

dominant pattern of interpretation has been unchallenged for centuries, it is almost impossible to escape completely from its influence. In chapter 5, with an analysis of three feminist commentaries on Romans, I ask what the hermeneutical presuppositions are on which their interpretation is based. I demonstrate that in some aspects they are not critical enough of their own hermeneutical presuppositions since their interpretations unwittingly are still based on traditional malestream interpretations of Romans.

In chapter 6, then, I apply aspects of the image of Paul emerging from the most recent strands of research of the New Perspective and even beyond it in an analysis of Rom 14–15.¹ I demonstrate that from such a perspective an interpretation of these chapters emerges that addresses issues which feminist theories and theologies also prominently handle somewhat differently.

This study shows that the interaction and positive relation of different strands of research on Paul—feminist interpretation, Pauline studies, and theologies dealing with the Shoah—actually lead to a fresh view of Paul and his letters. The consequences of such interaction between different strands of research on Paul open the door for significant new avenues of research, particularly in relation to issues of power.

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Changing Perspectives

On Hermeneutics

To live is to interpret. There is no such thing as a pure event that speaks for itself. "In the beginning there is hermeneutics," as Jacques Derrida has expressed it.¹ Even such a basic event as the birth of a child does not speak for itself. We can see it as the happiest moment in the parents' life, but one family may barely notice that a new human being has arrived among them, and another family may view the birth as a catastrophe, a disaster. How they perceive the birth depends on the context into which a child is born. Any interpretation involves psychological, social, economic, political, and cultural factors, as in understanding the birth of a child. This is not to claim that there is nothing out there beyond our minds, that it is all in our heads; instead, the stance I advocate here opposes a naive empiricism claiming that what we experience, see, and understand is the objective reflection of "reality."

1. Jacques Derrida states: "The necessity of commentary, like poetic necessity, is the very form of exiled speech. In the beginning is hermeneutics. But the *forced* necessity of exegesis, the interpretive imperative, is interpreted differently by the rabbi and the poet. . . . The original opening of interpretation essentially signifies that there will always be rabbi and poet. . . . The original opening of interpretation. The Law then becomes question and the right to speech coincides with the duty to interrogate. The book of man is a book of question." From "Edmond Jabès and the Question of the Book," in *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 67; original, *L'écriture et la différence* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1967). Also see Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1996), 3.

1. For details, see Part 2, Chapter 4, 123ff.

Nothing can be real to us without interpretation. Experiences of the physical world are given shape and meaning by interpretive acts.²

Religious traditions are one way of shaping and interpreting life and finding meaning in it. They provide specific matrices for believers to understand their lives in the present and in the future.

Christianity, like Judaism and Islam, is a religion based on forebears of faith and on written traditions, which are regarded as holy and therefore have authority attributed to them. The interpretation of "Holy Scriptures" as the basis for one's understanding of life is of primary importance for Christianity, as it is for all three monotheistic religions. Just as life itself is not self-explanatory, so also we need to interpret the Scriptures for the present situation. In Western culture Jewish and Christian traditions of interpretation developed over the centuries, and such biblical hermeneutics form one of the two main foundations of modern hermeneutical approaches, alongside the pattern of interpretation of Greek philosophy.³ Later we will turn to this aspect. Interpretation does not question the authority of the scriptural tradition; instead, interpretation is the means by which the tradition of the past attains relevance for the present and the future.⁴

In Jewish and Christian tradition, Scripture is the record of earlier traditions of interpreting life in the light of the people's relationship to the one God. This record has been passed on within communities that, in a complex process, both shaped these traditions and were shaped by them. The Bible, the so-called Old and New Testaments, or the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament, are the basic texts for Christian self-understanding. To come to understand our own life in the light of this tradition, we necessarily have to enter into an interpretative dialogue with its written form.⁵ Since these are the living traditions of communities of faith, we cannot enter into this dialogue without being in dialogue also with such communities.

As interpreters we are not entering the dialogue of interpretation as a *tabula rasa*. We enter this dialogue in the specific social, cultural, political, and personal context we live in, from our own specific and thus also limited

2. See also Pamela Dickey Young: "The experience we have, whatever the externality of many facts, is filtered, interpreted through the lens of who we are, reflected upon in light of the internality of this experiencing," what our cumulative experience of the past has made us. . . . But whatever these experiences in their immediacy, the articulation and understanding of them change as factors such as culture, gender, race, and class, mold one's expectations and reflections." In *Feminist Theology/Christian Theology: In Search of Method* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 51.

3. See Susan Handelman, *The Slayers of Moses: The Emergence of Rabbinic Interpretation in Modern Literary Theory* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), xiii.

4. See Sylvia Keesmaat, *Paul and His Story: (Re)interpreting the Exodus Tradition* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), esp. chap. 1.

5. On this see the refreshing and profound analysis of Paul M. van Buren, *A Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality. Part 1: Discerning the Way* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), chaps. 6 and 7.

perspective. There is also no "view from nowhere."⁶ There is only a view from a specific location and from within the limits of a specific perspective; "There is only a perspectival seeing, only a perspectival knowing," as Friedrich Nietzsche emphasized.⁷ This specific and selective perspective cannot be neutral or innocent. Any perspective is entrenched in social, political, and personal interests and thus is centrist to some degree, even in its most honest attempts to do justice to all.⁸ This means that we enter the dialogue of interpretation as embodied human beings, not as detached from the concrete world in which we live. The feminist philosopher Seyla Benhabib has thus declared:

Understanding always means understanding within a framework that makes sense for us, from where we stand today. In this sense, learning the questions of the past involves posing questions to the past in the light of our present preoccupations. . . . Every interpretation is a conversation, with all the joys and dangers that conversations usually involve: misunderstandings as well as ellipses, innuendos as well as surfeits of meaning.⁹

These statements about presuppositions and conditions in the process of interpreting are indications of the sociopolitical situation in which interpretation takes place at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Since there is no generally agreed term for this situation, it is often subsumed under the term "postmodernism," indicating that the period of so-called modernity, dominated by objective positivism, has come to an end. As the Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann has expressed it, "The great new fact of interpretation is that we live in a pluralistic context, in which many different interpreters in many specific contexts representing many different interests are at work on textual (theological) interpretation."¹⁰ The diversity of these different and differing readings cannot be subsumed into any kind of universal common assumption about a "truth behind the text."

6. On this see, e.g., Peter J. Tomson's excellent formulation: "The process of reading is more complicated than is often assumed. One always 'reads,' that is, understands a written text from a preconception of what one expects to find written there. . . . In other words, nobody reads without tradition or 'canon,' without an a priori understanding within which that which is read is situated. Reading is always interpreting." *If This Be from Heaven . . . : Jews and the New Testament Authors in their Relationship to Judaism* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 15–16. See also Susan Bordo, "Feminism, Postmodernism, and Gender-Scepticism," in *Feminism/Postmodernism* (ed. Linda Nicholson; New York: Routledge, 1990), 136.

7. Quoted in Bordo, "Feminism, Postmodernism, and Gender-Scepticism," 140.

8. *Ibid.*, 140.

9. Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, xxxiv.

10. Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 62.

In the field of theological interpretation several approaches—mainly from the margins of mainstream scholarship, such as feminism, poststructuralism, and postcolonialism, as well as from a theology dealing with Auschwitz—have contributed to the questioning of objective positivism, which granted privilege to certain interpretive perspectives. These approaches convincingly demonstrate the impossibility of neutral objectivity and thus show that, in reality, any claim to an interest-free interpretation is an illusionary ideal. “Interpretation . . . is an ongoing process of negotiation, adjudication, and correction.”¹¹ No approach therefore can claim to be “the right one” or “the ultimate one.” There can only be different, provisional, and possibly conflicting readings, for which the interpreter is ethically responsible. The purpose of this enterprise thus cannot be to achieve “assured results” but to come to adequate conclusions that in themselves raise new questions asking for new responses. This requires interpreters to remain engaged in an ongoing and open adjudicating, dialogical process.

Some voices in contemporary theological discourses warn that different perspectives are related to, and may influence, each other. With regard to feminist hermeneutics, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza has emphasized that “feminist scholars are in danger of collaborating with the continuing patriarchal silencing and marginalizing of feminist theoretical accomplishments.”¹² Being aware of such a warning, I nevertheless consider it of primary importance for feminist as well as other theologians to be involved in an open dialogue with other and differing strands of scholarly research. Entering an open and mutual dialogue has nothing to do with submitting to the domination of another perspective, even when this might be a main/malestream perspective. Instead, it means simply recognizing that we can develop neither feminist theology nor any other type of theology from within an ivory tower, detached from others, nor can we adequately develop theology only from within the boundaries of one separated interpretive community.

A dialogue is a process of mutual influencing that is supposed to be fruitful for all those involved in it. Research—particularly biblical interpretation from whatever perspective—developed in isolation can do nothing but lead to distortions and deprive itself of insights others have gained. This applies, for example, to main/malestream theologians, who are still frequently ignoring the insights and ongoing processes of feminist theologies. But it applies likewise to feminist theologians ignoring insights and ongoing processes in post-Shoah theologies and Pauline studies.

11. *Ibid.*, 63.

12. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “Liberation: A Critical Feminist Perspective,” in *Theology Digest* 46.4 (winter 1999): 335.

The purpose of this study is to engage in a dialogue between different strands of research, to relate interpretive insights from certain perspectives (the so-called New Perspective on Paul, and Beyond the New Perspective) to others (feminist perspectives on Paul). Insights gained in Pauline studies over the last thirty years have led to a paradigm shift via the New Perspective, to a perspective Beyond the New Perspective. From a different perspective, feminist theologies have provoked a paradigm shift on the methodological level generally, as well as in biblical studies in particular. Both these paradigm shifts indicate similar tendencies, though emerging from different perspectives. However, there is hardly any recognition of these similar trends across the boundaries of disciplines and interpretive communities, and thus these paradigm shifts cannot illuminate each other. This study is a contribution to such a dialogue that, if fully engaged in, could prove mutually beneficial.¹³

Hermeneutical Presuppositions: From Hegemony to Diversity

The philosophical program of rationalism, particularly identified with René Descartes and the Enlightenment, generally provides the theoretical framework for the scientific perception of the world of modernity. Rationalism has perceived the human being as the knower who by objective reason can achieve knowledge of truth. One has to keep in mind that this program—associated with reason, objectivity, autonomy, and positivism, and culminating in the work of Immanuel Kant and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel¹⁴—developed as a reaction against the domination of the churches’ claims to truth. After the Reformation, people were confronted not only with one claimant to truth but by differing ones, which moreover resulted in the absurdity of a war that went on for thirty years, leaving most of Europe devastated. Descartes wrote during these years, seeking for ways out of such brutal nonsense.¹⁵

But despite the Enlightenment’s liberationist point of departure, to free people from church domination, its project of rationality quickly developed into a new instrument of domination. Human reason was perceived as the one universal human essence, the common ground of sameness of all humankind, beyond particularity and differences. Hence, rationalists had to

13. E.g., Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, *A Land Flowing with Milk and Honey* (New York: Crossroad, 1986); Christa Mulaick, *Jesus: der Gestalt der Frauen. Weiblichkeit als Grundlage Christlicher Ethik* (Stuttgart, 1987); Elsa Tamez, *The Amnesty of Grace: Justification by Faith from a Latin-American Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993).

14. On the different stages of the development of the “discourse of modernity,” see, e.g., Bruggemann, *Theology* 6–15.

15. On this see, e.g., Sheila Greeve Davaney, *Pragmatic Historicism: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 5f.

overcome or suppress any particularities and differences that did not conform to this ideal of humanity. The ideal of this rational human being had close similarities to the white European man (*bourgeois*), leaving little room for those who were different—women and Jews in particular, as well as people from non-European cultures. It is not necessary here to discuss the implications of the Enlightenment in detail. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the Enlightenment, political imperialism and anti-Semitism seem to be more than merely historical accidents.

In the wake of the Enlightenment, the enterprise of interpretation developed the critical approach, which dealt with the biblical text not as privileged by tradition or church authority. Criticism had great confidence in objective, detached scholarship: human rationality was the lawcourt to which any interpretation had to adjust. This ideal of scholarly objectivity supposedly left the interpreter personally uninvolved in the process of interpretation.

Amid the critical assumptions of modernity, one could sustain theological claims only by adjusting theology and the enterprise of interpretation to the academic institution's standards of critical scholarship. According to Brueggemann, these were committed to

(a) historicism that could determine "what happened," for there could be no meaning beyond "what happened"; (b) evolutionism, so that religious development occurred in a straight line of unilateral progress from the primitive to the sophisticated; and (c) a rationalism that felt a need to explain away much of the contradiction that violated "reasonableness" or that made claims beyond a naturalistic, scientifically available world.¹⁶

In Brueggemann's view, it was through the combination of triumphalist Christendom with critical positivism that "a pattern of hegemonic interpretation" was established.¹⁷

Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Wahrheit und Methode* (1960) is regarded as a watershed between such traditional objectivist perceptions of interpretation and the growing awareness of the complexity of interpreting processes.¹⁸ Anthony C. Thiselton describes this shift:

Traditionally, hermeneutics entailed the formulation of rules for the understanding of an ancient text, especially in linguistic and historical terms. The

interpreter was urged to begin with the language of the text, including its grammar, vocabulary, and style. He examined its linguistic, literary, and historical context. In other words, traditional hermeneutics began with the recognition that a text was conditioned by a given historical context. However, hermeneutics in the more recent sense of the term begins with the recognition that historical conditioning is two-sided if not even multifaceted: the modern interpreter, no less than the text, stands in a given historical context and tradition.¹⁹

Preceding Gadamer's work, however, were earlier fundamental critiques of traditional Western discourse by philosophers such as Walter Benjamin, Max Horkheimer, and Theodor Adorno.²⁰ As early as 1914, Benjamin criticized the idea of evolutionism as well as the notion to reconstruct "what happened" from an objectivist position of detached scholarship. Instead, he emphasized that history is always reconstructed, and the reconstruction is thus dependent on the position of the scholar in the present.²¹ Whether and to what extent the most prominent representatives of the Frankfurt school, Horkheimer and Adorno,²² were influenced by Benjamin is a matter of debate. Nevertheless, in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the two developed an analysis of the perception of history and culture that anticipated postmodern approaches in several ways. They stated that the dominant discourse of rationality had turned into its opposite by producing new rationalized forms of domination to the extent of becoming totalitarian: it eliminated other patterns of thinking and claimed to be the only path to truth and validity.²³

Since Walter Benjamin and many members of the Frankfurt school were Jews, these critiques of the Enlightenment discourse in Germany emerged at

19. Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description with Special Reference to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 1980), 11.

20. Naming these philosophers does not provide a definitive list of early critics of the discourse of modernity and positivist historicism; one could mention many more "masters of suspicion." See Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay in Interpretation* (trans. Denis Savage; New Haven: Yale University Press 1970), 32–36.

21. On this see Stéphane Mosès, *Der Engel der Geschichte: Franz Rosenzweig, Walter Benjamin, Gershom Scholem* (Frankfurt: Jüdischer Geschichts, 1994), 87ff.; translation of *Lange de l'histoire: Rosenzweig, Benjamin, Scholem* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1992).

22. It is noticeable that already in 1931 Adorno had developed a radical critique of traditional philosophy: "Whoever chooses philosophy as a profession today must first reject the illusion that earlier philosophical enterprises began with [the belief] that the power of thought is sufficient to grasp the totality of the real." Adorno goes on to state that all "ontological blueprints" and any attempt to conceptualize the totality of being are illusions. "True being," according to Adorno, only appears in traces and ruins (Theodor Adorno, "The Actuality of Philosophy," *Telos* 31 (spring 1977): 120–33, quote from 120.)

23. See Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interpretations* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 217ff.; Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (trans. John Cumming; New York: Herder & Herder, 1972), translation of *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, originally published as *Philosophische Fragmente* (Amsterdam: Querido, 1944).

16. Brueggemann, *Theology*, 708.

17. *Ibid.*, 709.

18. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (rev. trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall; 2d, rev. ed.; New York: Crossroad, 1989); first published as *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1960).

the margins of the dominant culture of the West. Furthermore, the totalitarian regime of the Nazis came to power in Germany and played a significant role in Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of the dominant discourse.

There were other critical approaches that paved the way to what now is generally termed "postmodern" thinking.²⁴ Beginning with the late 1960s, however, a series of new philosophical approaches evolved, particularly in France, which queried the traditional claim of objectivity in the process of scholarly research and knowledge.²⁵ Yet it was only near the end of the twentieth century that Brueggemann could say, "Dissidence and hegemony have become so deep and so broad as to challenge the hegemony [of the Enlightenment discourse] in serious and effective ways."²⁶

Feminist theory as well as feminist theology played a significant role in the emergence of postmodern approaches.²⁷ For our purpose, it is significant to note that these approaches oppose any kind of closure in totalizing, centralized theories and systems. Such systems require as their foundation a secure knowledge of truth. The new approaches regard any claim to obtain or have unmediated access to "true reality" as illusory: truth and meaning can only be produced in "a never-ending process of signification . . . within the infinite, intertextual play of signifiers."²⁸

Postmodern approaches have implications for biblical interpretation, especially for exegesis as a hermeneutical process, since it is about understanding a text. As for any scholars, there is no absolute objective viewpoint for exegetes. Even in science the "new physics" questions the validity of the subject-object dichotomy and recognizes that "the conductor of an experiment is not a purely independent observer, but an active participant whose input directly influences the experiment's result."²⁹ One can hardly find a solitary true or original meaning of a literary text.³⁰ Though this seems to be

24. There is no room in this study to deal with these here in detail, but see Best and Kellner, *Postmodern Theory*, 3–33, the introduction.

25. With utmost caution, one might compare the "breach of civilization" that the events of the Shoah eventually caused for many European intellectuals, with the damage the Vietnam War caused to the confidence in the dominant discourse and the legitimacy of established institutions in the United States. See Brueggemann, *Theology*, 709 n. 8.

26. *Ibid.*, 709.

27. See my more detailed outline in chapters 2 and 3; cf. Davaney, *Pragmatic Historicism*, 17–18: "Thus while many liberation, African American and feminist theologians proclaimed their distance from the dominant modes of theologizing, they nonetheless altered the entire theological scene in profound ways. For they introduce, in a manner previously unheard of in theology, the issue of power and how it was deployed throughout religious worldviews and theological symbol systems. The seeming innocence of theology for everyone, was over."

28. Best and Kellner, *Postmodern Theory*, 21.

29. David Rutledge, *Reading Marginally: Feminism, Deconstruction, and the Bible* (Leiden: Brill 1996), 46.

30. Wendy Dabourne explained: "The basic exegetical tool is the question, 'What does this text mean?' It is shattering to realize that exegetical experiment and hermeneutical study over several decades have broken it. The concept 'the meaning of the text' has been relativized. Is it the meaning of what the writer intended to say? Does meaning inhere in the structures of a text itself, independently of the writer's

a rather pessimistic statement, I do not mean it to be so. All those techniques of interpretation that have been developed in the aftermath of the Enlightenment—such as the historical-critical, sociological, linguistic, literary-critical methods—are useful and necessary tools to help us come to understandings of biblical texts as adequately and as historically responsible as possible. They might help the interpreter to come to well-based arguments to support an interpretation that has its basis in the text and in its historical context and is not mere fantasy. But none of these valuable tools will reveal to us the "true meaning" of Scripture generally and of Paul's letters in particular.

These tools, nevertheless, are used by human beings, bringing with them their own presuppositions and their specific context, which inevitably influence the process of interpretation. Thus the statement that we cannot find the "true meaning" of a literary text is not meant to lead to the conclusion that it makes no sense at all to try to understand such a text, especially a text of our religious tradition. As far as is possible, however, we should become aware of the presuppositions that influence our own interpretations. We therefore must recognize that every interpretation is contextual and driven by certain specific interests.³¹ Moreover, recognizing the limits of any particular interpretation implies the recognition that there are different and differing interpretations of the same texts, and that any one interpretation can only be provisional and has to remain open to questions and adjudication.

Thus interpretation always is a dialogical process: "The practice of understanding proceeds as it does and will, as dialogue."³² It is also in a concrete context that includes the personal situation of the interpreter,³³ never merely in an academic ivory tower. People entering a dialogue enter into relationships. Relating to each other means influencing each other. This applies to relationships generally and for interpretation as a dialogical process in particular. Entering this process means influencing and being influenced by others, altering and being altered by others. Interpretation understood in such a way thus also implies being in, and remaining involved in, a conflictual conversation about different adequate conclusions. Conflict belongs to the core of the enterprise of interpretation in a pluralistic context.

intention? Does meaning arise in the encounter between text and reader? . . . A text is a series of conventional marks on a sufficiently smooth surface. All our language about meaning is metaphor. In reading a text in general we conceive the meaning in different ways, depending on the nature of the text and what we want to do with it." In *Purpose and Cause in Pauline Exegesis: Romans 1.16–4.25 and a New Approach to the Letters* (SNTS Monograph Series 104; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 4.

31. On this see Craig A. Evans, James A. Sanders, eds., *The Function of Scripture in Early Jewish and Christian Tradition* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 15: "A tradition of necessity is limited to the terms of the culture, no matter how 'advanced' or refined, in which the tradition and his community live."

32. R. Barry Mauck, *Unveiling the Apocalyptic Paul: Paul's Interpreters and the Rhetoric of Criticism* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 337.

33. On this aspect in the process of biblical interpretation, see the excellent volume of essays from Ingrid Rosa Kitzberger, ed., *The Personal Voice in Biblical Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 1999).

Moreover, ethical responsibility for the practical implications of any one interpretation is of vital significance in this process of interpretation, for the individual as well as for the community and the society.³⁴ This has not been recognized in the course of history, and in addition negative implications were also accepted and justified as inevitable to the extent that they were in accordance with God's will. There is a long history of negative results from specific biblical interpretations. Since political imperial power often reinforced and supported these negative effects, they frequently caused incredible suffering for innumerable people. Jews and women are among those most prominently wronged.

To a vast extent in Western culture, Christians and Jews have generally determined the history of interpretation by each group maintaining different interpretations of Scriptures. This history includes numerous debates about "the proper" interpretation of the text. Christianity claimed to have found "the proper and final true understanding" of Scriptures: it claimed to possess truth in an absolute way, a claim that has had tragic consequences, especially for the Jewish people.³⁵

In universalizing its particular interpretation, triumphalist Christendom did not allow for any differing notion alongside its own. Moreover, the continuing existence of the Jewish people was a constant threat to any such claims and could not be tolerated. Thus, almost from its beginnings, Christianity formulated its own identity through using Judaism and Jews as a negative foil. Christians could not come to terms with the fact that there was a group of people who related to the same tradition of Scriptures as they themselves did, but who adhered to a different interpretation of them and therefore claimed legitimacy for their different lifestyle and distinctiveness generally. Christian tradition was unable to find another way to cope with this difference than through teaching contempt for these others who wanted to remain different in keeping their distinct identity as Jews. For centuries Christians used hegemonic claims for their interpretation to teach contempt against Jews, thus preparing the ground for the rise of political and racist anti-Semitism in the nineteenth century, which as a consequence led to the Shoah in the twentieth century.

After the Shoah the question is whether or not we can define Christian identity without anti-Judaism, whether or not Christians can interpret

34. See Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Ethics of Interpretation: De-Centering Biblical Scholarship," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 107 (1988): 3-17; also David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 36-37: "There is no such thing as an unambiguous tradition; there is no innocent reading of the classics."

35. On this see William S. Campbell, "Millennial Optimism for Jewish-Christian Dialogue," in *The Future of Jewish-Christian Dialogue* (ed. Dan Cohn-Sherbok; Lampeter, U.K.: Mellen, 1999): 215-37.

Scriptures without absolute claims and teaching contempt against Jews. It is actually the question of whether or not anti-Judaism is inherent in Christianity: Is it possible, from a Christian perspective, to accept that alongside the Christian interpretation there has been and is a different and Jewish interpretation of Scriptures? Can the acceptance of diversity in a pluralistic context be a Christian option?

In her book *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism*, Rosemary Radford Ruether has strongly argued for a perception of Christendom in which anti-Judaism is an inherent and essential part.³⁶ Accepting her argument would mean that hegemonic claims were and are inherently and essentially Christian. Whether or not other scholars agreed with her analysis and the conclusions she drew from them, a number of them from the 1970s onward became more and more aware of the connections between the Christian teaching of contempt for Jews and anti-Jewish interpretations of Scripture. These scholars had committed themselves to dialogue with Jews, realizing that theology and interpretation after Auschwitz could never be the same as it had been before. One of its leading representatives in Germany, Roman-Catholic scholar Johann Baptist Metz, wrote: "As Christians, we can never get behind Auschwitz; but considered properly we can never get beyond Auschwitz just by ourselves, but only together with the victims of Auschwitz."³⁷ What Walter Brueggemann wrote with regard to Old Testament theology is valid for Christian theology as such:

One must avoid trivializing the Holocaust by "taking a lesson" from it. Nonetheless a crucial learning . . . is a sharp measure of suspicion toward, or even resistance to, the triumphalist story of faith that is too easily recited on the basis of the Bible. Any triumph is made thin by this event, and every triumph is made unstable by this reality. . . . We do not yet know how to do even disruptive interpretation in light of this break, but whatever we are now able to do is profoundly and irreversibly qualified by this break.³⁸

This strand of research has insistently emphasized that something had to change radically in Jewish-Christian relations after World War II.

36. Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Seabury, 1979), 226.

37. Johann Baptist Metz, "Kirche nach Auschwitz," in *Israel und Kirche heute. Beiträge zum christlich-jüdischen Dialog. Für Ernst Luthwig Ehrlich* (ed. Marcel Marcus, Ekkehard W. Stegemann, and Erich Zenger; Freiburg: Herder, 1991), 112: "Wir Christen kommen niemals mehr hinter Auschwitz zurück; über Auschwitz hinaus aber kommen wir genau besehen, nicht mehr allein, sondern nur noch mit den Opfern von Auschwitz."

38. Brueggemann, *Theology*, 329.

Hermeneutical Consequences from Post-Shoah Theology

Scholarship and the enterprise of biblical interpretation in particular are contextual, "conducted by real people who are concretely located in the historical process."³⁹ Therefore, we cannot ignore the fact that this enterprise is undertaken in a post-Shoah situation. Since theological supersessionism and practical Christian teaching of contempt for Jews contributed to the emergence of political anti-Semitism and its unthinkable brutal realization in the Third Reich, Christian theology has lost its innocence and cannot go on doing business as usual.

Although the Shoah was not the sole impetus, it certainly was the decisive event that made Christians aware of the urgency of radical changes in their teaching and preaching vis-à-vis Judaism. It has been a courageous step for Jewish participants to enter into dialogue with Christians during and immediately after World War II. Small groups began to meet regularly, convinced that only through serious dialogue as equal partners, and without any hidden missionary agenda on the Christian side, could they take steps to overcome anti-Judaism in church and theology. In the beginnings of dialogue the main issue was to get to know and understand each other as different but equal religions. Later the Christian partners in dialogue began to realize how deeply Christianity was entrenched in stereotyped views of Judaism and the teaching of contempt. Research by both Christian and Jewish scholars led people to have increasing awareness and recognition of the Jewishness of Jesus.

There is a still ongoing debate about the "rehabilitation of Paul in Judaism"⁴⁰ and more generally about the reformulation of Christian identity without any kind of anti-Judaism. This agenda has developed over the last fifty years of dialogue. It is surprising that it was only from the mid-1960s that Christians, and then mainly those at the margins rather than in mainstream theology, began to realize that theology after Auschwitz can never be the same as it had been before.⁴¹ Johann Baptist Metz has stated: "No longer

[is it possible] to pursue any theology that is so conceived that it remains untouched by Auschwitz or could remain untouched by it."⁴²

Although these insights are gained in the encounter between Christians and Jews, they are by no means limited to this encounter or to a theology specific to this encounter. As Christianity and Judaism share a long and often closely intertwined history, Christian theology cannot avoid reflecting on this relationship in order to find and formulate its own identity.⁴³ Over the centuries theologians have done this by formulating a stance over against Judaism. This anti-Judaism permeates all areas of Christian theology as well as biblical studies. Peter von der Osten-Sacken goes as far as to say:

In this sense Christian theology can fundamentally *only* be theology in Christian-Jewish dialogue. . . . The Jewish-Christian encounter (as the *Sitz im Leben* under discussion), whether it takes place directly or indirectly, will therefore continue for a long time to have a primarily heuristic function, the function to help Christians undergo the undoubtedly wearisome and lengthy transformation of theology, proclamation, and instruction in its present largely anti-Jewish form.⁴⁴

In this process the interpretation of biblical texts plays a crucial role as both religious traditions rely basically on written texts to formulate their identity. In the process of the parting of the ways, the church, according to its own perception, had replaced Israel as the people of God. Thus Christians claimed to be the sole inheritors of Scripture, which in the early church meant the Hebrew Bible in its Greek translation, the Septuagint.⁴⁵ They regarded their own interpretation of Scripture as the true and only true one, which meant that supersessionism and triumphalism from then on served as main hermeneutical guidelines for understanding the sacred texts. In this view there could not be any future for a different (Jewish) interpretation of Scripture after the coming of Christ; there was actually no reason for Judaism to exist after the coming of Christ.

39. *Ibid.*, 734.

40. On this see W. S. Campbell, "Millennial Optimism," 217–37; Stefan Meisner, *Die Heimholung des Ketzers: Studien zur jüdischen Auseinandersetzung mit Paulus* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1996).

41. Rolf Rendtorff, "Nach Auschwitz," *Kirche und Israel: Neu-strömender theologische Zeitschrift* 10 (1995): 7. "As the Christian perception of Judaism has led to Auschwitz and as this perception of Judaism has been a basic part of Christian self-understanding (and still is), Christian identity has to be reformulated, 'after Auschwitz.' It has taken almost fifty years until some Christians have come to this insight, or rather, have been urged to it." This is my translation of the German: "Weil die christliche Sicht des Judentums nach Auschwitz geführt hat, und weil diese Sicht des Judentums bisher ein grundlegender Bestandteil des christlichen Selbstverständnisses gewesen ist (und weitgehend noch ist), muss die christliche Identität 'nach Auschwitz' neu formuliert werden. Es hat fast fünfzig Jahre gedauert, bis einige Christen zu dieser Einsicht vorgedrungen—oder besser gedrängt worden sind." On this see also Rolf Rendtorff and Ekkehard Stegemann, eds., *Ausbruch: —Krise der christlichen Theologie* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1980), 178.

42. Quoted in Peter von der Osten-Sacken, *Christian-Jewish Dialogue: Theological Foundations* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 6.

43. On this see Daniel Boyarin and Judith Lieu. For the period up to the fourth century, they both argue for a much more closely related history of what later became two separate religions. See Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Lancaster/Vantrout Lectures in Judaism and Other Religions; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); Judith M. Lieu, "Impregnable Ramparts and Walls of Iron," *Boundary and Identity in Early Judaism and Christianity*, main conference paper read at the 56th Annual General Meeting of Society for New Testament Studies, Montreal, Aug. 2001, published in *New Testament Studies* 48.3 (July 2002): 297–313.

44. On this see Osten-Sacken, *Christian-Jewish Dialogue*, 16.

45. See Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, quoted by van Buren, *According to the Scriptures: The Origins of the Church's Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 150–51.

As Christian tradition formulated its self-understanding, it was influenced particularly by Graeco-Roman interpretations of the Platonic-Aristotelian tradition. To a vast extent it developed a pattern of thinking in dichotomies, a dualistic mentality that constructed a far from innocent hierarchy of values—such as subject-object, appearance-reality, reason-nature, men-women—thus excluding and devaluing the inferior terms of the dichotomies. Christianity set up dichotomies such as old/new, letter/spirit, law/gospel, God of wrath/God of love, judgment/promise, particularistic/universal, Judaism/Christianity—in each pair regarding the first term as inferior and identified with Judaism, and the second term as higher and referring to Christianity. Through such patterns, which were also at work in interpretation, the teaching of contempt for Judaism became widespread. Later theological developments added to this early anti-Jewish pattern of interpretation by reading into biblical texts more of their own contemporary debates. Through Bible studies and interpreting Romans, Luther found his basic doctrine of righteousness of faith over against works. This was mainly influenced by his criticism of the Roman Catholic church, in which he put Jews and Roman Catholics into the same devalued categories.⁴⁶

The interpretation of Scriptures is a crucial issue that we must address in the process of reformulating Christian identity without anti-Judaism. Theologies grappling with Auschwitz have developed several general hermeneutical rules as guidelines for looking afresh to our biblical heritage, to find meaning and guidance for contemporary problems of everyday life as well as world politics:

1. Christians should never again forget that the Scriptures first and above all were and still are the Scriptures of the Jewish people.⁴⁷ As Christians, we share the Jewish Bible, the "Tanach," in the form of the First or Old Testament of our Scriptures, with the Jews. As Brueggemann has put it, "Christians are able to say of the Old Testament, 'It is ours,' but must also say, 'It is not ours alone.'"⁴⁸
2. In the church any form of displacement theory concerning Israel, or the Jewish people, has to be abandoned. The church and its scholars have to realize that there is and always has been an ongoing history of Israel and the Jewish people up to the present: they have been and are contemporaries of the Christians.⁴⁹
3. Recognizing this implies that there is not only one way to interpret Scriptures, but several and differing ones. The Jewish people had and have their own distinctive way of interpreting Scriptures. Christians need to appreciate

46. On this see W. S. Campbell, "Martin Luther and Paul's Epistle to the Romans," in *The Bible as Book: The Reformation* (ed. Orlaith O'Sullivan; London: British Library, 2000), 103–14.

47. On this see van Buren, *A Theology*, part 1: *Discerning the Ways*, 120–46.

48. Brueggemann, *Theology*, 735.

49. See also van Buren, *Discerning the Ways*, 141.

this situation and to listen to this other voice of interpretation. As early as 1958 the German theologian Helmut Gollwitzer formulated a key principle: "If it is impossible to understand the New Testament without the Old, then it is impossible to understand the Bible as a whole without a discussion with the Jews. What arrogance for Christians to believe that [Jews] have nothing to say to us!"⁵⁰ Brueggemann also asserts: "Jewish imaginative construal of the text is a legitimate theological activity, to which Christians must pay attention."⁵¹

4. Since over the centuries the church has used Scripture and its interpretation to teach contempt toward the Jews, Christians are obliged to investigate all of this tradition for elements of anti-Judaism in order to prevent any further bias resulting from them.

According to these main guidelines, theologians have to reinterpret the New Testament writings as well as the First Testament. This implies that Christians have to seek to formulate their identity in a new and different way without using Judaism as a negative foil. The change of perspective required is *radical* in the real sense of the word: it affects the roots of Christian identity.

Just as in the aftermath of the Shoah the anti-Judaism in Christian theologies and traditions became a serious issue, feminist research has made us aware of the misogynist tendencies in Christian theologies and traditions. This led to the emergence of new perspectives in both disciplines. But since these two strands of research have seldom related their work to each other, the history of their interaction has been rather complicated and conflictual.

This need not necessarily be so. Although the shifts in perspectives are not identical, they show similarities in that they both emphasize the need to move beyond dominating and oppressive patterns of interpretation.

Feminist Hermeneutics and the Feminist Debate on Anti-Judaism

By the end of the nineteenth century Elizabeth Cady Stanton with a group of women started developing *The Woman's Bible*.⁵² This project arose from the insight that society had used the biblical tradition to legitimate the supposed

50. Helmut Gollwitzer, *Israel—und wir* (Berlin: Lettner, 1958), 23.

51. Brueggemann, *Theology*, 735; he goes on to state: "I have no doubt that Christian supersessionism, enforced as it is by classical modes of Hellenistic thought, has made it nearly impossible for Christians to attend to the riches of Judaism. Once [we have] recognized that theological construal and imagination other than our own is legitimate, however, we may take it into serious account. I do not imagine that attention to this primal alternative construal of the text will lead to an abrupt overthrow of distinctive Christian claims. But I also do not imagine that such attention would leave Christian claims untouched, certainly not untouched in their fearful, destructive aspects, but perhaps also not untouched in good-faith exclusivism, rooted in a text that remains elusive as its Subject and that relentlessly resists closure."

52. Elizabeth Cady Stanton et al., *The Woman's Bible* (2 vols.; New York: European Publishing Co., 1895–98; reprint, Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993).

inferior status of women and oppression against them. Cady Stanton and her coauthors thus eliminated texts they regarded as biased against women and created a new canon suitable for women. Thus, when Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza introduced her mold-breaking method of "feminist critical hermeneutics of suspicion" in her *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (1984), she did so as part of an already-existing feminist hermeneutical tradition.

Different strands of religious feminism have emerged over the last thirty years: some feminists moved beyond Christianity, perceiving it as hopelessly patriarchal; some of them found enough liberationist potential in this tradition to render it worthwhile to remain within it.⁵³ In any case, many women assert with Ursula King, "Feminism is about a different consciousness and a vision, a radically changed perspective."⁵⁴

To a significant extent feminism as well as feminist theology in particular have contributed to the hermeneutical shift from hegemony to diversity, as outlined above. Feminist theologians have demonstrated that the "objective" human perspective in research has almost exclusively been the perspective of white European men; therefore, in no way could it be regarded as universal. It is as particular as any other perspective. In its first stage, feminism generally, as well as feminist theology in particular, has emphasized that scholarly research, as any other human activity, is based on experience. Since human beings exist in the mode of male and female, gender is thus one crucial aspect that shapes human experience.⁵⁵ Feminist theology was born out of the struggle to overcome the oppression and subordination of women. It is rooted in visions of equality, justice, and liberation, and its intention is to do theology from a completely new and critical perspective, questioning especially the tendencies of universalization, hierarchical dualisms, and idealized abstractions.⁵⁶

53. For an overview see, e.g., Luise Schottroff, Silvia Schroer, and Marie-Theres Wacker, *Feminist Interpretation: The Bible in Women's Perspectives* (trans. Barbara and Martin Rumscheidt; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998); ET of *Feministische Exegese. Forschungserträge zur Bibel aus der Perspektive von Frauen* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995). Cf. also Adela Yarbro Collins, ed., *Feminist Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985).

54. Ursula King, *Woman and Spirituality: Voices of Protest and Promise* (London: Macmillan Education, 1989), 15.

55. I am aware of the ongoing debate in feminist theory about the question of body and gender. I cannot add to that debate, but Adriana Cavarero's theory of human beings as two, created in God's image as male and female, is most convincing to me. In this definition nothing is said yet about what male and female means; Cavarero does not go back to traditional or biologically based definitions. She says that what it means to be female is still to be discovered, since traditional definitions have been definitions by men. So what it means to say that human beings are twin ("der Mensch ist zwei") is what still is to be discovered, the not yet of feminist theory. See Adrianna Cavarero, "Der Mensch ist zwei," in *Der Mensch ist zwei: Das Denken der Geschlechterdifferenz* (ed. Diotima, Philosophinnengruppe aus Verona; Vienna: Wiener Frauenverlag, 1989).

56. On this see Ursula King, "Feminist Theologies in Contemporary Contexts," in *Is There a Future for Feminist Theology?* (ed. Deborah F. Sawyer and Diane M. Collier; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 100–114.

This "first-stage feminism"⁵⁷ assumed that there is a common and universal character to women's experience, based on what is assumed to be the essence of femininity. In fact, however, first-stage feminist theology as such was based on the theoretical framework of modernity, with its belief in a coherent self, which by means of objective rationality could explain the structure of existence. Rebecca S. Chopp thus emphasized: "In this stage, both feminist theory and feminist theology simply extended and stretched the modern frame to make it more equitable in its inclusion of women."⁵⁸

From within this general context, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza has developed the "feminist hermeneutics of suspicion."⁵⁹ She looked at biblical texts with critical eyes, questioning traditional interpretations in the light of women's experience, which has meant and often still means enduring contempt and oppression. Based on the insight that biblical texts are inherently patriarchal/kyriarchal, Schüssler Fiorenza developed methods to uncover the hidden history and voices of women in these texts.

Schüssler Fiorenza and other feminist theologians following her approach have stressed that the processes of writing and of canonization were male dominated, produced from a patriarchal perception of the world and of religious tradition. The fact that these texts hardly mention women and hardly reflect women's experience is not proof that "there were no women present." The hermeneutics of suspicion was the method applied to uncover the hidden and silenced history of women in these patriarchal/kyriarchal texts. Feminist scholars began to look for the impact of silencing on women in terms of history: Where are women's lives in biblical texts? Likewise, how did silencing impact women's thinking? Where are women's thoughts and expressions of faith in Scripture? After the beginnings of feminist theology and feminist hermeneutics, scholars did substantial research in the early 1970s. Feminist theologians have reformulated the main theological issues from a feminist perspective in order to develop a theology that would support the liberation of women. The feminist quest, taken seriously, requires as deep a shift in theological thinking as does the quest to eradicate anti-Judaism.⁶⁰

57. This term comes from Rebecca S. Chopp, "Theorizing Feminist Theology," in *Horizons in Feminist Theology: Identity, Traditions and Norms* (ed. Rebecca S. Chopp and Sheila Greeve Davaney; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 216–17.

58. *Ibid.*, 217.

59. As mentioned above, the fundamental theory was formulated by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza: see *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Construction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983); and *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon, 1984).

60. Cf. also Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, in *The Power of Naming: A Conciliar Reader in Feminist Liberation Theology* (ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza; London: SCM, 1996), xix: "Feminist theological studies in particular underscore both that women must be recognized as theological subjects and that the practices and institutions of theology must be changed. They want to engender a paradigm shift . . . from mainstream scholarship produced by patriarchal academic institutions, to feminist comprehension of the world, human life, and Christian faith. Such a paradigm shift would not only produce different emancipatory knowledges but also a different kind of theology."

Despite the undoubted merits of the earlier feminist theological approaches, feminists from different perspectives, especially from different cultural backgrounds, have questioned some of the basic presuppositions implicit within them. They asked whether the notion of an essential, universal nature of women, as well as the category of experience as the root of women's thinking, was not in fact a universalization of white middle-class women's nature and experience. These critics pointed out that the thinking and theologizing of women from different backgrounds living in different cultures are shaped by experiences that might differ radically from those of white middle-class women living in the Western world. In such experiences, women could find racism, anti-Semitism, and other prejudices to be as threatening as sexism.⁶¹ The perception and rethinking of diversity and difference became an issue in feminist theology.

At the end of the 1970s, in the context of such critical negotiations about more differentiation in feminist theology, Jewish feminists made Christian feminist theologians cognizant of the inherent anti-Judaism in most current feminist theological concepts. Nevertheless, until the late 1980s there was hardly any dialogue between those involved in the reformulation of Christian theology from a feminist perspective and those involved in the project of reformulating Christian theology to avoid anti-Judaism. Where there is no dialogue, there is no exchange of knowledge; thus, feminist theologians often unconsciously based their research on traditional theological patterns of interpretation that were inherently anti-Jewish. In formulating liberation theology for women, they repeated anti-Jewish stereotypes and continued teaching contempt for Jews.⁶² Jewish feminists Judith Plaskow and Susannah Heschel first made Christian feminists aware of the trap they had fallen into.⁶³

In her article "Blaming the Jews for the Birth of Patriarchy," Plaskow showed that in order to find an image of Jesus and Christian origins that is liberating for women, feminist theologians had used Judaism as a negative foil. They depicted it as the religion that had imposed and maintained patriarchal dominion over women. Christian feminist theologians had just added "a new slant to the old theme of Christian superiority."⁶⁴ Following these pioneering articles by Plaskow and Heschel, there has been an intensive debate

about these crucial issues, first in the United States and then, from the second half of the 1980s, also in Germany.⁶⁵

Although the issues debated were identical, the debates themselves were not. The fact that the context was quite different played a significant role: in the United States there is a "vibrant Jewish feminist community and feminist organizations where Jews and non-Jews collaborate."⁶⁶ In Germany, however, the Jewish-Christian dialogue and the debate about anti-Judaism in particular are often carried on without Jewish participants. This is the legacy of the Shoah, which left Germany practically *judenrein* (cleared of Jews). This legacy is a far more significant feature in central Europe than in other parts of the world, and it renders it exceedingly difficult to point to anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism without provoking intensive emotional denial.⁶⁷

In the United States, in response to Plaskow and Heschel's critique, Christian feminist scholars such as Bernadette Brooten, Ross Kraemer, and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza began to focus on the problem of anti-Judaism in feminist theology. Wide-ranging historical research on Jewish, Christian, and pagan women's lives of the Second Temple Period became an important aspect of feminist research, in order to reformulate the image of the Jesus movement, to see it not so much in opposition to Judaism but rather as an "alternative option."⁶⁸ Christian feminists also became aware of the growing volume of research done by Jewish feminists on women's lives, and more aware of Jewish research generally.

In Germany, the feminism and anti-Judaism debate has taken longer to bear fruit in academic research. This is partly due to the fact that it is exceedingly difficult for feminist scholars to obtain appointments to ordinary academic lectureships. Feminist theologians are in a position that renders them vulnerable. Therefore, the critique from Jewish feminists as well as from scholars involved in Jewish-Christian dialogue, at least during the initial period, could hardly be seen as a full-fledged and constructive critique. It was rather perceived as questioning feminist theology as such. Nevertheless, in

65. See Schlangenbrut 16-18 (1987); *Kirche und Israel. Neukirchener theologische Zeitschrift* 5.1-2 (1990); and *Journal for the Feminist Study of Religion*, especially 7.2 (1991). Kellenbach, *Anti-Judaism*, 28-36.

66. Kellenbach, *Anti-Judaism*, 32.

67. This became obvious in the different debate on Jewish gold in the Swiss banks; see Pierre Weill, *Der Milliarden-Dad* (Zürich: Weltwoche ABC, 1999).

68. See Bernadette J. Brooten, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue: Inscriptional Evidence and Background Issues* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982); idem, "Jewish Women's History in the Roman Period: A Task for Christian Theology," in *Christians among Jews and Gentiles: Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (ed. G. W. E. Nickelsburg and George W. MacRae; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 22-30; Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: Ross Shepard Kraemer, Marnada, Marys, Marvini, Monastics: A Sourcebook on Women's Religions in the Greco-Roman World* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); idem, *Her Share of the Blessings: Women's Religions among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

61. See Katharina von Kellenbach, *Anti-Judaism in Feminist Religious Writings* (Adanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 17; Doris Strahm, *Von Rand in die Mitte: Christologie aus der Sicht von Frauen in Asien, Afrika und Lateinamerika* (Lucerne: Edition E-robus, 1997), 24-56.

62. Kellenbach gives an excellent and detailed analysis of this debate in *Anti-Judaism*.

63. Judith Plaskow, "Blaming the Jews for the Birth of Patriarchy," in *Nice Jewish Girls* (ed. Evelyn T. Beck; Watertown, Mass.: Posephone, 1982), 250-54; Susannah Heschel, "Jüdisch-feministische Theologie und Antijudaismus in christlich-feministischer Theologie," in *Verdrängte Vergangenheit, die uns bedrängt* (ed. Leonore Siegle; Wenschkeitz; Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1988), 54-103; E.T., "Anti-Judaism in Christian Feminist Theology," *Tikkun* 5.3 (1990): 25-28, 95-97.

64. Plaskow, "Blaming the Jews," 250.

the aftermath of the debates in the feminist journal *Schlangebrut* (snake fry) and the Neukirchener theological journal *Kirche und Israel*, which is committed to Jewish-Christian dialogue, Luise Schottroff and Marie-Theres Wacker in particular further developed their feminist approaches in careful awareness of the traps of anti-Judaism.⁶⁹

There are four main traps into which certain feminist theologians had fallen and on which the debate mainly focused:

1. They saw Judaism as the antithesis of the early Christian church, depicted as a liberation movement, freeing people from the bonds of particularism and oppression, and in the case of women mainly from patriarchal oppression. Feminist theologians had regarded as Jewish all the particularism, patriarchy, and quite often, whatever did not conform to the idea of early Christianity as a liberation movement of equals. The liberationist and universalist components, on the other hand, they ascribed to the open-minded Hellenistic influence, especially on Paul. Thus von Kellenbach stated: "The pro-Gentile bias is evident in the presupposition that egalitarian and feminist customs and beliefs found in the New Testament originated in Greco-Roman Gentile culture rather than in Jewish tradition. . . . The 'good' Jesus and Paul are claimed as Christian while the 'bad' Jesus and Paul are rejected as Jewish."⁷⁰

2. They saw Jewish images of God as inferior to Christian images of God, regarding the Jewish image of God as that of a God of wrath, and the Christian God as the God of love and mercy. They took the New Testament use of *abba* as typical for Jesus' image of God as a nonpatriarchal parent, encompassing paternal as well as maternal love. In contrast, they depicted the "Jewish God" as authoritarian and patriarchal, whose love was not as perfect as that of the Christian God.⁷¹ In her essay "Abba Isn't Daddy,"⁷² the German feminist theologian Martina Gnadl pointed to the inherent anti-Judaism of this imagery. Again, now in a feminist form, this image formulated Christian identity over against Judaism, not taking into account that God is depicted as righteous and merciful both in the Hebrew Bible and in the New Testament. Moreover, she also showed that the use of *abba* is not as unusual and extraordinary as feminist theologians (who had based their concepts mainly on the work of Joachim Jeremias⁷³) claimed it to be. Scholars

69. See especially Luise Schottroff and Marie-Theres Wacker, eds., *Von der Wurzel gezogen: Christlich-feministische Exegete in Auseinandersetzung mit Antijudaismus* (Biblical Interpretation 17; Leiden: Brill, 1995).

70. Kellenbach, *Anti-Judaism*, 66, 69.

71. *Ibid.*, 75–86.

72. Martina Gnadl, "Abba Isn't Daddy—Aspekte einer feministische-befreiungstheologische Revision des Abba Jesu," in *Von der Wurzel gezogen*, 115–31.

73. Joachim Jeremias, *Abba: Studien zur neutestamentlichen Theologie und Zeitgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966).

such as Ulrich Luz and James Barr had shown that *abba* is "a more solemn, responsible, adult address to a Father,"⁷⁴ not uncommon in the Judaism of Jesus' day. Gnadl also doubts that feminist liberation theology can rely on such a male-oriented image of God as "Jesus' *abba*" as one pillar of their (feminist) Christian identity.⁷⁵

3. A reappearance of the old accusation that the Jews murdered God (in Jesus' execution) was the variation that the monotheistic religion of the Jews murdered the Goddess. The idols against which the prophets had been fighting were not just mere idols but, among others, symbols of the great Goddess. Under the influence of the prophets, Israel suppressed her worship, and the male God pushing to power replaced and banned her. Alongside this replacement theory goes the depiction of Hebrew society as patriarchal, submitting women to oppression and depriving them of rights:

It was inevitable that together with the development of patriarchal religion, the position of woman in society would also be upset. . . . The scope of misogynist polemic in the Old Testament reaches from instructions of petty restrictions of women's rights in everyday life to the justification of the brutal murder of women.⁷⁶

Feminist theologians based these arguments on the theory of patriarchy as a primary stage in history, a sort of a utopian, ideal golden age of women's reign, where all evil is banned. This is not to criticize feminist research on patriarchal societies in general; nevertheless, there is a tendency in some parts of this stream of research rather easily to transfer utopian dreams of an ideal society too uncritically into a remote past. The inherent danger is the creation of a dualistic worldview, which blames mainly the Old Testament and Hebrew society for the evil of the murder of the Goddess, overlooking the marginality of the Israelites in the Near East between 2500–1000 B.C.

4. We find a less obvious anti-Jewish trap in the feminist variation of replacement theology and in the inclusion of Judaism in Christian theological concepts. To demonstrate awareness of the Jewish origins of Christianity, people use the term "Judeo-Christian tradition,"⁷⁷ usually not merely to designate two different religious traditions but simply to recognize that the Christian faith is rooted in the Jewish one. Yet this particular term designating

74. James Barr, "Abba, Father' and the Familiarity of Jesus' Speech," *Theology Today* 91 (1988): 173–79. See also Barr, "Abba Isn't Daddy," *Journal of Theological Studies* 39 (1988): 28–47.

75. Gnadl, "Abba Isn't Daddy," 125–28.

76. Gerda Weiler, *Ich verwerfe im Lande die Krüge* (Munich: Frauenoffensive, 1984), 386.

77. See, e.g., Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, *A Land Flowing with Milk and Honey: Perspectives on Feminist Theology* (trans. John Bowden; New York: Crossroad, 1986), 106; Susanne Heine, *Matriarch, Goddesses, and Images of God: A Critique of Feminist Theology* (trans. John Bowden; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 20.

Christian tradition is an expression of the assumption that the Jewish tradition has now become part of the Christian; hence, it is nothing but a variation of the traditional supersessionist concept: Judaism is the prologue, Christianity the fulfillment. These concepts do not demonstrate sufficient awareness of Jewish traditions and contemporary Jewish people as distinct and self-determining while based on the same biblical tradition as Christians.

There are examples of feminist theologians who include Jewish symbols or theological issues in their theologies without referring to their origin. For example, Virginia Mollenkott integrates the concept of God's Shekinah into her interpretation of the New Testament, claiming that the "body of Christ . . . is the perfect dwelling place" for the Shekinah. As von Kellenbach has noted, this "reasserts traditional replacement theology and dispossesses a Jewish concept for Christian purposes. It fails to preserve the Jewish interpretation of the Shekinah in its integrity and distinctiveness."⁷⁸

Another example of an unconscious reintroduction of traditional anti-Jewish patterns of interpretation is Carter Heyward's depiction of Jesus as the man who had made relationship the core of his message. This, she claimed, implied a radical change "from an emphasis on ritual to right relation; from an understanding of salvation as 'escaping from enemies' to an understanding of salvation as 'just relation with God.'"⁷⁹ Here we find the traditional oppositions of law/gospel, body-bound Jew/spiritual Christian. Also, Heyward does not mention the fact that a main characteristic of Judaism is its stress on the relational aspects of life, whether the relationship to God or among human beings; from a Jewish perspective, therefore, Jesus' attention to relationships is nothing exceptional or innovative.

Since this anti-Judaism debate began in feminist theology, feminist research has increasingly become aware of these issues. This applies especially to research on the history of women of the Second Temple period and on the Jesus movement.⁸⁰ A fruitful and constructive dialogue with Jewish feminists has led to new and more appropriate insights into the developments and relationships of Judaism and Christianity in the early days of the church. But, as the Swiss feminist theologian Silvia Schroer has put it, "The task to develop a historically appropriate model for a feminist reconstruction of history without anti-Judaistic implications is not yet solved."⁸¹

78. Kellenbach, *Anti-Judaism*, 128.

79. Carter Heyward, *The Redemption of God: A Theology of Mutual Relation* (Washington D.C.: University of America Press, 1982).

80. Tal Ilan, *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine: An Inquiry into Image and Status* (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1995); Krcmar, *Her Share of the Blessings*; Amy-Jill Levine, ed., *Women Like This: New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991).

81. Silvia Schroer, "Feminismus und Antijudaismus: Zur Geschichte eines konstruktiven Streits," in *Antijudaismus—christliche Ethik* (ed. Walter Dietrich, Martin George, and Ulrich Luz; Stuttgart:

Until recently Paul and his letters have not been central for feminist theology and research. This difficult brother in Christ has either been ignored or been regarded primarily as the one who reimported patriarchy into the Jesus movement of equals. Feminists may also count him as the one who created a new universalistic religion, beyond particularity and contextuality.⁸² Feminist research on Paul and his letters has been growing during the last few years, but feminist approaches to Paul⁸³ have hardly yet taken into account the shift in Pauline studies initiated by the New Perspective and by perspectives Beyond the New Perspective.⁸⁴

I will elaborate further on this question in chapters 5–7 of this study. Now I turn to aspects of the history of Pauline studies and feminist studies on Paul before we deal with different hermeneutical presuppositions and their relevance for the interpretation of Paul and his letters.

Pauline Studies and Feminist Theology: Some History of Research

Albert Schweitzer surveyed the history of Pauline research from the Reformation up to 1911. More recently, Peter J. Tomson (1990) has studied Paul's relationship to the Jewish law and its halakah.⁸⁵ These and other resources help us to assess what feminist theology needs to deal with in Pauline studies.

The Traditional Perspective on Paul

In church and academy, people have traditionally regarded Paul as the one who had overcome Judaism in favor of a universalistic Christian faith. They

Kohlhammer, 1999), 28–39, with my translation of the German: "So ist die Aufgabe, ein historisch tragfähiges Modell feministischer Geschichtskonstruktion ohne antijudaistische Implikation zu entwerfen, keineswegs gelöst."

82. On this see, e.g., Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethics: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), esp. 165–67; Elisabeth Castelli, "Romans," in Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (ed.), *Searching the Scriptures*, vol. 2: *A Feminist Commentary* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 272–300.

83. Luise Schottroff is an exception to this as she emphasized throughout her work that a differentiated approach to Paul from a feminist perspective is necessary. See, for instance, Christine Schaumberger and Luise Schottroff, *Schuld und Macht: Studien zu einer feministischen Befreiungs-ethologie* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1988), 15–36; Luise Schottroff, "Wie berechtigt ist die feministische Kritik an Paulus? Paulus und die Frauen in den ersten christlichen Gemeinden im Römischen Reich," in her *Befreiungserfahrungen: Studien zur Sozialgeschichte des Neuen Testaments* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1990), 229–46; and most recently Claudia Jansen, Luise Schottroff, and Beate Wehn, eds., *Paulus: Unversittete Traditionen—Lebendige Theologie* (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser/Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2001); ET, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 79 (2000).

84. W. S. Campbell introduced this term in his paper "The Interpretation of Paul: Beyond the New Perspective," given at the New Testament Postgraduate Seminar, Oxford, 2001. On this further, see chap. 4, below.

85. See Albert Schweitzer, *Geschichte der paulinischen Forschung von der Reformation bis auf die Gegenwart* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1911); ET, *Paul and His Interpreters: A Critical History* (New York: Macmillan, 1951); Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 5–19.