang Nielsen, and Heike Omerzu, *Rewriting and Reception in and of the Bible*, WUNT 396 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018).

[28] James D. G. Dunn, "Matthew as Wirkungsgeschichte," in *Neutestamentliche Exegese im Dialog: Hermeneutik, Wirkungsgeschichte, Matthäusevangelium: Festschrift für Ulrich Luz zum 70. Geburtstag,* ed. Peter Lampe et al. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2008), 149–66.

[29] Joachim Gnilka, "Die Bedeutung der Wirkungsgeschichte für das Verständnis und die Vermittlung biblischer Texte," in *Dynamik im Wort: Lehre von der Bibel, Lehre aus der Bibel,* (Stuttgart: KBW, 1983), 329–44 (here: 339). See also Joachim Gnilka, "Die Wirkungsgeschichte als Zugang zum Verständnis der Bibel," *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 40 (1989): 51–62.

[30] Mark Knight, "Wirkungsgeschichte, Reception History, Reception Theory," *JSNT* 33 (2010): 137–46 (here: 142).

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primarily based on the historical-critical method, maybe to indicate that it is an ancillary activity. Thiselton, although he is one of those who have worked most on the issue, affirms without discussion the priority of the historical-critical method. Only in a second stage can its findings be refined by considering successive contexts.

> Wrestling with *Wirkungsgeschichte* or reception history opens the door to exegesis as explication: an explication that permits us to see dimensions of meaning that successive contexts of reading bring into sharper focus for our attention.[31]

Thiselton thus sees *Wirkungsgeschichte* as a separate discipline, with an illustrative purpose, intended to enhance the results achieved by traditional methods.

This is the common idea about reception history: Like a holiday in the countryside that persuades jaded city dwellers it's better to keep living downtown, the *Wirkungsgeschichte* allows small expeditions to foreign lands of the past to reveal the beauty of modern exegesis in contrast, as a sort of optional excursion during a cruise.

Three reasons explain why *Wirkungsgeschichte* has erroneously come to be considered a subsidiary discipline of somewhat superfluous exegesis, a kind of hobby for cultured exegetes.

1) The first one stems from a misinterpretation of the very name of *Wirkungsgeschichte*, *histoire de la réception*, history of reception. While Gadamer referred to a flow from the past impacting all interpreters, many exegetes have understood it as a new discipline to promote, consisting of studying the history of the effects of a text. In this respect, Hans-Theo Wrege's *Wirkungsgeschichte des Evangeliums*[32] is particularly emblematic: the book is a history of the way the Gospel has influenced the thinking of great personalities from Ignatius of Antioch to Karl Barth. Similarly, it is characteristic to see how exegetes protest the need not to confuse the *Auslegungsgeschichte* (the history of readings) with the *Wirkungsgeschichte*. Bockmuehl, for example, states: "*Auslegungsgeschichte* […] is indeed part of *Wirkungsgeschichte*, and the two are always interdependent. Nevertheless, a distinction between them remains useful and should be maintained."[33] This quote is typical. The history of interpretations has a long-standing history (as shown by Nancy

[31] Anthony C. Thiselton, *Thiselton on Hermeneutics: The Collected Works and New Essays of Anthony Thiselton*, Ashgate Contemporary Thinkers on Religion (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 304.

[32] Hans-Theo Wrege, *Wirkungsgeschichte des Evangeliums Erfahrungen, Perspektiven u. Möglichkeiten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981).

[33] Markus Bockmuehl, "A Commentator's Approach To 'Effective History' of Philippians," *JSNT* 18 (2015): 57–88 (here: 62).

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Klancher[34]), and it has had good representatives since the 19th century.[35] Assessing that one is part of the other amounts to saying that both are two historical disciplines, one encompassing the other, because it also takes heed of visual arts, cinema, literature, and so on into account.

It must therefore be repeated with absolute certainty: *Wirkungsgeschichte* is not a new exegetical method, but a hermeneutic fact. Or as Evans says so clearly:

> For Gadamer this is not one method among competing ones but is the way any transmitted text is read: it is not a type of reading, it is the very nature of reading.[36]

2) The second reason derives from the persistence of an illusion denounced by Rachel Nicholls:[37] the belief in an original sense of the text. Both Luz and Bockmuehl evoke an "original intention," "original meaning"[38] or "kernel meaning."[39] Judith Kovacs and Christopher Rowlands, yet the authors of the first of the Blackwell comments, maintain that two kinds of meanings exist: what the Bible says and what people believe the Bible says.[40] As Parris states, "the Holy Spirit guides the Church by clarifying the truth through the communal life of the Church."[41] The underlying thought is obvious: on the one hand there lies the "meaning of the text" that traditional exegesis will bring out with its appropriate methods, and, on the other hand, the endless succession of the more or less fanciful interpretations that the centuries have made of it. Like scientists seeking to maintain the elements of an old paradigm in the new, making *Wirkungsgeschichte* a historical discipline could be an

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[34] Nancy Klancher, "A Genealogy for Reception History," *Biblical Interpretation* 21 (2013): 99–129.

[35] For instance Frederic William Farrar, *History of Interpretation: Eight Lectures Preached before the University of Oxford in the Year MDCCCLXXXV on the Foundation of the Late Rev. John Bampton*, Bampton Lectures 1885 (London: Macmillan, 1886).

[36] Robert Charles Evans, *Reception History, Tradition and Biblical Interpretation: Gadamer and Jauss in Current Practice*, Scriptural Traces: Critical Perspectives on the Reception and Influence of the Bible 4 (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 16.

[37] Rachel Nicholls, *Walking on the Water: Reading Mt. 14:22–33 in the Light of its Wirkungsgeschichte*, BibInt 90 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 22–23.

[38] Bockmuehl, "A Commentator's Approach," 62. Ulrich Luz, "The Final Judgment (Mt 25:31–46): An Exercise in 'History of Influence' Exegesis," in *Treasures New and Old: Recent Contributions to Matthean Studies,* ed. David R. Bauer, Symposium Series 1 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1996), 271–310 (here: 309).

[39] Ulrich Luz, *Matthew in History: Interpretation, Influence, and Effects* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994), 22.

[40] Judith Lee Kovacs and Christopher Rowland, *Revelation: The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ*, Blackwell Bible Commentaries (Malden: Blackwell, 2004), xiii.

[41] Parris, *Reception Theory*, 142.

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attempt to salvage what might be saved from the bulldozers of Gadamerian philosophy.

3) The third reason is the vertigo sensation that affects any interpreter faced with the enormity of the effects he discovers. How many times does he surprise himself lamenting about working on the most widely read book over the centuries! For instance, this is what Evans explains at the end of research on the parenetic use of the verb ὑποτάσσειν (to submit) in Paul. Having observed the incredible diversity of understanding and contestation of Pauline discourse, he notes that it is difficult to identify the reception that shape the "pre-understanding" of the subsequent generations of interpreters, as well as the "paradigm shifts."[42] Is this really a surprise since he addresses, without restricting his focus, nothing less than the question of authority? The plethora of readings must necessarily be reduced by passing them through the prism of a particular question asked of the texts – in other words, a leading question. A mention should be made of Víctor Manuel Morales Vásquez's thesis.[43] It contains a remarkable first part that skilfully and profoundly introduces the hermeneutics of Gadamer and Jauss in order to sketch the contours of a theory of biblical reception. Subsequently, this methodology is applied to the first seven verses of the thirteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. It is understandable that within the limits of a dissertation the research could not be exhaustive. However, the gaze stops in the 13th century with serious explanation being provided as to why it would not have been possible to continue into the 21st century. The interesting discoveries gleaned from the comments are not really put into perspective. A detour through the history of reception is expedient only if it allows either the text or the interpreters to be understood.

The same rule applies to the history of reception as it does to history in general: it cannot be written without a prior question orienting the research, reducing the corpus, distinguishing the essential from the incidental. We can never tire of repeating the famous text by Lucien Febvre from his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France in 1933:

> Each history is a choice […]. The historian does not go wandering through the past like a ragpicker in search of finds, but sets out with a precise purpose in mind, a problem to solve, a working hypothesis to verify […]. To elaborate a fact is to construct. If you prefer, it means providing an answer to a question. And if there is no question, there is only nothingness …[44]

[42] Evans, *Rececception History*, 226.

[43] Víctor Manuel Morales Vásquez, *Contours of a Biblical Reception Theory: Studies in the Rezeptionsgeschichte of Romans 13.1–7* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2012).

[44] Lucien Febvre, "De 1892 à 1933, examen de conscience d'une histoire et d'un his-

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III. Proposal: Reading the Bible with the Readers of the Past

My proposal, therefore, is that we should resolutely follow the path of historicity of interpretations and consider all the interpretations that have preceded us. This is what can be called "reading the Bible with the tradition" or "with the Readers of the Past." Before exploring what can be heard under this expression, it is necessary to understand what is meant by "tradition." A provisional definition can be provided, which may need to be clarified and commented on.

1. Conceptual Definition: Tradition

Tradition means all interpretations of New Testament texts that have been transmitted in a linguistic form (exegeses, theological treatises, sermons, literature, etc.), visual (paintings, sculptures, photographs, films, comics, etc.), auditory (music, etc.), without exclusion, considered in their historical and cultural setting.

In other words, I propose to carry out exegesis without refraining from referring to old commentaries and to other media – specifically the plastic arts, since visual exegesis is also exegesis.[45] The key feature is the task of placing the interpretations in context so that they can be understood; not all opinions are contemporary to us and they do not have the same weight in our modern day.

This definition makes it possible *a contrario* to clarify a few points in order to avoid misunderstandings.

1) Tradition does not mean simply what has been transmitted. This definition steers clear of the *Quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum* proclaimed in the *commonitorium* of Vincent of Lérins. The purpose of this book is not to persuade people that "nothing has changed" or to seek an "eternal truth" in the text maintained throughout all interpretations. On the contrary, it adopts without reservation Gadamer's statement:

> In tradition is constantly an element of freedom [...] Even the most genuine and pure tradition does not persist because of the inertia of what once existed. It needs to be affirmed, embraced, cultivated.[46]

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torien," in *Combats pour l'histoire*, L'Ancien et le Nouveau 12 (Paris: A. Colin, 1992), 3–17 (here: 6–7).

[45] Martin O'Kane, "Wirkungsgeschichte and Visual Exegesis: The Contribution of Hans-Georg Gadamer," *JSNT* 33 (2010): 147–59. Régis Burnet, "Plaidoyer pour l'iconographie biblique," *Études* 2019/4 (2019): 95–103.

[46] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 282.

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2) Tradition is not confessionalism either. As Bockmuehl excellently states, "the Bible has had a *Wirkungsgeschichte* which also extends to the losers of Church history, to heretics and indeed to complete outsiders."[47] Under the guise of a call to tradition, a distinction should not be made between "appropriate" and "inappropriate" statements. On the other hand, this does not exclude – and this was the beginning of this book – a dialogue with the theological discourse, one of the most important receptions of the biblical text.

3) Tradition is not intellectual snobbery either. Maintaining a broad conception of culture is essential in order not to deprive oneself of what is one of the clearest sources of the text's effects.[48] It is often easier to analyse an interpretation of the text in an unskilled painter who reproduces proven models than in a continuously innovating genius like Rembrandt. In the same way, the kitsch clichés of badly pious films, the torrents of coarseness of hard-rock songs, or the silly images of catechism comic strips sometimes say more about the zeitgeist than a litany of Arvo Pärt or a Pulitzer Prize-winning novel.

4) Finally, the purpose of reading with tradition is not to return to an interpretation regulated by institutions. This the reason why I chose to use the terms "reading *with* tradition" and not "reading *in* tradition," which would suggest the practice of traditional reading. This reading in dialogue with tradition, and especially with the theological tradition, is not enslaved by it. Thinking *with* tradition can lead to thinking *against* tradition.[49] At least, if it happens, it will be in full knowledge of the tradition, and without allowing prejudices to be expressed, since they have been made explicit.

According to the beautiful formula of Moisés Mayordomo, reading with tradition is "remembering the future of the text" (*Erinnerung an die Zukunft der Texte*).[50] We should not only recall the different readings of the past that were the text's future at the time it was written. With Gadamerian etymology, we should internalise the text as our future.

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[47] Bockmuehl, "A Commentator's Approach," 61.

[48] Timothy Beal, "Reception History and Beyond: Toward the Cultural History of Scriptures," *BibInt* 19 (2011): 357–72.

[49] See for example the criticism of the notion of Hell in Matthew by Heikki Räisänen, "Matthäus und die Hölle. Von Wirkungsgeschichte zu ethischer Kritik," in *Die prägende Kraft der Texte: Hermeneutik und Wirkungsgeschichte des Neuen Testaments: Ein Symposium zu Ehren von Ulrich Luz,* ed. Moisés Mayordomo, SBS 199 (Stuttgart: KBW, 2005), 103–24.

[50] Moisés Mayordomo, "Wirkungsgeschichte als Erinnerung an die Zukunft der Texte," in *Die prägende Kraft der Texte: Hermeneutik und Wirkungsgeschichte des Neuen Testaments: Ein Symposium zu Ehren von Ulrich Luz,* ed. Moisés Mayordomo, SBS 199 (Stuttgart: KBW, 2005), 11–14.

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2. Why Read the New Testament with Tradition?

Why read the New Testament with Tradition, and what is the benefit of the proposal offered in this book? At the end of this first section, we can already sketch out an initial answer: taking the past readings into account makes it possible to resist the temptation of the *tabula rasa* method. To believe that we are our own beginning is to smuggle into our discourse some opinions that precede us and which we will no longer question. Reading in tradition, therefore, makes it possible to fight a certain form of methodological solipsism to engage in methodological debates.

One of the starting points of this book can also be addressed: the divorce between theology and exegesis. Indeed, as Gerhard Ebeling showed in *Wort Gottes und Tradition*, the history of the Church can be described as a history of the effects of the reception of the Bible in the Church.[51] It is the only factor of unity, the only parameter that explains why, beyond the separations and changes that have occurred throughout its history, this human group called "Church" has an unmistakable identity. These different appropriations constitute precisely what is called theology, as Froehlich reminds us by making the same observation as Ebeling.[52] To revive the various readings of the text is to renew the dialogue with theology.

But can we go further?

Were my intention to demonstrate indisputably and definitively the superiority of a historical hermeneutics over all other interpretative theories, I should prove its complete adequacy with what is at stake in the understanding process. Unfortunately, this is precisely the question that hermeneutics does not solve. Gadamer eventually postulates the uniqueness of a meaning of the text, which he calls *die Sache*, "the thing" of the text: it is the exposure of the interpreter to this *Sache* that constitutes understanding. The *Sache* somehow changes the mind of the one who meets it. But Gadamer finally acknowledged that a certain degree of "miracle" occurs. Ricœur prefers to avoid talking about a particular meaning and favoured the much vaguer metaphor of the "world of the text." For him, to understand is to appropriate a proposal for a world, which is not behind him, as a hidden intention, but before him, as what the work unfolds and reveals. Even if Ricœur does not

[51] Gerhard Ebeling, *The Word of God and Tradition: Historical Studies Interpreting the Divisions of Christianity* (transl. S. H. Hooke; London: Collins, 1968). See also Friedrich de Boor, "Kirchengeschichte oder Auslegungsgeschichte?," *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 97 (1972): 401–13.

[52] Karlfried Froehlich, "Church History and the Bible," *Lutheran Quartely* 5 (1991): 127–42.

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say so in as many words, his reader gets the impression that understanding is for him something inexplicable; it just happens, that's all.[53]

We must therefore come to terms with the idea that hermeneutics, which presents itself as an art of understanding, cannot explain what understanding is. But can the literary method explain what it means to create a literary commentary? Can the historian clarify what it means to "make history?" We must also accept the idea that we can approach this complex process of understanding through the means of metaphors and approximations.

Furthermore, I am *not* proposing here a new exegetical method, but a *hermeneutic posture* that assumes that the history of interpretations and readings must be considered. Having demonstrated that the use of methods does not produce decisive changes in the interpretation of texts, but rather serves to put the interpretations into a coherent form that suits the spirit of the time, it would be quite paradoxical to propose a new method.

Like Diogenes the Cynic who proved the movement by walking, the only means to demonstrate the fertility of the proposal is to show it in action, according to the biblical proverb (Matt 7:16) that we recognise the tree by its fruits. The second part of this book therefore focuses on showing the fruits of the tree.

[53] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Discourse on Matter: Hermeneutics and the 'Miracle' of Understanding," in *Hermeneutics at the Crossroads,* ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer et al., Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Religion (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 3–34.

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Chapter 4

Reading with Tradition to Be Aware of Prejudices

"It is impossible to make ourselves aware of a prejudice while it is constantly operating unnoticed, but only when it is, so to speak, provoked."[1] This previously quoted statement, by Hans-Georg Gadamer, perfectly describes the first reason why we must go back to tradition: it serves to identify preconceptions or prejudices. Two examples will help us out grasping the usefulness of such an approach.

I. The Book Burning of Ephesus

The first one is a minor episode from the text of the Acts of the Apostles: the *auto-da-fé* of Ephesus in chapter 19.

> When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honour. Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed what they had done. A number who had practised sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. In this way, the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.

1. Dismantling the Prejudice of the Fight Against Pagan Magic

At first sight, the meaning of the text is clear. After the failure of the sons of Sceva, the inhabitants of Ephesus realise that their magic no longer works and that the time is ripe for converting. They arrange a bonfire to get rid of it. The author of Luke-Acts exults: "the word of God" – a technical term of Acts to say the whole Christian mission – triumphs.[2]

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[1] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 298.

[2] Henry J. Cadbury, "Names for Christians and Christianity," in *The Acts of the Apostles,* ed. Kirsopp Lake and Henry J. Cadbury, The Beginnings of Christianity 5 (London: Macmillan, 1920), 269–77. Jerome Kodell, "'The Word of God Grew' – The Ecclesial Tendency of Logos in Acts 6:7; 12:24; 19:20," *Bib* 55 (1974): 505–19.

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On the basis of these observations, many commentators consider that the text recalls a great victory over magic.[3] They establish a link with the *Ephesia grammata*, a kind of magic formula for success, protection or healing.[4] Burning spells is quite a good idea: the fight against magic requires a demonstrative act. The power of the enchantments lies widely in their secret nature, so it is convenient to bring them into the light.[5]

This interpretation takes up, without the moral considerations, what Ernest Renan said in the 19th century:

> Struck by the superiority of Paul's formula, the lovers of occult sciences came to him to exchange confidences concerning their practices. Many even brought their books of magic and burnt them; they valued at fifty thousand pieces of silver (drachma) the price of the *Ephesia Grammata* consumed in this manner.
>
> Let us turn our eyes away from these sad shadows. All that is done by the popular ignorant masses is spotted with unpleasantness. Illusion, chimera, are the conditions of the great things created by the people. It is only the work of wise men which can be pure; but wise men are usually powerless. We have a physiology and a medicine very superior to that of Paul; we are disengaged from a crowd of errors of which he partook, alas! and it is to be feared that we may never do a thousandth part of what he did. It is only when humanity as a whole shall be instructed, and reach a certain point of positive philosophy, that human affairs will be led by reason. One would never understand the history of the past if one did not refuse to treat as good and great movements in which many mean and equivocal features are mixed up.[6]

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[3] Rudolf Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, EKKNT 5 (vol. 2: Apg 13–28; Zürich/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Benziger/Neukirchener Verl., 1986), 173. Jürgen Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, Neues Testament Deutsch 5.18 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), 287. Philippe Bossuyt and Jean Radermakers, *Témoins de la Parole de la Grâce: lecture des Actes des Apôtres*, IET 16,2 (vol. 2. Lecture continue; Bruxelles: Institut d'études théologiques, 1995), 584. Susan R. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989), 94–99. Hans-Josef Klauck, *Magie und Heidentum in der Apostelgeschichte des Lukas*, Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 167 (Stuttgart: KBW, 1996), 116.

[4] Daniel Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres*, CNT 5B (vol. 2: Actes 13–28; Genève: Labor et Fides, 2015), 201. Otto Bauernfeind, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, THKNT 5 (Leipzig: Deichert, 1939), 232. Ernst Haenchen, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, KEK 3.15 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968). Frederick Fyvie Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 369. David W. Gill and Bruce W. Winter, *The Book of Acts in its Graeco-Roman Setting*, The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting 2 (Carlisle, UK: The Paternoster Press, 1994), 314. Charles Kingsley Barrett, *Acts of the Apostles*, ICC (vol. 2; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 913. Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, Reading the New Testament (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2005), 169. Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 384.

[5] Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 412.

[6] Ernest Renan, *Saint Paul*, History of Origins of Christianity 3 (transl. Ingersoll Lockwood; London: Mathieson, 1869), 182–83.

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Although amusing by dint of his sanctimonious self-assurance, Renan is by no means the precursor of this idea, which dates back to the Fathers of the Church. Understanding the Ephesus evangelisation as the victory over magic goes back to Eusebius who, in his *Evangelical Demonstration*, writes:

> It shows what their pupils were like, how pure and honourable in disposition, determined that nothing evil in them should lurk below the surface, and how boldly they prided themselves on their change from the worse to the better. Yes, they who gave their magic books to the flames, and voted for their complete destruction, left no one in any doubt that they would never again have anything to do with sorcery, and from that day forth were pure from the slightest suspicion of it.[7]

All the elements necessary to a commonplace united themselves: new converts, the darkness of magic, the redeeming power of fire. The Bishop of Caesarea has a solid reason for reading the text in this way. He is engaged in an apologetic discourse. Book III of the *Evangelical Demonstration* aims to defend the faith against its assailants. After replying to those who say that Christ was an impostor (chap. III and IV), Eusebius advocates the reality of miracles (chap. V), while criticising those who believe that Christ was a magician (chap. VI). The passage of Acts 19 is entirely fitting, and Eusebius has every interest in taking it in the direction of a full, complete and whole renunciation of those who convert to magic. Therefore, he reads it without nuance.

If the reading is old, the allusion to the *Ephesia grammata*, these amulets apparently coming from Ephesus, is a novelty. It dates back to the 16th century and the writings of Erasmus, who quotes them in his *adagii*.[8] Therefore, it does not come from a precise reading of the text, but from the humanistic taste for the oddities of Antiquity. Henri Estienne repeated this intellectual curio, in his thesaurus, this time with reference to the biblical text: thus, it enters exegesis. From that moment on, it became commonplace for the examination of the pericope. For instance, the *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* by Cornelius a Lapide (1567–1637)[9] quotes it, a proof of the force

[7] Eusebius Cæsarensis, *Demonstratio euangelica* iii, 6, 18–19, transl. Eusebius of Caesarea, *The Proof of the Gospel: Being the Demonstratio Evangelica of Eusebius of Caesarea*, Translations of Christian Literature Series 1 Greek Texts (transl. W. J. Ferrar; London: Macmillan, 1920), 146.

[8] Proverb 748 Desiderius Erasmus, *Erasmi Roterodami Adagiorum Chiliades Tres, Ac Centuriæ Fere Totidem* (Venetiis [Venie]: in Ædibus Adli, 1508), 174g. *At ἐφέσια γράμματα, Ephesite literæ, pro Magicæ literæ: quoniam Ephesi plurimum magicarum artium professores fuerunt.* Henri Estienne, *Θησαυρὸς τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς γλώσσης. Thesaurus græcæ linguæ, ab Henrico Stephano constructus* (Genevæ: excudebat H. Stephanus, 1572), lxix.

[9] Cornelius a Lapide, *Commentarius in Acta Apostolorum* (Lugduni [Lyon]: Léonard Plaignard/Jean-Baptiste Guillimin, 1689), 284.

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of the allusion, since Cornelius compiles the opinions of his time in order to build a sort of *glossa ordinaria* of the commentaries from the Counter-Reformation. In the intellectual framework set by Eusebius (the fight against magic), this erudite precision comes at the right time, because it provides a concrete element to fashion the relentless battle against magic.

A painting by Eustache Le Sueur in the Louvre, *La Prédication de Saint Paul à Éphèse* (1649),[10] is an epitome of this perspective. In a city of antiquity, in front of a colossal white marble temple likely representing the sanctuary of Artemis, Paul had large books, boxes, scrolls, and slates burned. Ephesians of all ages dressed in blue, the colour of reason, line up to bring their volumes to a bonfire that a young slave dressed in red, the colour of faith, is lighting. In the foreground on the left, a man with a tiara spreads out the pages of the book to make them burn better, he could be a depiction of Greek magic; on the right, an old man with his head covered bends under the weight of his books and scrolls, possibly an image of Jewish magic. In the centre, Paul, dressed in a bright red coat, stands upright with impressive majesty, pointing to the realities from above with his index finger. He too carries a book, probably the Scriptures. The composition relies on contrasts that reinforce the reading of a great victory over paganism: the verticality and hieraticism of the apostle against horizontality (the slave), the agitation and curves of the crowd; the resolute and open attitude of Paul against hesitation, defiant behaviours (the man standing under the elbow of the apostle) or even the dissimulation of the crowd (the man hiding his face under a hood), single book held in Paul's hand against the multiple forms, supports and formats of the pagan writing. This painting is a prestigious masterpiece offered by the goldsmiths to the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris during May (hence the name *may* designate these pictures[11]) to show their edifying piety; it is, therefore, a triumphalist work, proudly displaying the efficiency of apostolic preaching.

The fact that scholars retained this interpretation for many years underlines how difficult it is to get rid of the dualist interpretation of the history of the Church constructed by Eusebius of Caesarea: Christians against pagans, Christians against Jews, orthodoxy against heterodoxy, and so on. Even contemporary commentators who do not believe in it are unable to free themselves from the idea that the author of the Acts did not have such oppositions in mind. They repeat it as an unquestioned prejudice.

[10] Eustache Le Sueur, *La Prédication de Saint Paul à Éphèse*, oil on canvas, 394 × 328 cm, 1649. Paris, musée du Louvre.

[11] Annick Notter, *Les Mays de Notre-Dame de Paris* (Arras: Musée des Beaux-Arts d'Arras, 1999).

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In fact, looking back at the text, it is easy to realise that the story is not dualistic at all; on the contrary, the author wrote a nuanced narrative.

1. This is not a campaign against paganism. – The text makes it clear that fear of the Lord comes both from the Greeks and the Jews. It is, therefore, the whole population that, without distinction, starts to be afraid. This should not come as a surprise: in the Jewish world, the influence of magic is well known, as is the reputation of magic that Jews had in antiquity.[12] It is therefore not necessary to build an opposition between the pagan devotees of magic and the Jews who are already Christians. All Ephesians are afraid – including Christians –, many believers come to confession, and a small number burn the books.

2. The Ephesia grammata *have little to do with the text.* – Although the hypothesis is attractive, the consumed items cannot be *Ephesia grammata*. As a matter of fact, the comic poet Anaxilas said in the 4th century BC that *Ephesia grammata* were series of letters carried in small sewn bags[13]: they have nothing to do with the burnt books (the text says βίβλιοι). An extract from Clement of Alexandria's *Stromata* discloses the content of the formulae, quoting the Pythagorean Androcydes: ἄσκιον, κατάσκιον, λίξ, αἴσια, τετράξ, δαμναμενεὺς, αἴσια.[14] Archaeology, for instance a metal sheet discovered in 1899 in Phalasarna, Crete, which bears ασκι κατασκι, confirmed the sequence.[15] Although Clement offers a symbolic explanation of this word sequence, many ancient writers agree that they have no meaning, although popular beliefs consider them as powerful entities one can address in an imploring fashion.[16] They are therefore similar to these magic words known as φθόγρος ("resonances"), a particular language that mimics the phonic identity of the divinity in a series of letters, "barbaric" words or foreign names. This language at the margin of the language was believed to be powerful.[17]

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[12] Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[13] ἐν σκυταρίοις ῥαπτοῖσι φορῶν/ἐφέσια γράμματα καλά, "Carrying beautiful Ephesian letters in small sewn bags." Reference and commentary in Ernst Kuhnert, "ἐφέσια γράμματα," in *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft,* ed. August Pauly and Georg Wissowa (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1905), 2771–73. Chester C. McCown, "The Ephesia Grammata in Popular Belief," *TAPA* 54 (1923): 128–40. Karl Preizendanz, "Ephesia grammata," in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum,* ed. Theodor Klauser et al. (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1962), 515–20.

[14] *Stromata* I, 630.

[15] Walter Burkert, "Genagelter Zauber Zu den *Ephesia Grammata*," *ZPE* 183 (2012): 109–10.

[16] McCown, "The Ephesia Grammata in Popular Belief," 136–37.

[17] Sabina Crippa, "Les marges du langage dans les contextes sacrés: φθόγγος, φθέγγομαι," in *Manières de penser dans l'Antiquité méditerranéenne et orientale: Mélanges*

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Their function is apotropaic: an anecdote reported by Photius, Suda and Eustathius reminds us of the case of this Ephesian athlete who triumphed at the Olympic Games over a Milesian man until the ἐφέσια γράμματα he was hiding was taken from him.[18]

In short, *ephesia grammata* cannot be the target of auto-da-fé. Moreover, despite their name, they do not seem to originate from Ephesus (where magic was not otherwise unknown),[19] but from Crete, since several traditions claim that the Dactyls of Mount Ida coined them. The name could derive from ἐφίημι (let go)[20] or from the Babylonian *epêšu*, "bewitch."[21]

3. The paradigmatic value of the text is obvious. – The text reaches an unusual level of precision: the value of the burned books amounts to 50,000 silver coins. Although it is impossible to have an exact idea of the amount, especially since we do not know whether the currency being referred to is denarii, drachmas or talents,[22] the sum is huge anyway. Moreover, the fact that Luke does not specify the currency unit suggests that the amount is figurative. Bede the Venerable understood this symbolism in his commentary:

> They discovered that the money was 50,000 denarii. And if in the Gospel a debt amounting to 50 or 500 denarii is forgiven, I believe that it is because it is through the five senses of the body that we transgress in this life the precepts of the decalogue.
>
> Moreover, the number 50 often refers to penance and the remission of sins, hence the fact that there are fifty psalms of penance and that the year of remission [the Sabbatical year] is the fiftieth.[23]

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offerts à Francis Schmidt par ses élèves, ses collègues et ses amis, ed. Christophe Batsch and Mădălina Vârtejanu-Joubert, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 134 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 269–80. The term ἐφέσια γράμματα has become proverbial for these series of letters. Carl Wessely, *'Ephesia grammata' aus Papyrusrollen, Inschriften, Gemmen, etc.* (Wien: A. Pichlers Wwe und Sohn, 1886). David Jordan, "Ephesia grammata at Himera," *ZPE* 130 (2000): 104–07.

[18] Campbell Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets, Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, University of Michigan Studies Humanistic Series 49 (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1950).

[19] Peter Lampe, "Acta 19 im Spiegel der ephesinischen Inschriften," *BZ* 36 (1992): 59–76.

[20] Richard Wünsch, "Neue Fluchtafeln," *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 55 (1900): 62–85.

[21] Adolf Deissmann, "Ephesia Grammata," in *Abhandlungen zur semitischen Religionskunde und Sprachwissenschaft Wolf Wilhelm Grafen von Baudissin zum 26. September 1917 überreicht von Freunden und Schülern,* ed. Wilhelm Frankenberg and Friedrich Küchler, BZAW 33 (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1918), 121–24.

[22] Kay A. Y. Ehling, "Zwei Anmerkungen zum ἀργύριον in Apg 19,19," *ZNW* 94 (2003): 269–75.

[23] Inuenerunt pecuniam denariorum quinquaginta milium. Et debitoribus in euangelio sub quinquagenario et quingentenario numero denariorum debita laxantur, credo quia corporis quinque sensibus subsistentes in hac uita decalogi præcepta transgredimur. Aliter: Quinquagenarius sæpe numerus refertur ad pænitentiam remissionem que peccatorum,

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Although some may seek to preserve the historical value of the text,[24] it is undoubtedly more appropriate to remain cautious on this point,[25] especially since the passage is isolated in the narrative and seems to cover a relatively long period, as highlighted by (the use of) the imperfect ἤρχοντο ("they came") points out, suggesting that these events took time …[26] The book burning of Ephesus is instead one of the many "summaries" of the Acts of the Apostles which interrupt the narrative to assess the progress of the Gospel.[27] It is a kind of trope.[28]

2. Offering an Alternative Reading

Once the prejudice inherited from history identified, what alternative interpretation might we offer? The tradition provides us here again with a solution. A generation after Eusebius, Basil of Caesarea cites the same text in his *regula moralia* and concludes with this moral principle:

> For those who repent, the renunciation of sins alone is not enough; we also need fruits worthy of repentance.[29]

From the text, Basil does not retain at all the aspect of the struggle against magic, but rather the extent of penance. And this is precisely the reading John Chrysostom proposes in the first of his sermons on the confession.

> Do you not see the active obedience and quick salvation? Do you not see how the weaknesses have been multiplied for them? But the swiftness of their willingness has corrected everything. And you who wander alike and with deceitful thoughts, despising this difficulty and fleeing from this deception of men as if it came from the serpent, strive to show an adapted penance, before this threat and this lamentation against which nothing can be done: the time is convenient, do not ignore it.[30]

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unde et quinquagesimus pænitentiæ psalmus et quinquagesimus remissionis est annus. Beda Venerabilis, *Expositio actuum apostolorum* 19, ed. M. L. W. Laistner (CCSL 121, 1983), 49.

[24] Lampe, "Acta 19." Paul R. Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius*, WUNT 166 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 150–54.

[25] With Haenchen, *Apostelgeschichte*, 544. Barrett, *Acts II*, 914.

[26] Eugène Jacquier, *Les Actes des apôtres*, EBib (Paris: Lecoffre/Gabalda, 1926), 577.

[27] Barrett, *Acts II*, 915.

[28] Richard I. Pervo, *Acts*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), 481. Pervo sees here a "trope."

[29] Ὅτι τοῖς μετανοοῦσιν οὐκ ἀρκεῖ πρὸς σωτηρίαν ἡ ἀναχώρησις μόνη τῶν ἁμαρτημάτων, χρεία δὲ αὐτοῖς καὶ καρπῶν ἀξίων τῆς μετανοίας. Basilius Cæsariensis, *Regulæ morales*, reg. 1, cap. 3, PG 31, 701.

[30] Εἶδες ὑπακοὴν ὀξεῖαν καὶ σωτηρίαν σύντομον; εἶδες πῶς ἐπληθύνθησαν αἱ ἀσθένειαι αὐτῶν; Ἀλλὰ τὸ τάχος τῆς ὑπακοῆς πάντα κατώρθωσε. Καὶ ὑμεῖς οἱ τὰ ὅμοια πλανώμενοι,

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There again, no allusion to magic, but a meditation on repentance. To understand why the text could be read this way, it is necessary to revisit it.

The passage raises not only the question of magic but also that of faith.[31] The past participle πεπιστευκότες suggests that those who go to confession are long-time believers and not new converts. They are instead already Christians, and, according to the context of Paul's preaching, they are probably Jewish.[32] As Eugène Jacquier noted with a hint of irony, "the Confession of Christ does not necessarily imply immunity from all evil deeds."[33]

The issue raised by the text is, therefore, the authenticity of the conversion; an interrogation repeated several times in the Acts, particularly regarding the Samaritans's conversion by Philip, "confirmed" by Peter and John (Acts 8) or regarding those Johannites Paul met at Ephesus (Acts 19) and brought back to the small Christian flock.

Through these episodes, Luke acknowledge the existence of degrees of faith and even the possibility of an impure faith. Within an already Christianised life, there can exist various and disparate remains of the old beliefs. He refers to these as these περίεργα, "curiosity" but also "futility."[34] Of course, we can call these leftovers of previous faith "magic," but only if we abandon the old perspective on magic, inherited from Frazer or Malinowski, i. e., the survival of an inferior or primitive form of religion.[35] Magic is above all a category intended to define "the other" in communities, either the one who does not have the mission to perform wonders (this is what dis-

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καὶ γνώμῃ ἀπατώμενοι, καταπτύσαντες τὴν τοιαύτην χαλεπὴν καὶ ἀπάνθρωπον ἀπάτην, καὶ ὡς ἀπὸ ὄφεως ἀποφυγόντες, σπουδάσατε ἀξίαν μετάνοιαν ἐπιδείξασθαι, πρὶν φθάσῃ ἡμῖν ἡ ἀνυπόστατος ἀπειλὴ καὶ οἰμωγή· ὁ γὰρ καιρὸς ἐγγὺς, καὶ μὴ ἀμελῆτε. Ioannes Chrysostomus, *De pænitentia* 1, PG 60,697

[31] Scott Shauf, *Theology as History, History as Theology: Paul in Ephesus in Acts 19*, BZNW 133 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005), 228–29.

[32] Jacob Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, KEK 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 484.

[33] Jacquier, *Les Actes des apôtres*, 577.

[34] According to conventional practice to designate the methods of enchantment to condemn them, as proven by *P. Coll. Youtie 1*, who reproduces the edict of a prefect during the time of Septimius Severus. Greg H. R. Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity: A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Published in 1976* (vol. 1; Sydney: Macquarie University Ancient History Documentary Research Centre, 1981), 47–51.

[35] James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1922), 49–51. Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion, and Other Essays* (Glencoe, UK: Free Press, 1948). Stanley E. Porter, "Magic in the Book of Acts," in *A Kind of Magic: Understanding Magic in the New Testament and its Religious Environment,* ed. Michael Labahn and L. J. Lietaert Peerbolte, Library of New Testament Studies 306 (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 107–20.

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tinguishes the magician from the miracle worker in Christianity),[36] or the one who integrates elements that are foreign to it into the group's belief, that is, the so-called syncretism.[37]

This issue of traces of old habits still in use remained the central question of the missionary Church at least until the Twelfth Century.[38] Luke's answer to this question will prove decisive for the rest of Christian history: if one wants to become a perfect Christian, one has to perform a public conversion. In his opinion, true conversion is not a private act, but a public act.

The history of the reception reveals that commentators saw in the text the prodromes of the future sacrament of confession – a reason why Cornelius a Lapide used this episode at length to defend it against the Lutherans who challenged him.[39] During the first millennium, penance was public (and often spectacular) and the Lateran IV Council belatedly instituted the secret of confession, a sign of a complete revolution in mentalities.[40] In ancient mentality, only public coercion – and the harshness of penance – could guarantee the effectiveness of contrition.

Finally, it is necessary to focus on the very choice of the gesture accomplished by the new converts: burning books. This voluntary deed belongs to a long tradition of conversion. Burning a written document has always been considered as a hugely symbolic act that must be done in public as a sign of life change.[41] This conversion can be aesthetic – Plato had probably burned all his poetry except his erotic epigrams[42] and Augustus's intervention was the only reason for the *Æneid* not being burned after Virgil's death. It can also be religious[43]: when the Peripatetic Metrocles converted to cynicism, he burned the notes he had taken during Theophrastus's classes as well as his

[36] Andy M. Reimer, *Miracle and Magic: A Study in the Acts of the Apostles and the Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, JSNTSup 235 (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002).

[37] David E. Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," in *ARNW,* ed. Wolfgang Haase and Hildegard Temporini (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1980), 1507–57.

[38] Richard A. Fletcher, *The Barbarian Conversion from Paganism to Christianity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999). Günter Klein, "Der Synkretismus als theologisches Problem in der ältesten christlichen Apologetik," in *Rekonstruktion und Interpretation: Gesammelte Aufsätze zum Neuen Testament*, Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie 50 (München: Kaiser, 1969), 258–79. Cited by Pervo, *Acts*, 480.

[39] Cornelius a Lapide, *Commentarius in Acta Apostolorum*, 283–84.

[40] Denzinger, 814. Henri Rondet, "Esquisse d'une histoire du Sacrement de Pénitence," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 80 (1958): 562–84.

[41] Clarence A. Forbes, "Books for the Burning," *TAPA* 67 (1936): 114–25.

[42] Claudius Ælianus, *Historia varia* ii, 30; Apuleius, *Apologia* 10; Eustathius Thessalonicensis, *In Homeri Illiadem* xvii, 392.

[43] Plinius, *Historia naturalis* vii, 114. Divus Augustus carmina Vergili cremari contra testamenti eius verecundiam vetuit, maius que ita vati testimonium contigit quam si ipse sua probavisset. "The divine Augustus forbade the burning of Virgil's poems without any

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own tragedies.[44] Likewise, Ælianus tells the story of a sick Epicurean priest named Euphronios warned in a dream by Asclepius to burn Epicure's works to use as a poultice to heal his wound.[45]

In Luke's case, the choice of the gesture is clear: since burning books is a spectacular and costly act (both symbolic and financial), it triggers the reaction of those who watch it. As such, burning is not only a personal commitment in front of the crowd; it is also a way to make an impression and provoke emulation.[46] So the evangelist can end the passage by saying that the Lord's word has increased in power: the spectacular act of the bonfire reinforcing the Word.

But at the same time, this little "summary" in the Acts of the Apostles entails a symbolic cost. By promoting the burning of the books, it participates (perhaps without realising it) in a pre-existing history of auto-da-fé. This operation is no longer the voluntary act of a person who publicly shows his conversion by burning what he once believed in, but the decision of the state or a social group to make ideas disappear by burning the books that contain them. This is not a Christian invention: Antiquity witnessed this practice too.[47] One can enumerate the famous examples of the burning of Protagoras's *On the Gods* treatise, which began with the famous sentence: "concerning the gods, I cannot say if they exist or if they do not exist," the *De Bacchanalibus* senatus-consulte of 186 BCE which prescribed the burning of Dionysian oracle books,[48] the burning of Jewish books organised by Antiochus Epiphanes (1M 1:56) or that held by Augustus concerning all oracle books.[49]

Inspired by these examples, but perhaps also by the very acts of the first generation, Christian authorities practised auto-da-fé as a means of evangelisation, to the point of making an almost ritual use of it.[50] Emperor

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regard for the modesty of his last will, and this constitutes a greater testimony for the poet than if he had himself approved his works."

[44] Plinius, *Historia naturalis* vii, 95.

[45] Claudius Ælianus, fragment 89. Emma Jeannette Levy Edelstein and Ludwig Edelstein, *Asclepius: A Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies*, Ancient Religion and Mythology (New York: Arno Press, 1975), 200–01.

[46] Shauf, *Theology as History*, 233.

[47] Forbes, "Books for the Burning," 117–19. Arthur S. Pease, "Notes on Book-Burning," in *Munera studiosa,* ed. Massey Hamilton Shepherd (Cambridge, UK: The Episcopal Theological School, 1946), 145–60.

[48] Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* xxxix, 16, 8.

[49] Suetonius, *Augustus* xxxi, 1.

[50] Daniel Sarefield, "The Symbolics of Book Burning: The Establishment of a Christian Ritual of Persecution," in *The Early Christian Book,* ed. William E. Klingshirn and Linda Safran, CUA Studies in Early Christianity (Washington: Catholic University of

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Jovian burned down an entire library of pagan books built by his predecessor, Emperor Julian.[51] After him, the bonfires followed one another at an accelerated pace, both against magical practices, such as the books of Bishop Paulinus of Dacia, burned around 360 by Macedonius, another bishop,[52] or the auto-da-fé of the writings of Porphyry in 448, and against enemies on the inside such as the writings of Eunomius of Cyzicus in 398 by Arcadius,[53] those of Nestorius by Theodosius and Valentinian in 435 and 448.[54] This persecution was, however, not limited to emperors or bishops: in his chronicle, Fredegar says that the Visigoth king Reccared I, freshly converted from Arianism, organised a gigantic pyre of Arian writing in 587. As for the rest, from the burning of the Talmud in 1242 at the great bonfires of Nuremberg, the horrific practice enjoyed great prosperity …[55]

To sum up, what is the prejudice that made this text fascinating, while preventing it from being read correctly? Why does it still have a strength? Undoubtedly because it allows a binary and convincing explanation of the rise of Christianity. We see the effectiveness of the detour through tradition: by exhuming alternative readings, one makes it possible to revive curiosity about the text and to review more precisely the nature of these not-so-real *realia*.

II. Doubting Thomas

Leaving the apostolic Ephesus to go back to the Paschal Jerusalem, we can recall a better-known episode – namely, the appearance of the Risen One to the Apostle Thomas. Here, the recourse to tradition will not help with "fixing"

America Press, 2007), 159–76. Dirk Rohmann, *Christianity, Book-Burning, and Censorship in Late Antiquity: Studies in Text Transmission*, Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 135 (Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2016).

[51] The Souda tells the anecdote in the article Ἰοβιανός and by the fragment 181 of the *Universal Chronicle* of John of Antioch.

[52] Hilarius Pictaviensis, *Fragmenta* III, 27 (*PL* 10, 674).

[53] *Codex Iustinianus* I, 1, 3. *Codex Theodosianus* XVI, 5, 34.

[54] *Codex Iustinianus* I, 1, 3.

[55] Matthew Fishburn, *Burning Books* (Basingstoke/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). Rebecca Knuth, *Burning Books and Leveling Libraries: Extremist Violence and Cultural Destruction* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006). Rebecca Knuth, *Libricide: The Regime-Sponsored Destruction of Books and Libraries in the Twentieth Century* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003). Lucien X. Polastron and Jon E. Graham, *Books on Fire: The Destruction of Libraries throughout History* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2007). James Raven, *Lost Libraries: The Destruction of Great Book Collections since Antiquity* (Houndmills/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

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an interpretation, but rather seeing how a reading prejudice leads to a one-sided reading of a far more polysemic text.

1. The "Doubt" of Saint Thomas as Prejudice

A proverbial commonplace oriented the reading of John 20:19–29: the doubt of Saint Thomas. Whether in English by the expression *Doubting Thomas*, in German by *Thomas ungläubige*, in Italian by *Sono come San Tommaso, se non vedo non credo*, or *être comme Saint Thomas* in French, the apostle is forever associated with doubt.

One particularly famous artwork sums up this doubt attributed to Thomas: *The Incredulity of Saint Thomas* by Caravaggio.[56] In this painting reduced to its purest narrative expression – against a dark background that suppresses elements of decoration – three men have their eyes fixed on the wound that Christ exposes by opening the flap of his cloak. The *chiaroscuro* highlights the wrinkles on their forehead and shows their intense concentration. In the foreground, Thomas is plunging his finger into the wound. More exactly, Jesus, with a firm gesture, is leading the index finger into the injury; a non-bleeding slit, with sharp protruding edges, revealing soft and healthy skin. The extreme intensity of the looks, the light underlining the interaction of the hands – the one that leads and the one that plunges into the body –, the elongated format of the painting that gives the viewer the illusion of being at the heart of the scene,[57] the extreme realism of the skin rendering make a kind of scientific experiment of this moment, in harmony with the emerging scientific spirit of the late Renaissance.[58] The picture praises experience and touch in a solemn moment reinforced by the contrast between the rustic and poorly dressed figures of the apostles and the extraordinary nobility of their attitude.

However impressive this painting may be, it is part of the long history of Christian iconography. As a matter of fact, over the years, artists did not hesitate to represent the real nature of Saint Thomas's touch. A scene from mythology inspired the first type: the wound of the Amazons.[59] Like these

[56] Caravage, *The Incredulity of Saint Thomas*, oil on canvas, 107 × 146 cm 1601–1602. Potsdam, Stiftung Preußische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg.

[57] Michael Fried, *The Moment of Caravaggio*, The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts 35.51 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 83–86.

[58] Erin E. Benay, "Touching is Believing: Doubting Thomas in Counter-Reformatory Rome," in *Caravaggio: Reflections and Refractions,* ed. Lorenzo Pericolo and David M. Stone, Visual Culture in Early Modernity (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2014), 59–82.

[59] Patrick R. Crowley, "Doubting Thomas and the Matter of Embodiment on Early Christian Sarcophagi," *Art History* 41 (2018): 566–91.

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fierce warriors on the Greek and Roman reliefs, Jesus, head on, raises his arm and bends his hand over his head to allow a shy Thomas to point his finger at the wound (sarcophagus of Santa Maria delle Miracoli, 4th century, Milan; onyx sarcophagus, mid-4th century, Brescia, Museo di Santa Giulia; ivory of the 10th century, Athens, Byzantine Museum). But the second type, frequent from the Early Middle Ages onwards, gives Jesus more initiative: dressed only in a red mantle reminiscent of his Passion, holding a sceptre or a cross bearing the Resurrection standard (white banner with two pointed ends and a red cross), he firmly grabs Thomas's hand and directs it towards his wound. Caravaggio was inspired by this last scene, which conveys a powerful idea: Thomas is the apostle of the concrete, the realistic, the tangible.

This image passed without much modification into the current exegesis, that makes of Thomas the very model of scepticism. The fact is sometimes expressed without hindsight, and even with a certain degree of moralising, when scholars claim that his previous absence is "inexcusable" (Marchadour), that it expresses a "distance" from Jesus (Vignolo), that the apostle shows a confused and hesitant faith (Barrett), that his depression makes him walk alone on solitary paths (Zahn), or that he is unable to go further than the sign of the Resurrection (Brown).[60] Three contemporary readings exist, all going in the same direction.

– *A psychological interpretation of the character.* – Thomas wants to attest to the physical reality of the Resurrection,[61] or, according to Jean Zumstein, "only an empirical verification of the reality of the resurrection can convince him."[62] Thomas, therefore, portrays the pragmatic, the rational apostle.[63] Did he not, before the Resurrection of Lazarus, underline the danger of going to Judea, proof of his correct perception of things (John 11)? Did he

[60] Alain Marchadour, *Les Personnages dans l'Évangile de Jean: Miroir pour une christologie narrative*, Lire la Bible 139 (Paris: Cerf, 2004), 137. Roberto Vignolo, *Personaggi del Quarto Vangelo: Figure della fede in San Giovanni*, Bib 2 (Milano: Glossa, 2003), 59–60. Theodor Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, KNT 4 (Leipzig: Deichert, 1912), 680. Charles Kinsley Barrett, *The Gospel According to St John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (London: SPCK, 1978), 477. Raymond Edward Brown, *The Gospel according to John XIII-XXI*, AB 29 B (New York: Doubleday, 1970), 1045.

[61] Pierre Benoît, *Passion et Résurrection du Seigneur*, Lire la Bible 6 (Paris: Cerf, 1966), 323.

[62] Jean Zumstein, *L'Évangile selon Jean (13–21)*, CNT 2.4b (Genève: Labor et Fides, 2007), 290.

[63] William Bonney, *Caused to Believe: The Doubting Thomas Story at the Climax of John's Christological Narrative*, BibInt 62 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 137–41.

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not reject the idea of a path out of the world (John 14:5)?[64] Is he not the apostle who bases his faith on the testimony of his eyes rather than that of the words?[65]

1. *A theological reading of his role in the story.* – This psychological reading goes along with an analysis of his theological role. The text itself suggests that the apparition to the apostles takes place on the Sunday after the Resurrection. After the first week of the apparitions, the pericope enters the time of the Church, the time of the believing community and obviously, since it is a Sunday, the time of the Eucharistic liturgy.[66] Thomas is not merely a character; he represents a theological attitude. For Bultmann, Thomas is the figure of the Christian who cannot believe without seeing miracles,[67] although the Gospel reminds us that the signs do not provoke faith. The parallel with the royal official (John 4:46–54), the declaration of John 2:24–25,[68] and the rebuke of Nathanael, who believes he understands everything because he has seen someone under the fig tree, illustrates this perfectly.[69] Boismard follows the same line: "faith without evidence is superior to faith which needs miracles"[70] or that "faith that is not based on vision is superior to faith that needs a sign."[71]

2. *An ecclesiastical reading.* – Thomas's doubt describes the attitude of second-generation followers.[72] Jesus who blesses those who believed without having seen also celebrates the faith of those who do not need miracles to be-

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[64] Johnson Thomaskutty, *Saint Thomas the Apostle: New Testament, Apocrypha, and Historical Traditions*, T. & T. Clark Jewish and Christian Texts 25 (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), 159–60.

[65] Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, New Century Bible (London: Oliphants, 1972), 616.

[66] Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to Saint John* (transl. Kevin Smyth; vol. 3; London: Burns & Oates, 1980), 331. Lindars, *John*, 609. Peter J. Judge, "A Note on Jn 20,29," in *The Four Gospels, 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck,* ed. Frans van Segbroeck et al., BETL 100 (Leuven: University Press/Peeters, 1992), 2183–92.

[67] Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (transl. George R. Beasley-Murray; Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 696. Rudolf Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, KEK 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), 539.

[68] Bultmann, *John*, 206–07. Schnackenburg, *John III*, 130–31.

[69] Vignolo, *Personaggi*, 75–82.

[70] Marie-Émile Boismard, "Guérison du fils d'un fonctionnaire royal," *Assemblées du Seigneur* 75 (1965): 26–37 (here: 34–35).

[71] Marie-Émile Boismard and Arnaud Lamouille, *L'Évangile de Jean*, Synopse des quatre évangiles en français 3 (Paris: Cerf, 1977), 474–75.

[72] Ernst Haenchen, *John: A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Hermeneia (vol. 2; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984), 211. Benoît, *Passion*, 324. Dorothy A. Lee, "Partnership in Easter Faith: The Role of Mary Magdalene and Thomas in John 20," *JSNT* 58 (1995): 37–49 (here: 43).

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lieve,[73] and encourages a generation struggling with his absence.[74] Thomas would therefore be a counter-example *not* to be followed.[75]

This prejudice against Thomas's faith may have real consequences on the edited text itself. As a matter of fact, the Greek version of the SBL New Testament (SBLGNT), UBS5 and the 28th edition of Nestle-Aland close the verse 29 (Ὅτι ἑώρακάς με πεπίστευκας;, "do you have faith because you saw me?") with a question mark that expresses a strong sarcasm. Scrivener, based on Estienne and Tregelles, as well as Tischendorf, put a simple interpunct, showing a much more neutral observation: Ὅτι ἑώρακάς με πεπίστευκας·, "you have faith because you saw me". Modern editors have ratified the figure of a doubtful Thomas whom Jesus would mock.

It is easy to understand why this prejudice lasts: it suits modernity. As Léon Bloy said in the 19th century in one of his dazzling formulae, Thomas is "the patriarch of positivists, that is to say, of men without faith and even, if we must say everything, of a fairly large number of scoundrels who, unfortunately, slip into this luminous group, whatever precautions we take."[76] Even today, both the proponents of a critical historical approach and the supporters of the Church find it beneficial. For the former, the episode constitutes a kind of criticism of the stories of the appearance of the Risen One. Bultmann's reflections at the end of his explanation of the event are paradigmatic:

> Accordingly, as in the story of Mary, vv. 1 f. 11–18, there is embedded in the narrative of Thomas also a peculiar critique concerning the value of the Easter stories; they can claim only a relative worth. And if this critical saying of Jesus forms the conclusion of the Easter narratives, the hearer or reader is warned not to take them to be more than they can be neither as narrations of events that he himself could wish or hope to experience, nor as a substitute for such experiences of his own, as if the experiences of others could, as it were, guarantee for him the reality of the resurrection of Jesus; rather they are to be viewed as proclaimed words, in which the recounted events have become symbolic pictures for the fellowship which the Lord, who has ascended to the Father.[77]

Thomas is Rudolf Bultmann's delegate in the text: he allows him to relativise the historical significance of the gospels, to redefine the Gospel as a proclamation and therefore as a speech act, and to insist on the importance

[73] Haenchen, *John*, 212.
[74] Lee, "Partnership," 47.
[75] Marchadour, *Personnages*, 139.
[76] Léon Bloy, *Exégèse des lieux communs* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1902), 53.
[77] Bultmann, *John*, 696.

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of individual choice before the text. The entire Bultmanian program is condensed in this paragraph.

If making Thomas a sceptic suits the Protestant professor of Marburg, it also satisfies the Catholic Scripture teacher Roberto Vignolo. Jesus's declaration indeed opens on the kerygmatic proclamation and the significance of ecclesial mediation.[78] The declaration "blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed," justifies the community magisterium and tradition since those "who have not seen" believe through the Church's relay of events.

For both readings, the question of whether Thomas actually touched the wound becomes central. As Benjamin Schliesser's remarkable article reviewing the history of the reception of this pericope demonstrates,[79] the consensus in favour of a true touch is overwhelming. However, from the 18th century onwards, the trend was reversed. The reason for this is theological. The emphasis is now put on the power of the divine word, on the spoken word and not on deeds. According to this perspective, Jesus's imperative commandment is sufficient, it is not necessary for Thomas to touch. But as Schliesser says in a beautiful formula. "John is not a 'Word of God'-theologian in the manner of Karl Barth, for whom Jesus's address to Thomas 'Believe!' encloses in itself the faith of the addressee. Rather, John is a 'Word-theologian' in the sense that the Logos became visible, tangible 'flesh.'"[80]

2. A Prejudice Based on a Long Tradition …

This prejudice about the radical doubt of Thomas stems from a long tradition. Surprisingly enough, modern exegetes did not innovate in this particular case. From the very beginning of the history of exegesis, Hippolytus of Rome (v. 220) already ranks him among the sceptics. He explains why he doubted by contriving a kind of Targum of John:

> When He had risen and was wishful to show that what had risen was the same body which died, when the Apostles doubted, He called to Him Thomas and said, "handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have."[81]

This quotation, preserved in Theodoret of Cyrus, harmonises the gospels by uniting John 20 with Luke 24 to explain Thomas's fear: is he a ghost? Two centuries later, Jean Chrysostom's commentary, which exerted great in-

[78] Vignolo, *Personaggi*, 82–94.

[79] Benjamin Schliesser, "To Touch or Not to Touch? Doubting and Touching in John 20:24–29," *Early Christianity* 8 (2017).

[80] Schliesser, "To Touch," 88–89.

[81] Hippolytus Romanus in Theodoretus Episcopus Cyri, *Eranistes* 3,14.

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fluence throughout the centuries, contains all the features of modern interpretation. The first is the rudeness of the disciple's mind:

As believing carelessly and in a random way comes from an over-easy temper; so being beyond measure curious and meddlesome marks a grossest understanding. On this account, Thomas is to blame. For he did not believe the Apostles when they said, "we have seen the Lord;" not so much did he mistrust them, he deemed the thing to be impossible, that is to say, the resurrection from the dead.[82]

The second is the radicalness of the doubt expressed by the apostle:

Don't you see that his doubt proceeded from unbelief? But it was before he had received the Spirit; after that, it was no longer so, since, for the future, they were perfected.[83]

Paulinus of Nole makes clear that the text was primarily intended for future readers:

By his doubting, he strengthened faith. When doubting Thomas was refuted face-to-face, all mankind was given instruction. What Thomas was bidden to see and feel in person, I learn to believe it unswervingly and with steady faith.[84]

Gregory the Great is of the same opinion:

It was not an accident that that particular disciple was not present. The Divine mercy ordained that a doubting disciple should, by feeling in his Master the wounds of the flesh, heal in us the wounds of unbelief. Thomas's unbelief is more profitable to our faith than the belief of the other disciples; for the touch by which he is brought to believe [confirms] our minds in belief, beyond all question.[85]

3. … But that Fails to Do Justice to the Complexity of the Text.

This consensus, however, does not reflect the complexity of the text, which the story of the reception of the figure of Thomas helps to uncover. And the greatest surprise is indeed to see how much this apostle, allegedly criticised by Jesus, has enjoyed considerable favour over the centuries.[86] If the first

[82] Johannes Chrysostomus, *Homiliæ* 87,1,13.

[83] Johannes Chrysostomus, *Homiliæ* 87,1,14.

[84] Paulinus a Nola, *Carmen* 31,150. Firmauit dubitando fidem; dum comminus anceps arguitur Thomas, omnis homo instruitur. Cernere quod Thomas coram et palpare iubetur, constanter stabili credere disco fide. Roald Dijkstra, *The Apostles in Early Christian Art and Poetry*, Supplements to Vigiliæ Christianæ 134 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 262–63.

[85] Gregorius Magnus, *Homilia* 26 in Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea* 4,2,607.

[86] Investigation in Régis Burnet, *Les Douze Apôtres: Histoire de la réception des figures apostoliques dans le christianisme ancien*, Judaïsme antique et origines du christianisme 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 489–543. See also Thomaskutty, *Thomas*. Régis Burnet, "Pierre, Thomas, Philippe, trois figures mystiques," in *La Mystique théorétique*

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tradition reported by Origen and preserved by Eusebius of Caesarea (*Hist. Eccl.* 3:1) stated that he was confined to the evangelisation of the Parthians, from the fourth century onwards he became an apostle of Edessa perhaps because of confusion between Addai, the historical apostle, and Thaddai, who is also called Jude.

Jude is the name of one of Christ's brothers and in Aramaic *Toma* (or in Greek *Didymos)* means "twin." The inference is natural to make: if Addai = Thaddai = Jude, if Jude is the brother of the Lord and if the name Thomas means twin brother, then Thomas is the twin brother of the Lord.[87]

The composite Jude Thomas had all the qualities to become a Christian hero. Relics were quickly produced, and a cult set up, evidenced by Egeria around 384.[88] Thanks to this Thomasian influence in the Syrian regions, the *Gospel of Thomas* was written, a collection of logia discovered from the end of the 19th century.[89] Then followed the second phase of traditions, again from Edessa, which took Thomas from the Syrian regions to have him travel to India. Ephrem the Syrian (*Carmen Nisibena* 42.1–2) is the first to attest this tradition, still prevalent in the area in the 13th century, as Solomon of Basra confirmed (*Book of the Bee*). His cult still exists today in Kerala, amplified by the Portuguese from the beginning of the 16th century onwards.

A fascinating text recounts this journey: the *Acts of Thomas*, known by the Syrian (BHO 1186–1204), Coptic and Greek (BHG 1800–1831), Latin (BHL 8136–8146) Arabic (BHO 1213 and 1217), Ethiopian (BHO 1215 and 1218), Armenian and Georgian versions. This abundant composite text blends theological considerations close to Gnosis, with ascetic morality and hagiographical narratives. It presents Thomas as an ideal apostle, who embodies the *imitatio Christi* to its fullest, thanks to his twinning with the Saviour. The old myth of twins, which in the past received geographical, anthropological or astrological interpretations, expresses in this text a model of salvation in which one must be like Christ to let Christ and his mysteries pass through into oneself.[90] The equivalence between the apostle and Christ becomes a metonymy to translate the union or fusion that must take place between the divinity and the faithful, a return to a lost unity. Thomas embodies Christ in the literal sense in the foreign country of India, which

et théurgique dans l'Antiquité gréco-romaine, ed. Simon Claude Mimouni and Madeleine Scopello, JAOC 6 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 245–66.

[87] Burnet, *Douze Apôtres*, 497.

[88] Egeria, *Itinerarium*, ed. P. Maraval (SC 296), 2002, 202–205.

[89] The consensus has recently been challenged, see J. Gregory Given, "'Finding' the *Gospel of Thomas* in Edessa," *JECS* 25 (2017): 501–30.

[90] Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987), 360.

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is a metaphor for our world. The famous *Song of the Pearl* (Acts of Thomas 108–112) expressed the return to unity. Its centre is not the pearl, but the robe, metaphor of the return to the lost unity.[91]

The *Book of Thomas the Athlete* found in Nag Hammadi (NH II, 7) completes the mystical journey. It is a text whelmed by encratism that completes the identification between the Saviour and Thomas. The apostle becomes an intimate disciple thanks to his twinning with Jesus, so that he may be the recipient of all the secret revelations.[92]

How can we explain this wide reception and what did modernity lack in its reading the text to build such a dull figure of the apostle? Perhaps because it tends to underestimate Thomas's request. What did the disciples see when gathered together? Jesus or his ghost? They indeed saw him giving them peace and showing them his hands and his side. But why are they certain that the one who was dead is alive? Only from the *view*. In ancient times, seeing ghosts was not uncommon: literature is full of these visions of death. During their descents into Hades (as in the *Æneid* or the myth of Orpheus), heroes see many dead people, who struggle along and complain about their very boring life. *Nekyia*, the invocation of the dead, is also a widespread practice, as Ulysses invoking Tiresias in chapter XI of the *Odyssey*. These are dead and will remain so; things are in order. The real surprise is to see a dead man come back alive.

Origen considers that Thomas is a prudent disciple, who does not question the *reality* of the apparition to the disciples, but rather its *nature*. How can one be sure that what they saw is not some fantasy (*Catena* 106 = SAG 11.4, 651)? Some ghost or what the Alexandrian calls elsewhere ἀντιτύπῳ (*Against Celsus* 2.61), a kind of copy of the real body?

Celsius, according to Origen, had assumed that Jesus did not physically exist after his death and had only emitted a kind of image (*Against Celsius* 2:61). For Origen, Thomas's claim confirms that this was not the case. The presence of wounds, often invoked by contemporary commentaries, does not prove anything. The ancients believed that the wounds of life remained in death, as shown on sarcophagi and cenotaphs but also in the literature. The dead Clytemnestra shows his wounds inflicted by Orestes (Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 103). Hector in the Aeneas's dream appears *squalentem barbam*

[91] Paul-Hubert Poirier, *L'Hymne de la Perle des Actes de Thomas*, Homo religiosus 8 (Louvain-la-Neuve: Centre d'histoire des religions, 1981).

[92] Jean-Daniel Dubois, "La figure de Thomas dans quelques textes apocryphes," in *Les Apocryphes chrétiens des premiers siècles: mémoire et traditions,* ed. François-Marie Humann and Michel Berder, Théologie à l'université 7 (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2009), 149–70.

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and concreteos sanguine crinis vulneraque illa gerens, "wearing a filthy beard and hair that is clotted with blood, and those wounds" (*Æneid* 2, 277).[93] Thomas, on the contrary, asks the question of the concrete reality of the vision: is it *inscribed* in the body, or is it merely an ecstatic vision or a pious illusion?[94]

Following the hypothesis proposed by J. Louis Martyn that the characters are also a reflection of the events experienced by the Johannine community,[95] Elaine Pagels posited that the episode countered contemporary Christians convinced that Jesus was but a ghost.[96] The reception of the figure of Thomas, and in particular the *Gospel of Thomas* from the end of the 1st century, confirms this: Thomas was to some extent the symbol of a belief that "orthodoxy" tried to nip in the bud and that they also found in Marcion's writing. Tertullian, in *De Anima* indeed writes:

> On this false principle, Marcion chose to believe that He was a phantom, denying to Him the reality of a perfect body. Now, not even to His apostles was His nature ever a matter of deception. He was truly both seen and heard upon the mount; true and real was the draught of that wine at the marriage of (Cana in) Galilee; true and real also was the touch of the then believing Thomas.[97]

Thomas would, therefore, be the ultimate docete[98] and the episode a way of underlining the sufferings of the cross to counter "Thomas's Christians" who did not believe that Jesus had been resurrected physically.[99]

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[93] Barrett, *John*, 571–72. Antonius Hilhorst, "The Wounds of the Risen Jesus," *Estudios Bíblicos* 41 (1983): 165–67. Jan Den Boeft and Jan Bremmer, "Notiunculæ Martyrologicæ III. Some Observations on the Martyria of Polycarp and Pionius," *Vigiliæ Christianæ* 39 (1985): 110–30 (here: 118). Xavier Léon-Dufour, *Lecture de l'Évangile selon Jean*, Parole de Dieu 34 (vol. 4 L'heure de la glorification, chap. 18–21); Paris: Seuil, 1996), 246.

[94] Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 1185.

[95] James Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).

[96] Elaine H. Pagels, *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas* (New York: Random House, 2003).

[97] Tertullianus, *De Anima* 17, 14, CCSL 2, 806.

[98] Udo Schnelle, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, THKNT 4 (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1998), 256.

[99] Gregory J. Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered: Thomas and John in Controversy* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995).

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4. Seizing a Receding Body

The docetic detour changes the perspective on what Thomas expresses. The text is not so much about the issue of doubt and scientific evidence; it is about *corporality*. The aforementioned play on the very name of the apostle proves it. Contemporary exegesis may minimise the power of the name by claiming that it denotes his schizophrenic personality – "Thomas, whose name means Twin, carries in him a double personification, doubt and faith,"[100] Béda Rigaux said –, the twinning already raised the question well. To have a twin is to have a body like one's own, but inhabited by another, to have a double body. With Thomas, everything revolves around the question of the body.

John 20 is built upon this question, and more importantly, is crafted so as *not* to provide the answers that the reader would like to have. The entire chapter 20 deals with the question of the body of the Risen One and the difficulty of having faith. The race to the tomb of Peter and the beloved disciple (John 20:3–10) opens the door to the question. While there are only bandages to contemplate, the beloved disciple sees and believes (καὶ εἶδεν καὶ ἐπίστευσεν). Here, we see nothing, and yet we believe. But the following sentence casts a shadow on this understanding: "they did not understand the scripture according to which he must rise from the dead" (John 20:9). The verb used is interesting: ᾔδεισαν comes from εἰδῶ, this curious defective verb which means to understand, but also to see.

The garden scene carries on the questioning of vision.[101] It is also a matter of seeing: Mary Magdalene sees angels, sees Christ but does not recognise him. It is a matter of *not* touching: Μή μου ἅπτου. For it is indeed a ban. An investigation into the occurrences of this word in the New Testament shows that ἅπτω never has its primary meaning of being attached and that the translation "do not hold me back"[102] makes no sense.[103] The grammar confirms that the prohibition expressed by μή usually has no imperfective meaning. It

[100] Béda Rigaux, *Dieu l'a ressuscité: exégèse et théologie biblique*, Studii biblici franciscani analecta 4 (Gembloux: Duculot, 1973), 238. See also Luc Devillers, "Thomas, appelé Didyme (Jn 11,16; 20,24; 21,2). Pour une nouvelle approche du prétendu jumeau," *RB* 113 (2006): 65–77.

[101] Lee, "Partnership."

[102] Léon-Dufour, *Jean IV*, 223. Heinrich Julius Holtzmann, *Evangelium des Johannes*, Hand-Commentar zum Neuen Testament 4.1 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1908), 303.

[103] Régis Burnet, "Noli me tangere. Toucher ou ne pas toucher dans la Bible," *Gaia: revue interdisciplinaire sur la Grèce Archaïque* 20 (2017): 185–97.

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is therefore impossible to translate as "stop touching me" either.[104] Besides, Mary comes back saying Ἑώρακα τὸν Κύριον, "I saw the Lord". Mary believed without touching.

Surprisingly, the disciples use the same word with Thomas: Ἑωράκαμεν τὸν Κύριον, "we have seen the Lord." His request comes in the first place from the desire of a replication of what others have had. However, he adds a new request. Thomas does not say that he does not want to believe, he imposes a clause on his belief: that he may touch Jesus's wounds. This time the vocabulary is much more precise: βάλλειν τὸν δάκτυλόν εἰς τὸν τύπον τῶν ἥλων and βάλλειν τὴν χεῖρα εἰς τὴν πλευρὰν. Thomas does not question the *reality* of the experience his fellows have just had – he believes them – but the *nature* of the experience they have just had. The vigour with which he responds shows that he understood their statement as a reproach.[105] His requisite is a little curious: ἐὰν μὴ ἴδω […] μὴ πιστεύσω. Can someone decide to believe or to "not-believe?" Is belief a matter of will?

Jesus's answer is a series of injunctions that sound like permission: φέρε τὸν δάκτυλόν σου ὧδε καὶ ἴδε τὰς χεῖράς μου. His statement reverses Thomas's declaration; it begins with the finger and ends with the vision. Seeing becomes the second step in an operation based on lasting contact.

Jesus's adds a unique command: μὴ γίνου ἄπιστος ἀλλὰ πιστός, "do not become without trust, but trusting." In dictionaries, ἄπιστος is often translated as "unbeliever," but it is a late reading, influenced by Christianity. Ἀπιστός belongs more to the vocabulary of trust than to the vocabulary of belief, or even religion. It means "who cannot be trusted." In this very sense, it is found in Thucydides (*History* 8, 45, 1) or in Dion Cassius about Cicero (*Roman History* 46, 3, 4), Menas (*Roman History* 48, 54, 7), Domitian (Roman History 67, 1, 3), or Cassius (*Roman History* 71, 25, 1). In Appian (*Roman History* 4:14), the opposition πιστός/ἄπιστος is present, to characterise the slaves's behaviour towards their masters during the upheavals that occurred after the second triumvirate:

For these reasons each one became treacherous to the household, preferring his gain to compassion for the home. Those who were faithful and well disposed feared to aid,

[104] Reimund Bieringer, "Touching Jesus? The Meaning of μή μου ἅπτου in its Johannine Context," in *To Touch or not to Touch?: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the 'Noli me Tangere'*, ed. Reimund Bieringer et al., Annua Nuntia Lovaniensia 67 (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 61–81.

[105] Glenn W. Most, *Doubting Thomas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 45.

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or conceal, or connive at the escape of the victims because such acts made them liable to the very same punishments.[106]

Jesus's remark is therefore not about faith, but about trust in him. The verb γίνομαι strongly marks this fact, which can undoubtedly express a state but actually expresses a change. It would be wrong to translate "do not be without trust, but trust." It is far better to translate: "do not become without trust, but trust," or even "do not lose trust, but trust." Thomas understands the order in this sense: ἀπεκρίθη Θωμᾶς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ Ὁ Κύριός μου καὶ ὁ Θεός μου. Dazzled by Thomas's confession of faith, most commentators forget to note that everything happens in the speech: ἀπεκρίθη … καὶ εἶπεν. Thomas does not "exclaim" as if he was amazed by the vision or touch of the wounds; he enters dialogue and answers. Whereas he was locked in his requests and conditions for having faith from the beginning of the text, Jesus allowed him to go out of himself and re-engage in dialogue. The body that offers itself to the touch and the word that accompanies it unite to form a statement to which Thomas answers.

The text does not criticise the faith that depends only on sight. It blames this thinking limitation deeming that the need to see outweighs the possibility of believing. Thomas was not unbelieving; he was shut in. Of course, he was permitted to see when others cannot. But the problem is elsewhere: believing is incompatible with seeing as long as it goes with refusing to hear. This is the reason why the apparition to Thomas cannot exempt him from believing in the Word. This Word must be heard *in lieu of* the body. In a strange reversal, believing is seeing. The end of chapter 20 raises the question of the difference between vision and gaze: "we only see what we look at," as Maurice Merleau-Ponty said.[107]

The pericope involving Thomas is therefore much more complicated than a simple question about having faith.

1) It first raises the issue of the identity of Jesus. Thomas wants to touch this body, not randomly but on his scars, because he is wondering about his identity. We do not stop evolving, and our bodies change during our lives. The only certainty we have of living in the same body is the presence of our scars, which attest that we were indeed present at the events imprinted in our

[106] Appianus, *Romana Historia* 4,3,14: Ἄπιστος γὰρ δὴ διὰ ταῦτα ἀθρόως ἕκαστος ἐς τὸν οἰκεῖον ἐγίγνετο καὶ τὸ σφέτερον κέρδος τοῦ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐλέου προυτίθει· ὁ δὲ πιστὸς ἢ εὔνους ἐδεδίει βοηθεῖν ἢ κρύπτειν ἢ συνειδέναι δι' ὁμοιότητα τῶν ἐπιτιμίων. Cited in Stan Harstine, "Un-Doubting Thomas: Recognition Scenes in the Ancient World," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 33 (2006): 435–47 (here: 444).

[107] "On ne voit que ce qu'on regarde." Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *L'Œil et l'Esprit* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 17.

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flesh. As David Le Breton says, "it is part of the meanders of personal history whose events are always subject to revision […] It is sometimes claimed as an essential element of personal identity."[108] And Cyprian of Carthage told about the martyrdom of Celerinus (*Epistula* 39:2): "and if anyone here, who, like Thomas, does not want to believe his ears, the testimony of his eyes is at his disposal, and he can see what he is hearing. Glorious wounds have given victory to the servant of God, and scars keep the memory of his glory." In remembering the wounds on the body of the Risen One, John not only opens a long mystical tradition of devotion to the wounds of Christ and stigmata, and a meditation on the nature of the risen body, but also a theological reflection on his absence, the very condition for the possibility of faith. As Jean-Luc Nancy puts it: "not touching this body, touching its eternity. Not coming into contact with his manifest presence, accessing his real presence, which consists in his departure. Resurrection is the surrection, the emergence of the unavailable, the other and the disappearing *in the body itself and like the body*."[109]

2) It involves the sense of touch. The Bible has already contested the Greek visiocentrism. In fact, the Old Testament proposes a certain audiocentrism. More than seeing, we must hear God, and more than hearing, we must even listen. The hearing is the sense of the sacred.[110] Here the text highlights a new sense. Only Theophrastus (*Metaphysics* 25:9b15) advocated the primacy of touch.[111] By his request, which crosses the taboo line of touching the corpse,[112] Thomas opens a promising path for experience.

3) Finally, it expresses the personal nature of religious experience. Ὁ Κύριός *μου* καὶ ὁ Θεός *μου* says Thomas, pointing out twice that he appropriates the Saviour in an individual way. This is ultimately the heart of the operation carried out by Chapter 21: to transform a personal attempt to seize the body of the Risen One into an individual appropriation of the faith. The individual confession of faith opposed to the concealed body, on which Thomas wants to lay his hands individually and which he intends to hold to

[108] David Le Breton, *La Peau et la trace: Sur les blessures de soi*, Traversées (Paris: Métailié, 2003), 70.

[109] "Ne touchant pas ce corps, touchant à son éternité. Ne venant pas au contact de sa présence manifeste, accéder à sa présence réelle, qui consiste dans son départ. […] La résurrection est la surrection, le surgissement de l'indisponible, de l'autre et du disparaissant *dans le corps même et comme le corps*." Jean-Luc Nancy, *Noli me tangere: Essai sur la levée du corps*, Le Rayon des curiosités (Paris: Bayard, 2003), 28–29.

[110] Catherine Chalier, *Sagesse des sens: Le regard et l'écoute dans la tradition hébraïque*, L'être et le corps (Paris: Albin Michel, 1994), 86.

[111] Most, *Doubting Thomas*, 48.

[112] Most, *Doubting Thomas*, 50.

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take control of. As Schliesser clearly put it: "his coming to faith via doubting, seeing, and touching separates him most starkly from those who will later believe; his confession of faith, however, is intended as a model for all Christians, particularly those who doubt and wish to see and touch."[113]

Being aware of reading prejudices through tradition does not always serve to reverse prejudice, as this analysis of Thomas's episode demonstrates. The purpose of the reading I defend is not to promote a kind of inquisition or a hunt for "bad readings." There is a great deal of truth in the prejudice of the "doubt of Saint Thomas." But it also simplifies the text and makes it easier to be satisfied with a definite opinion on it. Being aware of the univocity generated by prejudice makes it possible to enter the plurivocity of the text.

III. Summary

The two preceding examples are not identical. In the case of the Ephesus auto-da-fé, looking at tradition helps in detecting a prejudice in the sense that the Enlightenment has given to the word, i. e., an epistemological obstacle that prevents access to the truth. The prejudice of the struggle against paganism and magic has obscured the meaning of the text, to the point of identifying the burned books with *ephesia grammata*, which is objectively an error. In this case, the use of the history of the readings allows the origin of the biased interpretation to be traced, to understand why it was issued, and thus to correct the misunderstanding.

Entirely different is the case of Thomas's doubt. The point here is not to amend a misguided explanation, but to show the multiplicity of views on the biblical text. The prejudice suggesting that the apostle doubts is not an interpretative error or a misunderstanding: it represents one of the possible readings of the text. However, this interpretation is somewhat restrictive and does not do full justice to all the potential interpretations of the text. The use of the reading tradition allows the consideration of other perspectives. As in a conversation during which the multiplicity of points of view advocated enhances the debate, the various commentators of the text throughout history are all guests cooperating in the interest and fruitfulness of the discussion.

[113] Schliesser, "To Touch," 92.

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Chapter 5

Tradition and the Historical-Critical Method

Taking into account the historicity of interpretations is above all a way of making history. And it would be a mistake to consider that history could be used to demolish historicity, in a kind of treacherous movement where historical weapons would turn against history itself. Three examples will now show how taking traditional readings into account can help resolve historical issues.

I. Textual Criticism: The Example of Lebbaeus

The first example concerns the use of reception in the most philological discipline available: textual criticism.[1] To illustrate the contribution of an approach that takes tradition into account, let us take the classic example of Lebbaeus.

Who occupies the Apostles's 10th seat? Unlike his peers in the front ranks who possess a certain heft, he has but one name to which future centuries will attribute no fewer than seven different biographies.[2] And again, when I say, "one name", it would be more accurate to say three names. For Mark (Mark 3:18), he is called Thaddaeus (Θαδδαῖος); Luke gives him the eleventh place (he switches with Simon the Zealot) and names him "Judas of James" (Luke 6:16 and Acts 1:13: Ἰούδας Ἰακώβου) without specifying whether he is his son or his brother. John, who discloses no list of the Twelve, mentions his presence at the Last Supper, clarifying that his name was Judas, but that he should not be confused with the Iscariot (John 14:22: Ἰούδας, οὐχ ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης) – to avoid this confusion, English usage distinguishes Judas and

[1] Source of this paragraph: Régis Burnet, "Thaddée ou Lebbée? Comment se nomme le 10e apôtre," in *Philologie et Nouveau Testament: Principes de traduction et d'interprétation critique*, ed. Christian-Bernard Amphoux and Jacqueline Assaël, Héritages méditerranéens 16 (Aix-en-Provence: Presses universitaires de Provence, 2018), 181–91.

[2] See Burnet, *Douze Apôtres*. Régis Burnet, "Jude l'obscur ou comment écrire les actes d'un apôtre inconnu," *Apocrypha* 20 (2009): 189–212.

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Jude. Such hesitation over his name led Schermann, then Meier,[3] to say that several characters had been amalgamated, as Bartholomew and Nathanael have been. But what about/of Matthew's text (10,3)?[4] While the majority of the manuscripts – those of the Byzantine review – call him Lebbaeus (Λεββαῖος) and the harmonising version Λεββαῖος ὁ ἐπικληθεὶς Θαδδαῖος and the Old Latin versions call him *Lebbeus*, the modern editions of the New Testament names him only Thaddaeus. This is the case for Westcott and Hort (1881), Nestle (1904), the Greek New Testament of the Society of Biblical Literature (2010), UBS 5 (2014), and the 28th edition of Nestle-Aland (2014). How can we explain the very contemporary disappearance of this name of Lebbaeus and its substitution by the name of Thaddaeus? In an attempt to answer this question, I propose to adopt a reception history approach: instead of looking upstream at the Urtext to be rebuilt, we will go downstream, towards what the Fathers of the Church and more generally the old exegetes of the text have said about it. Will the history of the readings of the biblical text allow the debate to be settled once and for all?

1. How Science Can Make a Name Disappear

To start our missing person investigation, it is necessary to hear the arguments of those pleading for Thaddaeus. Bruce Metzger explains his choice on behalf of a kind of ecumenism of the versions: "on the basis, however, of the agreement of early representatives of Alexandrian, Western,

[3] Theodor Schermann, *Propheten-und Apostellegenden nebst Jüngerkatalogen des Dorotheus und verwandter Texte*, Texte und Untersuchungen 31.3 (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1907), 210. John Paul Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus.* Volume 3: Companions and Competitors, ABRL (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 133–134.

[4] . The overwhelming majority of witnesses read the lesson Λεββαῖος ὁ ἐπικληθεὶς Θαδδαῖος with some spelling changes (Λεββέος, Λεβέος, Λεβαῖος, Θαδέος, Θαδδέος). We can mention the uncials L, M, N, K, U, W, Δ, Θ, Π, the family f1 (Lake Group), as well as more than 1500 minuscule manuscripts: this lesson is indeed the one of the Byzantine text. The family f13 (Ferrar Group) and 6 uncial manuscripts (including 1346, Mar Saba, 10th century) bear Θαδδαῖος ὁ ἐπικληθεὶς Λεββαῖος, but it should be noted that 124 and 788 have only Θαδδαῖος. D (Bezæ),/the Western text, therefore/reads Λεββαῖος. B (Vaticanus), ℵ (Sinaiticus), and 5 other minuscule manuscripts read Θαδδαῖος: 17, 124, 130, 788, 892 (124 and 788 belonging to f13) This reading is confirmed by the Coptic versions which reads ⲑⲁⲇⲇⲁⲓⲟⲥ in Sahidic and ⲧⲁⲇⲑⲉⲟⲥ in Bohairic. Reuben J. Swanson, *New Testament Greek Manuscripts: Variant Readings Arranged in Horizontal Lines against Codex Vaticanus* (Sheffield/Pasadena, CA: Sheffield Academic Press/William Carey International University Press, 1995), 80. Kurt Aland et al., *Text und Textwert der griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments*, Arbeiten zur neutestamentlichen Textforschung 27 (vol. 4.2.1; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1999), 64–66.

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Caesarean, and Egyptian witnesses, the Committee judged that Θαδδαῖος is to be preferred."[5] These are the famous manuscripts: 17 (15th-century BNF manuscript) is not classifiable, 124 (Caesar-Vindobonensis, 11th century) is of Caesarean type, 130 (Vatican, 15th century) is of Byzantine type, 788 (Greece, 11th century) is of Caesarean type, 892 (British Library, 9th century) is of Alexandrine type, Vaticanus and Sinaiticus being, of course, of the Alexandrine type. The argument is a little weak and betrays the fascination exercised by the Alexandrian text on the UBS Committee.

The choice also echoes the subliminal influence of an old exegetical argument. Where Tischendorf and Blaß opted for Λεββαῖος, Nestle had chosen Θαδδαῖος according to reasoning made explicit in an article from Hastings's *Dictionary*. The name "Lebbeus" would be a deliberate alteration of "Thaddaeus" to include Levi in the list of apostles; Matthew says Jesus converted him, but, afterwards, does not mention him among the Twelve.[6] In support of his thesis, Nestle refers to Grotius, quoting *Quæstiones ad Numeros* by Theodoret of Cyrus, who states that Θαδδαῖος ὁ καὶ Λεβί, "Thaddaeus [is] also Levi." Unfortunately, Theodoret's manuscripts do not contain this lesson: it seems to be a reading error made by Pico della Mirandola.[7] In spite of the error, Nestle probably borrowed his hypothesis from Westcott; twenty years earlier, he was justifying his reading by hypothesising a Western corruption.[8]

Others argue that convenience might have facilitated this passage from Thaddeus to Lebbaeus. According to Dalman and Allen, the name Thaddeus might come from the Aramaic *theda* which means "nipple" or "breast" and which seems much less suitable than Levi, deriving from *leb*, the heart.[9] Lindars explains this theory of substitutions to include Levi in a note from *New Testament Studies* in which he contends that this absence of the tax

[5] Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 80.

[6] Eberhardt Nestle, "Thaddaeus," in *A Dictionary of the Bible,* ed. James Hastings (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1904), 741–42.

[7] See the editor's remark in *Patrologia Græca* 80, col. 367. He reads thus Θαδδαῖος ὁ καὶ Λεββαῖος.

[8] Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (Cambridge, UK: Macmillan, 1881), 11.

[9] Willoughby C. Allen, "Thaddaeus," in *Encyclopaedia Biblica,* ed. Thomas Kelly Cheyne and J. Sutherland Black (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1903), 5031–32. Gustaf Hermann Dalman, *Die Worte Jesu* (vol. 1; Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1930), 40. Barnabas.

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collector pushed Latin and then Greek publishers to include it very early in their New Testament editions.[10]

However relevant they may be, are these arguments convincing? We can undoubtedly put forward the admirable unanimity of the 8 witnesses, but we could just as easily invoke the agreement of the three types, Western (with *Ephræmi* and *Bezæ*), Caesarean (with part of the Ferrar family) and Byzantine, to keep Lebbaeus.

2. Were Modern Scholars Right to Get Rid of Lebbaeus?

Can the use of the history of the reception of the text settle the debate? Six arguments can be put forward to challenge the outright elimination of Lebbaeus from our modern editions of the New Testament.

1. The challenge of the anteriority of the Egyptian text. – The reconstruction proposed by Westcott and Nestle works well only if we take for granted the absolute anteriority of the Alexandrian text. Mentioning "corruption" implies that there used to be a "first state," later adulterated by more or less perverse intentions. It is impossible to settle the debate about the precedence between Western and Alexandrian texts.[11] On the other hand, if we assume that we are confronted with two ancient traditions that were circulated concurrently, it is hardly possible to retain the substitution hypothesis and therefore to make a choice. Obviously, several traditions circulated on the name of the apostle: Judas, Thaddeus, Lebbaeus.

2. The confirmation of Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions. – A Latin version of the Pseudoclementine novel written by Rufinus in 406, the *Recognitions*, dates back to a Greek original from the late 2nd century or the early 3rd century.[12] This Latin translation seems accurate and reflects the old form of the text.[13] At the beginning of the novel, Clement attends preaching by

[10] Barnabas Lindars, "Matthew, Levi, Lebbaeus and the value of the Western text," *NTS* 4 (1958): 220–22.

[11] For arguments in favour of the Western text, see: Marie-Émile Boismard and Arnaud Lamouille, *Les Actes des deux apôtres*, EBib 2.12 (vol. 1; Paris: Gabalda, 1990). Christian-Bernard Amphoux and Jean Margain, *Les Premières Traditions de la Bible*, Histoire du texte biblique 2 (Lausanne: Éd. du Zèbre, 1996). See also Joël Delobel, "The Text of Luke-Acts: A Confrontation of Recents Theories," in *The Unity of Luke-Acts,* ed. Jozef Verheyden, BETL 142 (Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 83–107.

[12] Frédéric Manns, "Les pseudo-clémentines (Homélies et Reconnaissances). État de la question," *Liber Annuus* 53 (2003): 157–84.

[13] F. Stanley Jones, "Evaluating the Latin and Syriac Translations of the Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions," *Apocrypha* 3 (1992): 237–58. See also F. Stanley Jones, *An Ancient Jewish Christian source on the History of Christianity: Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1.27–71*, Texts and translations 37 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995).

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the apostles. After a sermon by James of Alpheus, he hears praise from a character called Lebbaeus: *post hunc Lebbæus populus cœpit vehemeter arguere cur non crederent Iesu*. No mention of Thaddaeus, no imitation of the Greek formula *Lebbæus qui nominatur Thaddæus*. In the Syrian region at the turn of the 3rd century, only Lebbaeus was known.

3. *The Origenian declaration.* – A quotation from Origen translated into Latin by Rufinus confirms this existence of biblical manuscripts bearing only Lebbaeus:

> However, the same Matthew says in the list of apostles after several names: "Matthew the tax collector, James of Alpheus, Lebbaeus and Simon the Canaanite." However, Mark speaks of them this way: "Matthew the tax collector, Thomas, James of Alpheus and Thaddaeus." The same individual that Matthew refers to as Lebbaeus, Mark calls him Thaddaeus. And Luke puts it this way: "Matthew, Thomas, James and Jude of James." Therefore, the same man Matthew called Lebbaeus and Mark Thaddaeus, Luke called him Jude of James. It is certain that the evangelists did not make a mistake in the name of the apostles: since it was the custom among the Hebrews to use two or three names, they used different designations for the same single man.[14]

The text indicates that Origen, whose work of textual criticism is not to be remembered here, considered that the best version for Matthew was Lebbaeus, for Mark Thaddaeus, and for Luke Jude. This triple tradition regarding the name of the 10th apostle does not seem to worry him; he explains it by a triple name, which is highly plausible. Commenting on the epistle to the Romans, he goes on to talk about the case of Paul/Saul. Origen's testimony, therefore, indicates that a state of the text with the name of Lebbaeus alone was circulating in Alexandria around 240.

4. The significance of Latin translations. – Old Latin translations also illustrate the importance of the *Lebbaeus* reading. The *aureus holmiensis* (aur.), the *colbertinus* (c), the *corbiensis* (ff1) and the *rhedigeranus* (l) bear *Thadeus* and, obviously, the Latin translation of the *Bezæ Cantabrigensis* bears *Lebbeus*. But we must do justice to the ancient 4th-century *bobbiensis*

[14] Sed et idem Mattheus in catalogo apostolorum dicit post multos: "Mattheus publicanus et Iacobus Alfei et Lebbeus et Simon Cananæus." Marcus uero ita refert: "Mattheus publicanus et Thomas et Iacobus Alfei et Taddeus." Hunc eundem quem Mattheus Lebbeum Marcus Taddeum posuit; Lucas uero ita ponit: "Mattheus Thomas Iacobus et Iudas Iacobi." Igitur eundem quem Mattheus Lebbeum et Marcus Taddeum dixit Lucas Iudam Iacobi scribit. Certum est autem euangelistas non errasse in nominibus apostolorum, sed quia moris erat binis uel ternis nominibus uti Hebræos unius eiusdemque uiri diuersa singuli uocabula posuere. Origenes Adamantius, *Epistulam Pauli ad Romanos explanationum libri* I, 2, ed. Caroline P. Hammond Bammel, *Der Römerbriefkommentar des Origenes. Kritische Ausgabe der Übersetzung Rufins Buch 1–3*, Aus der Geschichte der lateinischen Bibel 16 (Freiburg im B.: Herder, 1990), 43.

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which bears *Lebbacus,* corrected to *Lebdæus* – as well as the old versions of the *Afra* which have the same reading, according to Jülicher.[15] These witnesses attest that the name Lebbaeus was circulating at an early stage in Latin communities.

The Latin versions also substantiate the perplexity that communities experienced in dealing with this multi-named chameleon apostle. Ancient manuscripts such as the *vercellensis* of the 4th century or the *veronensis* of the 5th century read *Iudas zelotes*, which shows that Jude was confused with Simon the Zealot and that Matthew's list was aligned not with Mark's but rather with the references of Luke and John. This reading must have been influent since the *epistula apostolorum* contains it and the great mosaic of the Baptistery of the Orthodox of the 4th century in Ravenna (Dome of the Lamb and the apostles) distinguishes *Iuda zelotes* and *Simon cananeus*.

5. The confirmation of Eusebius of Caesarea. – About a century after Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea goes further by mentioning the list of the seventy disciples who followed Jesus:

> Now the names of the apostles of our Saviour are plain to everyone from the gospels, but no list of the Seventy is anywhere extant [...]. They also say that Thaddaeus was one of them, and I will shortly recount a narrative which has reached us concerning him.[16]

A few sentences later, the Bishop of Caesarea relates the correspondence between King Abgar of Edessa and Jesus. The former, "perishing from terrible suffering in his body, beyond human power to heal" (πάθει τὸ σῶμα δεινῷ καὶ οὐ θεραπευτῷ ὅσον ἐπ' ἀνθρωπείᾳ δυνάμει καταφθειρόμενος, *Eccl. Hist.* I, 13, 2) wrote to the Saviour asking him to heal him. Jesus replied with a signed letter stating that he had better things to do than make a trip to Edessa (namely a Passion to complete), but that one of his disciples would come soon. Indeed, Thomas commissioned Thaddaeus, who healed the king and converted the city to Christianity. On two occasions (*H.E.* I, 13, 4 and 11), Eusebius, who claims to rely on the Edessene archives, ranks him among the Seventy.

Although it is likely that Eusebius reported a story of the evangelisation of Edessa that involved Addai – also known from a story of Labubna from Edessa, the *Doctrine of Addai* – and that he confused Addai and Thad-

[15] Adolf Jülicher, Walter Matzkow, and Kurt Aland, *Itala, das Neue Testament in altlateinischer Überlieferung* (vol. 1: Matthäus; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1972), 56.

[16] Eusebius Cæsarensis, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 1,12,3 in Eusebius of Caesarea, *The Ecclesiastical History I*, Loeb 153 (transl. Kirsopp Lake; London: Heineman/Putnam, 1926), 83–85.

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daeus,[17] he has no difficulty in ranking Thaddaeus among the disciples, which shows that his inclusion among the apostles was evident in his time. Besides, he reports that this habit dates back to the end of the 2nd century and the *Hypotyposes* of Clement of Alexandria. It is noteworthy that these statements somehow undermine the theory which holds that the prestigious Sinaiticus or Alexandrinus codices, which have thus substituted Thaddaeus for Lebbaeus, were produced under the guidance of Eusebius.

6. *the attestation of the Apostolic Constitutions* – A last argument proves the antiquity of the denomination Lebbaeus for the 10th Apostle, a statement from the *Apostolic Constitutions*. This text probably dates from the years 375–380 and originates in the Syrian region (perhaps from Antioch).[18] This is a list of prescriptions and practices put under the authority of the apostles. Lebbaeus is mentioned twice. Book VI, mostly devoted to heresies, begins with the report of a solemn assembly of the apostles in which each is named: the 10th apostle is called according to the Byzantine name: Λεββαῖος ὁ ἐπικληθεὶς Θαδδαῖος Book VIII contains liturgical prescriptions reported to the apostles. Again, it is Λεββαῖος ὁ ἐπικληθεὶς Θαδδαῖος who gives his opinion on the order of the widows (chap. 25) and the charge of the exorcist (chap. 26).

These six arguments demonstrate that, at least until the 5th century, the name Lebbaeus was in fierce competition with the name Thaddaeus. Moreover, they suggest that in the Syrian-Palestinian regions and Alexandria, Lebbaeus seems to have supplanted Thaddeus in the order of the apostles, perhaps under the influence of Thaddeus's assimilation to Addai and his incorporation into the group of seventy disciples.

3. Is It Possible to Choose Between Thaddeus and Lebbaeus?

Can we conclude from this that the Lebbaeus reading is the only suitable one and that we must exert pressure on the UBS committee to have them replace Thaddaeus with Lebbaeus in the text of Matt 10:3? The sources are far too fragmented to assert the authority of one reading over another. However, the entire history of the text and its reception suggests that from the 3rd century onwards, commentators became aware of the existence of ir-

[17] On the legend: Alain Desreumaux, *Histoire du roi Abgar et de Jésus: Présentation et trad. du texte syriaque intégral de La Doctrine d'Addaï*, Apocryphes 3 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1993).

[18] Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy* (London: SPCK, 2002), 85–87.

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reducible traditions. Various solutions, which had posterity, were proposed, to keep the two names in competition.

1. The recognition of the difficulty from the 3rd century onwards. – Origen, as previously mentioned, recognises the rivalry between the two names and set out a solution that was promised to a brilliant future, trinominism. It was around the same time that a first solution was implemented in the "pre-Caesarean" state of the text of the Bible, the Family 13 or the Ferrar group (f13 or φ):[19] Θαδδαῖος ὁ ἐπικληθεὶς Λεββαῖος, "Thaddaeus *aka* Lebbaeus." This is clearly a union formula, what Bruce Metzger called a "conflate reading," that may not reflect a simple harmonising gloss, but rather a solution. The Lake group (f1 or λ), the other "pre-Caesarean" family, adopted the opposite union formula, which gave rise to the Byzantine solution: Λεββαῖος ὁ ἐπικληθεὶς Θαδδαῖος.

This impossibility of reaching a decision is summarised in the position of Jerome of Stridon. He revised Itala by collating ancient Greek manuscripts; he would only have corrected the altered passages, leaving the rest as it was.[20] This revision work was carried out during his second stay in Rome, between 383 and 384, under the impetus of Pope Damasus, of whom he was then a secretary. He opted for the *Thaddeus* reading and one might have expected a complete disappearance of Lebbaeus in his work. This is not the case. Indeed, in his commentary on Matthew's gospel, written later when he was in Bethlehem, he states:

> The *Ecclesiastical History* reports that the apostle Thaddaeus was sent to Edessa to the king of Osroene, Abgar. He is called Jude of James by the evangelist Luke and elsewhere he is called Lebbaeus, which means "little heart." He must have had three names, like Simon Peter and the sons of Zebedee who are named *boanerges* because of the elevation and greatness of their faith.[21]

[19] Bruce M. Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible: An Introduction to Greek Palaeography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 120. On this peculiar group, see Didier Lafleur, *La Famille 13 dans l'évangile de Marc*, New Testament Tools, Studies and Documents 41 (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

[20] Bonifatius Fischer, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der lateinischen Bibeltexte*, Vetus latina. Aus der Geschichte der lateinischen Bibel 12 (Freiburg im B.: Herder, 1986), 237–38. Many thanks to Régis Courtray (University of Toulouse Jean-Jaurès) for this reference.

[21] Taddeum apostolum ecclesiastica tradit historia missum edessam ad abgarum regem osrœnæ; qui ab euangelista luca iudas iacobi dicitur et alibi appellatur lebbeus quod interpretatur corculus credendum que est eum fuisse trinomium, sicut simon petrus et filii zebedæi boanerges ex firmitate et magnitudine fidei nominati sunt. Hieronymus Stridonensis, *Commentarii in euangelium Matthæi* i, ed. D. Hurst et M. Adriaen (CCSL 77, 1969), l. 1520.

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Apparently, the Stridonian has read Eusebius and Origen and intends to preserve Lebbaeus's memory, even though he has opted for a reading that makes him disappear from the sacred texts. He even bothered to explain his name from an etymology on *leb*. In his *liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominum*, he recalls: "the name Lebbaeus is formed from 'heart' and we can transcribe it by the diminutive 'little heart'".[22] Why bother searching for an etymology if you consider that the 10th Apostle had ever been called Lebbaeus? The weight of Eusebius's authority, the presence of manuscripts preserving this name, motivates Jerome not to minimise textual traditions.

At the same time, Augustine, in the *Consensus of the Gospels*, did not say otherwise:

> Luke is not contradicting Matthew, except in the name of Jude of James, whom Matthew calls Thaddaeus. Several codices have Lebdeum. Who was ever forbidden to call a man by two or three names?[23]

The Bishop of Hippo already witnesses Lebbaeus's disappearance in Matthew's text; perhaps he already uses the text revised by Jerome. But he also probably has in front of him the Afra text, as evidenced by the *Lebdeum* transcription he uses. He does not solve the problem and prefers to preserve the plurality of traditions.

2. A double posterity. – This impulse to maintain Lebbaeus tradition lasted in the following centuries.

In the East, the Byzantine version triumphed, which ensured that the name Lebbaeus was remembered. Thus, in his homily XXXII, John Chrysostom comments on Matthew's text by repeating that Lebbaeus is also called Thaddaeus. In his *Questions on the Octateuch*, Theodoret of Cyr explains why Jethro (Ἰοθώρ in the Septuagint), Moses's stepfather, is named Ῥαγουήλ in Exod 3:18 and Ἰωβάβ in Num 10:29: like Thaddaeus, he has three names. The influence of this reading can be found in the corrections made by a second hand in Arabic in some Coptic manuscripts reported by Horner: "in Greek Lebbaeus, who is called Thaddaeus."[24] George the Monk in the 9th century comments on the nickname of

[22] Lebbæus figuratum nomen a corde, quod nos diminutiue corculum possumus appellare. Hieronymus Stridonensis, *Liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominum*, ed. P. de Lagarde (CCSL 72, 1959), 62.

[23] Lucas a Matthæo non discrepat, nisi in nomine Iudæ Iacobi, quem Matthæus Thaddæum appellat. Nonnulli autem codices habent Lebdeum. Quis autem unquam prohibuerit duobus uel tribus nominibus hominem unum uocari? Augustinus Hipponensis, *De Consensu Evangelistarum* II, 30, 70, éd F. Weihrich (CSEL 43, 1904), 175.

[24] George William Horner, *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Northern Dialect* (London: Clarendon, 1898), 71.

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Emperor Tiberius III (698–705), Apsimar, with an enumeration of double names: Jacob-Israel, Iôthôr-Ragouel, Simon-Peter, Thomas-Didymos, and, of course, Thaddaeus-Lebbaeus.[25] The evangelisation of Edessa reported by Eusebius, however, caused a certain degree of uncertainty in the lists of apostles and disciples. The anonymous 5th-century list named *anonymus græcus* (BHG 154) from Syria mentions a "Jude of James" among the apostles and a "Thaddaeus" at the 15th rank of the list of Seventy,[26] while the 8th-century list of Hippolytus (BHG 153) mentions a Jude of Jude, also called Lebbaeus, who evangelised Edessa, and a Thaddaeus who brings the letter of Christ to Abgar.[27] Finally, the Synaxarion of Simeon the Logothete from 1000 evokes a double character: the apostle Jude aka Thaddaeus or Lebbaeus, and a second Thaddaeus.[28]

In the West, despite the authority of the Vulgate, the name Lebbaeus remained prevalent. A few years after Jerome, Eucherius of Lyon (370–449), who relied heavily on the former,[29] cited the list of apostles in his *Instructions to Salonius* and stated: "Lebbaeus the little heart means 'from the heart,' he is the same as Thaddeus and the same as Judas of James".[30] Isidore of Seville restates the same hypothesis in his *Etymologies*, which also recalls the Edessenian tradition. In the 10th century, Beatus of Liébana quoted Isidore in his *Commentary on the Apocalypse*. Thanks to the success of Jerome's commentary, the West did not forget the name Lebbaeus. Hieronymic expressions can be found in the works of Christian of Stavelot in the 9th century, in Rabanus Maurus's *Commentary on Matthew* (780–856), then in Paschasius Radbertus (785–856) or Rupert of Deutz (1075–1130). Thomas Aquinas in the *catena aurea* knows Lebbaeus.[31] His *lectio*, which compiles the Eusebian tradition, Augustine's statements, and the etymology of Jerome through Rabanus Maurus's commentary, ensures the survival of the name in the West, as witnessed by one of the most popular relays of hagiographical traditions, Jacobus da Varagina. In his *Golden Legend*, the Dominican recalls

[25] Georgius Monachus, *Chronicon breve (redactio recentior)* 242, PG 101, 904.

[26] Theodor Schermann, *Prophetarum vitæ fabulosæ*, Bibliotheca scriptorum Græcorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Lipsiæ [Leipzig]: Teubner, 1907), 172 et 74.

[27] Schermann, *Prophetarum*, 166–67.

[28] Schermann, *Prophetarum*, 178–79.

[29] Ilona Opelt, "Quellenstudien zu Eucherius," *Hermes* 91 (1963): 476–83.

[30] *Lebbeus corculus, id est a corde, ipse est et Thaddeus, ipse est et Iuda Iacobi*. Eucherius Lugdunensis, *Instructionum ad Salonium* ii, ed. C. Mandolfo (CCSL 66, 2004), 190.

[31] Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in Matthæum* x, 1, ed. Angelico Guarienti, *S. Thomæ Aquinatis Catena aurea in quatuor Evangelia* (vol. 1; Taurini [Torino]: Marietti, 1953), 163.

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this name of Lebbaeus whilst indulging his passion for more or less fanciful etymologies, since he derives it from *lebes*, i. e. "vase for the lustral water."[32]

At the end of our investigation, which text should we put forth in the New Testament editions? Nothing allows us to decide between Λεββαῖος and Θαδδαῖος. Neither were the Fathers of the Church able to make a choice. I would therefore suggest taking up the Byzantine text, and treating it not as a secondary gloss, but as the acknowledgement, already made by the oldest patristic testimonies, that it was impossible to decide between the two traditions. Λεββαῖος ὁ ἐπικληθεὶς Θαδδαῖος could therefore be what future editions of the Bible might translate. This result is very modest and the case of Lebbaeus *aka* Thaddaeus is a little anecdotal, but the research leads to another conclusion: the fecundity of engaging a real consideration of the history of the readings to help establish a text that will necessarily become polyphonic. The question that should govern textual criticism should no longer be "what is the best state of a hypothetical original text?" but "what is the best state of the texts that Christians actually read?"

II. Historical Criticism: The Author of the "Note to the Hebrews"

Reading with tradition is not only useful for textual criticism questions: it also provides answers to some pending historical issues.[33] Let us take the case of the Epistle to the Hebrews as an example: how can one speak of "Epistle to the Hebrews," when everything indicates it is a sermon? And if it is indeed a sermon, why did its author close it with the few sentences which give it a letter-writing aspect? In its current form, the Letter to the Hebrews is an uncharacteristic piece of writing. In Antiquity which defined everything in terms of belonging to literary genres, it was a strange object, in which an epistolary ending had been added to a pre-existing sermon. When was this operation carried out and why? After having established the radical difference between Heb 13:19.22–25 and the rest of the text, I will study this final text for itself by trying to identify the possible motives for its writing and, through the study of the reception of the letter, by proposing a probable date for its drafting.

[32] Jacobus a Voragine, *Legenda aurea* 155.

[33] Paragraph inspired by Régis Burnet, "La finale de l'épître aux Hébreux: une addition alexandrine de la fin du IIe siècle," *RB* 120 (2013): 423–40.

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1. Hebrews 13:19.22–25 Is a Separate Unit.

In the letter to the Hebrews, verses 13:19.22–25 constitute a separate entity, for three reasons.

1. A formal difference. – While the rest of the text uses only the first person of the plural as enunciation markers,[34] an enallage to the first person singular occurs in verses 19, 22 and 23. Verses 24 and 25 form a "second ending," – verses 18 to 21 having already served as a conclusion –, reinforced by a final amen. As a result, the readers are confronted, three sentences apart, with two concluding blessings: a long blessing (vv. 20–21) and a short blessing (v. 25).

2. A generic difference. – This formal difference entails a difference in the literary genre. While the previous sentences obviously formed a sermon, these last few sentences are a letter. They contain the characteristic elements of the epistolary[35] style such as greetings (v. 24), news sharing (v. 23), and a blessing at the end (v. 25). The word ἐπιστέλλω (v. 22), characteristic of epistolary activity, is also used. In its style, this letter looks like a familiar letter whose primary purpose is the exchange of news[36] and the long-distance manifestation of feelings, what H. Koskenniemi called epistolary *philophronesis*.[37]

3. A difference in content. – The formal differences also suggest content differences.[38] Two details do not fit in with the rest of the writing. The first is the strange expression "I exhort you […] to endure the word of exhortation." By using the definite article, the author of the sentence seems to dissociate it from the previous writing (he says neither "my word" nor "this word" but "the word"), as if the former speech was not intended for those to whom he is sending it.[39] Why would anyone express such a doubt at the end of a book for

[34] Albert Vanhoye, *La Structure littéraire de l'Épître aux Hébreux*, Studia neotestamentica 1 (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1963), 219.

[35] On the epistolary genre and its formal characteristics in Antiquity see Régis Burnet, *Épîtres et lettres, Ier–IIe siècle: de Paul de Tarse à Polycarpe de Smyrne*, LD 192 (Paris: Cerf, 2003).

[36] Stanley Kent Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, Library of Early Christianity 5 (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1986), 72. John L. White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, Foundations and Facets (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1986).

[37] Heikki Koskenniemi, *Studien zur Idee und Phraseologie des griechischen Briefes bis 400 n. Chr*, Annales Academiæ scientiarum fennicæ B 102:2 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Kirjall. Kirj., 1956).

[38] It does not seem possible, as Claire Rothschild did, to see this final "in continuity" with the rest of the letter: Clare K. Rothschild, *Hebrews as Pseudepigraphon: The History and Significance of the Pauline Attribution of Hebrews*, WUNT 235 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 63–118.

[39] Albert Vanhoye, *L'Épître aux Hébreux: Un prêtre différent*, Rhétorique sémitique 7 (Pendé: Gabalda, 2010), 335.

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which there is no evidence of a possible adverse reaction from the listeners? The second detail is the use of the expression διὰ βραχέων to characterise a text that is not particularly brief: this suggests the existence of a shorter document. Without this hypothesis, the meaning of the sentence is hardly understandable: how does shortening the sentence help to support an exhortation that is difficult to hear (as suggested by ἀνέχω)?

The biggest difference is theological. If the author of the previous text had maintained a deliberate anonymity, then he likely had a very specific reason for doing so.[40] The whole letter shows that the only reference character is Christ (Heb 2:3). The author claims no authority, let alone apostolic authority: only Christ is an apostle (Heb 3:1). The writer continually places himself as a listener (Heb 1:2, 2:1): in front of the λόγος τῆς ἀκοῆς (Heb 4:2), no authority can hold. How would this unassertive writer suddenly have gained enough assurance to urge in his own name, twice (v. 19 and 22)?

If Heb 13:19.22–25 form a separate entity, what role does it play in the general structure of the work? Most of the scholars who identified the autonomy of the passage referred to it as an "epistolary final" or even a postscriptum:[41] somebody added these few verses to a pre-existing sermon to provide an epistolary twist. Such a claim is contradicted by the supporters of a unity of the letter:[42] how could anyone believe that this is a real letter, when the author did not even take the time to add an address? Instead, it seems to be an accompanying letter that would have been inserted inside the text. In a book (in Latin!) resuming his lectures, Albert Vanhoye summarises with great clarity the literary mechanism at work:

> 1° the first work is a long preaching, composed with application, intended to be pronounced orally, and which was actually pronounced in Christian communities. It extends from the *exordium* to the first conclusion, i. e., 13:21, except for 13:19. 2° the second work is a brief addition, in a hasty style, added when the preaching was sent

[40] Erich Grässer, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, EKKNT 17.1 (vol. 1; Zürich/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Benziger/Neukirchener Verl., 1991), 17. Martin Wolter, "Die anonymen Schriften des Neuen Testaments. Annäherungsversuch an ein literarisches Phänomen," *ZNW* 79 (1988): 1–16.

[41] William Wrede, *Das literarische Rätsel des Hebräerbriefs mit einem Anhang über den literarischen Charakter des Barnabasbriefes*, FRLANT 8 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1906), 39. Franz Overbeck, *Zur Geschichte des Kanons, vol. 1: Die Tradition der Alten Kirche über den Hebräerbrief* (Chemnitz: Schmeitzner, 1880), 16. Eugen Burggaller, "Das literarische Problem des Herbäerbriefes," *ZNW* 9 (1908): 110–31. Richard Perdelwitz, "Das literarische Problem des Herbäerbriefes," *ZNW* 11 (1910): 59–78.105–23. Hartwig Thyen, *Der Stil der jüdisch-hellenistischen Homilie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1955).

[42] E. g. Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews*, AB 36 (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 582. Hans Windisch, *Der Hebräerbrief*, HNT 4.3 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1913), 113.

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to another community. This letter consists of one sentence inserted before the peroration and a few others added after the peroration. It contains news and greetings.[43]

2. The Goals of the Final Addition

The final addition pursues a simple purpose: to bring the sermon into the realm of the Pauline epistles.

1. Formally. – From a formal point of view, these few verses contain several of Paul's signature traits.[44] Some comparisons can be listed.[45] (a) Vv. 19.22 initiate a paraenesis whose terms are similar to those of 1 Thess 3:11–13; 5:15; 2 Thess 2:16; 2 Cor 13:11; Gal 6:10; Phil 4:18. (b) Vv. 19.23 contain personal remarks and travel intentions (which R. Funk had named *travelog*[46]) found in Rom 15:22–29; 1 Cor 6:5–11; 2 Cor 13:1–10; 1 Thess 3:6–11; Col 4:7–9; Eph 6:21; Phlm 21. (c) The final greetings copy those of the Pauline letters: Rom 16:3–16; 1 Cor 16:19–21; 2 Cor 13:12; Phil 4:21–22; Col 4:10–18; 1 Thess 5:26–27; 2 Thess 3:17; Phlm 23; 2 Tim 4:19–21; Titus 3:15.

2. *Semantically.* – From a semantic point of view, the mention of Timothy obviously ensures continuity with the Pauline world.[47] Born in Lystra, of a Jewish mother and a Greek father (Acts 16:1), he was Paul's most faithful companion, the man whom the Apostle entrusted with delicate missions. He helped Paul with the drafting of 1 Thess, then stayed in Berea to solve the problems of the churches in Macedonia (1 Thess 3:6) and finally joined Paul

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[43] Albert Vanhoye, *Exegesis Epistulæ ad Hebræos [ad usum privatum auditorum]* (Romæ: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1968), 15. 1° Primum opus est prædicatio longa, sedulo composita ut ore pronuntietur, et quæ de facto pronuntiata in cœtibus christianis. Extenditur ab exordio usque ad primam conclusionem, scl. 13, 21, excepto 13, 19. 2° Opus secundum est adscriptio brevis, stilo veloce, addita quando prædicatio ad alium cœtum scripto missa est. Hæ litteræ constant una sententia ante perorationem inserta et paucis aliis post perorationem additis; in eis continentur nuntia et salutationes. Same claim in Vanhoye, *Structure littéraire*, 219.

[44] Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1989). David A. DeSilva, *Perseverance and Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary to the Epistle 'to the Hebrews'* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 390. Koester, *Hebrews*, 42.

[45] On the final benediction: Robert Jewett, "The Form and Function of the Homiletic Benediction," *Anglican Theological Review* 51 (1969): 18–34.

[46] Robert Walter Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God: The Problem of Language in the New Testament and Contemporary Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 271. Robert Walter Funk, "The Apostolic *Parousia*: Form and Significance," in *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies presented to John Knox,* ed. William Reuben Farmer et al. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 249–68.

[47] Erich Gräßer, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, EKKNT 17.3 (vol. 3; Zürich/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Benziger/Neukirchener Verl., 1997), 412.

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in Corinth (2 Cor 1:19). He then followed Paul to Ephesus and was sent by the apostle to settle the first Corinthian crisis (1 Cor 4:17), but failed. Afterwards, he followed his master in Corinth (Rom 16:21), then in Jerusalem (Acts 20:4). His memory in the community was so prevalent that he was credited with two apocryphal letters. The history of the reception of this figure confirms this position of a Pauline marker: his whole hagiography – written much later[48] – makes him the most faithful of all the disciples. Besides the data from the New Testament, Acts attributed to Polycrat of Ephesus disclose that he was the successor of his master at Ephesus and died a martyr in circumstances similar to those in which the apostle almost lost his life: wishing to resist a pagan practice, the καταγώγια, he was beaten to death by the Ephesians.[49]

3. From a literary point of view. – A closer look at the question of how the author engages in his text, his "literary posture," reveals that he is very much in line with Paul. The study of the three Pastoral Letters discloses the literary memory of the man from Tarsus:[50] the self-dispossession in favour of the proclamation of the Gospel, the figure of the prisoner "for the Gospel," as well as the figure of the travelling writer. The same themes can be found in the final words of Hebrews. Ἐπιστέλλω and the expression of an intention to travel evokes the nomadic apostle. While nothing is said about the author's imprisonment, Timothy's release does suggest the prison world. In a few words, the author intends to give a "quintessence" of Paulinism.

As a formal, semantic and literary imitation of the Pauline epistles, the last verses of the Epistle to the Hebrews constitute a *pseudopaulinischer Briefschluß*,[51] a pseudo-Paulinian epistolary ending or *ein dem Hebr ganz äußerlich aufgeklebte Etikett*, a "label conspicuously stuck on Hebrews."[52]

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[48] Jean Bolland, "De S. Timotheo Apostolo, episcopo ephesine, martyre," in *AASS januarii,* ed. Jean Bolland and Godefroid Henschen (Antverpiæ [Antwerpen]: Meursium, 1643), 562–69. See also Louis-Sébastien Le Nain de Tillemont, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique des six premiers siècles* (vol. 2; Paris: Robustel, 1701), 142–48.

[49] Claudio Zamagni, "Passion (ou actes) de Timothée: étude des traditions anciennes et édition de la forme BHG 1487," in *Poussières de christianisme et de judaïsme antiques, études réunies en l'honneur de Jean-Daniel Kaestli et Éric Junod,* ed. Albert Frey and Rémi Gounelle, Publications de l'Institut romand des sciences bibliques 5 (Lausanne: Le Zèbre, 2007), 341–75.

[50] Régis Burnet, "Peut-on parler de postures pour l'Antiquité? L'exemple paulinien," in *Écritures et réécritures: La reprise interprétative des traditions fondatrices par la littérature biblique et extra-biblique,* ed. Claire Clivaz et al., BETL 248 (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 19–34.

[51] Wrede, *Das literarische Rätsel*, 39.

[52] Grässer, *Hebräer (vol. 3)*, 412.

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The remaining question is: when and where did someone take the personal responsibility to write this label?

3. Dating the Letter Ending Thanks to Its Reception

To answer this question of the places and dates of origin of the second hand, I propose, as above, to invoke the history of the reception. Let us recall the stages of the process of acceptation of the letter.[53]

1. A Roman origin for the sermon. – A discussion on the author and the date of writing of the speech is not within the scope of this chapter. The author's name is forever lost and, as already mentioned, this anonymity is deliberate for someone who set himself up as a listener of the word and not as an apostle. Defining the date of writing is an operation that involves both the interpretation of the text and the understanding of Second Temple Judaism: the hypothesis of an early dating (before 70) seems more and more likely today.[54]

On the other hand, the *Auslegungsgeschichte* gives a few hints concerning the place of writing. Evidence points to the fact that, originally, only Roman circles knew of the text. The first available attestation comes from Rome: The First Letter of Clement. Clement has about twenty reminiscences of

[53] An excellent review has already been done by Ceslas Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux* (vol. 1: introduction; Paris: Gabalda, 1952), 168–86. See also Rothschild, *Hebrews as Pseudepigraphon*, 15–43. C. Rothschild concludes with irenicism that *all regions of Empire accept Hebrews without reserve* (p. 43) which is clearly not the case.

[54] The dating depends mainly on the way Judaism is perceived. Indeed, if one reads in this epistle the separation between Judaism and Christianity, one must date it to 90–100: Walter Schmithals, *Neues Testament und Gnosis*, Erträge der Forschung 208 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984), 138–39. The fact that Clement cites the text reinforces this dating: Edgar J. Goodspeed, "First Clement Called Forth by Hebrews," *JBL* 30 (1911): 157–60. However, this hypothesis withstands what the author says, presuming that the Temple is still in operation, which often leads to the dating of the years 68–70: George A. Barton, "The Date of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *JBL* 57 (1938): 195–207. Frederick Fyvie Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 22. Barnabas Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 20. The new paradigm of the Parting of the Ways and greater attention to Second Temple Judaism provide arguments for a much earlier dating. Being hostile to the sacrificial system of the Temple did not imply the rupture with Judaism. A return to Robinson's early dating is thus possible: John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1976), 200–20. In general, there are significant nuances to be made in the use of the events of 70 as a dating pivot, as stated in the book edited by D. R. Schwartz: Daniel R. Schwartz and Zeev Weiss, *Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish History? On Jews and Judaism before and after the Destruction of the Second Temple*, Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 78 (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

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the letter. His, chapter 36 reproduces the prologue almost identically. The way Clement uses the text is most interesting. While dependent on it in literary terms, he differs significantly in theology, particularly on the issue of the High Priest.[55] The most interesting thing to notice is he mentions neither any subscription "to the Hebrews" nor any Pauline origin (whereas Clement evokes the apostle elsewhere). For Clement, the Epistle to the Hebrews comes from "the tradition" even though it does not have the weight of an apostolic text – since he distances himself from it. Three arguments reinforce the possibility of a Roman origin. (a) The existence in Rome of a vigorous Jewish community, well documented by literary and archaeological sources,[56] which could provide a *Sitz im Leben* for a text that describes a Jewish community ready to turn towards priestly Judaism. The existence of a synagogue "of the Hebrews,"[57] consonant with the title of the writing, does not necessarily prove that it was the very place of this preaching, but shows that such a designation was common in Rome. (b) The statement on the penance of the Pastor of Hermas, also written in Rome around the year 140 gives a second argument: "I am not saying that at the present time someone can deny the Lord and receive repentance; for the one who is about to deny his Lord now cannot be saved. But repentance appears to be available to those who made a denial before now."[58] This declaration on the impossibility of a second conversion, this moral rigorism, seems to be primarily based on Hebrews. (c) The third argument is the lack of explicit reference to the text in the East until 200. The Epistle of Barnabas (v. 130), which makes a rad-

[55] Paul Ellingworth, "Hebrews and 1 Clement: Literary Dependence or Common Tradition?," *BZ* 23 (1979): 262–69.

[56] Karl P. Donfried and Peter Richardson, *Judaism and Christianity in First-Century Rome* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998). Harry J. Leon, *The Jews of Ancient Rome*, Morris Loeb (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1960).

[57] Attestation by ICJ 291, 317, 510, 535 referring to the "archons of the Hebrews." We can mention CIJ 317 (= JIWE II,2), a white marble plaque from the 4th century found in the Monteverde catacomb on the Via Portuensis preserved in the Vatican museums: ἐνθά<δ>ε κεῖτε | Γελάσις ἐξάρχων | τῶν Ἑβρέων· ἐν εἰ|ρήνῃ ἡ κοίμησις | αὐ-(menorah)-το-(amphore)-ῦ, "Here lies Gelasius, exarch of the Hebrews: in peace his rest." David Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe* (vol. 2: The City of Rome; Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 12–13. The expression "Synagogue of the Hebrews" is found in CIJ 510 (= JIWE II,577) which preserves the memory of Salo: "Here lies Salo daughter of Galias who was father of the synagogue of the Hebrews. She lived 41 years. Her sleep is in peace". ὧδε κεῖ|τε Σαλὼ | θυγάτηρ Γα|δία πατρὸς || συναγωγῆς | Αἰβρέων Ἑβραίων· ἐβί|ωσεν [scil. ἔτη μα']· | ἐν εἰρήνῃ | ἡ κοίμη||σεις αὐτῆς.

[58] Hermas, *The Shepherd*, 9th Parabole, 26,6 § 103 transl. Bart D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers II*, Loeb 25 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 451.

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ically different interpretation of Scripture, does not mention it,[59] while the references in Ignatius of Antioch are most evanescent.[60] Marcion does not seem to be aware of it.[61] Irenaeus of Lyon, circa 180, who largely depends on Asian Christianity, does not say a single word about it, despite his constant concern to sort out the sacred texts. It may be possible that Justin of Neapolis evokes the letter by calling Christ ἀπόστολος (*First Apology* 12:9; 63:5; 10:14; cf. Hebr. 3:1) and ἀρχιερεύς but also by making a link between Abel, Enoch and Melchisedek as Christ's predecessors in the justice without the law.[62] But these faint reminiscences are not likely to contradict the Roman hypothesis, since Justin lived for a long time in the Eternal City. In short, everything suggests that the sermon – because it was known in Rome, but unknown in the East – came from Rome.

2. The turn of the 3rd century: entry into the East under the name of Paul. – From the end of the 2nd century onwards, new interest in the epistle to the Hebrews grew in the East.

The history of the reception reveals that the Alexandrian School gradually began to admit the Pauline authenticity of the text. At first, it was regarded as a novelty to handle with care. Clement of Alexandria, in a passage of his lost *Hypotyposes* (before 215) quoted by Eusebius of Caesarea (*Hist. Eccl.* VI, 14), seems to be the first to believe that the text was written by Paul. At the same time, he seems to be very well aware of the difficulty of his position. He declares that the epistle to the Hebrews is from Paul (καὶ τὴν πρὸς Ἑβραίους δὲ ἐπιστολὴν Παύλου μὲν εἶναί φησιν), but he assumes the intervention of Luke. According to him, Luke would have translated a text written in He-

[59] Reidar Hvalvik, *The Struggle for Scripture and Covenant: The Purpose of the Epistle of Barnabas and Jewish-Christian Competition in the Second Century*, WUNT 2.82 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 132–40.

[60] IgnMagn 8, 1 is usually quoted (cf. Heb 13:9) although it involves the warning against false doctrines. We can mention IgnPh 9:1 which compares Jesus the High Priest to a gate like Heb 10:20–21, but then goes on with the fact that it let pass Isaac, Abraham, Jacob and the prophets, which is not said by Hebrews. We can also mention IgnEp 16:2, which links unforgivable sin to crucifixion like Heb 6:4–6, but does not make the connection with ἅπαξ, "once and for all," the principal argument in the chapter.

[61] This is what Jerome explicitly says in his preface to the epistle of Titus: ut enim de cæteris epistolis taceam, de quibus quidquid contrarium suo dogmati uiderant, eraserunt, nonnullas integras repudiandas crediderunt: ad timotheum uidelicet utramque, ad hebræos, et ad titum, quam nunc conamur exponere (PL 26,589). One may wonder whether Marcion was aware of it and made it disappear (*erado*) or whether he was not aware of it at all, which was misinterpreted by Jerome.

[62] Justinus Martyrus, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 19, 3–6. The subsequent reference of Abel and Enoch led Skarsaune to believe that Hebrews was Justin's source: Oskar Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy: A Study in Justin Martyr's Proof-Text Tradition*, Suppl. Nov. Test. 56 (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 128.

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brew by Paul into Greek, which would explain some stylistic similarities. Embarrassed by the absence of the letterhead form, Clement offers two explanations. The first is of a tactical nature: Paul kept his anonymity to avoid repelling the Hebrews (συνετῶς πάνυ οὐκ ἐν ἀρχῇι ἀπέτρεψεν αὐτούς, τὸ ὄνομα θείς); the second is psychological: since he is the apostle of the Gentiles, he was not called the apostle of the Hebrews, knowing that he was writing to the Hebrews "by subrogation" (ἐκ περιουσίας).

Origen has a more complicated position illustrated by a famous passage quoted by all the commentators of the letter:

> But as for myself, if I were to state my own opinion, I should say that the thoughts are the apostle's, but that the style and composition belong to one who called to mind the apostle's teachings and, as it were, made short notes of what his master said. If any church, therefore, holds this epistle as Paul's, let it be commended for this also. For not without reason have the men of old time handed it down as Paul's. But who wrote the epistle, in truth God knows.[63]

Adamantius is in an awkward position. His keen sense of language tells him that the text is the work of an author who puts himself in a listening position and writes in good Greek. It cannot come from the Apostle of the Gentiles, who writes with confidence in a harsh language. Like his master Clement of Alexandria, Origen speculates on mediation by Luke, or by Clement of Rome. But he is under the spell of a growing tradition.

And moreover, in other places, such as in the *Letter to Africanus* (chap. 8) or in *Against Celsus* (VII, 29), he does not hesitate to attribute the text to Paul. Quoting Heb 12:22 speaking of the heavenly Jerusalem, he says that "it is what the Apostle envisions, as a man who has risen with Christ and who, seeking higher realities, has found a meaning not to be found in any Jewish mythology."[64]

In Rome, on the other hand, the text continues to circulate anonymously, as Epiphanius explains,[65] stating the case of a Theodotus, a cobbler from Byzantium who came to Rome under Pope Zephyrin (199–217) and founded the "Melchizedechians" by authorising himself with the letter to the Hebrews. However, as Eusebius reports, Caius, the opponent of the Cataphrygian Proclus, writes in his *Dialogues* that there are 13 letters of Paul:

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[63] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* vi, 25, 13–14. Eusebius of Caesarea, *The Ecclesiastical History II and the Martyrs of Palestine*, Loeb 253 (transl. Hugh Jackson Lawlor and John Ernest Leonard Oulton; London: Heineman/Harvard University, 1942), 77–79.

[64] Origenes Adamantius, *Contra Celsum* 7,29 περὶ ἧς διαλαβὼν ὁ ἀπόστολος, ὡς συνεγερθεὶς Χριστῷ καὶ τὰ ἄνω ζητῶν καὶ νοῦν εὑρὼν οὐδεμιᾶς ἐχόμενον ἰουδαϊκῆς μυθολογίας φησίν.

[65] Epiphanius Salamis, *Panarion* iv, 34.

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"he mentions only thirteen epistles of the holy Apostle, not numbering the Epistle to the Hebrews with the rest; seeing that even to this day among the Romans some do not consider it to be the Apostle's."[66] The sermon was therefore still not attributed to Paul. Other evidence points in the same direction. Muratori's Canon, widely considered to date from the 3rd century,[67] does not mention the letter. Hippolytus of Rome, around 235, still doubts the Pauline authenticity of Hebrews. Photios confirmed in his *Bibliotheca*: "some of the statements are inaccurate, for instance, that the epistle to the Hebrews is not the work of the apostle Paul."[68] Elsewhere, the same Photius reports that Stephen Gobar, an obscure Monophysite theologian of the 6th century, recalled that Hippolytus did not believe in the authenticity of Hebrews.[69] He was therefore in the same position as the Carthaginian Tertullian who, around the year 200, still thought he had 13 epistles of Paul and believed that Hebrews was from Barnabas.[70]

In the 3rd century, therefore, Hebrews continued to circulate anonymously in the West, while the Alexandrian Church suddenly received it as coming from Paul. What else, other than the introduction in Alexandria under the patronage of Paul could have happened then? What other than the intervention of the second hand could have happened? Giving a Pauline visa to the sermon makes the written word suddenly pass into the canon orb. Obviously aware that the text is already known in Rome, the "second hand" takes great care to greet "those from Italy" who seem to surround "Paul": this enables him to explain why it was not known earlier and why the Romans have already heard about it.[71]

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[66] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* vi, 20, 3. Eusebius of Caesarea, *History II*, 67.

[67] Jos Verheyden, "The Canon Muratori: A Matter of dispute," in *The Biblical Canons,* ed. J.-M. Auwers and H. J. De Jonge, BETL 163 (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 487–556.

[68] Photius, *Bibliotheca* 121. Λέγει δὲ ἄλλα τέ τινα τῆς ἀκριβείας λειπόμενα, καὶ ὅτι ἡ πρὸς Ἑβραίους ἐπιστολὴ οὐκ ἔστι τοῦ ἀποστόλου Παύλου.

[69] Photius, *Bibliotheca* 232.

[70] Tertullianus, *De Pudicita* 20. Tertullian calls the text "Barnabas' Epistle to the Hebrews" and attributes it entirely to Paul's companion.

[71] This seems to be the only plausible hypothesis, and not Rome as Schmithals thought. According to him, the addition of the epistolary final was part of the canonisation movement at work during the end of the 2nd century in the Roman Church: Adolf von Harnack, *Entstehung und Entwickelung der Kirchenverfassung und des Kirchenrechts in den zwei ersten Jahrhunderten* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1910), 71. If that were the case, the process failed miserably in Rome, whereas it was successful in the East. It does not explain why the author includes these greetings from Rome. Walter Schmithals, "Der Hebräerbrief als Paulusbrief: Beobachtungen zur Kanonbildung," in *Paulus, die Evangelien und das Urchristentum Beiträge von und zu Walter Schmithals zu seinem 80. Geburtstag,* ed. Cilliers Breytenbach, Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums 54 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 252–71. [Second publication of Walter

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A precious archaeological testimony gives us a *terminus ad quem* to this inclusion of the "Pauline authorisation" within Hebrews, namely P^{46}. According to most palaeographers, this papyrus, copied in Egypt, dated back to the years 200. The epistle to the Hebrews is curiously placed immediately after the Epistle to the Romans as a part of the Pauline writing group. The letter contains the ending at folio 38v, proving that it already existed at the turn of the 3rd century.[72]

3. From the 3rd to the 5th century: resistance in the West, canonisation in the East. – The continuation of the story of the reception confirms that the canonicity of this writing, under the patronage of Paul, was spreading in the East. If Origen had doubts about Hebrews, his student Denys of Alexandria († 264) no longer had any. In one of his letters quoted by Eusebius of Caesarea (*Hist. Eccl.* VI, 41, 6), he has a reminiscence of Heb 10:34 he unflinchingly attributes to the Apostle. Following Denys of Caesarea, Peter of Alexandria († 311) quotes Heb 11:32 and writes ὡς λέγει ὁ ἀπόστολος,[73] like Alexander of Alexandria († 326) quoting He 13:8.[74] Athanasius finally considers it to be a letter of Paul in his famous 39th *Festal Epistle* of 367.

The Antiochian and Syrian Churches, closely linked to the Church of Alexandria, followed the lead with a slight delay, evidence the movement had originated in Egypt. In 264, the Council of Antioch countered Paul of Samosata by quoting Hebrews and declaring that the text was by Paul.[75] Aphraates (ca. 330) regularly used it[76] and Ephrem († 373) commented on it by attributing it to Paul after an introductory discussion in which he uses Heb 13:19.22–25 to decide in favour of authenticity, proof of the efficiency of this postscript.[77] In Asia Minor, the changeover was slower since Methodius

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Schmithals, "Der Hebräerbrief als Paulusbrief: Beobachtungen zur Kanonbildung," in *Die Weltlichkeit des Glaubens Festschrift für Ulrich Wickert zum siebzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. Barbara Aland et al., BZNW 85 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1997), 319–37.]

[72] Gert J. Steyn, "The Ending of Hebrews Reconsidered," *ZNW* 103 (2012).

[73] Petrus Alexandrinus, *Epistula canonica* 9, PG 18, 485.

[74] Alexander Alexandrinus, *Epistula de Arii Depositione* II, 4, PG 18, 576.

[75] Gian Domenico Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio* (vol. 1; Florentiæ [Florence]: A. Zatta, 1759), 1037.

[76] See *Demonstrationes* I, 16; 2, 14; 8, 7; 13, 13.

[77] Ephrem's comments are only preserved in Armenian, and the only edition available is the Latin translation made by the Mekhitarist Fathers: Ephræm Syrus, *S. Ephræm Syri commentarii in epistolas D. Pauli nunc primum ex armenio in latinum sermonem a Patribus Mekitharistis translati* (Venetiis: Typographia Sancti Lazari, 1893). In his prologue, Ephrem, after having disclosed his doubts about Paul's authorship, declares himself in favour of authenticity by pointing out that "Paul" refers to Timothy and "those of Italy." For Ephrem, this is a familiar letter: the apostle therefore does not need to put his name, or use his usual style, especially since his doctrine is difficult to explain, "which requires a certain humility," adds the Syrian (p. 200).

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(† 311) quoted it whilst still declaring it anonymous,[78] whereas the Council of Laodicea in 360 enumerated 14 letters from Paul, including, of course, Hebrews.[79]

Probably because the text was originally from Rome and had long circulated anonymously, it took much longer for the Latins to accept it as being from Paul. Eusebius of Caesarea, in the East, still acknowledges this in 340: "and the fourteen letters of Paul are obvious and plain, yet it is not right to ignore that some dispute the Epistle to the Hebrews, saying that it was rejected by the Church of Rome as not being by Paul."[80] The switchover did not take place until the middle of the 4th century. Hilaire of Poitiers († 367) twice cites the epistle as Paul's, but this is an isolated case.[81] The Church of Brescia constitutes a good point for monitoring the change. Philastrius, bishop from 383 to 391, illustrates the ambiguities of the time. In chapter 88 of his treatise against heretics, he states that the Church has ruled on 13 letters from Paul to stop the proliferation of apocryphal books:

> Therefore, it was decided by the blessed apostles and their successors that the universal Church should not read anything other than the law, the prophets, the gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the thirteen letters of Paul, seven other [letters] – the two of Peter, the three of John, the one of Jude, the one of James – these seven are attached to the Acts of the Apostles.[82]

Only 13 letters of Paul are therefore in use in the Church for Philastrius. However, in the next chapter, he seems to contradict himself. Turning to a list of heresies which does not acknowledge the canon in its entirety and read other books, he begins by quoting the "Manicheans" who consider as canonical the apocryphal Acts of Andrew, Peter, Paul, etc. Then he adds:

> Some others do not recognise that the epistle from the Blessed Paul to the Hebrews is of him: on the contrary, they say that it comes from the Blessed Apostle Barnabas or Clement, the Bishop of the City of Rome; others say that it comes from Luke the Blessed Evangelist. They also want to read a letter written to the Laodiceans by the

[78] *Symposium* IV, 1; V, 7.

[79] *Canon 60*. Brooke Foss Westcott, *A General Survey of the History of the Canon of the New Testament* (London: Macmillan, 1870), 401.

[80] Eusebius Cæsarensis, *Hist. Eccl.* III, 3, 5. Eusebius of Caesarea, *The Ecclesiastical History I*, 193.

[81] Hilarius Pictaviensis, *De Trinite* IV,11; *Commentarius in psalmos* XIV, 5.

[82] Philastrius Brixensis, *Diversarum hereseon liber* 88. *PL* 12, 1111. Propter quod statutum est ab apostolis beatis et eorum successoribus non aliud legi in ecclesia debere catholica nisi legem et prophetas et euangelia, et actus apostolorum et pauli tredecim epistolas, et septem alias, petri duas, iohannis tres, iudæ unam, et unam iacobi, quæ septem actibus apostolorum coniunctæ sunt.

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Blessed Apostle. And because they have added things in the latter that do not seem right, it is not read in the Church. Although some read it, however, the Church only reads its thirteen letters and, occasionally, the one to the Hebrews.

In the latter, because Paul writes rhetorically, with a speech worthy of praise, they do not think it is the same apostle. And because he says in it that Christ was created, they do not read it; they do the same about penance because of the Novatians. He says that Christ was created, in his body he says and not in his divinity, and he teaches at the same place that the Son must have the divine substance of the Father, which is the splendour of glory, as he says, and the image of its substance.[83]

Philastrius defends a complex position. On the one hand, he includes among the heretics those who, like Origen, Clement or Tertullian, consider that the letter is not from Paul for stylistic or theological reasons and he even feels compelled to refute their arguments, which are nevertheless quite legitimate. But on the other hand, if he says that the letter is from Paul, he acknowledges that only thirteen letters are read in the Church and *ad Hebreos interdum*, "from time to time that to the Hebrews." The Councils of Hippo (393) and Carthage (397) recall this marginal status: they quote the 13 epistles of Paul and add: *ejusdem ad Hebræos una*.[84]

The immediate successor of Philastrius, Gaudentius, by contrast, no longer adopts this cautious position. In his first sermon, quoting Heb 10, he clearly tells his listener: *disce ab apostolo*, "discern through the Apostle."[85] At the same time, Ambrose, in Milan, quotes Hebrews as saying *apostolus ait*, the formula he often uses to quote Paul.[86] Around 410, Rufinus quoted 14 letters, and around 405, Pope Innocent I's letter to Exuperius of Toulouse *Consulenti tibi* contained an index of sacred books stipulating that *pauli epistolæ quattuordecim*, "Paul's Letters are fourteen."[87]

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[83] Philastrius Brixensis, *Diversarum hereseon liber* 89. *PL* 12, 1111. Sunt alii, qui epistolam beati pauli ad hebreos non adserunt esse ipsius, sed dicunt aut barnabæ esse beati apostoli aut clementis de urbe romæ episcopi, alii autem lucæ beatissimi euangelistæ aiunt; epistolam etiam ad laodicenses scriptam beati apostoli quidam uolunt legere. Et quia addiderunt in ea quædam non bene sentientes, inde non legitur in ecclesia, et si legitur a quibusdam, non tamen in ecclesia legitur populo nisi tredecim epistolæ ipsius et ad hebreos interdum. Et in ea quia rhetorice scripsit, sermone plausibili, inde non putant esse eiusdem apostoli; et quia et factum christum dicit in ea, inde non legitur; de pænitentia autem propter nouatianos æque. Cum ergo factum christum dicit, corpore dicit, non diuinitate dixit factum, cum doceat ibidem quod diuinæ sit paternæ substantiæ filius: qui est splendor gloriæ, inquit, et imago substantiæ eius.

[84] Denzinger, § 186. Westcott, *General Survey*, 440.

[85] Gaudentius Brixensis, *Sermones 1*, PL 20, 848.

[86] Ambrosius Mediolanensis, *De Patriarchis* iv, 16, CSEL 3.22, 133.

[87] Innocentius I papa, *Consulenti tibi*, PL 20,502.

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Augustine and Jerome also are uncomfortable with the letter. Augustine mentions that many doubts that Hebrews was from Paul[88] but declares himself convinced by the weight of the Eastern tradition.[89] Jerome has the same questions as Augustine. The Stridonian is suspicious every time he quotes Hebrews and regularly reminds us that his canonicity is not part of the Latin Church's habits.[90]

This journey through the history of reception corroborates the results of the literary analysis of the text of the "epistle" to the Hebrews: the current document is but a composite text, the result of late canonisation. Initially a homily addressed to a Jewish community, probably in Rome and probably at the end of the 60s, it long enjoyed a sure favour in the Roman Church, to the extent that in 96, Clement of Rome could use it creatively, citing it while developing arguments that were almost contrary to it. On the other hand, it remained unknown in the East. Everything changed towards the end of the 2nd century. While the Romans continued to use it without attributing it to Paul, the Church of Alexandria first reluctantly, then more and more frankly, assumed that the apostle had written it; soon the whole Eastern world adopted it as a Paulinian letter. My guess is that the second-hand intervention took place at that time. In a few verses, it succeeded in giving a "Pauline touch" to the speech and also in presenting it as a product imported from Italy: the sermon becomes the writing of Paul from Rome. The rest of the story of the reception confirms this hypothesis: while the Orientals accept without hesitation the Pauline authority over Hebrews, the Latins are in turn reluctant, proving that the initiative did not come from them (and no doubt also they knew perfectly well that the text was not from Paul). Their reticence would last much longer than that of the Orientals: while it did not take them a century to put Hebrews among the Pauline epistles, Jerome and Augustine, almost two hundred years later, still expressed doubts.

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[88] Augustinus Hipponensis, *De Civitate Dei* xvi, 22. CCSL 48. sed plane tunc benedictus est a melchisedech, qui erat sacerdos dei excelsi; de quo in epistula, quæ inscribitur ad hebræos, quam plures pauli apostoli esse dicunt, quidam uero negant, multa et magna conscripta sunt.

[89] Augustinus Hipponensis, *De peccatorum meritis et remissione et de baptismo parvulorum* i, 27, CSEL 60, 47: ad hebreos quoque epistula, quamquam nonnullis incerta sit, tamen, quoniam legi quosdam huic nostræ de baptismo paruulorum sententiæ contraria sentientes etiam ipsam quibusdam opinionibus suis testem adhibere uoluisse magisque me mouet auctoritas ecclesiarum orientalium, quæ hanc etiam in canonicis habent, quanta pro nobis testimonia contineat aduertendum est.

[90] Hieronymus Stridonensis, *Epistula* 53, 8; *In Amos* 3, 8, etc. For instance *In Isaia* 3, 6: paulus apostolus in epistolas ad hebræos, quam latina consuetudo non recipit, "[this is what] the apostle Paul says in the epistle to the Hebrews, that the Latin tradition does not receive."

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III. Engaging in Contemporary Debates: Gamaliel and the Parting of the Ways

The last way to make history with tradition is to usee the reception to enter contemporary debates. Let us take Gamaliel as an example. This eminent figure of the Pharisaic movement has been virtually recuperated by Christianity, which made him the master of Paul of Tarsus and the advocate of the apostles in a confrontation before the Sanhedrin. Is Gamaliel the quintessential Pharisee or a Christian in disguise? The means taken to solve this dilemma will be a mirror of the perception that the authors had of the relationship between Judaeans and Christians.[91]

1. Gamaliel, a Well-Known Pharisee

Before seeing how Gamaliel's figure was *received*, let us try to see how it was *constructed*. Two corpora will help to do this, the Christian Acts of the Apostles and the information transmitted by the Talmudic corpus.

1.1. The Rabbinic Reception of a Pharisee From Before 70

Gamaliel's reception in Jewish sources is late, since it dates to the Mishnah. His name appears in three passages of Flavius Josephus, but only to refer to one of his sons, Simon, who opposed Josephus himself when he was in charge in Galilee:[92] his historical existence is proven, but no more can be concluded. In the Talmudic texts, his memory is preserved, with the difficulty that he can easily be confused with his grandson Gamaliel (II) of Yavne.[93]

Following Neusner's work on rabbinic traditions concerning the Pharisees,[94] it is worth remembering he was known as the grandson of Hillel the

[91] Source of this paragraph: Régis Burnet, "Gamaliel, un docteur de la Loi au secours des apôtres," in *Judaïsme et christianisme chez les Pères,* ed. Marie-Anne Vannier, JAOC 8 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 187–203.

[92] Flavius Josephus, *Bell. J.* vi, 9, § 158; *Vita* 38, § 189; 60, § 309. On the little we know about Gamaliel, see Neusner's conclusions: Jacob Neusner, *The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees before 70 I. The Masters* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 386–88. See also: Richard Bauckham, "Gamaliel and Paul," in *Earliest Christianity within the Boundaries of Judaism: Essays in Honor of Bruce Chilton,* ed. Bruce Chilton et al., The Brill Reference Library of Judaism 49 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 87–106.

[93] Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 341. The same fact is deplored by Bruce and Barrett: Frederick Fyvie Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (London: Apollos, 1990), 175. Charles Kingsley Barrett, *Acts of the Apostles*, ICC (vol. 1; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 292.

[94] Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 341–76. See also Bruce Chilton and Jacob Neusner, "Paul and Gamaliel," *Review of Rabbinic Judaism* 8 (2005): 113–62.

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Elder, even if his name never appears in the conflicts between Beth-Hillel and Beth-Shammaï,[95] perhaps because he created his own school.[96] Some anecdotes are remembered, such as the fact that he forbade the reading of the Targum of Job (*Tos. Shabbat* 13:2; *Yer. Shabbat* 16:1; *Bav. Shabbat* 115a), that he married his daughter to Simon ben Netanel (*Tos. Avodah Zarah* 3:10) and that the famous Hanina ben Dosa healed his son (*Bav. Berakhot* 34b). His prescriptions concern the witnesses of Rosh Hashana's new moon (*M. Rosh Hashana* 2:5) and divorce (*M. Gittin* 4:2–3).[97] His legal opinions are that the wives of a missing husband are allowed to remarry on the basis of a single witness to the death of their first husband (*M. Yebamoth* 16:7). Some concern the betrothal (*M. Ketuboth* 13:3–5). His prescription does not increase the separation of the Pharisees from the rest of the world and seems compatible with an official status.[98]

These are only a few glimpses, and it would be necessary to make a more precise reception of the different occurrences of Gamaliel's name, to refine the possible dating of the various statements – which is extremely risky. Suffice it to say that Gamaliel the Elder is considered by rabbinic Judaism as a "fully Jewish" figure of authority. He is regularly named *Rabban*, which places him in the masters's rank – Hershel Shanks even considered that he was the first to receive this title of *rabbi*, an idea challenged by Salomon Zeitlin.[99] He often intervenes at the end of discussions and his word is never questioned, which makes him an accurate source of interpretation, a "Halakhic model" as Neusner said.[100] He is the subject of the famous statement of *M. Sotah* 9:15: "since Rabban Gamaliel the Elder died, there has been no more reverence for the law, and purity and piety died out at the same time."

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[95] Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 344.76.

[96] Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 375–76.

[97] Chilton and Neusner, "Paul and Gamaliel," 123–43. Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 375. See also Hermann Leberecht Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (vol. 2; München: C. H. Beck, 1922), 636–39. Leo Michel Abrami, "Were all the Pharisees 'Hypocrites'?," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 47 (2012): 427–35.

[98] Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 376.

[99] Hershel Shanks, "Origins of the Title 'Rabbi'," *JQR* 59 (1968): 152–57 (here: 155). Salomon Zeitlin, "The Title Rabbi in the Gospels Is Anachronistic," *JQR* 59 (1968): 158–60. See also Salomon Zeitlin, "Is the Title 'Rabbi' Anachronistic in the Gospels?: A Reply," *JQR* 53 (1963): 345–49.

[100] Chilton and Neusner, "Paul and Gamaliel," 128. See also S. Enslin Morton, "Paul and Gamaliel," *Journal of Religion* 7 (1927): 360–75.

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1.2. The First Christian Reception of a Pharisee

A second reception is performed by the Acts of the Apostles twice: Acts 5:34–42 and Acts 22:3.

1. The Pharisee who intercedes on behalf of Christians. – At the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles, Luke portrays a community still in its childhood. Those whom he presents as its main leaders, Peter and John, are summoned before the Sanhedrin and are facing death. Gamaliel then intervenes in a speech. He acts with power since he ordered to take the apostles out and speaks with authority (Acts 5:35b–39).

We can leave aside whether this discourse is historical, nor is it necessary to clarify the differences between what Gamaliel tells us about Theudas and Judas and what Flavius Josephus has to say, nor to know whether Luke commits the "most egregious anachronism in Acts," as Pervo put it,[101] whether there are two Theudas,[102] nor whether this ever happened:[103] these questions would not help in the history of the reception.

Let us focus on the content of this speech. It is obviously a deliberative speech with two *exempla*[104] that echoes an old Greek argument found in Euripides's *Bacchantes*: it is dangerous to become θεομάχοι, to fight a god.[105] The principle can be found in the treaty *Pirqe Avot* 4:11: "any assembly gathered in the name of heaven will eventually last, and the one that is not in the name of heaven will eventually not last".[106]

This recommendation is not very responsible, since Gamaliel asks the Sanhedrin to acknowledge its incompetence precisely on what its members were elected for. It can make sense only within the framework of the Acts: Gamaliel establishes a hermeneutic principle similar to Luke's: the divine Will can be discerned through the successes of witnesses.[107] The purpose of the manoeuvre is clear: to support Christianity and delegitimise those

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[101] Pervo, *Acts*, 147.

[102] Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 176.

[103] Étienne Trocmé, *Le Livre des Actes et l'histoire*, Études d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses 45 (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1957), 193–94. Cf., for instance, Bauernfeind: Bauernfeind, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 94–96.

[104] Pervo, *Acts*, 146.

[105] Martin Dibelius, *Aufsätze zur Apostelgeschichte*, FRLANT 60 = Neue Folge 42 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1953), 160–62. John B. Weaver, *Plots of Epiphany: Prison-Escape in Acts of the Apostles*, BZNW 131 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004), 132–48.

[106] Daniel Marguerat, *Les Actes des Apôtres*, CNT 5A (vol. 1: Actes 1–12; Genève: Labor et Fides, 2007), 200.

[107] Marguerat, *Actes*, 200. Daniel Marguerat, *La Première Histoire du christianisme*, LD 180 (Paris: Cerf, 2003), 130–31. Jean-Noël Aletti, *Quand Luc raconte: le récit comme théologie*, Lire la Bible 115 (Paris: Cerf, 1998), 58–59.

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who oppose it.[108] As Loisy said with his usual hint of irony, it "delivers a pass to Christian propaganda that is suitable for all reasonable men."[109] And elsewhere: "we are really inclined to make him the grandfather of Christianity."[110] The ambiguity of the position Luke builds is perceptible in the aporias of commentators. Is Gamaliel ironic as John Darr had shown,[111] or is he a crypto-Christian as Conzelmann thought?[112]

2. Paul's master. – The Book of Acts has Gamaliel intervene a second time. When Paul was arrested, he calmed the crowd down with a speech he made in the Hebrew language, in which he stated: "I am Judean, born in Tarsus in Cilicia; but I was raised in this city, and educated at the feet of Gamaliel in the exact knowledge of the law of our fathers, being full of zeal for God, as you all are today." This first sentence issues a "patent of Judaism." Paul does not only indicate that he is Ἰουδαῖος, i. e., of Judean descent, but also that he comes from the Diaspora, that he was educated in Jerusalem, that he is full of this zeal for the Torah reflecting a committed religious attitude. And the very proof of the excellence of this training is his education παρὰ τοὺς πόδας Γαμαλιήλ, at Gamaliel's feet, as the good student sitting on the ground while his master is seated.[113]

Does this statement have any historical validity? Haenchen and Bultmann doubted this, noting that Gal 1:22 seems to contradict the idea of an extended stay in Jerusalem.[114] Jeremias admitted it, because of the "hillelite" nature of Paul's thought,[115] while Hübner rejected it, thinking that he was

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[108] Robert L. Brawley, *Luke-Acts and the Jews: Conflict, Apology and Conciliation*, SBL Monograph Series 33 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1987), 97–98.116–17.

[109] Alfred Loisy, *Les Actes des Apôtres* (Paris: Émile Nourry, 1920), 286.

[110] Loisy, *Les Actes des Apôtres*, 284.

[111] John Darr, "Irenic or Ironic? Another Look at Gamaliel Before the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:33–42)," in *Literary Studies in Luke-Acts: Essays in Honor of Joseph B. Tyson,* ed. Richard P. Thompson and Thomas E. Phillips (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 101–19. See also Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, SP 5 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 102–03. William John Lyons, "The Words of Gamaliel (Acts 5.38–39) and the Irony of Indeterminacy," *JSNT* 20 (1998): 23–49.

[112] Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987), 43.

[113] See *Pirqe Avot* 1: 4. Strack and Billerbeck, *Neuen Testament aus Talmud*, 763.

[114] Rudolf Bultmann, "Paulus," in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft IV,* ed. Hermann Gunkel and Leopold Zscharnack (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1930), 1019–45 (here: 1020). Haenchen, *Apostelgeschichte*, 554.

[115] Joachim Jeremias, "Paulus als Hillelit," in *Neotestamentica et Semitica: Studies in Honour of Matthew Black,* ed. Edward Earle Ellis and Max Wilcox (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1969), 88–94. Jeremias was immediately contested by Haacker: Klaus Haacker, "War Paulus Hillelit?," *Institutum Iudaicum Veröffentlichungen* 1971–1972 (1971): 106–20.

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rather Shammaite.[116] Schmithals in turn rejected it, doubting that Paul had any knowledge of Hebrew.[117] Today, such assertions seem outdated, as everyone is so wary of retro-projections of Talmudic data on the first century. This education at Gamaliel's feet is possible, Bauckham argues, even contending Paul might be a relative of Gamaliel's.[118] Whether it was this education that conditioned the scene in the Sanhedrin, whether it was the scene in the Sanhedrin that gave Luke the idea of mentioning Gamaliel again, or whether neither happened, the truth will remain unknown.

The construction of Luke places Gamaliel in a delicate position. This "doctor of the Law, respected by all the people" (νομοδιδάσκαλος τίμιος παντὶ τῷ λαῷ, Acts 5:34) is both the defender of Christians and Paul's master in Judaism, which he eventually denied in favour of Christianity. How can this tension be resolved? Should Gamaliel be annexed to Christianity? Was he a hidden Christian? On the contrary, should the Christians, by exalting the figure of Paul, reject the figure of his master? Although different in their results for the figure of Gamaliel, these two hypotheses go in the same direction: they disqualify Gamaliel's Jewish anchoring. Surprisingly enough, however, neither of these two was in use in the first centuries, which evidences for the fact that this rejection was not necessarily on the agenda.

2. How Long can Christians Speak Favourably of a Jew?

2.1. A First Good Impression

Not only Gamaliel's image is not contested, but his argument is often repeated in praise of him. In *Against Celsius*, Origen intends to refute a criticism of the Jew of Celsus, who finds Jesus very reckless when he is applying to him, what can be applied to many.[119] He replied by citing the cases of Judas the Galilean, Theudas, adding that of Dositheus of Samaria and arguing that for all these cases, the "wise dictum of Gamaliel" should be applied (τὸ εἰρημένον πάνυ σοφῶς). The case is fascinating since Origen opposes the Jew of Celsus with the Gamaliel Jew by praising him for his wisdom.

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[116] Hans Hubner, "Gal 3, 10 und die Herkunft des Paulus," *Kerygma und Dogma* 19 (1973): 215–31.

[117] Walter Schmithals, *Die Apostelgeschichte des Lukas*, Zürcher Bibelkommentare Neues Testament 3 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1982), 202.

[118] Bauckham, "Gamaliel and Paul," 105.

[119] Τινὲς δὲ καὶ ἐλέγξουσιν, ὥς φησιν ὁ παρὰ Κέλσῳ Ἰουδαῖος, μυρίοι τὸν Ἰησοῦν φάσκοντες περὶ ἑαυτῶν ταῦτα εἰρῆσθαι, ἅπερ περὶ ἐκείνου ἐπροφητεύετο. Origenes Adamantius, *Contra Celsum* i, 57.

To be used for corrections only.

Epiphanes of Salamis, likewise, as he introduced Flavius Josephus, says of him he was close to Hillel and Gamaliel "the contemporary of the Saviour, who gave the advice from God not to insult the apostles."[120] He goes further here: Gamaliel, in his moderation advice, is an inspired man.

2.2. In the Fifth Century, a Still Favourable Vision

This favourable opinion lasted until the 5th century, since Jerome, Augustin and John Chrysostom did not question Gamaliel, an authority figure.

1. Jerome. – Jerome is impressed by Paul's education and recalls it several times with respect. In his long letter to Hedibia, he attributes the great science of the apostle to his Jewish master: "I have already said sometimes that the apostle Saint Paul was very learned, since he was instructed at the feet of Gamaliel."[121] Similarly, when Paulinus of Nola asks him to train him, he gives, as usual, an answer that shows that he does not feel worthy, but that he is flattered. Gamaliel then slips in under his pen:

> I speak this way, because there is nothing in me that you can or want to learn; but I have to approve your ardour and your taste for study, independently of us. For a docile spirit that has no master [to train him] is always worthy of praise. We do not take into consideration what you have found, but what you are asking for. A soft wax, easy to form, even if the craftsman's hand gives it shape, is, however, all δυνάμις, whatever it may be. The apostle Saint Paul praises himself for having learned the law of Moses and the prophets at the feet of Gamaliel.[122]

During a controversy with Rufinus, focused precisely on culture and knowledge, the name of Gamaliel recurs, here again in praise. Speaking of Paul, Jerome affirms that he was "a great connoisseur of Hebrew literature and raised at the feet of Gamaliel whom he did not blush to call his master when he possessed the dignity of an apostle. He condemned the Greek prolixity and concealed out of humility what he knew perfectly, so that his

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[120] Τοῦ ἐπὶ τοῦ σωτῆρος, τοῦ κατὰ θεὸν συμβουλεύσαντος ἀποσχέσθαι τῆς κατὰ τῶν ἀποστόλων ἐπηρείας. Epiphanius Salamis, *Panarion* II, 4, 2.

[121] Aliquotiens diximus apostolum paulum uirum fuisse doctissimum et eruditum ad pedes gamalihel. Hieronymus Stridonensis, *Epistula* 120 *ad Hedibiam*, 11, ed. I. Hilberg (CSEL 55, 1912), 507.

[122] Nec hoc dico, quod sit aliquid in me tale, quod uel possis uel uelis discere, sed quod ardor tuus et discendi studium absque nobis per se probari debeat; ingenium docibile et sine doctore laudabile est. non, quid inuenias, sed, quid quæras, consideramus. mollis cera et ad formandum facilis, etiamsi artificis et plastæ cesset manus, tamen δυνάμει totum est, quidquid esse potest. paulus apostolus ad pedes gamalihel legem et prophetas didicisse se gloriatur. Hieronymus Stridonensis, *Epistula* 53 *ad Paulinum*, 3, ed. I. Hilberg (CSEL 54, 1911), 446.

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preaching did not consist in the persuasion of words, but in the virtue of miracles."[123] Elsewhere, on several occasions in his comments on biblical books, he refers to Paul's education by Gamaliel to explain his erudition.[124]

2. Augustine. – Augustine's comment is even more interesting. In the commentary on the psalms, he evokes the figure of the Apostle of the Nations.

> The apostle Paul was, therefore, a crystal, hard, unamenable to the truth, declaiming against the Gospel, in an effort to harden himself against the sun. He was hard, this one, who progressed in the law, taught at the feet of the doctor of Gamaliel law. He did not listen to Moses or the Prophets, who proclaimed Christ. What hardness![125]

What does Paul resist? Gamaliel's purely legal teaching or rather what Gamaliel is supposed to teach him, namely the typological exegesis that reads the proclamation of Christ in the Law and the Prophets? Curiously enough, the Bishop of Hippo does not oppose Gamaliel's reading with Christian reading, which suggests that he considers Gamaliel to be one of the precursors of such an interpretation.

3. *John Chrysostom.* – John Chrysostom, who is known for his controversy against the Jews, is nevertheless measured against Gamaliel. He uses Gamaliel's famous maxim several times, showing that he adopts it, without being reluctant to attribute it to the Jewish doctor. For instance, in a sermon on the Christmas feast, he says that this feast has imposed itself, as it is one of those things that come from God and not from men.[126] In a homily, he spoke in the same way of the "truth proclaimed by Gamaliel."[127] Even in his speech *against the Jews*, Gamaliel's figure is positive. While they are "furious against the disciples and altered by their blood" (μαινομένους, καὶ ἐπιθυμοῦντας τὸ αἷμα τῶν μαθητῶν), he "closes their mouths" (ἐπεστόμισεν).[128] In a homily

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[123] Ille hebræis litteris eruditus et ad pedes doctus gamaliel, quem non erubescit, iam apostolicæ dignitatis, magistrum dicere, græcam facundiam contemnebat, uel certe quod nouerat humilitate dissimulabat, ut prædicatio eius non in persuasione uerborum, sed in signorum uirtute consisteret. Hieronymus Stridonensis, *Adversus libros Rufini* I, 17, ed. P. Lardet (CCSL 79, 1982).

[124] Hieronymus Stridonensis, *Commentarii in Isaiam* XVI, *Præf.; Commentarii in Abacuc* I, 2; *Commentarii epistulæ ad Galatas* II; *Commentarii epistulæ ad Titum.*

[125] Ecce crystallum erat apostolus paulus, durus, obnitens ueritati, clamans aduersus euangelium, tamquam indurans aduersus solem. iste quam durus fuit, crescens in lege, eruditus ad pedes gamalielis legis doctoris! non audiebat moysen et prophetas christum prædicantes? magna duritia! Augustinus Hipponensis, *Ennarationes in Psalmos* CXLVII, 25, ed. E. Dekkers et J. Fraipont (CCSL 40, 1956).

[126] Iohannes Chrysostomus, *In diem natalem*, PG 49, 352.

[127] Iohannes Chrysostomus, *In Acta apostolorum* XVI, 1, PG 60, 128.

[128] Iohannes Chrysostomus, *Adversus Iudæos*, PG 48, 887.

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on the epistle to Timothy, he even gives him an almost Christian virtue: "he was a man who did nothing for the love of domination."[129]

This admiration is ambiguous because it can turn against the Jews. Commenting on circumcision, John Chrysostom shows that no Jew can support it for justification, since it was a Jew educated by Gamaliel himself who revoked it in doubt.[130] Elsewhere John Chrysostom, eventually wondered how he managed not to be a Christian.[131]

2.3. The Tipping Point

The real tipping point of the interpretation of the figure occurred later, in the context of Visigothic Spain, where, from the conversion of King Recareda to Catholicism (587) onwards, a significant change in attitude towards the Jews came about. Many laws were adopted to restrict their influence and persecutions began at the beginning of the 7th century, under King Sisebuto.[132] Julian, Archbishop of Toledo (642–690), who was probably of Jewish origin himself,[133] was one of the main proponents of the conflict, particularly in his book *De comprobatione sextæ ætatis*, written as a polemic against the Talmud.

> Let us now turn to the apostle Paul himself, this vessel of election, which was first nourished in the law and raised at the feet of Gamaliel, and thus possessed the knowledge of the whole old instrument, so that it would be unholy for him to believe that something was hidden in these texts.[134]

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[129] Ὁ δὲ Γαμαλιὴλ ἀνήρ τις ἦν οὐ φιλαρχίας ἕνεκέν τι ποιῶν. Iohannes Chrysostomus, *In Epistulam I ad Timotheum* iii, 2, PG 62, 517.

[130] "Ινα γὰρ μὴ ἀναισχυντῇ ὁ Ἰουδαῖος καὶ λέγῃ, ὅτι Οὐχὶ ἡ περιτομὴ τὴν δικαιοσύνην αὐτῷ προεξένησε; διὰ τοῦτο ὁ μακάριος οὗτος ὁ παρὰ τοὺς πόδας Γαμαλιὴλ μαθητευθεὶς, ὁ κατὰ ἀκρίβειαν τὸν νόμον παιδευθείς φησι· Μὴ νομίσητε, ὦ ἀναίσχυντοι Ἰουδαῖοι, ὅτι ἡ περιτομή τι εἰς δικαιοσύνην αὐτῷ συνετέλεσε· καὶ γὰρ ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τῆς ἀκροβυστίας τὴν πίστιν ἐπιδειξάμενος, ἤκουσεν· *Ἐπίστευσε δὲ Ἀβραὰμ τῷ Θεῷ, καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην.* Iohannes Chrysostomus, *In Genesim* xxxix, PG 53, 367.

[131] Οὗτος ὁ Γαμαλιὴλ, Παύλου διδάσκαλος ἦν. Καὶ θαυμάσαι ἄξιον, πῶς καὶ τὰς κατὰ νοῦν κρίσεις ἔχων καὶ νομομαθὴς ὢν, οὐδέπω ἐπίστευσεν. Οὐκ ἔστι δὲ αὐτὸν μεῖναι μὴ πιστεύσαντα δι' ὅλου. Καὶ δῆλον ἐκ τῶν ῥημάτων αὐτοῦ, δι' ὧν συμβουλεύει. Iohannes Chrysostomus, *In Acta apostolorum* xiv, 1, PG 60, 112.

[132] Sergio Tommaso Stancati, *Prognosticum futuri sæculi, Foreknowledge of the World to Come*, ACW 63 (New York: Newman Press, 2010), 15.

[133] Stancati, *Prognosticum futuri sæculi, Foreknowledge of the World to Come*, 39–40.

[134] Transeamus deinde ad paulum ipsum uas electionis apostolum, qui et ipse adprime in lege nutritus et ad pedes gamalielis edoctus, ita fuit totius veteris instrumenti notione præcognitus, ut nefas sit credere eum aliquid in illis litteris latuisse. Julianus Toletanus, *De comprobatione sextæ ætatis libri tres* ii, 10, ed. J. N. Hillgarth (CCSL 115, 1976).

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Julian reversed Augustine's perspective here. Gamaliel is no longer this wise doctor of the Law who could have taught Paul typological exegesis, he instead is the agent of the Law with, however, providential teaching. He instructed the man of Tarsus so well in the subtleties of the Law that the latter can only see its emptiness. He does not play the villain, since he is in a way the instrument of an anti-Jewish Providence, but he is *ipso facto* on the side of the enemies.

3. A Slow Appropriation

If the anti-Judaism of Julian of Toledo even goes so far as to contest Gamaliel's high figure, most anti-Jewish reactions instead headed in another direction John Chrysostom already outlined: the Christian appropriation of the doctor of the Law. Gamaliel seems so much on the side of Christians that he cannot be a Jew.

3.1. A First Wave in Fourth Century Syria

This movement of "character recycling" had begun a bit earlier. Several texts originating from Syria and extending from the 3rd to the 5th centuries state that Gamaliel could not have intervened in this way in favour of the apostles without having converted to Jesus's message.

The pseudo-clementine recognitions, known by attestations dating back to 379, are the first to propose this reading. The conversion of Gamaliel is twice recalled during a speech given by him. The first occurrence presents the fact: "Gamaliel, a leader of the people, who secretly was our brother in faith, but who, on our advice, remained among them."[135] The second occurrence is more precise, since it explains why Gamaliel did not openly declare himself:

> Gamaliel, whom we said belonged to our faith, but, according to our agreement, remained among them, so that, if they ever prepared a hostile or unholy manoeuvre against us, he could either stop them with skilfully formulated advice, or warn us, so that we could remedy or avoid it.[136]

[135] Gamaliel princeps populi (qui latenter frater noster erat in fide, sed consilio nostro inter eos erat). Pseudo Clemens Romanus, *Recognitiones* I, 65, 2, ed. B. Rehme & F. Paschke (GCS 51, 1965), 45.

[136] Gamaliel, qui, ut supra diximus, nostræ fidei erat, dispensatione vero manebat inter ipsos, ut si quando iniquum aliquid adversum nos aut impium molirentur, vel ipsos consilio reprimeret prudenter aptato, vel nos commoneret ut aut curare aut declinare possemus. Pseudo-Clemens Romanus, *Recognitiones* I, 66, 4, ed. B. Rehme & F. Paschke (GCS 51, 1965), 45.

To be used for corrections only.

Another testimony about Gamaliel's conversion is provided by the *Doctrine of Addaï* dating from 5th-century Edessa, whose legendary elements probably date back to the 3rd century. King Abgar, hearing of Jesus and convinced of his divine nature, wished to bring him to Edessa to heal his leprosy. He dispatches the archivist Hannan: "he left Edessa on March 14 and entered Jerusalem on Wednesday, April 12. He found Christ at Gamaliel's, the head of the Jews, and the letter was read before him."[137] What was Jesus doing just before his arrest, at Gamaliel's house, if the latter was not a sympathiser?

The vogue of the Christian Gamaliel does not stop here but continues in later texts that belong to a cycle called *Homilia de lamentis Mariæ* or simply *Euangelium Gamalielis*. This text is known from some Coptic fragments published at the beginning of the 20th century by Pierre Lacau,[138] an Arab recension in Garshuni[139] and an Ethiopian one.[140] Taking some features of the *Acta Pilati*, this text depicts Mary's lamentation on her dead son. Gamaliel presents himself as the silent spectator of the scene. He intervenes with the same sentence, "I Gamaliel, followed the crowd." The text seems to be completed by a killing of Pilate, sometimes called *Martyrium Pilati* (in Garshuni Arabic) in which the same role of spectator is given to Gamaliel, who this time attends the killing of Pilate, beheaded by his soldiers.[141] Gamaliel's Christian character is much more assertive here since Gamaliel claims to be the disciple of Nicodemus and Josephus of Arimathea.[142]

3.2. A Christian Saint in the Greek World of the Fifth Century

If the Syriac world turned Gamaliel into a true Christian, the Greeks did not hesitate to make a saint of him through the invention of relics. In 415, Lucian, a priest in Caphargamla, a town that seems to be Beit Gimal near

[137] *Doctrina Addaï* 4, transl. A. Desreumaux dans François Bovon and Pierre Geoltrain, *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade 442 (vol. 1; Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 1487.

[138] Pierre Lacau, *Fragments d'apocryphes coptes*, Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire 9 (Le Caire: Impr. de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1904), 15–18. Eugène Revillout, *Les Apocryphes coptes II*, PO 2 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1905), 170–74.

[139] Alphonse Mingana, *Woodbrooke Studies: Christian documents in Syriac, Arabic, and Garshūni* (vol. 2; Cambridge, UK: W. Heffer & Sons, 1928), 163–240 (transl.) et 41–332 (text).

[140] M.-A. Van den Oudenrijn, *Gamaliel: Äthiopische Texte zur Pilatusliteratur*, Spicilegium Friburgense 4 (Freiburg im B.: Universitätsverlag, 1959).

[141] Mingana, *Woodbrooke Studies*, 241–82 (transl.) et 83–333 (text). Robert Beylot, *Martyre de Pilate*, PO 45.4 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1993).

[142] Mingana, *Woodbrooke Studies*, 265.

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Bet Shemesh,[143] received a revelation that the priest Avitus of Braga enjoined him to write.[144] It tells how Lucian receives in his dreams the visit of a fabulous character:

> I saw an old man of high stature, a priest full of dignity, with white hair and a long beard, dressed in a white stole, decorated with gold tassels, with a cross in the middle. He was holding a golden stick in his hand.[145]

It is, of course, Gamaliel who tells him how he took Nicodemus into his home in the countryside, and hid Martyr Stephen's corpse, which had been entrusted to him. After a few adventures and two other apparitions (Lucian refusing to believe), Gamaliel reveals the place where he buried the precious relics. At the place, he buried Nicodemus, his own son Habib, and eventually he himself rests there. Lucian found all the coffins and transferred them to a sanctuary on Mount Zion, before scattering some of the relics.

3.3. The Appropriation of the Christian Saint by Bede the Venerable

From the Syriac world to the Greek world, Gamaliel had different appropriations, and ultimately the Latin world made the link between all these traditions. Bede the Venerable († 735) collected all the traditions in the 8th century.

In his *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, when he met Gamaliel in chapter 5, Bede recalled both Clement's hypothesis about Nicodemus being a secretive disciple and the story of the invention of the relics.

> He appeared in a vision to the holy servant of God and priest Lucian – the same Lucian wrote to the whole Church afterwards – and taught him in his very sweet apparition where Stephen's tomb was located and Nicodemus's tomb, which had buried the Lord with Joseph, as well as the one of himself, Gamaliel, and his son Habib.[146]

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[143] Émile Puech, "Un mausolée de Saint Étienne à Khirbet Jiljil-Beit Gimal," *RB* 113 (2006): 100–26. Fr. Lagrange previously identified it with Jemala (today Al-Ittihad): Marie-Joseph Lagrange, *Saint Étienne et son sanctuaire à Jérusalem* (Paris: A. Picard, 1894), 59.

[144] Edited by S Vanderlinden, "Revelatio Sancti Stephani (BHG 7850–6)," *Revue des études byzantines* 1946): 178–217. A (French) Translation in Lagrange, *Saint Étienne*, 43–53. Henri Leclercq, *Étienne (Martyre et sépulture de Saint)*, DACL (vol. 5; Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1922), 641–46.

[145] Lagrange, *Saint Étienne*, 42.

[146] Apparuit namque in uisione sancto dei famulo et presbytero Luciano, ut idem Lucianus postmodum omnibus ecclesiis scripsit, et, ubi sanctus Stephanus esset tumulatus, simul et Nicodemus, qui dominum cum Ioseph sepeliuit, necnon et ipse Gamalihel cum filio suo Abiba suauissima ostensione perdocuit. Beda Venerabilis, *Retractatio in Actus Apostolorum* v, ed. M. L. W. Laistner (CCSL 121, 1983).

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Shortly afterwards, concerning Stephen's lapidation, he quotes the rest of Lucian's story.[147] Finally, he picks up the whole account again in his world chronology, the *De temporum ratione liber*.[148] From Bede on, Gamaliel is ranked as a quasi-saint since he entered the martyrology of August 3, is part of the office of Saint Stephen (for instance that of Stephen of Liège in the 10th century)[149] and is found in universal chronicles (like those of Freculf in the 8th century or Sigebert of Gembloux, 12th century).[150] The whole story is finally repeated by Jacobus de Varagine in his *Golden Legend*.[151]

The same Bede is at the origin of a tenacious legend, specific to the Latin world: Gamaliel would be the supervisor of the wedding meal at Cana. The miracle tended to be read as the passage from the Old Law to the New Law. And Gamaliel the *architriclinus* can witness it:

> The steward of the feast represents the one who is an expert in the Law of that time, perhaps Nicodemus, Gamaliel or Paul; when the gospel word, which was hidden under the letter of the Law and the prophets, is believed by such men, it is like wine made with water that is approved by the meal steward.[152]

Only an expert in the Law, such as Nicodemus, Gamaliel or Saul could have seen the change of Law: Gamaliel ratified the passage from the Old to the New Covenant. Alcuin takes Bede's opinion *verbatim*[153] and so does Thomas Aquinas,[154] which marks the completion of Gamaliel's process of assimilation into the Christian world.

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[147] Beda Venerabilis, *Retractatio in Actus Apostolorum* viii.

[148] Beda Venerabilis, *De temporum ratione liber* lxvi.

[149] Stephanus Leodiensis, *Officium sancti Stephani protomartyris*, ed. dans Ritva Jonsson, *Historia: Études sur la genèse des offices versifiés* (Stockholm: Almqvist et Wiksell, 1968), 215.

[150] Freculphus Lexovensis, *Historiarum* II, i, 17, ed. M. Allen (CCCM 169A, 2002), 470. Sigebertus Gemblacensis, *Cronica*, ed. L. Bethmann (MGHSS 6, 1844), 306.

[151] Iacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea* 112 (De inuentione sancti Stephani protomartiris).

[152] Architriclinus aliquis legis peritus illius temporis est, fortasse nichodimus uel gamalihel uel discipulus tunc eius saulus nunc autem magister totius ecclesiæ paulus apostolus. Et dum talibus uerbum euangelii creditur quod in littera legis et prophetiæ latebat occultum uinum utique architriclino de aqua factum propinatur. Beda Venerabilis, *Homeliarum evangelii* ii, 14, ed. D. Hurst (CCSL 122, 1955).

[153] Alcuinus, *Commentaria in sacri Iohannis Evangelium* PL 100, 771.

[154] Thomas Aquinas, *Super Euangelium Iohannis reportatio* 2,1, 361, ed. Marietti, 1952, 71.

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4. Conclusion

It is therefore in the 8th century that a process begun in the 3rd century for Gamaliel concluded. The least we can say is that the evolution of a character as representative as Gamaliel took time. Beyond the somewhat anecdotal nature of the metamorphoses of this figure, this long history tells us about the complexity of the process of the parting of the ways. From Syria to Visigoth Spain, from Hieronymic Bethlehem to Bede's England, perspectives diverge, and interpretations follow one another, to the point that one can neither speak merely of a unilateral and punctual separation, nor envisage a kind of irenic communion between the two religions.

IV. Summary and Perspectives

Taking into account the reception history allows us to enter into historical debates and to propose arguments to address issues of textual criticism, redaction history or historical developments. This perspective makes it possible to show that the choice made by modern editions to systematically privilege Thaddeus over Lebbaeus in designating the 10th apostle does not represent the diversity of patristic opinions on this question and would deserve, at least, that the double name be retained. The research was also able to make a proposal for dating the final section of the epistle to the Hebrews. While the letter may have been written in the second half of the first century, the accompanying note may have been written a century later in Alexandria. Thus, endowed with a Pauline visa, the epistle was gradually able to enter the canons of the communities, especially in the East, where resistance was strongest. Finally, as we have just seen, the method of the history of the reception allowed us to refine the chronology of the Parting of the Ways. It was not until the 8th century that Christians definitively distanced themselves from the Jewish figure of Gamaliel, either by contesting him or by assimilating him on the assumption that he was a convert. In the meantime, the geographical diversity of this famous process of separation has become obvious. What is true in the Latin world is not true in the Greek world, and even less so in the Syriac world. And within the same world, the perspectives do not overlap. The history of reception thus makes it possible to refine chronologies and to embrace geographical and cultural diversity.

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Chapter 6

Tradition and Literary Methods

Reading with tradition does not only shed light on historical issues. It also questions the application, to texts from the past, of literary methods developed to analyse modern and contemporary documents. The narrative analysis, a fruit of the linguistic turn, arose from the study of literary works written after the 17th century, with a preference for 19th- and 20th-century novels, or from general theories about meaning, forged in the intellectual context of 1930s Europe, such as structuralism. In one of the programmatic articles of the method, Elisabeth Struthers-Malbon[1] admits her debt to New Criticism, the American literary criticism movement founded by John Crow Ransome, Cleanth Brooks, William K. Wimsatt, and Monroe Beardsley. Now, Brooks was working on Faulkner, Yeats and Eliot, Wimsatt and Beardsley on the poetry of the 19th and 20th centuries, and Ransome was himself a poet. Struthers-Malbon also acknowledges the importance of the work of Greimas, who was above all a linguist working on semiology (his first work was on the vocabulary of clothing in 1830), European folklore, Saussurian linguistics, etc. And the few books considered as standard, such as R. A. Culpepper's *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* or David Rhoads and Donald Michie's *Mark as Story*[2] rest heavily on modern novels, like Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* and Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, as well as Hemingway's novels. Culpepper, in particular, relies on the work of Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse*. Chatman was a Henry James specialist. James Resseguie, in his introduction to the literary method,[3] also mentions the works of Robert Alter (a specialist in picaresque novels, Stendhal and Kafka), Frank Kermode (an expert in 16th- and 17th-century English poetry, Shakespeare, John Donne, Andrew Marvell). He also affirms the debt the method owes to Wolfgang Iser (a Shakespeare and Laurence

[1] Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "Narrative Criticism: How Does the Story Mean?," in *Mark & Methods: New Approaches in Biblical Studies,* ed. Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moor (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg), 23–49.

[2] Culpepper, *Anatomy*. David M. Rhoads and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1982).

[3] Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction*, 19–26.

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Sterne scholar) and to the work of Gérard Genette (who worked on Balzac, Stendhal and most of all on Proust).

How can we be sure not to commit anachronism by retro-projecting literary concepts crafted after the 16th century on texts written at least fifteen centuries earlier? Can we naively apply concepts inherited from contemporary literary genres to ancient literature?

The history of reading helps to answer these questions since it provides a complete repertoire of reading acts of a text in Western literature. Thanks to its essential religious and cultural significance, the Bible was transmitted with its commentators. Each of them gives testimony about the effect the text had at her time. And their statement is usually surprising for narratology. Two examples warn about the temporal permanence of the literary process identified by these methods.

I. Scrolls and Coats

The first example is the request of Paul to Timothy to bring objects left at Troas in 2 Tim 4:13, usually considered as a rather trivial solicitation by modern commentators.[4] "Paul", who asks Timothy to join him in his prison, plans to stop in Troas (also known as Alexandria Troas), in the estuary of the famous Scamander River. Paul had visited this city many times (Acts 16:8; 20:5; 2 Cor 2:11) and had left several objects in the house of an unknown Christian named "Fruit" (Κάρπος); he asked his disciple to collect them:[5] one φελόνης, some βιβλία, and μεμβράνα.

What are these objects? The travel coat, the *pænula*, can be spelled φαινόλης but also φαινόλης or φαινόλιον. This strange metathesis could be explained by the fact that *pænula* and φαινόλης come from the same word that was borrowed from the Romans by the Greeks and then from the Greeks by the Romans.[6] This double loan reflects the popularity of this garment, widespread in antiquity. It was a kind of country coat, according

[4] Source of this paragraph: Régis Burnet, "'Petit fait vrai' et construction du personnage. Réflexions sur 2Tm 4,13," in *La Contribution du discours à la caractérisation des personnages bibliques,* ed. André Wénin, BETL 311 (Leuven: Peeters, 2020), 331–42.

[5] Ceslas Spicq, *Saint-Paul: Les Épîtres pastorales*, EBib (Paris: Gabalda, 1947), 392.

[6] James Hope Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (vol. 2; London: T&T Clark, 1963), 106. "En somme, ce sont deux grands faits de civilisation que résume l'évolution du mot *pænula*: les Romains empruntèrent le terme aux Grecs lors de l'hellénisation de la culture romaine, et le monde grec en réapprit l'usage lorsqu'il fut soumis au pouvoir de Rome." Maurice Leroy, "Pænula," *Latomus* 3 (1939): 1–4 (here: 4).

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to Dom Calmet[7] or a cycling rain cape as J. N. D. Kelly said with a hint of British humour.[8] Directly appropriated from Latin by modern languages, the word becomes the "chasuble," which describes its shape accurately[9] – a kind of poncho. The *pænula* is *par excellence* the attribute of the traveller, as shown by the archives of a Theophanes who took a business trip from Hermoupolis to Antioch of Syria around the year 320 and who held his travel accounts. During the journey, he spent large sums of money to have his *pænulæ* cleaned (especially P. Ryl. 4:629, accounts of the month of paÿni, May-June), evidence of the importance this garment had to him.[10]

The other two objects requested by Paul are almost synonymous (βιβλίον and μεμβράνα). The first is a Greek term for paper or parchment rolls, and the other one is a Latin word (*membrana*) for parchment. How to understand this hendiadys? Perhaps it is necessary, as Kelly did, to choose the most straightforward interpretation: it is merely the two forms of presentation of writing, scrolls and codices.[11]

If the scrolls and codices have any prestige, what about the coat that likens Paul to some reckless hobo? Strangely enough, those who seek to define the meaning of the presence of these objects in a Pauline letter comes up with strictly contradictory results. For some, they prove the self-sufficiency of the apostle presented as an independent traveller;[12] for others, they express a mark of his dependence on his communities, since he needs Timothy's help to regain his activity as a writer.[13] Taking into account the literary nature of these details, some do not hesitate to give them a symbolic function. For instance, they might reveal the transition between generations – Timothy keeps

[7] Augustin Calmet, *Commentaire littéral sur tous les livres de l'Ancien et du Nouveau Testament: Épîtres de Paul* (vol. 2; Paris: Emery, 1716), 492.

[8] John Norman Davidson Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (London: A&C Black, 1986), 215.

[9] Henri Leclercq, "Chasuble," in *DACL,* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1913), 1174–99, especially 1179–1194.

[10] John F. Matthews, *The Journey of Theophanes: Travel, Business, and Daily Life in the Roman East* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 109–15 (transl. of P. Rylands 629) et 162–63 (commentary). See also Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *Die Pastoralbriefe*, HNT 13 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1966), 92. Spicq, *Saint-Paul: Les Épîtres pastorales*, 392.

[11] Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles*, 216.

[12] Lorenz Oberlinner, *Die Pastoralbriefe: Kommentar zum zweiten Timotheusbrief*, Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament (vol. 11.2.2; Freiburg im B.: Herder, 1995), 167. Peter Trummer, *Die Paulustradition der Pastoralbriefe*, Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie 8 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1978), 80–86.

[13] Alfons Weiser, *Der zweite Brief an Timotheus*, EKKNT 16.1 (Düsseldorf: Benziger, 2003), 319. Edmund Kidley Simpson, *The Pastoral Epistles* (London: Tyndale, 1954), 159.

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Paul's cloak, as Elijah entrusts his to Elisha –,[14] or they are a kind of polemic against gymnosophists, who, as their names suggest, walked around naked.[15]

What if they did not make sense? The characterisation – increasingly consensual since the 19th century – of Pastoral Letters as pseudepigraphic writing leads us to consider this verse as a means to accredit the authenticity of the entire letter. The request could be merely a way to generate trust in the genuineness of the letter. Joachim Jeremias notes that 2 Tim 4:13 has long been the *Hauptargument für die Echtheit der Pastoralbriefe*.[16] It works so well that some went so far as to say it would be the only authentic passage of the letter because it was interpolated from a letter from the apostle's hand.[17] The comparison with ancient letter epistolography confirms that personal data are *topos* of the Hellenistic letter and therefore a majority of scholars consider the author could have added these *realia* to produce life.[18] They took a crucial part of the literary process designed to produce credibility,[19] to make more "plausible" a common situation[20] based on "historically credible" knowledge.[21] *Mutatis mutandis*, coats, scrolls and codices play the same role as Mrs. Aubain's barometer in "A Simple Heart" ("Un cœur simple"), the first of Flaubert's *Three Tales* analysed by Roland Barthes.[22] They are not useful for diegesis or argumentation. They have no apparent function. On the contrary, they are some "narrative luxury" that contributes to creating a "referential illusion," an *effet de réel* as Barthes puts it.

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[14] Horacio Bojorge, "El poncho de san Pablo: Una posible alusión a la sucesión apostólica: en II Timoteo 4,13," *Revista Bíblica* 42 (1980): 209–24.

[15] Michael Prior, *Paul the Letter Writer and the Second Letter to Timothy*, JSNTSup 23 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 152.

[16] Joachim Jeremias and August Strobel, *Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus: Der Brief an die Hebräer*, Neues Testament Deutsch 9 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968). Cited by Norbert Brox, *Die Pastoralbriefe*, Regensburger Neues Testament 7.2 (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1969), 271.

[17] Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, *The Pastoral Letters*, Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 97. Prior, *Paul the Letter Writer*, 150.

[18] Norbert Brox, "Zu den persönlichen Notizen der Pastoralbriefe," *BZ* 13 (1969): 76–94. See also Joram Luttenberger, *Prophetenmantel oder Bücherfutteral? Die persönlichen Notizen in den Pastoralbriefen im Licht antiker Epistolographie und literarischer Pseudepigraphie*, Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte 40 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2012), 44–84 et 181–201.

[19] Brox, *Pastoralbriefe*, 273.

[20] Yann Redalié, "Le rôle de la figure de Paul dans la théologie des épîtres pastorales," *RB* 115 (2008): 596–612 (here: 602). Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, AB 35A (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 440.

[21] Weiser, *Timotheus*, 320.

[22] Roland Barthes, "L'effet de réel," *Communications* 11 (1968): 84–89.

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1. A Brand-New Reading

The explanation by referential illusion can solve with efficiency and elegance the problem of this somewhat trite request by the apostle. It only has one drawback. No one had even considered it until the end of the 20th century. Focused on our methods and our beliefs about antiquity, we often claim that texts have effects on their readers, without checking whether this was the case in the past. Of course, since the text was received as authentic, readers of the past should not be expected to have built any theory on the means to establish genuineness. But the very idea that this detail is trivial, or that it may be figurative, is foreign to them. With a few rare exceptions, they were only interested in the *pænula*, leaving aside the scrolls and codices. They all wanted to clarify the presence of this garment in a letter from Paul, and three explanations were given.

1) The pænula *is a coat.* – When the Fathers of the Church assume that φελόνης refers to a coat, they multiply the explanations to justify its presence. In his commentary on the Pauline epistles, Jerome, for example, notes that Paul does not say "my coat," but "the coat" and suggests that it is not his own and that he asks Timothy to sell it and make money out of it.[23] Elsewhere, in his *Dialogue against the Pelagians*, he sees it as a teaching against those who get lost in ratiocinations: "do you not think that the apostle Paul, when he was writing 'the *lacerna* [a hooded coat] or the *pænula* I left at Carpus in Troas, bring them when coming, with the books and especially the scrolls,' thought of the heavenly mysteries and not of what is commonly used in life or what is necessary to the body?"[24] John Chrysostom also justifies this presence of the coat. In his commentary on the letter, he takes up the image of the apostle who is not borne by his communities.[25] In the commentary on Philippians, he provides a moral reading of the Pauline request: it was a way for the apostle to show his humility and his concern for the contingencies of life.[26]

The interpretation of the coat allowed interesting moral considerations that could have been continued. Oddly enough, it did not triumph in the

[23] Non dixit penulam meam: potuit enim conversus aliquis ad pedes eius, inter cætera imposuisse vendendam. Hieronymus Stridonensis, *Commentarii in secundam epistolam ad timotheum* 4, PL 30,895.

[24] Putasne apostolum Paulum eo tempore quo scribebat, Lacernam, sive penulam, quam reliqui Troade apud Carpum, veniens affer, ac libros, et maxime membranas, de cœlestibus cogitasse mysteriis, et non de his quæ in usu communis vitæ vel corporis necessaria sunt? Hieronymus Stridonensis, *Dialogus contra Pelagianos* 3,4, PL 23,573.

[25] Iohannes Chrysostomus, *In Epistulam II ad Timotheum* 10, PG 62,656.

[26] Iohannes Chrysostomus *In Epistulam ad Philippensens* 9, PG 62,254.

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Latin world. It was quickly challenged by two other hypotheses: the citizen's toga and the parchment box.

2) The pænula *is a civic toga.* – The idea that the *pænula* could be something other than a coat goes back to Ambrosiaster, the unknown commentator who was active during Pope Damasus's pontificate (366–384). He claims that the inhabitants of Tarsus had acquired from Rome the right to possess a *curia* where they gathered, dressed in *pænulæ*, the equivalent of togas.[27] At first glance, the statement is surprising. In fact, it is not that strange. This garment, first dedicated to travellers, had slowly taken on a broader meaning. Over the centuries, the status of the *pænula* changed, as it became urban clothing. The eccentric Caligula appeared for instance to the people in a *pænula* decorated with precious stones (Suetonius, *Caligula*, 52). According to Martial (*Epigrammata* 2:57,4; 5:26; 14:145), during the second half of the 1st century AD, *pænula*, made of white and fine wool, became a fashionable attire.[28] The interpretation of Ambrosiaster was taken up by Primasius of Hadrumetum (ca 553),[29] and was then adopted by Aymon of Halberstadt (ca 780–853), who confirmed it throughout the medieval period.

> The *pænula* was a consular coat that the Roman consuls wore when they entered the curia. […]. Blessed Paul's father deserved to receive the *pænula* because of his rank. After his death, in the name of his memory, the apostle kept this garment for himself.[30]

3) The pænula *is a manuscript box.* – If the Middle Ages are in line with Ambrosiaster's opinion, modern times revive another ancient hypothesis put forward by Jerome, also found in the Peschitta. Writing to his protector Pope Damase about translation, the Stridonian explains how he reads the text in original Hebrew: "I unroll the Hebrew scroll that some call Paul φελόνης, and I look carefully at the characters themselves."[31] Φελόνης would, therefore, refer to the scrolls of the Law, the *Sefer Torah*. The idea is always more or

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[27] Ambrosiaster, *Commentaria in Epistolam ad Timotheum Secundam* 4, PL 17,496.

[28] Vsevolod V. Zeltchenko, "Tac. Dial. 39,1: *pænulæ istæ*," *Philologia Classica* 12 (2017): 29–34.

[29] Primasius Adrumetanensis, *Commentaria in epistola ad timotheum secunda*, PL 68,679.

[30] Penula vestis erat consularis, qua induebantur consules Romani quando ingrediebantur in curiam. […] pater beati Pauli penulam accipere meruit causa dignitatis. Post cuius mortem Apostolus ob memoriam eius recordationis, hanc vestem sibi retinuit. Haymo Halberstatensis*, in D. Pauli epistolas, in Epistolam II ad timotheum* 4, PL 117,808–809.

[31] Volumen Hebræum replico, quod Paulus φενόλην iuxta quosdam vocat, et ipsos characteres sollicitus attendens, scriptum reperio. Hieronymus Stridonensis, *Epistola* 36, *Seu rescriptum Hieronymi ad Damasum* 13, PL 22,458.

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less mentioned and then dismissed until the 17th century when it came back in force. Estius, for example, reviews all the data and finally concludes that the *pænula* refers to what he calls *theca*, a case that protects like a coat, in other words, the *tikim* (bag) of the *Sefer Torah*.[32] He argues that it makes no sense to ask for a coat you can buy locally, whereas books are irreplaceable. As keenly as ever, he anticipates contemporary reflections, and speculates on the difference between books and parchments: for him Paul bequeaths his books (*biblia*), but also his letters on parchments.[33] Dom Calmet did not retain the hypothesis, but mentioned it, proof of its relevance, and quoted a memoir by Abbé Boileau who stated that it could only be a box.[34] Strangely enough, the same hypothesis appears in recent studies.[35]

2. Giving up the Effect of Reality

The most striking aspect of these readings is their refusal to take the coat for a coat, in other words, to treat Paul's demand as a humble and naive request for service. They compete in creativity to understand φελόνης as a manuscript envelope or a toga, and when they admit that it may be a banal *pænula*, they hold it as a moral exemplum. Why do they not make the simplest assumption?

Ancient commentators do not perceive this detail of the *pænula* as an *effet de réel*, because this concept does not exist for them. This belief that facts generate historicity does not date back from before the 19th century. Since Aristotle (*Poetics* 9), poetic fiction has been systematically understood as superior to historical chronicles, because it represents the world in reference to the universal: confronted with events of ontological depth, the hero speaks the appropriate words to suit the situation. On the other hand, as Jacques Rancière demonstrated, the historical chronicle is limited to identifying the event in a reality whose status remains "infraontological," because it remains particular and subject to contingencies: historical events really happened, but fundamentally could have happened quite differently, because they are linked to circumstances and therefore to randomness.[36] The doctrine of "his-

[32] Guilielmus Estius, *In omnes divi Pauli apostoli epistolas commentaria* (vol. 2; Parisiis [Paris]: Quesnel, 1658), 855.

[33] Estius, *Commentaria*, 855.

[34] Calmet, *Commentaire*, 493.

[35] Luttenberger, *Prophetenmantel*, 323–43. Michaela Engelmann, *Unzertrennliche Drillinge? Motivsemantische Untersuchungen zum literarischen Verhältnis der Pastoralbriefe*, BZNW 192 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 490–93.

[36] Jacques Rancière, *Le Fil perdu: Essais sur la fiction moderne* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2014), 21 et 101.

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torical fact" enters the stage, as Ivan Jablonka explained,[37] at the end of a long process which eventually refutes the principle of the superiority of fiction – the domain of necessity and universality – over the reality – the realm of particularity and contingency. This upheaval overthrew the classic canon of the Belles-Lettres, challenged the privilege of representation, and gave birth to a new genre, the novel.[38] Literature, in the modern regime, no longer strives to represent anything, as Flaubert's plan to write a "book on nothing" attests – that is, a book that would hold by the sole internal force of his style.[39]

Barthes and his effect of reality as well as the assumption shared by historians that facts can accredit reality are the heirs of this mutation that separates history and literature. Historians devoted themselves to highlighting the fact as the only thing capable of producing reality.[40]

In antiquity, on the contrary, no detail is "innocent," none is designed to "look real," as we modern people are tempted to think in connection with contemporary novelist theories. The tiniest detail contributes to the construction of the reality, or more precisely to the expression of its ontological nature. Coats, scrolls and codices thus express Paul's selfhood.

What is the character that is being constructed here? Ancient authors feel the need to comment on the coat, and not at all on the codices and scrolls. Rolls and codices are not problematic because they are an intrinsic part of the way Christians represent themselves. The written culture, much superior among the Christians than expected, served to give them a place in society and provided them with access to a literate aristocracy: Christians have gained visibility through the written word.[41] It is no surprise therefore, if 2 Tim 4:13 constructs Paul as a literate character, who has several books and cares about them: this is the way the readers of the epistle perceive him.

Thanks to this remark, we can go further in the interpretation of φαιλόνης, βιβλία and μεμβράναι, once the doctrine of the effect of reality abandoned. They should be understood in this context of Christian literacy. Why was the Latin word μεμβράναι used here, whereas διφθέραι (which also means "parchments") was a more common word? The borrowing from Latin could

[37] Ivan Jablonka, *L'Histoire est une littérature contemporaine*, Points 533 (Paris: Seuil, 2017), 21–43 et 121–39.

[38] Jacques Rancière, *La Parole muette: Essai sur les contradictions de la littérature*, Pluriel (Paris: Hachette Littératures, 1998), 28–30.

[39] Rancière, *Fil perdu*, 103–19.

[40] Jablonka, *L'Histoire*, 76–77.

[41] John S. Kloppenborg, "Literate Media in Early Christ Groups: The Creation of a Christian Book Culture," *JECS* 22 (2014): 21–59.

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mark a technological innovation: the so-called codex.[42] Codices have always been used by Christians to support their Scriptures. They distinguished themselves from the Jews who had always used the scrolls for their Scriptures, and perhaps also they dissociated themselves from all the metaphors in the Old Testament concerning the Law as a scroll.[43] In his request to Timothy, Paul would thus ask for the Jewish Scriptures – in the form of a roll – and what would become the Christian Scriptures – in the form of a codex. And in this context, thinking that φαιλόνης is the *tikim* of the rolls is not so absurd. Paul stands for the ideal Christian: a scholar, who possesses not only the Jewish βιβλία and their protective φαιλόνης, but also the Christian μεμβράναι, these new Scriptures preserved on their new support, the religious revolution supported by the technological revolution.

What can we learn from this journey through the history of the interpretations of this anecdotal verse? Assuredly, our proclivity for anachronism. We consider the literary effects of the texts on the reader to be transhistorical and we believe that what we identify with our contemporary literary theories is what the text was intended to produce. In reality, literary effects also have a history. Since the linguistic turn of the 1970s, we have tended to give fiction and narrative a very considerable weight in the construction of social reality. However, these convictions are a mere moment in intellectual history and do not reflect what prior periods, especially Antiquity, took for granted. Thus, the *realia* served the construction of the character, and not the creation of a make-believe or an atmosphere of reality.

II. John's Prolepsis

Another example of the danger of anachronism in the application of literary methods to ancient texts is provided by a small difficulty in the text of John's Gospel, preceding the Resurrection of Lazarus, in John 11:2.[44] Introducing Lazarus, the narrator indicates that he is the brother of Martha and Mary ἦν δὲ Μαριὰμ ἡ ἀλείψασα τὸν Κύριον μύρῳ καὶ ἐκμάξασα τοὺς πόδας

[42] Colin H. Roberts and Theodore Cressy Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex* (London: Oxford University Press, 1983), 42. Theodore Cressy Skeat, "'Especially the Parchments': A Note on 2 Timothy iv. 13," *Journal of Theological Studies* 30 (1979): 173–77.

[43] Irven M. Resnick, "The Codex in Early Jewish and Christian Communities," *The Journal of Religious History* 17 (1992): 1–27.

[44] Source of this paragraph: Régis Burnet, "Prolepse à Béthanie: sens littéraire et sens théologique de Jn 11,1," in *Temporalité et intrigue: Hommage à André Wénin,* ed. Hans Ausloos and Didier Luciani, BETL 296 (Leuven: Peeters, 2018), 261–69.

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αὐτοῦ ταῖς θριξὶν αὐτῆς, "This Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair." However, this anointing, mentioned here in chapter 11, will only take place *after* the resurrection of Lazarus, in chapter 12. Why does the evangelist take such a freedom with chronology, and what is the meaning of it? More generally, what literary value does this distortion of narrative temporality produce, and what theological interpretation can be given to it?

1. The Answer of Literary Analysis: A Prolepsis to Maintain Suspense

Francis Moloney, relying on Wolfgang Iser,[45] gave an influent explanation of the use of prolepsis. For him, this literary figure was a means of evoking the action of a character before it takes place. This gap creates tension and requires the reader's focus. The idea is not new. A 19th-century commentator, totally unknown despite having a high sensitivity to literary processes, Heinrich Klee, explained in 1829 that this anticipation prepares the next chapter and arouses the reader's impatience to know the rest.[46] In other words, the prolepsis creates suspense.

Screenwriters know this distinctive feature well. The use of flashforward (a term based on flashback, somewhat rare until recently – even though it was already found in Méliès and Griffith) spreads out with the popularity of narratives exploring the limits of suspense, such as thrillers. *Pulp Fiction* by Quentin Tarantino (1994), one of the precursors of the current fragmented form of narratives, presents a flashforward, just like *Minority Report* (Steven Spielberg, 2002). The technique is becoming increasingly frequent in series whose sole purpose is to keep the audience captive using suspense. The second season of *Breaking Bad* (Vince Gilligan, 2009), the third season of *Quantico* (Joshua Safran, 2016) work with this device. *NCIS* (Donald P. Bellissario, since 2003) has been using it systematically. Some series are exclusively based on prolepsis such as *Dead Zone* (Michael and Shawn Piller, 2002–2007) where the hero is a medium gifted with premonitions.

Research on the construction of scenarios to support players's attention to serious games has most clearly explained the cognitive mechanisms at

[45] Wolfgang Iser, *Der Akt des Lesens: Theorie Ästhetischer Wirkung*, Uni-Taschenbücher 136 (München: Fink, 1976). Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), 182. Francis Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, SP (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 326.

[46] Heinrich Klee, *Commentar über das Evangelium nach Johannes* (Mainz: Kupferberg, 1829), 302–03.

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work in the efficiency of prolepsis.[47] According to these authors, the impact is due to what Keith Oatley calls "internal emotions",[48] namely the emotions produced by the world of the story and the composition of the plot itself, or to what Walter Kintsch calls "cognitive interest" (as opposed to emotional interest).[49] In the case of prolepsis, the pleasure arises from the *a posteriori* discovery that ruptures thought as conflicts or failures in the story construction are consistent. Kintsch gives a name to this positive emotion: postdictability. "Post-diction" is opposed to "predictability" by its temporal structure but has the same purpose: characterising a structure as coherent, without any retrospective conflict. Thanks to these concepts, the suspense generated by the prolepsis – and hence the interest in the story it sustains – is explained by the expectation of the return to coherence. Some computer engineers therefore proposed the automatic generation of flashforwards to prevent players from getting bored.[50]

According to this theory, John would have introduced a prolepsis so that his reader will have the pleasure of reading an episode that confirms that Mary did anoint Jesus's feet. But is that his only purpose? A small detail in the text alerts the reader and forbids him to stop at this explanation, which is only suitable for a first reading. Prolepsis usually points to the future because it anticipates events. However, ἀλείψασα and ἐκμάξασα are in the aorist form. They point to the past. How can we explain that this prolepsis is also its own contrary, i. e., an analepsis?

2. "*This is not a Prolepsis*"

The traditional reading had noticed the prolepsis but explained it differently. This must make us suspicious about the careless application of contemporary methods to ancient texts. In the history of the reading, three series of explanations have been given to this passage and, surprisingly enough, all three

[47] Pieter Wouters et al., "The role of Game Discourse Analysis and Curiosity in Creating Engaging and Effective Serious Games by Implementing a Back Story and Foreshadowing," *Interacting with Computers* 23 (2011): 329–36.

[48] Keith Oatley, "A Taxonomy of the Emotions of Literary Response and a Theory of Identification in Fictional Narrative," *Poetics* 23 (1994): 53–74.

[49] Walter Kintsch, "Learning from Text, Levels of Comprehension, or: Why Anyone Would Read a Story Anyway," *Poetics* 9 (1980): 87–98.

[50] Yun-Gyung Cheong and R. Michael Young, "Narrative Generation for Suspense: Modeling and Evaluation," in *Interactive Storytelling: First Joint International Conference on Interactive Digital Storytelling,* ed. Ulrike Spierling and Nicolas Szilas, Lecture Notes in Computer Science 5334 (Berlin: Springer, 2008), 144–55.

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lead to the elimination of any suspense effect, a proof that current interpretation does not fit the old mentality.

The oldest explanation hypothesises that this is not a prolepsis, but an allusion to another event, which occurs in the past. Augustine's reading, for example, claims that Mary did not perform one, but two anointings. Seeking to reconcile the synoptic gospel with John, the Bishop of Hippo presumes that Luke's account of the anointing done in Simon's house may be a first anointing.[51] This reading, despite the authority of the *Doctor gratiæ*, presents a difficulty that John Chrysostom saw in his commentary on the Gospel and that Bonaventure reminds us of: the two women cannot be confused, because this Mary is a woman of good reputation, while the other is a prostitute.[52]

Tradition, therefore, retains a much simpler explanation based on the reader's prior knowledge. Everyone knows this anointing, everyone has heard about it. John does not betray a narrative secret; he only reminds us what everyone knows. For him, the most critical point is that his reader does not make any mistake about Mary. Evangelical accounts have a significant shortcoming: everyone is called Mary; the mother of Jesus and Mary of Magdala, Mary of Bethany, Mary of Clopas and Mary Salome. In the 8th century, Alcuin explains in a notation included in *Catena aurea* from Thomas Aquinas: "and, as there were several women called Mary, to prevent us from making any mistakes, the evangelist characterises that woman with a very well-known action."[53] The explanation was repeated in the 9th century by Heiric of Auxerre (841–876) and then entered into Anselm of Laon's glosses (1050–1117), which would serve as a basis for the ordinary gloss.[54]

This interpretation has been challenged over the centuries. It was adopted in the 17th century by the sensitive commentator Wilhelm van Hest

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[51] hoc dicens iohannes adtestatur luc, qui hoc in domo pharisi cuiusdam simonis factum esse narrauit/iam itaque hoc maria fecerat –, quod autem in bethania rursus fecit, aliud est, quod ad lucæ narrationem non pertinet, sed pariter narratur a tribus, iohanne scilicet, mattheo et marco. Augustinus Hipponensis, *De consensu euangelistarum* II,79, § 154, ed. F. Weihrich (CSEL 43, 1904), 261.

[52] *Non est illa, quia ista erat bona mulier et famosa, sed illa erat meretrix.* Bonauentura, *Commentarius in Euangelium sancti Iohannis* XI, 16, ed. PP. Collegii a S. Bonaventura (*Opera omnia* VI, 1893), 397.

[53] Et quia plures feminæ huius nominis erant, ne erraremus in nomine, ostenditur ex notissima actione. Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in Iohannem* XI,1, ed. Marietti (1953), 482.

[54] Heiricus Autissiodorensis, *Homiliæ per circulum anni par hiemalis* 54, ed. R. Quadri (CCCM 116A, 1993), 150; Anselmus Laudunensis, *Glossæ super Iohannem* XI,2, ed. A. Andrée (CCCM 267, 2014), 200.

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(Guillaume Estius, 1542–1613), who, to the best of my knowledge, was the first to identify it as a prolepsis:

> It is not necessary to refer to any previous anointing, but it is easy to understand that this is a prolepsis [*per prolepsim*] of a subsequent anointing which John, without any possible hesitation, narrates in the next chapter and was done in Bethany.[55]

Dom Calmet in the 18th century echoed him by referring to it as "anticipation"[56] and the idea was echoed by a large number of 20th-century commentators such as Zahn, Barrett, Morris.[57] The 21st century may be more precise in talking about a "pre-Johannic substrate"[58] as does Craig Keener or the desire to "inscribe the following story in a world familiar to the reader"[59] in Jean Zumstein's words, but the conclusion is the same.

3. Understanding the Prolepsis

The prolepsis would therefore not seek to surprise the reader, but to make connections with what he already knows, and the huge number of Johannine prolepses and anticipations[60] confirm this interpretation. Marie-Émile Boismard even regarded them as defining features of the Fourth Gospel style, as Gilbert Van Belle confirms.[61] So, what is the meaning of a practice that is more a game about what the reader knows, than about what he does not know?

The great masterpieces of antiquity provide many examples of prolepsis. In Homer, the characters are kept in the highest possible ignorance of their

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[55] Non est necessario referendum ad unctionem aliquam præcedentem; sed per prolepsim intelligi potest uncio quæ postera facta est, quam videlicet Ioannes narrat capte prome sequenti factam in Bethania. Guilielmus Estius, *Guilielmi Estii … Annotationes aureæ in præcipua ac difficiliora sacræ Scripturæ loca* (Duaci [Douai]: Typis Viduæ et Heredum Petri Borremans, 1621), 549.

[56] Augustin Calmet, *Commentaire littéral sur tous les livres de l'Ancien et du Nouveau Testament* (vol. 21; Paris: Emery, 1729), 321.

[57] Zahn, *Johannes*, 472. Barrett, *John*, 390. Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 538.

[58] Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2010), 838.

[59] Jean Zumstein, *L'Évangile selon saint Jean 1–12*, Commentaire du Nouveau Testament 2.4a (Genève: Labor et fides, 2014), 366.

[60] John 1:7.10.14; 2:19; 3:26; 4:46; 5:16.33; 6:23.51.64; 7:21.23.34.39.50; 8:21.28; 9:15; 10:15.17.25.40; 11:2.4.8.11.57; 12:1.7.9.17.32–33; 13:1.11.19.21.33.34.38; 14:19; 15:9.18.20.24; 16:16.20.28.32; 17:4; 18:9.14.20.26.32; 19:39; 20:8; 20:31; 21:20.

[61] Marie-Émile Boismard, Arnaud Lamouille, and Gérard Rochais, *Synopse des quatre Évangiles en français. T. III L'Évangile de Jean* (Paris: Cerf, 1977), 514b. Gilbert Van Belle, "Prolepsis in the Gospel of John," *NovT* 43 (2001): 334–47.

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destiny, yet well known to the reader, because their future is already the reader's past.[62] The poet does not want to keep the reader in the dark about events that are outdated anyway; he seeks to demonstrate his skill in delaying predictable developments. In the *Iliad*, two events are systematically the subject of prolepses: the death of Achilles and the fall of Troy. This feature, which may be a remnant of orality,[63] will then be massively used in Plato[64] and also in the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius in which the announcements of oncoming events create an increasingly disturbing atmosphere as Lucius progresses in the knowledge of black magic.[65] And, of course, in Virgil, who strove to imitate Homer;[66] the whole episode of Dido and Aeneas is built on the foretold (and therefore proleptically stated) anticipation of the coming catastrophe.[67]

There can be only one meaning to this usage of the prolepsis: showing that the seal of inevitability and fatality marks ongoing events. In other words, they implicitly reveal the intervention of a deity and therefore fate, destiny, to which mortals cannot resist. Prolepses are indicators of a "predestination plot,"[68] according to Tzvetan Todorov. The play on temporality becomes a kind of mark of tragedy, according to Henri Gouhier's dazzling definition of this term: "an event is not tragic by itself, but by what it means, and this meaning is tragic when it introduces the sign of transcendence."[69]

John's use of prolepsis results from his desire to build a predestination plot and to highlight the tragic force of the divine plan. Through the interplay of internal references, John creates the confidence that all events are linked together by divine will.[70] Thanks to the thrill of this mysterious prolepsis, the reader can link the two chapters together. As Carson, Brodie and Zum-

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[62] George Eckel Duckworth, *Foreshadowing and Suspense in the Epics of Homer, Apollonius, and Vergil* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1933), 116.

[63] James A. Notopoulos, "Continuity and Interconnexion in Homeric Oral Composition," *TAPA* 82 (1951): 81–101.

[64] Charles H. Kahn, "Proleptic Composition in the Republic, or Why Book 1 was Never a Separate Dialogue," *Classical Quarterly* 43 (2009): 131–42. John R. S. Wilson, "Thrasymachus and the Thumos: A Further Case of Prolepsis in Republic I," *Classical Quarterly* 45 (2009): 58–59.

[65] Gerald N. Sandy, "Foreshadowing and Suspense in Apuleius' 'Metamorphoses'," *Classical Journal* 68 (1973): 232–35.

[66] Keith Stanley, "Irony and Foreshadowing in *Aeneid*, I, 462," *AJP* 86 (1965): 267–77.

[67] Frances Muecke, "Foreshadowing and Dramatic Irony in the Story of Dido," *AJP* 104 (1983): 134–55.

[68] Tzvetan Todorov, *Poétique de la prose*, Poétique (Paris: Seuil, 1971), 77.

[69] Henri Gouhier, *Le Théâtre et l'existence*, Essais d'art et de philosophie 31 (Paris: J. Vrin, 1973), 34.

[70] Gunnar Østenstad, "The Structure of the Fourth Gospel: Can It Be Defined Objectively?," *Studia Theologica* 45 (1991): 33–55.

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stein note,[71] there is a subtle affinity between the two episodes. By placing his reference to the Anointing at Bethany at the beginning of the events, John refers to Jesus's death, which is clearly announced at the end of the anointing. It plays the same role as the merchants expelled from the Temple in Mark and Luke; an episode that sets the Judaeans in motion to kill Jesus. The text suggests that the return to life of a dead man and the evanescent smell of an expensive perfume make Judas and the high priests want to suppress Jesus.[72] This is part of a plan that has been repeated over and over again since the beginning: "glorification." The prolepsis, therefore, draws attention not only to the plot, but also to its necessity.

The detour through the history of the readings illustrates once again the error of judgement made by the narrative method. How to explain it? The weight of the Western narrative tradition might be an answer. As Gérard Genette pointed out in *Figures III*,[73] the narrative suspense specific to modern narrative struggles with the idea of playing on what the reader already knows. We prefer narrators who seem to discover history at the same time as they tell it. Only Marcel Proust dared reconstruct temporality in a synthetic and personal way. At the time of the Gospel, the Homeric model bestows an entirely different mission on the story: to carry the weight of divine necessity. "Some prolepses lead some lines of action to their logical end,"[74] said Paul Ricœur. John intends to emphasise Providence. He links the anointing to Bethany and to the resurrection of Lazarus by showing that they are the beginning of the Passion. With this prolepsis, the Book of Signs closes, the Book of Glory begins.

III. Summary and Perspective

Whether it is the concept of the "effect of reality" or that of "narrative suspense," the two preceding studies have shown that the literary methods are

[71] D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1991), 405. Thomas L. Brodie, *The Gospel According to John: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). Brodie, *John*, 387. Zumstein, *Saint Jean*, 366.

[72] Maurits Sabbe, "The Anointing of Jesus in John 12,1–8 and its Synoptic Parallels," in *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck,* ed. F. Van Segbroeck et al., BETL 100.3 (Leuven: Peeters, 1992), 2051–82 (here: 2057).

[73] Gérard Genette, *Figures III*, Poétique (Paris: Seuil, 1972), 105.

[74] "Certaines prolepses conduisent à son terme logique telle ligne d'action." Paul Ricœur, *Temps et récit III: Le temps raconté*, L'Ordre philosophique (Paris: Seuil, 1985), 124.

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also influenced by history and that it is unwise, to say the least, to apply concepts that are two or three hundred years old to texts that are two thousand years old. Both of them make sense only in the context of a narrative theory developed mostly from the fiction genre. This is what Peter Szondi foreshadowed in his *Introduction to Literary Hermeneutics*:[75] philology has historical premises and cannot be valid for all times. The use of a reading history certainly cannot allow the work to be seen with the eyes and ears of its first audience. Even more than concepts or vocabulary, literary conceptions form the very framework in which textual elements are articulated: just as, for example, the sense of humour and irony, suspense and its relationship to reality are specific to an era. However, this approach may encourage a certain humility as to the universality of the results obtained.

These two examples also suggest that a historical narratology remains to be built. Rhetorical studies (for example for Paul) have thus been based on the examination of ancient treatises on rhetoric and preserved discourses. The same task remains to be carried out in narratology, using ancient readings from biblical texts.

[75] Peter Szondi, *Introduction to Literary Hermeneutics*, Literature, Culture, Theory 9 (transl. Martha Woodmansee; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 10–12.

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Chapter 7

Reading with Tradition as Theology in the Reader's Mirror

In the first few chapters, I not only promised that the use of *Wirkungsgeschichte* would not only bridge the gap between exegetical methods but would also enable a fruitful dialogue with theology. The main difficulty in mentioning the word "theology" is determining what it refers to. Is theology a university discipline that includes subdomains such as pastoral care, ethics, dogmatics, fundamentals, exegesis, etc.? Or is it, on the contrary, a generic term almost synonymous with "religious" or "Christian?" Is it the equivalent in the Christian domain of the adjective "ideological," i. e., a "theological" reading versus an "objective" or even "historical" reading? Is it another name for dogmatics? Is it, on the contrary, according to Thomas Aquinas's classical and encompassing definition, a discourse that takes into account the divine, and that speaks *sub ratione Dei*?

Benoît Bourgine, in his extremely useful essay on biblical theology, defines theology as that which comes from a movement between a biblical text considered as a testimony of revelation and a receiver enshrined in tradition, which are the two poles of the theological act.[1] Theology becomes a dynamic act, no longer a rigid discipline. Approaching the history of the readings as I propose means considering all these theological acts in order to obtain a synthesis which in turn helps with understanding the text. It is thus a study of theology by observing how readers of the past practised theology, in order to shed light on how we do so. I, therefore, propose to approach theology in the reader's mirror.

I. What Is Our Relationship with Christ? – Barabbas[2]

Barabbas's character provides an initial example of how the history of reception can lead to theological questions. When in 2013 Reelz' Channel

[1] Bourgine, *Bible oblige*, 262–65.

[2] Source of this paragraph: Régis Burnet and Cécile Du Champs, "Barabbas. Con-

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viewers discovered the miniseries *Barabbas*, they were surprised to discover a nice robber, full of doubts and contradictions, who eventually converted to Jesus.[3] What a difference with Augustine's unpleasant remarks: "when the Jews claimed that they wanted to free for the Passover, not Jesus, but the thief Barabbas, not the Saviour, but the murderer, not the one who gave life, but the one who took it, Pilate had Jesus seized and scourged."[4] This upheaval can be explained by more than sixteen centuries of reading the Gospel texts which complicated the figure of Barabbas from what narratologists call a "flat" character, i. e., a simple character who does not change during the plot, to a "round" character, i. e., a character that the narrative changes and makes more complex.[5] The history of this increase in complexity reveals a more in-depth understanding of anthropology, whose consequence is to question the relationship that humanity has with Christ.

1. Eighteen Centuries of Flatness

The Gospel accounts mention Barabbas and agree on four elements: his name, his presence in prison when Jesus appeared before Pilate, his bad reputation, and the fact that Pilate gives the mob the choice to free him or to free Jesus. Apart from these elements, the evangelists do not agree on anything; making attempts to reconstruct the thread of events very tricky. What is the reason for his incarceration? Mark and Luke refer to a riot in town that led to a murder, while Mark suggests that he was arrested with other rioters (μετὰ τῶνστασιαστῶν, Mark 15:7), keeping silent about his involvement in the killing, and Luke claims that he is the only one to be blamed for the murder and the riot (Luke 23:19). This data seems somewhat incompatible with John's claim that he was a thief (λῃστής, John 18:40). Matthew, on the other hand, does not adjudicate the issue and merely says that he is famous (ἐπίσημον, Matt 27:16). Most of the scholarly discussion focused

séquences littéraires de l'histoire de la réception d'un personnage biblique," *Revue théologique de Louvain* 50 (2019): 21–38.

[3] Roger Young (réal.), *Barabbas* (prod. Compagnia Leone Cinematografica, Rai Fiction, ReelzChannel, 2012, 200').

[4] Augustinus Hipponensis, *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus* 116, 1. PL 278, 1941. Cum iudæi clamassent, non iesum sibi a pilato dimitti uelle per pascha, sed barabbam latronem; non saluatorem, sed interfectorem; non datorem uitæ, sed ademtorem: tunc apprehendit pilatus iesum, et flagellauit.

[5] This distinction was established by Edward Morgan Forster (1879–1970) during a series of lectures on novel writing at Trinity College in 1927 collected in Edward Morgan Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, The Clark Lectures (London: E. Arnold & Co., 1927). Republished: Edward Morgan Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985).

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on Pilate's act. The texts do not agree on its motive or nature. Regarding his motives, whereas John and Luke do not provide any, Mark affirms that the governor's purpose was to please the crowd, while Matthew declares that he acted out of fear of a revolt. There is slightly more agreement regarding its nature. Except for Luke, all the Gospels mention the custom of releasing a prisoner. But it is unclear whether this custom is specific to Pilate or practised by other governors, and whether it only takes place at Passover (which John suggests) or on all major holidays. And above all, it is unprecedented in antiquity and would seem to conflict with ancient judicial habits.[6]

In short, Barabbas seems to be only a passive character in the story, present only as a foil.[7] He is the counter-figure (*Gegenfigur*)[8] of Jesus whose innocence he reveals; he is the divulger of the Machiavellianism of the high priests whose spiritual bankruptcy he discloses; he is the accuser of Pilate who does not succeed in doing anything on the contrary but a travesty of justice.[9]

Even more troubling is the reading of Matthew 27:16 in good manuscripts and in Origen: Barabbas is called Jesus.[10] A Jesus "son of the father" (for this

[6] For a historical perspective: Johannes Merkel, "Die Begnadigung am Passahfeste," *ZNW* 6 (1905): 293–316. Husband Richard Wellington, "The Pardoning of Prisoners by Pilate," *The American Journal of Theology* 21 (1917): 110–16. Charles B. Chavel, "The Releasing of a Prisoner on the Eve of Passover in Ancient Jerusalem," *JBL* 60 (1941): 273–78. Horace Abram Rigg, Jr., "Barabbas," *JBL* 64 (1945): 417–56. Robert L. Merritt, "Jesus Barabbas and the Paschal Pardon," *JBL* 104 (1985): 57–68. Stefan Witetschek, "Ein Räuber. Barabbas in Johannesevangelium," in *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel,* ed. Gilbert Van Belle, BETL 200 (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 805–15. Étienne Nodet, "Barabbas, un 'brigand religieux' (ληστής, Jn 18, 40)," *RB* 119 (2012): 288–99. A literary perspective: Roger David Aus, *Barabbas and Esther and Other Studies in the Judaic Illumination of Earliest Christianity*, South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism 54 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1992). K. Berenson Maclean Jennifer, "Barabbas, the Scapegoat Ritual, and the Development of the Passion Narrative," *HTR* 100 (2007): 309–34. On the Orient: Jean Colin, *Les Villes libres de l'Orient gréco-romain et l'envoi au supplice par acclamations populaires*, Latomus 82 (Bruxelles: Latomus, 1965).

[7] David L. Mathewson, "Barabbas: A Foil for Jesus, the Jewish Leadership, and Pilate," in *Character Studies in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Approaches to Seventy Figures in John,* ed. Steven A. Hunt et al., WUNT 314 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 598–600.

[8] Mathewson, "Thomas."

[9] Mathewson, "Thomas."

[10] Θ, 700, f^1, and Syriac Armenian and Georgian versions. Origen states (*In Matthæum* 27, 16–18): In multis exemplaribus non continetur quod Barabbas etiam Iesus dicebatur et forsitan recte ut ne nomen Jesu conveniat alicui iniquorum, Many copies do not mention that Barabbas was also called Jesus, and this is probably justified, so that the name of Jesus would not be fitting for a wicked person. See Adolf Deissmann, "The Name 'Jesus'," in *Mysterium Christi: Christological Studies by British and German Theologians,* ed. G. K. A. Bell and Adolf Deissmann (London: Longmans, 1930) 17–27. Hyam Z. Maccoby, "Jesus and Barabbas," *NTS* 16 (1969): 55–60. Robert E. Moses, "Jesus Barabbas, a Nominal Mes-

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is the meaning of his name in Aramaic) challenges a Jesus "Christ" or a "Son of Man." As Louis Marin pointed out in his commentary on the passage, the hero splits into a political agitator, an aspiring king, and a "King of the Jews," which reveals two ways of being king and two liberations, the political liberation and the religious one.[11]

The lack of agreement between the gospels could not have set the figure of Barabbas in motion, giving him substance, to make him a round character. This was not the case. Neither Byzantine text nor the Vulgate retained the duality between Jesus and Jesus Barabbas; the differences were erased by concordism; the character remained in his lack of substance. For eighteen centuries, he was passed off as the anti-Jesus, a negation of Christ, who exuded his darkness upon himself, those who chose him and those who could have.

The oldest and most widespread interpretation of the Barabbas episode sees the Jewish people's choice as proof of their rejection by God. The first occurrence of this theory can be found in Irenaeus of Lyon, who mentions Barabbas after a list of Israel's infidelities, to suggest that the crowd's choice is both the last of the infidelities and the one that sums them all up:

> Because they had left the real God and were giving service to unreal gods, and they had slain the prophets of God and were prophesying for Baal, to whom the Canaanites had an idol; despising also the real Son of God, they rejected Him, but were choosing Barabbas, a robber taken in murder, and they denied the eternal king and were acknowledging the temporal Caesar as their king – God was pleased to grant His inheritance to the foolish Gentiles, and to those who were not God's citizens, and know not who God is.[12]

This accusation is repeated, tirelessly, for centuries, and will lay the foundation for Christian anti-Judaism. For example, John Chrysostom, in his 84th homily on John, affirms that the people who are asking for his liberation at the expense of the Innocent, recognise themselves in Barabbas. They share and approve this depravity and corruption, deliver criminals, and ask for the death of the innocent.

These accusations persist for centuries, and it would be tedious and depressing to cite them all. Let us recall that Marlowe names "Barabas" the

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siah? Text and History in Matthew 27.16–17," *NTS* 58 (2011): 43–56. Epp Eldon Jay, "It's All about Variants: A Variant-Conscious Approach to New Testament Textual Criticism," *HTR* 100 (2007): 275–308.

[11] Louis Marin, "Jésus devant Pilate," *Langages* 6 (1971): 51–74 (here: 56).

[12] Irenæus Lugdunensis, *Demonstratio apostolicæ prædicationis* 95, transl. Irenaeus of Lyon, *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*, ACW 16 (transl. Joseph Smith; Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1952), 105.

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main character of his play *The Jew of Malta* and that he makes him the condensed version of all the accusations crafted against the Jewish people by Elizabethan England. In the French 18th century, for example, Father de La Rue (1642–1725) had words that the Bishop of Antioch would not deny:

Finally, you, inhuman Jews, implacable enemies of your Saviour and your God, who, fortunately, served the wrath of your pontiffs, have been granted everything: your hatred and theirs is satisfied. You have taken this Barabbas out of prison, worthy of your protection by sedition, homicide, and robbery; and you are leading this Jesus to death, worthy of your horror by his blessings, miracles and virtues. It is time to sing of victory. Scream loudly: "may his blood be on you and your children."[13]

Barabbas is not only the representative of the cursed people; he is also the incarnation of the demon. The assimilation to the devil goes back to Origen, who, in his commentary on Matthew, makes an allegorical reading of Deut 24:1. Indeed, he sees in the repudiation of the woman by her husband the rejection of Israel represented by Barabbas as an unfaithful wife for the benefit of the Church, the faithful wife:

The first woman having therefore left the house of the man [the one who no longer finds grace before the man who discovered in her a shameful act], and having been driven out, she becomes [the wife] of a man who subjects her, it must be said either that the man is the robber Barabbas, being allegorically the Devil, or that he is some evil power.[14]

Origen completes a moral, even moralising reading. He evokes the eternal struggle of good and evil within humanity. Hilaire of Poitiers takes the same perspective, ending up by identifying Barabbas with the Antichrist.

The meaning of the name Barabbas is "son of the father." Thus the mystery of future unbelief is already revealed, where the son of the father, that is, the antichrist, man of sin and son of the devil, is preferred to Christ, and, as their leaders commit themselves to it, they designate the one who is reserved for damnation rather than the author of salvation."[15]

Subsequently, this interpretation tended to be moralised. For example, Isaac Ambrose (1604–1664), a Puritan theologian, wrote:

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[13] Charles de la Rue, "Sur la Passion de notre Seigneur " in *Sermons du Père de la Ruë pour le Carême,* (Lyon: Bruyset Frère, 1751)(here: 401).

[14] Origenes Adamantius, *In Matthæum* 14,19, cited in Frédéric Rilliet, "Barabbas: quel père, quel fils?," in *Figures du Nouveau Testament chez les Pères,* ed. Daniel-Alain Bertrand and Pierre Maraval, Cahiers de Biblia Patristica 3 (Strasbourg: Centre d'analyse et de la documentation patristiques, 1991), 209–23 (here: 215).

[15] Hilarius Pictaviensis, *Commentarius in Matthæum* 33,2 transl. Jean Doignon, *Hilaire de Poitiers, Sur Matthieu*, SC 258 (Paris: Cerf, 1979), 238.

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Give me leave to look amongst ourselves. Are there not some amongst us, that prefer Barabbas before Jesus? O yes! not to mention such as swear as the devil bids them and as Christ forbids, or such as prophane Sabbaths and drink to excess, those that listen to that old mutinous murderer in his seditious temptations; those that reject the blessed motions of God's own Spirit, in his tenders and offers of grace; those that embrace the world with its pleasures and profits, and make them their portion; all these, choose Barabbas, and reject Jesus Christ.[16]

We see here at work the typical feature of moral reading: blurring boundaries. The distant narrative is placed in the past to be read in the second person while the grammatical times of the past are transformed into the present. *De te fabula narratur*: you are every day the Jew who cries, "to death!" Worse, your husband, wife, friends, identify themselves with Barabbas.

Surprisingly enough, this same application can be found in much more secular contexts throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, under the pen of those who refuse the extensions of census suffrage. Émile Ollivier, who was Napoleon III's last (somewhat reformist) minister in 1869–1870, was fiercely opposed to it. He writes, with absolute contempt for the mob.

As for us, we do not accept the infallibility of universal suffrage. When was it defined? It is certainly not when the Athenians made Socrates drink the hemlock and even less when, having to choose between Jesus and Barabbas, the Jews decided in favour of Barabbas.[17]

In 1925, Charles Benoist still used the same reference: "the popular acclamation delivers Barabbas and hands Jesus over to the executioner."[18]

Not all Bible readers made this political application of the episode. In 1866, an abolitionist clergyman named George Barrell Cheever used the text to rage against an attempted amendment prohibiting Black people from voting after the 13th amendment had given them American citizenship. Criticising the appeal to the reason of State to permit a single death so that all the people could be saved, he highly proclaims that excluding African Americans from the vote in this way would be like releasing Barabbas again.[19] Although now almost unknown, Cheever had a lot of influence.[20] The 15th amendment

[16] Isaac Ambrose, *Looking Unto Jesus: A Vew of the Everlasting Gospel* (Edinburgh: Alex. M'Caslan, 1771), 294.

[17] Émile Ollivier, "De la méthode politique," in *Solutions politiques et sociales,* (Paris: Société des écrivains français, 1894), 179–259 (here: 236–37).

[18] Charles Benoist, "Le n'importequisme," *Revue des deux mondes* 95 (1925): 801–19 (here: 817).

[19] George B. Cheever, *Impartial Suffrage A Right* (New York: R. J. Johntson, 1866), 20.

[20] George L Rockwood, "George Barrell Cheever, Protagonist of Abolition," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 46 (1936): 82–113.

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of 1870 proscribed the federal government and each State from denying a citizen the right to vote based on that citizen's "race, colour, or previous condition of servitude."

2. The Rounding Out of the Figure of Barabbas

Barabbas's figure only started to gain in roundness in the 19th century. And the best evidence of this fact is that he began to dazzle his readers. Indeed, as Forster stated: "the test of a round character is whether it is capable of surprising in a convincing way."[21] Barabbas began to astonish people at that time because he was now revealing abilities to regret and doubt. To manifest them, it had to go beyond the simple appearance before Pilate and appear in other episodes.

Victor Hugo, a pioneer in presenting this new image of Barabbas in one of the poems in *The End of Satan*[22] imagines him leaving his prison, not understanding anything of what happened to him, *tout ce récit lui semble un vin dont il est ivre* ("the whole story sounds like a wine he is drunk on"). He wanders, *fantôme lui-même en cette nuit stagnante/Larve tout effarée et toute frissonnante* ("himself a ghost in this stagnant night/all frightened and shivering larva"), and now he stumbles on the gallows. A long monologue then begins, showing Barabbas was ready to die in Jesus's place:

Si, quand j'avais le cou scellé dans la muraille,
Pilate était venu me trouver sur ma paille,
S'il m'avait dit: "Voyons, on te laisse le choix,
C'est une fête, il faut mettre quelqu'un en croix,
Ou Christ de Galilée, ou toi la bête fauve;
Réponds, bandit, lequel des deux veux-tu qu'on sauve?";
J'aurais tendu mes poings et j'aurais dit: clouez.

(Yes, when I had my neck stuck in the wall, Pilate had come to me on my straw. If he had said to me, "Come on, we are giving you a choice, It is a festival, we must put someone on a cross, Either the Christ of Galilee, or you, the beast of the wild; Answer me, villain, which one do you want us to save"; I would have stretched out my fists and said: nail in.)

Then, addressing the human race, he adopted an attitude of repentance towards Jesus and contempt for the world:

[21] Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, 78.

[22] Victor Hugo, "Ténèbres," in *La Fin de Satan,* (Paris: J. Hetzel & G-A. Quantin, 1886), 235–46.

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Je demande à genoux pardon à ta victime;
Genre humain, ta noirceur en est là maintenant
Que le gibet saisit l'apôtre rayonnant,
Que sous le poids de l'ombre abjecte, l'aube expire,
Et que lui, le meilleur, périt sous moi, le pire;
Oh; je baise sa croix et ses pieds refroidis,
Et, monstrueusement sauvé par toi, je dis:
Malheur sur toi!

Malheur, monde impur, lâche et rude;
Monde où je n'ai de bon que mon ingratitude,
Sois maudit par celui que tu viens d'épargner;
Puisse à jamais ce Christ sur ta tête saigner;

(I kneel and apologise to your victim; Humankind, your darkness is here now. Let the gallows seize the radiant apostle, May the dawn expire under the weight of the abject shadow, And may he, the best, perish under me, the worst; Oh; I kiss his cross and his cold feet, And, monstrously saved by you, I say: Woe to you! Woe, unclean world, coward and rough world; A world where the only good thing I have is my ingratitude, Be cursed by the one you just spared; May this Christ bleed forever on your head.)

Barabbas becomes a relay of the poet's religious attitude, who was undoubtedly anticlerical, but not "atheist," as is often said.[23] Fascinated by the Christian myth, adhering unconditionally to its humanistic harmonics, he rejects what he considers to be its oppressive aspects. His poem, therefore, contains the main elements of the Christian meaning of the crucifixion (and especially the unbearable horror of watching the just being condemned), but here laicised. One wonders how to understand "monstrously saved by you." Is this salvation the salvation of sinners, or does it merely express that Barabbas remained alive? Or is moral salvation, enabling the former criminal to curse the world, because their vision of crucified innocence has touched him?

If Victor Hugo ultimately remained relatively close to Christian drama, the *Barabbas* (1893) by Marie Corelli (1855–1924), who was one of the most illustrious writers of the late Victorian period, is entirely different. This free-spirited whimsical woman (she had an affair with a woman) who preceded the suffragettes, embroidered on religious themes to give them a gallant dimension. "We hear here and there the sound of kisses, as Jesus suffers or dies," notes a book's critic with some disgust in the French review *Les Études*.[24] Marie Corelli imagines that Barabbas became a thief and murderer to offer a pearl necklace to Judith, Judas's sister. But she is a fickle one. She

[23] Emmanuel Godo, *Victor Hugo et Dieu: Bibliographie d'une âme*, Histoire (Paris: Cerf, 2001).

[24] A. Lefèvre, "Recension de Barabbas de Marie Corelli," *Études* 31 (1894): 386–87.

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favours the devotion of the high priest Caiaphas, who came up with a hellish plan. He persuades the coquette to convince her brother Judas to betray Jesus. The master, he claims, will not let himself be carried away and will manifest his glory. Judas is therefore guilty of naivety only, and moreover, he commits suicide as soon as he realises his mistake. The end of the story is tragic: Judith goes mad, burdened with remorse, and Barabbas, who has become a convert, dies in mystical ecstasy. "'Lord Lord! he gasped faintly, stretching his manacled hands blindly forth–I am not worthy! Why hast Thou come to me? I, Barabbas, am unfit to look upon Thee! I should have died upon the cross, not Thou!', he exclaims. Jesus replied, just before he died: 'Whosoever believeth in Me shall not abide in Darkness! Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!' '.[25] The literary artifice, as we can see, is quite sophisticated: a second plot is layered over the Scriptures plot, which loses its strength. On the surface, Mary Corelli says, Judas's betrayal and Jesus's condemnation are the result of political and religious drama; in reality, they are the cause of romantic schemes in which the 'bad guys' (Judas, Barabbas) turn out to be 'good guys' and the real criminals are hidden (Caiaphas) or ignored (Judith). In the meantime, Barabbas becomes a round character who is modified by the plot, since he is now endowed with a life before and after the episode and undergoes deception and then conversion.

The novel *Barabbas* (1950) by the Swedish Nobel Prize winner Pär Lagerkvist (1891–1974) completed Barabbas's redesign as a round character. The book had a worldwide impact thanks to its adaptation for cinema in 1961 by Richard Fleischer with Anthony Quinn, Silvana Mangano and Vittorio Gassman. Unlike Marie Corelli, Lagerkvist took the story on after his release. First of all, he presents Barabbas as a disoriented character: just freed, he witnessed Jesus's death and then decided to celebrate his liberation. He acts mechanically, like a stranger, as the author reminds us several times. He discovers like a ghost that Jesus's body is no longer in the tomb: 'He was a man who had always been used to an active, dangerous life. It was not like him to dawdle around doing nothing in this way.'[26] And it is always the same absence that makes him return to his past life as a robber, being caught and sentenced to sulphur mines. Finally, pardoned after a few vicissitudes, he sailed to Rome where he is finally convicted for his participation in the city's famous fire.

This whole strange story is a meditation on the life of a survivor. For, and this is clear from the beginning, Barabbas should have been condemned and

[25] Marie Corelli, *Barabbas: A Dream of the World's Tragedy* (New York: A. L. Burt Company, 1921), 473.

[26] Pär Lagerkvist, *Barabbas* (transl. Alan Blair; New York: Vintage, 1952), 52.

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not Jesus: it was not in the nature of things that Jesus had to 'suffer and die, innocent, in our stead. For you have to admit that we are the guilty ones, not he.'[27] On several occasions, the author underlines the indissoluble proximity between the brigand and the rabbi.[28] And the reader gets the impression that Barabbas's life is no longer his own, because it should have been lived by someone else. He wanders around, in a dream, in doubt. He stands perfectly for the figure of the *Entfremdung*, the strangeness to oneself.[29]

Barabbas is above all an archetypal figure of doubt. The 'signs' multiply: the superiority of the condemned,[30] the manifestation of divinity, the strength guiding Barabbas to the cross, the darkening of the sky when the condemned man dies followed by a stroke of lightning in the middle of the afternoon, the overthrow of the stone and the absence of the condemned man's body, mystical emotions, the providential liberation of the mine depicted as a resurrection,[31] etc. Barabbas rationalises them, underestimates them. And despite obvious gestures of conversion – he prays after Jesus's death, he never stops seeking contact with his disciples, he risks his life to attend a Christian meeting, he was involved in the great fire of Rome as a Christian, he proclaims his Christian belonging during the trial, but denies it in front of his fellow Christian detainees.[32] But at the same time, he maintains a distance from Christ's disciples. His partaking in the fire shows his complete misunderstanding of the Christian message,[33] while the Christian community logic is clearly in tension with Barabbas's solitude.[34]

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[27] Lagerkvist, *Barabbas*, 31.

[28] "In actual fact, [Barabbas] was closer to him than they were, closer than anyone else, was bound up with him in quite another way. Although they didn't want to have anything to do with him. He was chosen, one might say, chosen to escape suffering, to be let off. He was the real chosen one, acquitted instead of the son of God himself – at his command, because he wished it." Lagerkvist, *Barabbas*, 57.

[29] Georges Ueberschlag, "Du mal d'être au non-être: le Barabbas de Pär Lagerkvist," *Germanica* 5 (1989): 123–43.

[30] "There was something very strange about him and that he was not like anyone else," Lagerkvist, *Barabbas*, 5.

[31] "It felt just as though this were the god's will." Lagerkvist, *Barabbas*, 123.

[32] "Christian! Didn't you see that the inscription was crossed out?" Lagerkvist, *Barabbas*, 173.

[33] "Now he knew why they had not been out there. They were here to set this odious Rome, to set the whole of this odious world on fuel Their hour had come! Their Saviour had come! The crucified man had returned, he of Golgotha had returned. To save mankind, to destroy this world, as he had promised. To annihilate it, let it go up in Hames, as he had promised! Now he was really sowing his might. And he, Barabbas, was to help him! Barabbas the reprobate, his reprobate brother from Golgotha, would not fail." Lagerkvist, *Barabbas*, 167.

[34] "He sat there alone day after day in the prison, on one side, apart from them. He heard

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Barabbas is the archetype of the doubting believer, continually going back and forth through the gate of conversion. The reader will never get the full picture of this round character's thoughts. Until the end, hesitation remains, until this final cry: 'To thee I deliver up my soul."[35]

Today, Barabbas has become the topic of an extraordinarily eloquent sermon by Pastor Judah Smith, available on YouTube and viewed more than eight million times.[36] For this evangelical preacher, the robber is representative of every human being who, contrary to the idea of merit or retributive justice, receives by pure grace the superabundant love of God. Judah Smith, through a masterfully studied scenography, leads his listeners to identify with Barabbas. Smith's turning point lies in the fact that Barabbas was chosen by God to allow everyone to be aware that the greatest challenge is not so much to cultivate one's skills as to believe in His love. A love he describes as scandalously large, broad, vast and inclusive. The liberation of Barabbas claims that human beings are not masters of their salvation, that no crowd sets them free, that Jesus pays for our freedom, our life.

3. Lessons from the Thickening of the Barabbas Figure

This mutation in Barabbas's perception as a literary figure gives rise to several series of reflections.

Neither this process nor even this chronology (from the turn of the 19th century) is isolated. This mechanism of complexification of biblical figures from 'flat' to 'round' was verified many times, as we have already seen. The story of the reception of the figure of Barabbas thus follows the same pattern as Judas, who moved from the status of a one-dimensional negative character to a much more complex figure. This reversal is not the characteristic of negative characters: the 19th-century transformed Mary Magdalene from the Church's best ally into her worst enemy, suspecting that the ecclesiastical institution had deliberately hidden an intimate relationship between her and the Lord.

The rise of the challenge to Christianity provides a first explanation. It is indeed no coincidence that Victor Hugo and Marie Corelli are among the first heralds of Barabbas's alternative figure. For different reasons, both sought to distance themselves from Christian control over minds. Modifying

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them sing their songs of faith and speak confidently of their death and the eternal life that awaited them." Lagerkvist, *Barabbas*, 178.

[35] Lagerkvist, *Barabbas*, 180.

[36] Judah Smith, *Jesus is Loving Barabbas*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwX_EpNR4CA.

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the biblical narrative allows them to subvert the Christian message from within. Both Hugo and Corelli are constantly flirting with a certain form of irreverence[37] that borders on blasphemy. The challenge becomes much more straightforward during the 20th century, as it increasingly tends to revoke all the foundations of Christianity with ever greater naivety, as religious inculturation grows. Some elements tend to be taken literally. Such is Matthew's famous lesson. While in the 19th century, Bruno Bauer noted with acumen that the presence of a Jesus Barabbas built a false representation of the salvation proposed by Jesus,[38] the authors of the 20th century and the early 21st century cry out for lies and manipulation.[39]

But this explanation is not sufficient to describe the reasons for such an upheaval at the turn of the 19th century. The remarkable unanimity of rehabilitating the negative figures of Christianity can only be explained by a deep reluctance to accept a Manichaean approach to characters. The invention of the novel seeking to render the complexity of the human soul and also of psychology and then psychoanalysis made it impossible to believe in a monolithic character, however good or bad. Cracking, fallibility, what Paul Ricœur has defined as the 'non-coincidence of the self to the self'[40] is now intimately part of our vision of man. This fundamental opacity about what makes us act, this fundamental weakness of will, comes up against the simplicity of the characters inherited from ancient times. We cannot accept that Barabbas is nothing, but this scoundrel built in radical contrast to the absolute purity of Jesus. So, we need more complexity. You only need to spend a few minutes in front of this social phenomenon called the television series to be convinced of this. Even Marvel's Manichaean characters have the luxury of moods.

This requirement of complexity even affects critical exegetes. This Barabbas cannot be a simple criminal. Do the terms not used by the evangelists, the στάσις (revolt), the fact that he is a thief, implies political resonance? Taking up Bauer's conceptions, the exegetes thus construct a narrative. Could Barabbas not be a zealot, one of those nationalists who sought to liberate

[37] Elizabeth White, "Getting to Grips with the Gospels: Interpretation and Elaboration in Marie Corelli's Barabbas (1893)," *LISA* 5 (2007): 206–19.

38 Durch seinen Namen ferner ist Barabbas das lügenhafte Abbild dessen, den sein Vater vom Himmel herab seinen geliebten Sohn nannte. Bruno Bauer, *Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte der Synoptiker und des Johannes* (Braunschweig: Friedrich Otto, 1842), 290.

[39] Gerald Messadié, *Jésus dit Barabbas* (Paris: J.-C. Lattès, 2014).

[40] *La non-coïncidence de soi à soi,* Paul Ricœur, *Finitude et culpabilité*, Philosophie de la volonté 2 (Paris: Aubier Éditions Montaigne, 1960), 157.

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their homeland from the Roman yoke? S. G. F. Brandon, then Martin Hengel and others did not hesitate to annex Barabbas, and these ideas are found in manuals of synthesis on the historical Jesus[41] as well as in contemporary presentations of the life of Jesus or theology of the New Testament.[42]

II. What Is Our Relationship to Death? – Lazarus

The reception of the character of Lazarus experienced a reading prejudice among exegetes and more generally among theologians more generally. In this case, it is a positive one: Lazarus's resurrection is a beautiful act of power from Jesus and, for Lazarus, the tremendous opportunity to come back to life. However, this reading resists an alternative interpretation, which was expressed for centuries under the surface and which nowadays bursts into popular culture: for Lazarus, this return to life is more of a curse. Joining the threads of these two visions of the text reveals the complexity of our relationship to death.

1. The Very Optimistic Reading of Theologians

For theologians, the resurrection of Lazarus is a vivid episode in the glory of God. For them, it is above all a deed of praise to God. For Thomaskutty, "Lazarus's illness is a means for revealing the glory."[43] Esler and Piper consider Lazarus, Martha and Mary to be prototypes of those Jesus loves.[44] Ball

[41] Samuel George Frederick Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots: A Study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity* (New York: Scribner, 1967). Martin Hengel, *The Zealots: Investigations into the Jewish Freedom Movement in the Period from Herod I until 70 A.D* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), 341. K. C. Hanson and Douglas E. Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus: Social Structures and Social Conflicts* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998), 87–88. Tom Holmén and Stanley E. Porter, *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 2301.

[42] Paula Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus*, Yale Nota bene (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 120–22. George Bradford Caird and Lincoln D. Hurst, *New Testament Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 645.

[43] Johnson Thomaskutty, *Dialogue in the Book of Signs: A Polyvalent Analysis of John 1:19–12:50*, BibInt 136 (Leiden Brill, 2015), 374. See also Cornelis Bennema, *Encountering Jesus: Character Studies in the Gospel of John* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009), 162.

[44] Philip Francis Esler and Ronald A. Piper, *Lazarus, Mary and Martha: Social-Scientific Approaches to the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 75–103.

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adds: "this whole episode is set up as a revelation of God's glory in Jesus."[45] As such, the episode is a kind of narrative climax of the entire gospel of John. It is both an announcement of the revelation of glory and an act of the revelation of that glory. As R. A. Culpepper had shown in his seminal book, the revelation of the glory of God to the disciples is the heart of the plot set up in the first part of John's gospel.[46] The book is indeed constructed as a revelation plot whose climax is the resurrection of Lazarus. Dodd clearly understood the meaning of the prodigy: "the miracle of Lazarus's bodily resurrection, which anticipates the final resurrection, is a symbol of the real resurrection by which a man passes from a merely physical existence, which is death, into the life which is life indeed, and which is proof against the death of the body."[47] This return to life is the seal of the fact that Jesus is himself life.[48] "Without the claim to be the Resurrection and the Life, the raising of Lazarus would be no more than a spectacular miracle."[49] The miracle is written in very Johannic categories, also contained in the *Prima Johannis*: Jesus is both love and the verb of life.[50] Alain Marchadour goes even further: for him, the episode of Lazarus is the culmination of humanity's entire quest for life and the very culmination of the Revelation.[51]

Theologically, the message set up by this pericope is also reassuring. Sandra Pellegrini explains it at the end of her investigation of the text:

> According to John 11:26, Lazarus is alive. From the actualisation of this dramatic figure, the reader gets a serene attitude towards corporal death and a comforting assurance that his/her passive attitude, resting in the love of Jesus Christ, will become both passive and active: from the tomb he/she will come out with his/her legs, even if they are tied.[52]

Her prognosis concurs with the conclusion of Sandra Schneiders, who sees in the story an invitation to appropriate faith in Jesus as Resurrection and

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[45] David Mark Ball, *'I am' in John's Gospel: Literary Function, Background and Theological Implications*, JSNTSup 124 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 102.

[46] Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 94.

[47] Charles Harold Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 148.

[48] Dodd, *Interpretation*, 366.

[49] Ball, *I am*, 103.

[50] Wendy E. Sproston North, *The Lazarus Story within the Johannine Tradition*, JSNTSup 212 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001).

[51] Alain Marchadour, *Lazare: Histoire d'un récit, récit d'une histoire*, LD 132 (Paris: Cerf, 1988), 264.

[52] Silvia Pellegrini, *L'Ultimo Segno: Il messaggio della vita nel racconto della risurrezione di Lazzaro*, Fondazione Bruno Kessler. Scienze religiose nuova serie 20 (Bologna: EDB, 2009), 188.

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as life,[53] of Wendy Sproston North who also sees it as an invitation not to fear persecution, since the certainty of having eternal life is real,[54] of Alain Marchadour who sees in the text the revelation of who is to be heard, and "whose voice draws from death all those who believe in him, in an irreversible manner."[55]

Lazarus is, therefore, a theological symbol;[56] he "represents the disciple to whom life has been given and challenges the reader to accept the realisation of eschatological expectations in Jesus";[57] it is the very foresight of the love of Jesus.[58] Who could say he has a more positive life than him? The figure is so beautiful that John P. Meier, after 34 pages of careful exegesis, reluctantly admits that "the Lazarus story ultimately reflects some incident in the life of the historical Jesus." However, he quickly recovers: "this event was believed by Jesus's disciples even during his lifetime to be a miracle of raising the dead."[59] At best, it is a theologised history,[60] at worst, as Barrett said, a real aporia.[61] The story is almost too beautiful. The *Formgeschichte* from Spitta to Schnackenburg via Bultmann, Fortna and Wilckens had expressed serious doubts about its historical reality. Might the story not come from the parable of the rich man and the poor Lazarus preserved in Luke?[62]

The optimistic reading of the episode of Lazarus's resurrection raises several textual difficulties. The answers provided reflect the difficulties of this unambiguous reading. *1. Why does Jesus let Lazarus die?* – In this optimistic reading, which emphasises Jesus's love and saving work, Jesus's passivity in the first verses (John 11:1–13) is inexplicable. Why does he not hurry to heal Lazarus before he dies? So especially can we read the statement in verse 4 – "This disease is not for death, but for the glory of God, that the Son

[53] Sandra M. Schneiders, "Death in the Community of Eternal Life," *Union Seminary Review* 41 (1987): 44–56.

[54] Sproston North, *Lazarus Story*, 54–57.

[55] Marchadour, *Lazare*, 268.

[56] Raimo Hakola, "A Character Resurrected: Lazarus in the Fourth Gospel," in *Characterization in the Gospels: Reconceiving Narrative Criticism,* ed. David M. Rhoads and Kari Syreeni, JSNTSup 184 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 223–63 (here: 249).

[57] Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 141.

[58] Schneiders, "Death in the Community of Eternal Life."

[59] John Paul Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (vol. 2: Mentor, Message, and Miracles; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 628–29.

[60] Derek M. H. Tovey, "On Not Unbinding the Lazarus Story: The Nexus of History and Theology in John 11:1–44," in *John, Jesus, and History,* ed. Paul N. Anderson et al., SBL Symposium Series 44 (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2007), 213–23 (here: 220–23).

[61] Barrett, *John*, 389.

[62] Marchadour, *Lazare*, 34–54.

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of God may be glorified through it" – without seeing it as an expression of incredible cynicism? Sandra Pellegrini is right to ask the question frankly:

> It is difficult for our minds to accept as morally right to let a friend die with premeditation, in order to save him, even with the confidence of being able to call him back to life.[63]

The most common answer is purely literary. Jesus's sentence is addressed to the reader. It generates a *double entendre* that points to a future reality:[64] by apparently saying that this disease is not fatal (meaning 1), Jesus is implying that this disease will not lead to death because Lazarus will return to life (meaning 2) and finally that he will rise again for eternal life (meaning 3).

2. What about the detail ἤδη ὄζει? – The difficulty here is twofold. On the one hand, the insistence on the rotting body is inappropriate, a mark of the bad taste of the narrator. On the other hand, it makes it almost impossible to hypothesise a revival of the body, which would meet the needs of the modern mind. While defibrillators have accustomed us to the possibility of "restarting the heart" to escape death, the insistence on the decomposition of the flesh made the awakening of the dead more difficult to imagine. Would Jesus also repair the flesh? J. Kremer concludes this is a *sicherlich fiktive*[65] precision. And others explain: perhaps it is a writing technique that feeds the reader's curiosity and lends narrative tension?[66] Perhaps the object of the reply is not really what Mary says, but a way of explaining her personality: as a practical woman, she seeks to bring Jesus back to a reality that he seems to have lost entirely sight of.[67]

3. Why does Jesus cry? – If the purpose of the text is to manifest the glory of God and if Jesus is built as the omniscient character, why this brutal nervous breakdown that leads him to burst into tears? Some claim that he weeps over the lack of faith of those around him;[68] others because he hears the murmurs

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[63] Pellegrini, *L'Ultimo Segno*, 106.

[64] Brodie, *John*, 385. Urban C. von Wahlde, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, Eerdmans Critical Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 489–91. Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 839. Xavier Léon-Dufour, *Lecture de l'Évangile selon Jean*, Parole de Dieu 29 (vol. 2, chap. 5–12); Paris: Seuil, 1990), 415.

[65] Jacob Kremer, *Lazarus: die Geschichte einer Auferstehung: Text, Wirkungsgeschichte und Botschaft von Joh 11,1–46* (Stuttgart: KBW, 1985), 75.

[66] Marchadour, *Personnages*, 108.

[67] Pellegrini, *L'Ultimo Segno*, 164.

[68] Ben Witherington, *John's Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 203.

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of the crowd and blames himself for having come too late.[69] Others think that he is moved by a kind of sympathy that makes him feel the pain of the two sisters over the death of their brother; others finally make the link with the confusion that seizes Jesus during the agony in the Garden of Olives (a scene absent from the Fourth Gospel) and suggest that it is the same anticipation of his own death – announced by Ps 42[70] – which troubles him.[71]

4. How to understand Lazarus's entanglement? – When Lazarus comes out, the text states that he is δεδεμένος τοὺς πόδας καὶ τὰς χεῖρας κειρίαις, bound by the feet and hands of/with strips. Hence a naive question asked by Élian Cuvillier: is this clarification not a terrible improbability that must lead us to read the text differently?[72] Barrett's answer deserves to be quoted in its entirety because it is so astonishing:

> Lazarus came out of the tomb alive under the bandages. It is unlikely that John saw allegorical significance in this statement. The story ends here, abruptly; there is no more to say.[73]

After seeing the difficulty, exegesis concludes that there is nothing to understand. Move along; there is nothing more to say.

2. A Reading Contradicted by Writers and the Pop Culture

However, if the optimistic reading seems to be evident in exegetical circles and more widely in the Churches, it is contradicted by another much bleaker vision. In popular culture a pessimistic view of Lazarus triumphs, which reflects the feelings of many contemporary individuals, and contrasts sharply with the optimism that sees in Lazarus's death only a sweet sleep and in Martha and Mary's brother a transfigured and heavenly man.

At the beginning of the 20th century, in one of his short stories, Oscar Wilde simply asked the question:

> And he [Jesus] went towards him and touched the long locks of his hair and said to him, "Why are you weeping?"

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[69] Cullen I. K. Story, "The Mental Attitude of Jesus at Bethany: John 11. 33, 38," *NTS* 37 (1991).

[70] Johannes Beutler, "Psalm 42/43 im Johannesevangelium," *NTS* 25 (1978): 33–57.

[71] Joseph Newbould Sanders, *A Commentary on the Gospel according to St John*, BNTC (London: A&C Black, 1968), 272. Léon-Dufour, *Jean II*, 423. Dorothy A. Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel: The Interplay of Form and Meaning*, JSNTSup 95 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 211.

[72] Élian Cuvillier, "Tombe, excellent état, vue/vie imprenable. Une lecture de Jean 11," *ETR* 91 (2016): 73–85.

[73] Barrett, *John*, 403.

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And the young man looked up and recognised Him and made answer: "But I was dead once and you raised me from the dead. What else should I do but weep[74]?"

What can we understand from this enigmatic answer? Is living a curse? Is coming back to life a curse? In "Zone," the French poet Apollinaire envisages it as follows:

You are in the garden of an inn near Prague
You feel altogether happy; there is a rose on the table
And instead of writing your story you stare intently
At the rose-beetle asleep in the heart of the rose.
Appalled, you find a picture of yourself in the veined agates at St. Vitus';
You were mortally sad the day you saw yourself there,
Looking like Lazarus unwitted by the daylight.[75]

Other writers are much more explicit, such as Karel Čapek. In a story called "Lazar" published in *Lidové noviny* (The People's Daily) on March 27, 1932, and posthumously republished in the *Kniha apokryfů* (Apocryphal Tales) in 1945, the Czech author imagines a hypochondriac Lazarus, unable to leave his home because he is so afraid of dying again.[76] We know that Čapek himself suffered with his spine and spent his life curing himself: the story may therefore have some autobiographical element to it. However, the short story makes us read anew: the gates of death must not be crossed with impunity, nor can anyone return unscathed from the underworld. The life of the risen Lazarus has kept something of the death that seized him.

"Why do you not tell us, Lazarus, what was There?" And they all paused, amazed at the query, as though they had just realised that Lazarus had been dead – three days, and they glanced up curiously awaiting the answer.

But Lazarus was silent [...]. And they were all perturbed, they waited eagerly for the reply of Lazarus; but he was dumb, looking cold and stern and downcast. And then they noted anew, as though for the first time, the dreadful bluish pallor of his countenance and his hideous obesity; his livid hand still reposed on the table as though forgotten there. All eyes were fixed on that hand in a strange fascination as though expecting that it might give the craved reply. [...] Silence reigned and the bluish hand reposed on the table and did not stir. Then it moved a little, and all heaved a sigh of relief and lifted their eyes: Lazarus, the risen, was gazing straight into their faces with a glance that took in all – stolid and gruesome.

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[74] Oscar Wilde, "The Doer of Good," *The Fortnightly Review* 62 (1894): 23. Cited by Hakola, "A Character," 256.

[75] Guillaume Apollinaire, *Alcools* (transl. William Meredith; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), 9.

[76] Karel Čapek, *Apocryphal stories*, Penguin Modern Classics (transl. Dora Round; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975).

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This was on the third day after he had emerged from his grave. Since then many had tested the pernicious power of his gaze, but neither those whom it wrecked forever, nor those who in the primal sources of life that are as mysterious as death itself found force to resist, could ever explain the nature of that dreadful, that something invisible which reposed in the depths of his black pupils.[77]

This disturbing strangeness is perfectly reflected in Odilon Redon's (1840–1916) very troubling drawing preserved at Harvard.[78] Lazarus, emerging from a triangle-shaped tomb, looks like some monster with a long neck, vague eyes and crooked fingers with sharp-edged fingernails. He has nothing of the usual kind portraits: he is marked by death, like a corpse.

Popular culture retains this disturbing weirdness. "Lazarus" is the name given to several cultural objects associated with death or the return to life. In 2015, *The Lazarus Effect* imagined a serum that makes it possible to bring the dead back to life, by transforming them into terrifying monsters.[79] *The Lazarus Project* is not cheerful either since the film tells the story of a death row inmate who escapes the death penalty to better fall back into a frightening scientific project.[80] The episode named "The Lazarus Experiment" in the British series *Doctor Who* (183rd episode, 2007) portrays the scientist Richard Lazarus who turns into a young and attractive man but proves to be a hungry anthropophagic monster. In the comic book of the same name, Lazarus Churchyard is a "plasborg," a man whose body has been replaced by intelligent plastic capable of regenerating itself and whose only obsession is to seek death after 400 years of immortality. *Lazarus A.D.* is also the name of a Hard Rock band whose songs are not particularly funny. For instance: "Beneath the Waves of Hatred," "Eternal Vengeance," "The Onslaught," "Forged in Blood." In the medical field, "Lazarus syndrome" describes the psychological difficulties experienced by patients who have had to face the certainty of their death but eventually survived. Finally, David Bowie's last video clip, *Lazarus*, shot a few days before his death, is a grim and mysterious work, which takes up the obsessions of the author of "Ashes to Ashes" in a morbid and frightening format.

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[77] Leonid Andreyev, *When the King Loses his Head, and Other Stories*, Russian Author's Library (transl. Archibald J. Wolfe; New York: International Book Publishing Company, 1920), 135–37.

[78] Odilon Redon, *La Résurrection de Lazare*, fusain et gouache blanche sur papier vélin bleu passé au vert, 25.8 × 37.5 cm, date unknown. Cambridge, Fogg Art Museum.

[79] *The Lazarus Effect*, real. David Gelb, avec Olivia Wilde et Mark Duplass, 83', prod. Lions Gate Film, 2015.

[80] *The Lazarus Project*, réal. John Patrick Glenn, avec Paul Walker, 100', prod. Sony Pictures, 2008.

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3. A Modern Reading That Goes Back to Antiquity

This, far less optimistic, reading is not ultimately modern since it goes back to the Fathers of the Church. Most of them did not have a significantly different reading from that of modern exegetes. They also read in the Lazarus episode the proof of Christ's power and divinity (see Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* I, ii, 6, 3–4 or Sedulius, *Carmen Paschale* III, 21). They also hesitate about the meaning to be given to Jesus's crying: for Peter Chrysologus (*Sermon* 44:23) it is compassion; for John Chrysostom, it is the mark of humanity (*Sermon* 63:2); Ephrem (*Commentary on Diatessaron* V:7, SC 121, 303–309) has the same exegesis as modern scholars who think Jesus had not wanted Lazarus dead. Some, like Irenaeus of Lyon, also read in the text the prelude to the general resurrection (*Adv. Hær.* V, 13, 1; Peter Chrysologus; Ephrem, *Commentary on the Diatessaron,* SC 121, 303–309), Romanos the Melodist, *Cantica* 15, ζ'). Finally, everyone reads the triumph over death, like a grandiose homily by Basil of Seleucia:

> Seeing his kingdom destroyed and unable to prevent this, [death] lamented, crying, "What is this change in my affairs, what is this miraculous alliance of nature? The dead are returning to life, and the tombs have become wombs of the living. Alas, for these misfortunes! Even the tombs are faithless to me with regard to the dead, and the dead, although putrefying, are leaping out. They are all dancing in their swathing bands, mocking my laugh. Still mourned, they are going up towards those that mourn them. By showing themselves, they undo the tragedy, leaving me an heir to grief. Who is it who teaches the dead to challenge death? Who is it who is enlisting the deceased against death? Who is the One whose voice the prisons underground cannot support? Who is the One before whom the tombs tremble? He merely speaks, and I am not able to hold on to those whom I have in my power. Oh, in vain was I entrusted with a kingdom! Oh, in vain was I confident in an angry God![81]

These interpretations will be repeated in the Middle Ages and in Modernity,[82] then up to the contemporary era.[83]

The Fathers go one step further. If Lazarus is the passive object of a process in which he is not involved, the ancient commentators have perceived that this object itself contains something profoundly unpleasant. He is decomposed, he smells bad, he is "stinking". I do not use this nasty adjective here for stylistic effect; it is hinted at by the old Latin translations. Indeed, as Jülicher, Aland and Matzkow note, the majority of the Italian manuscripts had trans-

[81] Basilius Seleucensis, *Homilia de Lazaro* 11–12, text in Mary B. Cunningham, "Basil of Seleucia's Homily on Lazarus: A New Edition BHG 2225," *AnBoll* 104 (1986): 161–84 (here: 183).

[82] Kremer, *Lazarus*, 166–230.

[83] Kremer, *Lazarus*, 231–328.

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lated the expression ἤδη ὄζει (John 11, 39) used by Martha to characterise her brother as *iam fetit*, two good witnesses bluntly affirm that he stinks: *iam putet* says Bezæ Cantabrigensis; *iam pudit* says the fragment from Saint-Gall (Sankt-Gall, Stiftbibliothek 1395).[84]

This decay of the body was first read symbolically, since Origen, who declared that Lazarus had "become so foul because of his sins leading to death":[85] the Alexandrian launched an allegorical reading that would regularly be found among the Latin Fathers. A particularly masterful Augustine carries it into the firmament:

> This is a third death for me, which was even taken to the tomb. Already the burden of a bad habit (*consuetudo*) weighs on him; he is pressed by a heap of earth; for he has long given himself over to disorder and is overwhelmed by the heavy habit. Christ addressed him again; he shouted: "Lazarus, come outside". With his perverse habit, this man already stinks.[86]

Moving boldly from somatic to pneumatic corruption, Augustine saw in Lazarus an incarnation of mankind subjected to sin, because body and spirit are in continuity. The rotting of Lazarus expresses the moral decomposition of the inveterate sinners whose sin is expressed by a perverse inclination, a bad habit. In his 49th treatise on John, he is more specific:

> The third dead is Lazarus. There is a kind of terrifying death: it is called the bad habit; for one thing is to sin, another is to contract the habit of sin. He who sins and corrects himself immediately returns to life very quickly; as he is not yet entangled by habit, he is not yet buried. But he who is accustomed to sinning is buried, and it is rightly said of him: "he stinks". For he is beginning to have the worst reputations, which is like the most terrible smell.[87]

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[84] Adolf Jülicher, Kurt Aland, and Walter Matzkow, *Itala das Neue Testament in altlateinischer Überlieferung* (vol. 4; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1963), 127.

[85] ὅτι δυσώδης ἀπὸ τῶν πρὸς θάνατον ἁμαρτημάτων τις γεγενημένος. Origenes Adamantius, *Commentarii in Euangelium Ioannis* xxvii, 49, ed. C. Blanc, Paris, 1992 (SC 385), 84.

[86] Sed et hic mihi tertius mortuus est, qui etiam perductus est ad sepulcrum. iam supra se habet consuetudinis pondus, moles eum terrena multum premit. multum enim exercitatus est in flagitiis, consuetudine sua nimia prægrauatur. clamat et christus, lazare, prodi foras. homo enim pessimæ consuetudinis iam putet. Augustinus Hipponensis, *Sermo* cxxviii, 14, PL 38, 720.

[87] Tertius mortuus est lazarus. est genus mortis immane, mala consuetudo appellatur. aliud est enim peccare, aliud peccandi consuetudinem facere. qui peccat et continuo corrigitur, cito reuiuiscit; quia nondum est implicatus consuetudine, non est sepultus. qui autem peccare consueuit, sepultus est, et bene de illo dicitur: fetet; incipit enim habere pessimam famam, tamquam odorem teterrimum. Augustinus Hipponensis, *In Iohannem tractatus* xlix, 3, ed. R. Willems, Turnhout, 1954 (CCSL, 36).

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Mere sin does not only explain the stench of Lazarus, but what the scholastics will call *habitus* and what Augustine still calls *consuetudo*. Lazarus has contracted a sinful ethos that has kept him away for a long time from life and led him to death. The decomposed body reveals the decomposed soul, and the smell of decomposition eventually takes on a symbolic meaning as well.

This corruption has been realistically read. A mysterious bishop of Lisbon, Potamius (ca 350), whose life between Arianism and orthodoxy[88] is not well known, writes in his sermon on Lazarus:

> Here, indeed, through the sad spheres of darkness and the shadows of black horror, that is, through the four-day course that was renewed according to the vicissitudes of increase and decrease – through eight days, if I may say so, including the dark nights –, he lay with his jaws hanging in a grin, his teeth crushed in his mouth, his mouth fetid, since it was reduced to a clod of earth, a putrid glebe, he decomposed and this unfortunate burial sentenced his nerve network and the beauty of his body to a disgusting pus. Then, the kidneys tightened by the slimming, the blackened skin torn by the ribs that let themselves be numbered, he released a flow of bodily fluid from the cavity of the entrails; an already stinking lees, flowing through the corpse's feet, repugnant and blackish, alas, while for four nights and four days, his mouth swamped by gall and humours of lies, members afflicted by the foul corruption, the corpse could not swell his lungs by its breath.[89]

This text, described by its first editor as "of bad taste, darkness and also a fatuity that has not often been equalled,"[90] is a fascinating example of a propensity for the morbid and the bizarre.[91] It also provides an excellent example of the spread of medical ideas (as shown by the mention of the network of nerves, moods, fluids, and the constant reference to the elements supposed

[88] Antonio Montes Moreira, *Potamius de Lisbonne et la controverse arienne*, Travaux de doctorat Nouvelle série 1 (Louvain-la-Neuve: Bibliothèque de l'Université, 1969).

[89] Hic quippe, per graues tenebrarum globos et nigri horroris umbracula, hoc est per quatuor dierum circulos, succidua incrementi et decrementi uicissitudine renascentes,/ octo, ut ita dixerim, cum cærulis noctibus dies,/pendulo mandibularum rictu, elisis in ore dentibus, fœtido ore sic iacuit, uere quia de terrena labe confectus, putris gleba, marcesceret et neruorum traduces cum corporis qualitate miserabili tabo infelix sepultura damnaret. Contractis igitur membris inter ieiunas et numerabiles costas pellis tetra distenditur et humoris riuus qui de gurgite uiscerum relaxatur fœtenti iam sentina per solum cadaueris teter et cæruleus labebatur Heu, quando non poterat cadauer, quatuor diebus et quatuor noctibus, per totum oris fellis et flemmatis flumina sentinarum, corruptis artubus fœtentia, pulmonis spiramenta conflare? Potamius Lisbonensis, *De Lazaro*, text in André Wilmart, "Le *De Lazaro* de Potamius," *Journal of Theological Studies* 76 (1918): 289–304 (here: 299).

[90] Wilmart, "*De Lazaro*," 289.

[91] Michel Meslin, *Les Ariens d'Occident (335–430)*, Patristica Sorbonensia 8 (Paris: Seuil, 1967), 34.

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to compose the body, earth, air, water …) in cultivated circles.[92] Through his style, which foreshadows a Spanish baroque drowned in gongorisms, Potamius vividly depicts the brutal reality of death no longer diminished by the symbolic reading of an Origen or an Augustine. In the process, he reveals one last reality of Lazarus: he was a corpse, and, although resurrected, he holds out to us forever a mirror that reminds us that we are mortal beings.

This detestable stench of rotting flesh forbids Lazarus to become a totally positive character, because it "gets in his blood." Obsessed with theological reading, 19th-century exegetes did not learn the lessons of the Fathers, who were the masters of reading. Forgetting the pictorial tradition that painted Mary and some of the spectators of the scene with their noses covered with a coat so as not to smell the terrible stench, forgetting the preachers of the *Grand Siècle,* like Massillon, Martin or Caignet,[93] fascinated by the opposite of their ideal of order, decay, and whose echoes are found even in the sacred eloquence of the 19th century.[94]

Few texts put this way the reader in front of this frightening spectacle, but they are very suggestive; they see the resurrection as a curse. An epistle attributed to Cyprian but probably by a Pelagian writer reads:

Jesus Christ wept over the dead Lazarus, it is true, but not with your tears. He who had promised the resurrection could not lament, without turning the faith he preached into a glaring lie. He lamented not over sleeping Lazarus, but over resurrected Lazarus, and he wept that he had to bring him back into the world in order to save other dead people and confound unbelief. The Lord wailed, therefore, to give this

[92] Juan Carlos Sánchez León, "Los sermones del obispo Potamio de Lisboa," *Espacio Tiempo y Forma: Serie II, Historia Antigua* 11 (1998): 501–21.

[93] Jean Baptiste Massillon, *Sermons* (vol. 3; Paris: chez la veuve Estienne & Fils, à la Vertu et Jean Herissant, à S. Paul & à S. Hilaire, 1745), 511. Nicolas Martin, *Exhortations courtes et pathétiques pour les personnes affligées, malades* (Paris: Delespine, 1746), 159. Antoine Caignet, *L'Année pastorale contenant des prédications familières pour servir aux curés* (Paris: 1663), 514.

[94] See for example the frightening sermon given by a certain Father Bedoin, priest of Mably in the Loire Department (France): Benoît Bedoin, "Sermons sur la mort," *La Tribune Sacrée* 17 (1861): 496–537 (here: 535). "Venez, vous dirai-je, comme les sœurs du Lazare au Sauveur eu le conduisant au tombeau de leur frère; venez et voyez: *Veni et vide*. Voyez, mais voyez attentivement; ne vous arrêtez pas à l'extérieur, enfoncez-vous par la pensée, dans le sein même de la terre, dans cette étroite prison qui renferme un cadavre: *Veni et vide*, venez et voyez! Ce ne sont plus seulement des yeux éteints, des traits défigurés, un visage flétri dont la pâleur et la difformité faisaient horreur: c'est d'abord une noirceur affreuse, puis des chairs qui s'ouvrent, des chairs qui se séparent, des chairs qui tombent, et dont la dissolution forme un cloaque impur, un amas d'ordures qui répand l'infection la plus insupportable, et, pour tout dire en un mot, c'est la corruption avec toutes ses horreurs, c'est la pourriture même avec tout ce qu'elle renferme de plus repoussant."

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life back which you lament to see taken away. Your tears are opposed to his tears, and your love does not compare to his love. His tears are unrivalled![95]

Ludolph the Carthusian (II, 17) maintains Lazarus never laughed again:

It is said of Lazarus that after his resurrection, he no longer allowed himself to laugh, he showed no joy, because he saw himself surrendering to this life of pitfalls and miseries; because it appeared to him more painful than before, while the other one seemed more desirable to him than in the past.[96]

In Arnoul Gréban's *Mystery of the Passion* (1420–1473), Lazarus is marked by his passage into hell:

> Seur, j'ay raison assés planiere,
> car depuis ma mort corporelle
> j av veu mainte chose cruelle;
> par quoy quand en ce penser suis,
> de riens esjouir ne me puis.[97]

(Sister, I have good reason because since my physical death I have seen many cruel things; so when I think about it, I cannot be happy about anything.)

4. Conclusion: The Text That Confronts Modernity with Death

The figure of Lazarus is controversial because he lost a large part of his individuality. This hero is not a hero. At first, he is only a mere object the language of others captures: he is sick (v. 1), information from the narrator and then from the sisters (v. 3); he sleeps (v. 11), information from Jesus confirmed by the narrator (v. 13), then by Jesus (v. 14), then again by the narrator (v. 17) and finally by Martha (v. 39). For Jesus, the illness (then Lazarus's death) is meant to glorify God and his own (v. 5); for the disciples, it will serve to make them believe (v. 15); for Martha, the death of her brother gives her the possibility to confess that in Jesus the life of God has broken into the world; for Mary (and the Jews), it is the starting point for their manifestation of grief (v. 15; 32–33); for some Jews, Lazarus's death and Jesus's intervention led to faith in Jesus; for others, it has ben leading to a malicious intervention with the Sanhedrin (v. 45). In short, Lazarus is nothing more than an opportunity for others.

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[95] Pseudo-Cyprianus, *Epistula* 4 *ad Turasium*, CSEL 3.3, 276.

[96] Ludolphus Cartusiensis, *Vita* II,17.

[97] Arnoul Gréban, *Le Mystère de la Passion*, 1455, v. 15756–15760 dans Arnoul Gréban, *Le Mystère de la Passion publié d'après les manuscrits de Paris par Gaston Paris et Gaston Raynaud* (Paris: F. Vieweg, 1878), 204–05.

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The absence of such a characterisation is perhaps not surprising given that Lazarus is presented as ill, dead, and entombed.[98]

This realisation allows us to rediscover elements of the story that the Fathers had already perceived. First of all, the pericope cannot be detached from the evangelist's global project: as Origen and Augustine had seen, Lazarus's resurrection is the opportunity that sets in motion the hostility of the Jews leading to the death of Christ, the driving force of the following chain of events.[99] Moreover, Lazarus is not an actor in the story, but simply the object of a series of speeches about him that define him as a sick, dying, dead, corpse. The cry of Jesus only, *Lazarus ueni foras*, considers him as the recipient of a word raising him from the tomb. An absolutely silent character, he is, in fact, a mirror in which everyone can read his relationship to death.[100] A detail of the biblical text, even though pointed out by the Fathers, finally crossed the barrier of modern commentators's consciousness. When Jesus calls Lazarus to himself, it is not Lazarus who comes out, but ὁ τεθνηκὼς "the one who has been dead." The substantive perfect participle expresses that even resurrected; Lazarus remains marked by death. Surrendered entirely to death, he carries the stigmata among the living. When death has been integrated into life, life can be received as a grace that glorifies God.[101] It is indeed like a dead man that Lazarus returns among the living so that they may face their own death and turn to life.[102] "In front of the buried Lazarus, Jesus fights against Death because it dominates men and opposes God's creative act."[103]

Therefore, our relationship to Lazarus reflects our relationship to life and death. At the beginning of the 20th century, Lazarus expresses the burden of life, as in Yeats:

> Christ: I gave you life.
> Lazarus: But death is what I ask.
> Alive I never could escape your love,
> And when I sickened towards my death I thought,

[98] Marienne Meye Thompson, "Lazarus: 'Behold a Man Raised Up by Christ'," in *Character Studies in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Approaches to Seventy Figures in John,* ed. Steven A. Hunt et al., WUNT 314 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 460–72 (here: 471).

[99] André Paul, *Le Fait biblique*, LD 100 (Paris: Cerf, 1979), 202.

[100] Marchadour, *Lazare*, 126–28.

[101] Guy Lafon, "Proposition pour une lecture sémiotique," in *Genèse et structure d'un texte du Nouveau Testament: Étude interdisciplinaire du chapitre 11 de l'évangile de Jean*, LD 104 (Paris/Louvain-la-Neuve: Cerf/Cabay, 1981), 185–211 (here: 207).

[102] Marchadour, *Personnages*, 113.

[103] Léon-Dufour, *Jean II*, 406.

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'I will to the desert, or chuckle in a corner,
Mere ghost, a solitary thing.' I died
And saw no more until I saw you stand
In the opening of the tomb; "Come out!" you called;
You dragged me to the light as boys drag out
A rabbit when they have dug its hole away;
And now with all the shouting at your heels
You travel towards the death I am denied.[104]

In the middle of the century, Jean Cayrol (1911–2005) revisited the figure of Lazarus, but in an entirely different way. After the experience of the Nazi Mauthausen camp, he proposes a new form of literature, a "Lazarean literature" (*literature lazaréenne*), which reflects the experience of people who could not remain unscathed from their journey through death and who must write, "for a world that suffers from the pain of chaos."[105] He fosters monologue literature at the very limit of language, as Lazarus was at the limit of life and death: "the hero does not like to be answered; he only needs to ask his question, he wants to leave his request in abeyance […] since the words were once taken from him, he forgot the wonderful movement of the lips."[106]

Another culture, much more popular than Jean Cayrol's, attests to Lazarus's character connection with modernity: the zombie film. At its beginning, zombie culture stems from the exoticism of the Caribbean, the fear of domination and subversion, and the perpetuation of the imperialist model of cultural and racial hegemony against a legacy of the US occupation (1915–1934) and colonial control of Haiti. *White Zombie* or *The Magic Island* portray Haiti as both savage and regressive, caught up in the fallout of colonialism and politics. At the same time, the films reflect on slavery: the issue of disposable and exploitable bodies.[107] It also expresses the fear of the end of white domination, since foreigners might also be turned into zombies, subjugated and colonised. George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* conveys the anguish of the Vietnam War and of the end of American supremacy. It sets the trend from Michael Jackson's *Thriller* to *The Walking Dead*, *Resident Evil* and *28 Days later*.[108] The zombie film, which is the

[104] William Butler Yeats, "Calvary," in *Four Plays for Dancers,* (London: Macmillan, 1921), 69–82 (here: 75). Cited by Hakola, "A Character," 325.

[105] Jean Cayrol, *Lazare parmi nous*, Cahiers du Rhône 82 (Genève: La Baconnière, 1950), 9.

[106] Jean Cayrol, *Pour un romanesque lazaréen*, Le Monde en 10/18 201 (Paris: Union générale d'éditions, 1964), 223.

[107] Kevin Bishop, "The Sub-Subaltern Monster: Imperialist Hegemony and the Cinematic Voodoo Zombie," *The Journal of American Culture* 31 (2008): 141–52.

[108] Stacey Abbott, *Undead Apocalypse: Vampires and Zombies in the Twenty-First Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 62–119.

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modern incarnation of the Lazarus episode, expresses the anguish and fascinations of our time, especially this diffuse feeling of being foreign to a world where everything is governed by technology, the GAFAs, supposedly all-powerful and merciless governments. It expresses this feeling of uncanniness, this blurring of landmarks.[109] Especially in favour amongst teenagers, it voices this non-belonging feeling specific to their age, which is reinforced by the image that adults cast back to them, that of being automatons: zombies of Ritalin, zombies of video games, and so on.[110]

III. What Is Our Relationship to the Church? – The Temple of the Holy Spirit

To conclude, a final example highlights the clear difference between theologians's reading and a mainstream reading: the expression, "Temple of the Holy Spirit." It comes directly from a passage from the First Epistle to the Corinthians. In the second part of this letter (from chapter 5 onwards) in which he intends to govern his community, Paul addresses a slogan that leads to a certain freedom of behaviour: "I have the right to do anything." During the discussion, the Apostle shares a formula that will have a bright future: "do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?" (1 Cor 6:19). What does he mean there? That the community is indeed the Temple of God, as he had previously affirmed in chapter 3? That each of us is a Temple, in which the Holy Spirit resides?

1. A Rather Mysterious Passage

The context is clear. Paul strongly forbids the use of prostitution. In style inherited from the diatribe,[111] punctuated by his beloved "don't you know"

[109] D. Derkson and Hudson Hick, "Your Zombie and You: Identity, Emotion, and the Undead," in *Zombies are Us: Essays on the Humanity of the Walking Dead,* ed. C. Mormon and C. Rushton (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011), 11–23.

[110] Victoria Carrington, "The 'Next People': And the Zombies Shall Inherit the Earth," in *Generation Z Zombies: Popular Culture and Educating Youth,* ed. Victoria Carrington et al., Cultural Studies and Transdisciplinarity in Education 4 (Singapore: Springer, 2016), 22–36.

[111] Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, SP 7 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 242.

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formula,[112] he rehabilitates the body, against those who denigrate its holiness. Indeed, throughout the Epistle, the body is the subject of a major theological controversy that goes far beyond prostitution. Chapter 15 insists on the physical nature of the Resurrection and suggests that Paul is fighting against an anthropological dualism separating the body from the spirit and underestimating the body, asserting its insignificance,[113] and thus the lack of consideration that should be shown to him. As Käsemann shown in the 1930s, this conflict between Paul and probably the "strong ones"[114] of the community is certainly due to two opposing anthropologies. While opponents promote a binary body/mind anthropology (however they call it), Paul defends three-pillar anthropology.[115] He distinguishes between the flesh (σάρξ) representing the individual's belonging to the world (*Weltlichkeit*), and the body (σῶμα) which would instead describe his status as a creature of God (*Geschöpflichkeit*). The σῶμα will be resurrected, including what we call the body and what we call the soul. For Paul, the σῶμα is the whole person. The third pole is the spirit (πνεῦμα), which is what man and God have in common, the life of God in the human being, again not to be confused with the soul.

To counter the aforementioned binary anthropology, Paul makes the use of prostitution a textbook case, illustrating the reversal of semiotic values brought by the coming of Jesus. In the act of prostitution, a man buys a woman's body to possess her sexually temporarily, but Christ bought the body of Christians at a high price once and for all. This strange practice of buying bodies, recalls the Greek σωματέμπορος,[116] the slave trader. The purchase of bodies by Christ has a double consequence: the affirmation that the Corinthians no longer belong to themselves, on the one hand, and the disappearance of the sexual act, on the other hand, because it is made impos-

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[112] Craig S. Keener, *1–2 Corinthians*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 58.

[113] Collins, *First Corinthians*, 241.

[114] Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 175. Charles Kingsley Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, BNTC (London: A&C Black, 1971), 143. John Coolidge Hurd, *The Origin of I Corinthians* (New York: Seabury Press, 1965), 68. Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 251. Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGNTC (Grand Rapids, MI/Carlisle: Eerdmans/Paternoster, 2000), 460.

[115] Ernst Käsemann, *Leib und Leib Christi: eine Untersuchung zur paulinischen Begrifflichkeit*, Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 9 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1933), 97–136.

[116] On this word Hervé Duchêne, "Sur la Stèle d'Aulus Caprilius Timotheos, *sômatemporos*," *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 110 (1986): 513–30.

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sible by the fact that males now occupy the place occupied by the prostitute, a place of object.[117]

To affirm the sacredness of the body, Paul affirms: "your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit in you." The expression "Sanctuary of the Holy Spirit" is traditional. In the LXX, the term ἱερόν refers to the sanctuary housing the Holy of Holies, the place of God's presence, as opposed to ναός, the Temple, which refers to the entire religious building, and this distinction has been preserved in the New Testament. During the Second Temple period, this residence of God in the sanctuary was often expressed by the proclamation of the dwelling of the Spirit of God in the Temple. Indeed, as shown in the apocryphal book of Solomon's Wisdom (7:22; 8:3; 9:4; 9:9), Philo (*Gig.* 26; *Spec. Leg.* 4:123) and Flavius Josephus (*Ant. Jud.* 8:114), the assimilation between God and his πνεῦμα seemed quite common.[118]

In contrast, to assimilate the sanctuary to the body, Paul makes a few and sometimes contradictory moves.[119]

1. A move from the stone temple to the flesh temple. – 1 Cor 3:16 reads: "do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" In this verse, the Temple is the community. The assimilation was announced by the preceding paragraph (1 Cor 3:5–15) which describes the work of evangelisation as a work of construction whose nature is gradually revealed: the construction of a building, since it has foundations, i. e., Jesus Christ (1 Cor 3:11). Behind this image lies the proclamation of Is 28:16 on the cornerstone, a messianic oracle regularly read by Christians as relating to Christ. This assimilation of Christ to stone was already prepared from the beginning of the epistle, with the description of Christ as a σκάνδαλον, a stone that the builders rejected and that is now the foundation stone.[120]

2. The assimilation of the members of the community to the body of Jesus Christ. – 1 Cor 6:15 reads: "do you not know that your bodies are the members of Christ?" This assimilation is confirmed in 1 Cor 12:27: "now you are the body of Christ, and you are his members, each for his part." The picture here is a little different. The sanctuary is no longer the community, but the body of Christ, whose Spirit is the Spirit of God. Of course, the two images can be

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[117] Alistair Scott May, *'The Body for the Lord': Sex and Identity in 1 Corinthians 5–7*, JSNTSup 278 (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 122.

[118] Marie E. Isaacs, *The Concept of Spirit: A Study of Pneuma in Hellenistic Judaism and its Bearing on the New Testament* (London: Heythrop College, 1976), 24–25.

[119] John A. T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology*, Studies in Biblical Theology 5 (London: SCM Press, 1952), 76.

[120] Morna D. Hooker, "'The Sanctuary of his Body': Body and Sanctuary in Paul and John," *JSNT* 39 (2017): 347–61 (here: 354).

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reconciled by using an idea expressed elsewhere, in John, regarding the body of Christ as ναός, but Paul does not affirm this elsewhere.

3. Finally, a residence of the Spirit of God in the Temple of the flesh, in 1 Cor 6:19. – These displacements, making corporeality the very place of the Spirit's presence, are common to the New Testament, whose authors tend to interpret the famous oracle of Ez 36:26–27 on the new spirit as applying to the community. They allow Paul to counterbalance anthropological dualism by affirming the intrinsic ambiguity of the body. Of course, the body is the place of sin, which Paul usually refers to as "the flesh," but it is also the spiritual body, the place of God's presence. In the 2nd century, Tertullian had already seen that the whole passage refutes a doctrine despising the body of philosophical origin: "if Plato's opinion [probably the famous pun σῶμα σῆμα explained in the Cratyle by an Orphic etymology according to which the body is the jail in which the soul is imprisoned, σῴζηται[121]] is that this body is a prison, the apostolic opinion is that it is God's temple."[122]

This ambiguity prohibits any idealistic spiritualisation of the body,[123] and thus opens the way to the discernment of the body's action in the world; it opens the way to ethics.

1. Implied by the comparison of the Temple comes the right behaviour. If the body is the sanctuary, it is, therefore, the place of divine service in mankind, a consecrated place that belongs to God. Οὐκ ἐστὲ ἑαυτῶν, "you are not your own," which follows, is an answer to Οὐκ ἔξεστιν, "anything is possible for me".[124]

2. Bad behaviour is also explained: if the body is a sanctuary, then it is somehow sacred, in the first sense of the term. The presence of a source of impurity defiles it and could lead to God's departure.[125]

However, the text is not entirely clear. It presents two difficulties. The first concerns the very nature of this defilement. Why this excessive focus on the use of prostitution, which leads to this ambiguous phrase: "any sin a

[121] *Cratyl* 400c. On this text and its posterity: Pierre Courcelle, "Tradition platonicienne et traditions chrétiennes du corps-prison (*Phédon*, 62b; Cratyle, 400c)," *Revue des Études latines* 43 (1965): 406–43. Pierre Courcelle, "Le Corps-Tombeau (Platon, Gorgias, 493 a, Cratyle, 400 c, Phèdre, 250 c)," *Revue des Études anciennes* 68 (1966): 101–22.

[122] *Si enim corpus istud Platonica sententia carcer, ceterum apostolica dei templum.* Tertullianus, *De Anima* 53,4, ed. Jan Hendrik Waszink, *Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani De Anima*, Supplements to Vigiliæ Christianæ 100 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 72.

[123] Wolfgang Schrage, *Ethik des Neuen Testaments*, Grundrisse zum Neuen Testament 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 226.

[124] Hans Conzelmann, *Der erste Briefe an die Korinther*, KEK 5 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), 143.

[125] May, *Body for the Lord*, 130.

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human being can do is outside the body, but he who engages in prostitution sins against his own body?" Indeed, if prostitution has always been condemned – it is a metaphor that runs throughout the Bible to say that the Law is abandoned since prostitution is an act of alienating freedom –, no one has ever condemned the unmarried person who uses it. He is not likely to fall into adultery.[126] The condemnation does not come from Hellenistic culture, which, since the ancient Greek world, had a somewhat positive image of the *hetaira*, often presented as the companion of the great men (e. g., Pericles and Aspasia), and pictured on many funerals and honorific monuments.[127] The second difficulty concerns the extension of this declaration to the body. What has been said so far about the community – in 1 Cor 3:16 – seems to be transferred here to the individual.[128] How could the community be soiled by one member resorting to one prostitute? Is the body we are talking about the social body of the Church or the individual body? The detour through the history of reception allows us to see both the lack of consensus and the projections of the various periods on the text.

2. Contemporary Reading: The Temple of the Church

Since the 19th century, one interpretation has dominated the passage among exegetes. It is based on two principles.

1. To think of the sanctuary as a place of communication with God. – The current interpretation focuses on the positive character of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in each individual. One of the precursors of this interpretation is certainly John Henry Newman, who had insisted from his Anglican period that the Holy Spirit dwelling in us enables us to make the right decisions.[129]

Actually, this interpretation is not so new, because it is similar to an old analysis, which exalted the human body. It intervened as an argument that does not aim to glorify corporality but pursues other goals. In the sermons for the feast of the dedication of the churches, 1 Cor 6:19 often came at the right time to remind that the sanctity of the consecrated building comes from

[126] Bruce Malina, "Does Porneia Mean Fornication?," *NovT* 14 (1973): 10–17.

[127] Konstantinos A. Kapparis, *Prostitution in the Ancient Greek World* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018).

[128] Conzelmann, *Korinther*, 143. "Mais le thème du temple individuel et intérieur, primaire chez Philon d'Alexandrie, parce qu'il répond mieux à l'esprit grec plus individualiste, ce thème est secondaire." Lucien Cerfaux, *La Théologie de l'Église suivant saint Paul*, Unam sanctam 10 (Paris: Cerf, 1965), 113.

[129] John Henry Newman, "Sermon 19. The Indwelling Spirit," in *Parochial Sermons,* (London: Rivington/Parker, 1835), 240–56.

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the sanctity of those who worship God in it, for they are the actual temple. It is a *topos* that can be found from Caesarius of Arles' (6th century) to Dom Guéranger's (20th century) commenting on the liturgy of the feast of the dedication, through Bernard of Clairvaux's 11th century.[130] In the 13th century, Pope Innocent III even used the sentence with humour during a church's dedication to galvanise a rather sleepy assembly:

> Do you not know that your bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit? If you wish to participate in this solemnity for which you really desired to come, you must wake up, so that everything that happens in the consecration of the sanctuary in a material way may be accomplished in us in a spiritual way.[131]

Similarly, the sentence has always served to exalt particular bodies. First of all, that of the Virgin Mary. The text is indeed particularly appropriate for she who received the Spirit at the Annunciation, which Lawrence of Brindisi (1559–1619) acknowledges in his Marian sermons, by quoting the sentence and specifying *singulariter Maria*, "especially Mary."[132] Other saints, however, can be seen as a temple, as recalled by the Council of Trent in its 25th session, recommending the worship of saints as members of Christ and as the Temple of the Holy Spirit.[133] Cornelius a Lapide, following the trend, could not help but cite the example of the martyrdom of 2nd-century Seraphia who, asked where her worship place was, answered the potentate: *Ego castitatem colens templum sum Christi*, "I, who practise chastity, am Christ's temple."[134] And in the 19th century, the hagiographic literature customarily recalled that the body of saints is *templum spiritus*, "Temple of the Spirit."[135]

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[130] Cæsarius Arelatensis, *Sermo* 227, 1, ed. G. Morin (CCSL 104,1953); Prosper Guéranger, *L'Année liturgique: 7e section: le Temps après la Pentecôte* (vol. 6; Paris: H. Oudin, 1902), 292. Bernardus Claræuallensis, *Sermones in dedicatione ecclesiæ* 5,8, ed. Jean Leclercq and Henri Rochais, *Sermones*, Sancti Bernardi Opera 5 (Romæ: Editiones Cistercienses, 1968), 395.

[131] Nescitis quia corpora vestra templum sunt Spiritus sancti? (I Cor. VI). Si desideratis fieri participes solemnitatis hujus, ad quam cum desiderio convenistis, satagere vos oportet, ut quidquid in consecratione templi materialiter agitur, totum in nobis spiritualiter compleatur. Innocentius III papa (Lotario dei Conti di Segni), *Sermo 28 in consecratione altaris*, PL 217,439.

[132] Laurentius a Brundusio, *Sermones in uisionem s. Iohannis* 3,2, in Laurentius a Brundusio, *Mariale*, S. Laurentii a Brundusio opera omnia (vol. 1; Patavii [Padova]: Ex Officina typographica Seminarii, 1964), 28.

[133] Pierre-Nérée Dassance, *Le Saint Concile de Trente, œcuménique et général* (Paris: Méquignon junior, 1842), 291.

[134] Cornelius a Lapide, *Commentaria in omnes Diui Pauli Epistolas* (Antuerpiæ [Antwerpen]: Apud Henricum et Cornelium Verdussen, 1692), 237.

[135] Many examples could be given. See for example: Louis Joseph Barbet Rouzier,

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This interpretation implies a redefinition of the concept of the body. Bultmann, one of the pioneers of this approach, adopts an existentialist point of view and sees in the body the entire person who enters into communication with the world.[136] The human being may become one with it or alienate from it, in the sense that he may establish a good or bad relationship with himself. This interpretation is continued by Käsemann, who also sees the body as a means of communication between the individual and the rest of the world. The "body of Christ" characterises a communion between Christians and Christ and not concrete corporeality.[137] J. A. T. Robinson inscribes this theory in a Jewish thought (which he opposes to Hellenism) seeing in the body the whole person.[138] Brendan Byrne summarises this vision by explaining:

> The immoral person perverts precisely that faculty within himself that is meant to be the instrument of the most intimate bodily communication between persons. He sins against his unique power of bodily communication and in this sense sins in a particular way "against his own body." All other sins are in this respect by comparison "outside" the body.[139]

This interpretation, which emphasises the dignity of the body more than its possible defilement, goes beyond the boundaries of exegesis to reach morality, for instance, in the thought of John Paul II, who cites the text many times to glorify the dignity of sexuality. However, the Pope does not entirely break with old ascetic interpretation since it allows him to foster periodic abstinence within the married couple as an authentic marital spirituality.[140] More positively, a moralist like Alain Mattheeuws sees in Paul's statement participation of the family in Trinitarian life.[141]

Vie de saint Valéric, ermite, patron de la paroisse de Saint-Vaulry (Creuse) accompagnée de réflexions philosophiques et religieuses (Limoges: Mme J. Dumont, 1876), 136. Augustin-Joseph Crosnier, *Hagiologie nivernaise, ou Vies des saints et autres pieux personnages qui ont édifié le diocèse de Nevers par leurs vertus* (Nevers: impr. de Fay, 1858), 247. Albert Houtin, *Une Grande Mystique: madame Bruyère, abbesse de Solesmes (1845–1909)* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1930), 141. The research concerning this topos on the documentary bases seems to have no end.

[136] Rudolf Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1984), 195–96.

[137] Käsemann, *Leib*, 118–21.

[138] Robinson, *Body*, 11–15.

[139] Brendan Byrne, "Sinning against One's Own Body: Paul's Understanding of the Sexual Relationship in 1 Corinthians 6:18," *CBQ* 45 (1983): 608–16.

[140] Christopher West, *Theology of the Body Explained: A Commentary on John Paul II's 'Gospel of the Body'* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2003), 302.

[141] Alain Mattheeuws, "L'avenir de l'humanité passe par la famille," *Nouvelle Revue théologique* 130 (2008): 719–40.

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2. To favour a collective interpretation. – The second direction consists of favouring a collective interpretation of the passage and defining the Temple of which Paul speaks as the community. The use of prostitution, i. e., foreign bodies, permanently hurts relationships within the community. Making the Temple an image of the community breaks with any individualism of a cult rendered by an individual to God; it opens up to a communitarian understanding of the cult.[142] The Holy Spirit can therefore only be conceived as communication between individuals, what Mary Isaacs called the "corporate nature of Pauline pneumatology."[143] Stephen C. Barton offers an excellent summary of the growing interest in the community dimension of early Christianity and mentions the influence of scholarship especially in ecclesiological circles, including Roman Catholicism and the modern charismatic movement.[144] Also, it is indeed clear that in the theological discourse, the "temple of the Holy Spirit" tends to no longer characterise individual bodies, but rather the whole Church. This is particularly clear in Vatican II,[145] where the expression is used to define the Church itself in *Lumen Gentium* (LG 17), in *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (PO 1), in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC 2) and even in *Ad Gentes* (AG 7), which define missionary activity as the attempt to unite all humanity into a single community temple of the Holy Spirit.

3. Contemporary Reading: The Temple of the Body

But who still believes theologians and exegetes? In the middle of the Victorian period, the Rossiters were already recommending house ventilation and the benefits of eating salad and drinking pure water under a buzzing title: *Story of a Living Temple*.[146] And modern supporters of healthy living do not hesitate to repeat the same comparison to encourage people to get a membership at the gym. The theology underlying an exhortation like J. Warner's is somewhat surprising:

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[142] Hans Wenschkewitz, *Die Spiritualisierung der Kultusbegriffe: Tempel, Priester und Opfer im Neuen Testament*, Angelos Beihefte 4 (Leipzig: Pfeiffer, 1932), 112.

[143] Isaacs, *Concept of Spirit*, 93.

[144] Stephen C. Barton, *Life Together: Family, Sexuality and Community in the New Testament and Today*, T&T Clark Academic Paperbacks (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), 85–93.

[145] Richard R. Gaillardetz and Catherine E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council: Unlocking the Teaching of Vatican II* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 58.

[146] Frederick M. Rossiter and Mary Henry Rossiter, *The Story of a Living Temple: A Study of the Human Body* (Chicago, IL: Revell, 1902).

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Is God glorified in your body? Is your temple of the Holy Ghost polluted by cigarettes, alcohol, and poor nutrition? Is your temple fitting for the God of the universe to live in or is it overweight and ready to collapse? How fit are you physically? Will your body present God to others?[147]

Similarly, one is a little surprised by the title – undoubtedly humorous – chosen by Scott Davis to praise the efficacy of his diet: *If My Body is a Temple, Then I was a Megachurch.*[148] John Ritchie, who also promotes a diet, compares junk food to idolatry in the middle of the body's sanctuary.[149]

It could be argued that this comparison only exists in circles influenced by evangelism; this is not, however, the case. When searching with the keywords "Body Temple," on the Internet, one comes across a range of sites praising bodybuilding and hygiene. No reading of the Temple could be more individualistic! I am my own temple, which I must maintain as the high priest of my own narcissism. Psychologists have well understood this when they identify the impact of this religious belief on the pathologies of self-image such as eating disorders (anorexia, bulimia). Belief in the sacredness of the body, pushed to its maximum, is an obstacle to building self-esteem.[150]

This modern reading is not new. Tertullian, the first commentator to explicitly quote the passage[151] is utterly clear. He declares:

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[147] James C. Warner, *The Handgun of the Holy Ghost* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2006), 79.

[148] Scott Davis, *If My Body is a Temple, Then I was a Megachurch* (Boise, ID: Ampelon Publishing, 2011).

[149] Jennifer Ritchie, *Holy Spirit, My Personal Trainer: Losing Weight God's Way* (Bloomington, IN: Westbow, 2012), 9.

[150] John F. Morgan, Patricia Marsden, and J. Hubert Lacey, "'Spiritual Starvation'?: A Case Series Concerning Christianity and Eating Disorders," *International Journal of Eating Disorders* 28 (2000): 476–80. A. K. Henderson and C. G. Ellison, "My Body is a Temple: Eating Disturbances, Religious Involvement, and Mental Health Among Young Adult Women," *Journal of Religion and Health* 54 (2015): 954–76. See also: Steven J. Sandage and Jeannine K. Brown, *Relational Integration of Psychology and Christian Theology: Theory, Research, and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2018), 110–15. On a more positive note, reference to the body-temple can be used to promote difficult to communicate tests such as colorectal cancer among certain religious populations or to defend the right to body integrity in cases of gender-change surgery. C. L. Holt et al., "Your Body Is the Temple: Impact of a Spiritually Based Colorectal Cancer Educational Intervention Delivered through Community Health Advisors," *Health Promotion Practice* 12 (2011): 577–88. Doran Shemin, "My Body Is my Temple: Utilizing the Concept of Dignity In Supreme Court Jurisprudence To Fight Sex Reassignment Surgery Requirements for Recognition of Legal Sex," *American University Journal of Gender Social Policy & the Law* 24 (2015): 491–523.

[151] Tertullianus, *Adv. Marcionem* 5,6 makes a direct quotation to demonstrate that the God who dwells in us is indeed the God who created the Old Testament.

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The first condition of this salvation, for both men and women, is to be chaste. Indeed, if we are all God's temple once the Holy Spirit has been introduced and consecrated in us, the guardian and priestess of this temple is chastity, which cannot allow anything impure or profane to enter, for fear that the offended God who inhabits it will abandon his unclean dwelling.[152]

This quotation is essential, because it contains the two elements that will serve as a basis for the entire reading of the text that follows: 1° the presence of the Spirit in us is linked to baptism, which introduces it and consecrates it in us; 2° the practical consequence of this elevation of the human body in sanctuary is chastity. Elsewhere, in the Treaty to his wife (*Ad uxorem* 2,3), Tertullian revisits this idea by firmly affirming that fornication is like the desecration of a temple.

From this text, we must no longer give "fornicator" its primary meaning of "people who had a relationship with a prostitute." Indeed, through a gradual shift in vocabulary, the word *porneia* tended to assimilate to the word *moikheia*, which in ancient Greek meant the violation of a woman's honour, either because she belonged to a prominent man or a god, or because the sexual relationship was accompanied by significant violence. With the introduction of increasingly austere moral rules, this loss of honour seems to have extended to all sexual relations, outside the strict framework of marriage, and without any further connection with prostitution. From the end of the first century, *Didache* (Did. 2:2) and the Epistle of Barnabas put it in a kind of sin triad: "do not commit *porneia*, do not commit *moikheia*, do not rape children," (Οὐ πορνεύσεις, οὐ μοιχεύσεις, οὐ παιδοφθορήσεις, Barn. 19:4). But from Clement of Alexandria,[153] the term comes to mean any relationship outside the framework of marriage (relations before marriage, adultery). In Latin, the choice to translate *porneia* by *fornicatio*, a rather vulgar word that evokes the vaulted passages where the prostitutes stood, which contrasts with the more classic *meretricium* (the declared prostitute) and *prostibulum* (the low-ranking prostitute), may have accelerated this assimilation.

The majority tradition of interpretation is therefore that chastity must be practised for fear of defiling the Temple of the Spirit. Ambrosiaster (second half of the 4th century) does not say anything different, he who affirms that it is advisable to keep one's body free of contamination so that the Spirit can

[152] Tertullianus, *De Cultu feminarum* 1,1, in Marie Turcan, *Tertullien, La toilette des femmes*, SC 173 (Paris: Cerf, 1971), 91.

[153] Kyle Harper, "Porneia: The Making of a Christian Sexual Norm," *JBL* 131 (2012): 363–83.

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inhabit it.[154] John Chrysostom and Severian of Gabala, his opponent, agree. Severian thinks of the fornicator's double punishment: "the fornicator is also guilty of ungodliness, for by hurting his body, he has also defiled the Temple of the Holy Spirit."[155]

Peter Brown's seminal work shows that Christianity from this point on created a kind of barrier against desire,[156] and Daniel Boyarin can readily denounce the fact that sexuality in Christianity takes on a dimension of immorality that it did not have in Judaism.[157] The definition of a Christian identity related to the residence of the Spirit and participation in the body of Christ serves to control sexual practices[158] by making them feel guilty since the use of πορνεία is an offence against God and not only against the neighbour.[159] Pauline Christianity can, therefore, be described as a symbolic order embodied by the communities.[160]

Most of the time, commentators establish a connection with the strange statement in v. 17, which states that fornication is the only sin that does not remain outside the body. They, therefore, insist on the twofold gravity of lust, which, on the one hand, is the only sin that interests the whole body, and not one of its parts; and, on the other hand, ruins God's temple. This is what one Augustine says, particularly inspired in one of his emotional outbursts:

> Let us see. Here, the Apostle (through whom Christ himself was teaching) apparently wants to show that sexual immorality is even graver than all the other sins which are perpetrated through the intermediary of the body, but which nevertheless do not enslave the human soul and subject it to the body, as indeed happens only in sins of impurity. There, the force, the fierceness of passion fuse soul and body into one; and the soul, glued and chained, clings to this evil so tightly that, at the moment of delivering himself up frenetically to this brutish act, it is impossible for the sinner to see or to

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[154] Heinrich Joseph Vogels, *Ambrosiastri qui dicitur Commentarius in Epistulas Paulinas*, CSEL 81.2 (Vindobonæ [Vienne]: Hoelder/Pichler/Tempsky, 1968), 69.

[155] Ὁ πορνεύσας καὶ ἀσεβείας ἐστιν ὑπεύθυνος· τὸ γὰρ ἑαθτοῦ σῶμα ἐνυβρίσας τὸν ναὸν τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἐμόλυνεν. Karl Staab, *Pauluskommentare aus der griechischen Kirche*, Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen 15 (Münster i. W: Aschendorff, 1933), 248.

[156] Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, Lectures on the History of Religions 2.13 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 54–55.

[157] *Sexuality per se is taunted with immorality*. Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*, Contraversions 1 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 171.

[158] May, *Body for the Lord*, 92.

[159] May, *Body for the Lord*, 98.

[160] David G. Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence: Interests and Ideology from 1 Corinthians to 1 Clement*, Studies of the New Testament and its World (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 54.

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will anything besides what is sweeping his soul headlong into sheer animality. Submerged, engulfed in this shameful, seething mire, his soul becomes a mere slave.[161]

Consequently, the interpretation of the passage is fixed and will not be challenged. All the commentators repeat the words of Augustine, John Chrysostom, and other fathers. The Ordinary Glossary repeats that "no sin dishonours or defiles the body as much as this one."[162] Almost ten centuries later, Francis of Assisi recalled the same verse in his first rule of the Friars Minor (the *regula non bullata*, 1221) to urge the Franciscans Brothers to distrust women.[163]

The most astonishing thing here is the permanence of this interpretation, which ran until the 20th century.[164] Humanism and the Reformation do not call it into question. It is surprising to see Erasmus defend in his commentary the same reasoning as Tertullian: purified by holy water, the body was consecrated to God.[165] Catholics are not to be outdone, as this passage by Fléchier proves, which paints a clear picture:

> It is true that the body is a source of corruption and infirmities; from it most passions are born; it is in and through it that they exercise their tyranny; it rebels against the spirit. But the Apostle teaches us that it must be reduced to servitude and crucified with all its lusts, that not only does it belong to God as its work, but that it must be the temple of the Holy Spirit by its purity, that it must bear the mortification of Jesus Christ by its sufferings, that it serves Religion in the use of the sacraments and in the practice of most of the Christian virtues.[166]

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[161] Augustinus Hipponensis, *Sermo* 162, PG 38,885. Translated by Edmond Bonin http://aquinas-in-english.neocities.org/augustinus.html.

[162] *nullum peccatum intantum deshonestat et coinquinat corpus ut illud. Bibliorum sacrorum, cum glossa ordinaria*, 241.

[163] Franciscus Assisiensis, *Regula non bullata* 12,6.

[164] History of interpretation and references in Andrew David Naselli, "Is Every Sin outside the Body except Immoral Sex? Weighing Whether 1 Corinthians 6:18b Is Paul's Statement or a Corinthian Slogan," *JBL* 136 (2017): 969–87.

[165] Desiderius Erasmus, *Paraphrases on the Epistles to the Corinthians, the Epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, Collected works of Erasmus 43 (transl. Robert D. Sider; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 85.

[166] Il est vrai que le corps est une source de corruption & d'infirmités; de lui naissent la plupart des passions; c'est dans lui & par lui qu'elles exercent leur tyrannie; il se révolte contre l'esprit. Mais l'Apôtre nous apprend qu'il faut le réduire en servitude & le crucifier avec toutes ses convoitises que non seulement il appartient à Dieu comme son ouvrage mais qu'il doit être le temple de l'Esprit Saint par sa pureté, qu'il doit porter la mortification de JC par ses souffrances, qu'il sert à la Religion dans l'usage des Sacremens & dans la pratique de la plupart des vertus chrétiennes. Esprit Fléchier, *Œuvres complettes de messire Esprit Fléchier* (vol. 4.2; Nismes: P. Beaume, 1782), 297.

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The historical-critical turn with all its claims to the tabula rasa boldly continues in the same vein. Marcus Dods, in his 1889 commentary, expresses himself no differently than Augustine:

> This is the only sin in which the present connection of the body with Christ and its future destiny in Him are directly sinned against. This is the only sin, which by its very nature alienates the body from Christ, its proper partner.[167]

In 1994, it is a surprise to read once again under the pen of Craig Blomberg:

> We dare not lose sight of the unique seriousness of sexual sin that verse 18 upholds. The effects of gluttony are usually reversible by an increase in sweat and a decrease in calories. Some effects of illicit sex can never be undone (though, of course, they can be forgiven). Memories, emotions, and attachments stay with us for life, although excessive promiscuity can eventually dull or numb our senses in certain ways.[168]

It must be said that the old interpretation took time to fade from the minds, as Nick Tosches explains in the biography of Jerry Lee Lewis, *Hellfire*, who describes America in the 1930s as follows: "women were prohibited from cutting their hair, painting their faces, and wearing trousers, for their bodies were temples of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit would not be suffered to abide in a whore."[169] What a strange turn of events, which we do not have time to discuss here, when elegant women are so easily compared to prostitutes.

We should ask ourselves about this divorce. In 1997, N. T. Wright wrote:

> The Gospel creates, not a bunch of individual Christians, but a community. If you take the old route of putting justification, in its traditional meaning, at the centre of your theology, you will always be in danger of sustaining some sort of individualism.[170]

In fact, the opposite is happening. If you support a kind of individualism, you put justification at the centre of your worldview, until it becomes tiresome.

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[167] Marcus Dods, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Expositor's Bible (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1889), 156.

[168] Craig L. Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 128.

[169] Nick Tosches, *Hellfire: The Jerry Lee Lewis Story* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1982), 32–33.

[170] Nicholas Thomas Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Oxford: Lion, 1997), 158.

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IV. Synthesis and Perspectives

In his insightful essay which served as our starting point, Benoît Bourgine seeks to define the relationship between exegesis and theology. After a thorough investigation, he comes to the conclusion that the exegete's main task consists in evaluating the theological scope of the text he is interpreting: "it is by giving due consideration to the theological scope of biblical language and scriptures that the exegete participates fully in the explanation of the text and can rightly engage in conversation with systematic theology on the basis of the results of his interpretation."[171] This is precisely what the history of reception allows. It achieves this goal not *a priori*, by deciding from a historical reconstruction what the concepts mean before having experienced the text. It does not do so *in texto*, comparing the different statements of the biblical text in the manner of Kittel's *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* or Botterweck and Ringgren's *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*. It proceeds *a posteriori*, discerning the effects produced by the text.

The cases of Barabbas and Lazarus thus show that the "theological scope" referred to by Benoît Bourgine does not only concern the discourse, but also the narrative. The perception of biblical characters reveals theological insights. The case of Barabbas proves that this scope can appear late. It is only during the 20th century that readers question the univocity of the concept of the "villain." Conscious of the diversity of characters and situations, our culture questions the very possibility that a human being may be entirely bad. The case of Lazarus, on the contrary, shows how much our theological viewpoint can go back and forth. Surprisingly enough, today's readers of John are closer to the fathers of the Church than their grandparents could be. The resurrection of the brother of Martha and Mary reveals the paradoxes of this renewed life after the experience of death. Finally, the case of the "Temple of the Holy Ghost" reveals the incredible complexity of the relationship to the body developed by Christian communities. The examples allow us to enter this dialogue that Benoît Bourgine would like to see at work between theologians and exegetes. Not only does this conversation necessarily involve the theologians of the past, but it can blossom into a tête-à-tête conscious of its history and its stakes.

[171] Bourgine, *Bible oblige*, 251.

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Finale

Articulating the past historically does not mean recognising it, "the way it really was." It means appropriating a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger. Historical materialism wishes to holdfast that images of the past which unexpectedly appears to the historical subject in a moment of danger. The danger threatens both the content of the tradition and those who inherit it. For both, it is one and the same thing: the danger of becoming a tool of the ruling classes. Every age must strive anew to wrest tradition away from the conformism that is working to overpower it. The Messiah comes not only as the redeemer; he comes as the victor over the Antichrist. The only historian capable of fanning the spark of hope in the past is the one who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he is victorious. And this enemy has never ceased to be victorious.[1]

In his last text, written shortly before his suicide, Walter Benjamin defines the task of the "materialist" historian (in the sense of Engels's "dialectical materialism"), i. e., the new kind of historian he envisions. Without sharing his Marxist ideology, we can still agree with Benjamin's dazzling observation.

Writing history and, in this book, reading the texts with an awareness of their historicity and the historicity of their understandings, is not about going back to the past or clinging to the chimera of an immutable truth given by the author. Instead, it is about finding in the text a response that unexpectedly answers the urgent needs of the present. Admittedly, we no longer (or perhaps do not yet) live in the dramatic situation in which Benjamin found himself and which he recalls with the terms "danger" and "enemy." However, we need only open the biblical texts and see ourselves in them, as in a mirror.

Any text is read only in response to a pressing question, which may be personal, but that is always, at the same time, a reflection of the epoch in which the reader lives.

The task of the critic, like Benjamin's historian, is always to fight against "conformism," which can reflect the ideological balance of forces (as the Ger-

[1] Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," Thesis VI (1940) transl. in Michael Löwy, *Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin's 'On the Concept of History'* (London: Verso, 2005), 42.

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man philosopher thought), but also a more or less fostered sloth of thought. Some groups always find it advantageous for people not to think, including exegetes.

The challenge is that the enemy will not stop in front of the dead. By rewriting history as he pleases, he steals from the dead their very existence. And this robs the living of the hope that the dead might bring.

At the end of the first part of this book, I considered what the project of reading with tradition might consist of. A direction seems to be emerging from the various examples. The interpreter who reads with tradition has a double task. On the one hand, he asks a text about its capabilities. He demonstrates the diversity of the potential meanings of a text by organising them, not according to what Descartes called the order of reasons, but the order of topics. Brennan Breed, who attempted to do so, alluded to Deleuze's philosophy: not to follow a "sedentary" distribution, which perceives the world (and therefore the texts), according to fixed categories, but a nomadic distribution, which tries to distinguish categories from within.[2] We nomads have the history of the readings for the Silk Road and we follow it to find the nexus and crossroads.

But, on the other hand, the interpreter who reads with tradition identifies these famous "tipping points" that can be explained not only by the text itself, but by conceptual upheavals. Studying the history of interpretations always points to a history of mentalities. And, since the biblical texts are religious, we are engaged in a history of Christian mentalities.

In this respect, it could be argued that reading with tradition is not only a dialogue with theology but is a theological endeavour. Indeed, as Gerhard Ebeling or Wolfhart Pannenberg had already seen, what is Revelation if not all the interpretations given to Scripture throughout the centuries? To walk the path of Revelation is the task of the history of reading.

[2] Brennan W. Breed, *Nomadic Text: A Theory of Biblical Reception History*, Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014), 140–41.

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