

Simplistic Presentations of Biblical Authority and Christian Origins in the Service of Anti-Catholic Dogma: A Response to Anders Gerdmar

JAMES A. KELHOFFER

Uppsala University
james.kelhoffer@teol.uu.se

WHY A RESPONSE TO THIS BOOK IS WARRANTED IN A SCHOLARLY EXEGETICAL JOURNAL

By any academic measure, Anders Gerdmar (G.) is a well-qualified biblical scholar. His 2001 Uppsala University dissertation appeared in the *Coniectanea Biblica* series, and a second monograph on the roots of theological anti-Semitism among German exegetes and theologians from the 1750s to the 1950s is a substantial contribution.¹ He has also published a number of articles and essays, and with my predecessor at Uppsala University – also his *Doktorvater* – he wrote the lion's share of an introductory textbook still in use at Swedish universities.² In 2009, G. applied for, and received from the theological faculty at Uppsala

¹ Anders Gerdmar, *Rethinking the Judaism-Hellenism Dichotomy: A Historiographical Case Study of Second Peter and Jude* (ConBNT 36; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2001); idem, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism: German Biblical Interpretation and the Jews, from Herder and Semler to Kittel and Bultmann* (Studies in Jewish History and Culture 20; Leiden: Brill, 2009).

² Anders Gerdmar with Kari Syreeni, *Vägar till Nya testamentet: Metoder, tekniker och verktyg för nytestamentlig exegetik* [*Paths to the New Testament: Methods, Techniques and Tools for New Testament Exegesis*] (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2006). Here and elsewhere, English translations of Swedish are mine.

University, the distinction of “docent” (\approx a German *Privatdozent*); as the external examiner of G.’s application for that distinction, Heikki Räisänen (Helsinki) wrote an unequivocal and enthusiastic endorsement. Gerdmar deservedly belongs to the prestigious Society of New Testament Studies and to the Gesellschaft für Wissenschaftliche Theologie.

Published by the press operated by an independent charismatic church,³ G.’s latest book, *Guds Ord räcker: Evangelisk tro kontra romersk-katolsk* [*God’s Word Is Sufficient: Evangelical Faith against Roman Catholic (Faith)*],⁴ is aimed at a popular audience and concerns views of Scripture, theological method, and a posited contrast between the evangelical Protestant and Roman Catholic faiths. Given the audience and foci of this book, one may wonder why it merits attention in an academic, nonconfessional journal of biblical studies, such as *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok*. Further, one could ask why I, who am not an expert in either Catholicism or Swedish Evangelicalism, would be interested in responding to such a book.

The reasons, I will suggest, are several. Substantial parts of the book primarily concern the NT and Christian origins and assert a multitude of pre-critical views that many exegetes might believe had been abandoned generations ago. Having a faith, and basing arguments on faith, is anyone’s right. In this book, however, G. presents his arguments as though they were based on sound scholarship and legitimized by his own academic standing. If left unchallenged, those uncritical views belie the credibility of biblical studies as an academic discipline.⁵ They can

³ According to the National Library of Sweden (*Kungliga biblioteket*), the publisher Areopagos is owned and operated under the jurisdiction of the Word of Life church in Uppsala (<http://www.kb.se/isbn-centralen/sok-forlagsregistret/svenska-forlag/>). I do not know whether that publisher requires “peer review” of submitted book manuscripts.

⁴ Anders Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker: Evangelisk tro kontra romersk-katolsk* (Uppsala: Areopagos, 2016).

⁵ See James A. Kelhoffer, “Nya testamentets exegetik som akademiskt ämne med relevans för andra ämnen,” *SEÅ* 77 (2012): 55–70; English translation in idem, *Conceptions of “Gospel” and Legitimacy in Early Christianity* (WUNT 324; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 3–18.

also foster the construction of a parallel moral and religious universe, from whose vantage point – and presumed authority – adherents can lament and assail the views of their coreligionists, not to mention the results of nonconfessional biblical, theological and religious studies. Therefore, a response in this journal is both warranted and needed.

SUMMARY

Unconventionally, the book commences with ten “forewords” (*förorord*) – nine by Swedish “Christian leaders” (*kristna ledare*) who heartily endorse the book,⁶ and one by G. himself.⁷ The book consists of twelve chapters:

- 1) “Varför jag aldrig valde att konvertera” (“Why I Never Chose to Convert”) (27–40);
- 2) “Allt tillhör oss: vår gemensamma tro” (“Everything Belongs to Us: Our Common Faith”) (41–50);
- 3) “Om Bibeln och traditionen” (“On the Bible and the Tradition”) (51–73);
- 4) “Bibeln över kyrkan eller kyrkan över Bibeln? Om Bibelns kanonisering” (“The Bible over the Church or the Church over the Bible? On the Bible’s Canonization”) (75–88);
- 5) “Är romersk-katolska kyrkan den enda kyrkan?” (“Is the Roman Catholic Church the Only Church?”) (89–99);
- 6) “Är påven och kyrkan ofelbara? Om auktoritet och ledarskap” (“Are the Pope and the Church Infallible? On Authority and Leadership”) (101–24);
- 7) “Maria: troshjälte eller himmelsk varelse?” (“Mary: Hero of Faith or Heavenly Being?”) (125–50);
- 8) “Nattvarden – bruk och missbruk” (“The Lord’s Supper – Use and Misuse”) (151–63);
- 9) “Skärseld och avlat” (“Purgatory and Penance”) (165–77);
- 10) “Är protesten över?” (“Is the Protest Finished?”) (179–81);
- 11) “Att de alla ska bli ett” (“That They All Shall Be One”) (183–96);
- 12) “Till dig som funderar” (“To You Who Are Deliberating”) (197–200).

Extensive summaries are given at the end of chapters 2–7, and very brief summaries appear at the end of chapters 8, 9 and 11. The book ends with eleven endnotes to preceding chapters, endnotes that curiously lack reference to the page numbers to which the notes refer. Biblical transla-

⁶Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 9–19. The endorsements are from Sven Nilsson (9–11), Stanley Sjöberg (11), Carl-Erik Sahlberg (11–12), Linda Bergling (12–15), Hans Augustsson (15), Stefan Swärd (16–17), Stefan Gustavsson (17), Joakim Lundqvist (17–18), and Lukas Berggren (18–19).

⁷*Ibid.*, 21–26.

tions are occasionally G.'s own but are mostly from the Svenska Folkbibeln 2015 translation popular in many Swedish evangelical circles,⁸ rather than from the Bibel 2000 translation produced by the Swedish Bible Society.

Chapter 1 is largely autobiographical, highlighting how G.'s charismatic experience of "baptism in the Spirit" (*andedop*) as an adult fed his dissatisfaction with both the high church Lutheran tradition of his upbringing and with the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christian traditions, to which a number of his friends converted. Gerdmar also lays out a central thesis of the book: "There is one truth: God's Word is truth."⁹ He objects strongly not only to adding "the Tradition"¹⁰ to the Bible (a problem that he dubs "Bible Plus"), but also to eliminating certain biblical teachings (which he dubs "Bible Minus"), which, he holds, is the result of "liberal theology." He thereby identifies two dangerous foes that, in his view, jeopardize the faith of all Christians: adding traditions to Scripture and not accepting God's Word in its totality.

Chapter 2 defines Christians' "common faith" as a "faith in all of God's Word and the early Christian confessions," the latter having been produced by the early church's ecumenical councils that addressed, among other things, Christology and the Trinity.¹¹ Chapter 3 asserts, and defends, the authority of "the Bible alone" (*sola scriptura*) in the Christian church, drawing a sharp contrast between evangelical traditions that emphasize the preaching of the Word and Catholic and Orthodox traditions that emphasize liturgy and the Eucharist. For G., evangelicals' affirmation of the "apostolicity" (*apostolicitet*) of the divinely inspired words that the apostles wrote down contrasts markedly with

⁸ For a review of Svenska Folkbibeln 2015 as a confessional Bible translation, see Birger Olsson, "Svenska Folkbibeln – en evangelikal bibelöversättning" ["Svenska Folkbibeln – an Evangelical Bible Translation"], *STK* 91/3 (2015): 130–37, esp. 131–33, 137.

⁹ Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 27.

¹⁰ Swedish: "Traditionen" (singular, capitalization original), *ibid.*, 27.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 46.

Catholic and Orthodox understandings of Scripture in relation to later church traditions.¹² Gerdmar rejects, for example, later revelations attributed to the Virgin Mary as well as to the medieval mystic St. Bridget of Sweden (*S:ta Birgitta*). By contrast, it is only “the Bible, God’s Word, which for eternity is the canon [*rättesnöret*] and which helps us to see clearly.”¹³

Chapter 4 holds that “the New Testament canon comprises Scriptures that were inspired from their inception” and that “a canon was formed early, not by some church meeting but because believers in the whole of Christ’s body recognized the revelation in Scripture.”¹⁴ Chapter 5 counters the Roman Catholic Church’s claim to being the only legitimate church. Chapter 6 criticizes the rise of the monarchical episcopate as a “postbiblical” development that is not normative for evangelical churches. Additionally, G. challenges the notions of apostolic succession and papal authority. The demotion of the Bishop of Rome is followed, in chapter 7, by a demotion of Jesus’ mother, Mary, from being a heavenly agent in redemption (*co-redemptrix*) to being affirmed as “a role model for all believers.”¹⁵ Chapter 8 contrasts evangelical and Catholic teachings and praxes concerning the Eucharist, and chapter 9 similarly addresses forgiveness, purgatory and penance. The very short chapter 10 holds that the protests and reformations of the church that Martin Luther began 500 years ago rightfully continue, and that “the protest is the Lord’s.”¹⁶ Chapter 11 contrasts a Roman Catholic perspective on church unity with a charismatic evangelical understanding of church unity “that builds on the truth as it is found in Scripture and [the truth] in the Spirit’s unity.”¹⁷ The final chapter implores a non-Catholic reader who may be considering whether to convert to Catholicism not to do

¹² Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 54–55.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 149.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 180.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 196.

so, due to unbiblical Catholic teachings and practices, including praying to Mary or other saints.

CRITIQUE

Due to my own limitations and the focus of this journal, this critique examines primarily G.'s treatment of biblical literature. Other parts of the book could be better addressed by historical, dogmatic or systematic theologians; by modern church historians; or by experts in Catholic Studies.

The Bible and Tradition

Guds Ord räcker abounds with inconsistencies, several of which I will attempt to highlight. In particular, I find arbitrary G.'s definition of "God's Word" in contrast to both later church traditions and critical scholarship. The biblical literature itself represents not only an inheritance of earlier traditions and *augmentations* of certain traditions (\approx G.'s "Bible Plus") but also *departures* from other traditions, including earlier biblical traditions (\approx G.'s "Bible Minus"). Remarkably, any acknowledgement of diverse perspectives within biblical literature is absent from this book. As we will see, G.'s simplistic presentation of biblical and apostolic unity undergirds his polemics against certain Catholic views that are said to deviate from the earliest apostolic unity.

Chapter 2 describes much about "our common faith" with which many, if not most, Christians through the centuries could readily agree. Nevertheless, the insistence on "faith in all of God's Word"¹⁸ as the primary basis of the common Christian faith is particular to recent and contemporary fundamentalist Protestant traditions.¹⁹ Biblical literature

¹⁸ Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 46.

¹⁹ On this feature of Protestant fundamentalism, see James Barr, *Fundamentalism* (London: SCM, 1977; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 11–21; Nancy T. Ammerman, "North American Protestant Fundamentalism," in *Fundamentalisms Observed*, ed.

says precious little about faith *in* the written word. Jesus' teachings stress the centrality of faith in God, and church tradition emphasizes the centrality of God's revelation in Christ, to which the Scriptures attest.

One may also ask to what extent G. is consistent in his stance on the authority of the Bible in relation to later church tradition when he holds that the early ecumenical church councils are also essential to the "common faith" that all Christians share.²⁰ Those councils (beginning with Nicaea, 325 CE) are clearly postbiblical chronologically and affirm numerous postbiblical credenda. Even G. acknowledges a need for *something* from Nicene and post-Nicene theological developments. His appeal to acceptance of the councils as a basis for Christian unity undercuts his repeated assertions about the sufficiency of faith alone in all of God's Word.

Something more may be said about the uncomplicated hermeneutic that G. earnestly and repeatedly advocates in *Guds Ord räcker* when he, for example, lauds the ideal that the "truth of God's Word be allowed to stand pure and clear."²¹ He seems to affirm that biblical truths do not need to be interpreted but, rather, just need to be believed. Such a reading strategy differs markedly from the above-mentioned textbook by Gerdmar and Syreeni, who, building on Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricœur, recognize the role of the interpreter and of the interpreting community, and point out potential influences from particular communities on their adherents' subjective views ("intersubjectivity").²² In Gerdmar and Syreeni's book, the theological educator has a fine Swedish-language resource to guide students through many introducto-

Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1991), 1–65, esp. 5–6, 15–16.

²⁰ See above, on chapter 2 of Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 46.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 27. According to G., that ideal comes with a promise: "If we fill ourselves with the truth of God's Word, our life will be true ... and we need no other canon (*rättesnöre*)" (27–28). The last term in the sentence, "*rättesnöre*," could be translated "canon," "rule," "criterion," or "guiding principle." I return to this citation, below.

²² See the preface (attributed to both authors) in Gerdmar with Syreeni, *Vägar till Nya testamentet*, 10–11; cf. see further, 101–102.

ry principles on method and hermeneutics. The contrast between the Gerdmar of 2006 and the “flat” hermeneutic he espouses a decade later is remarkable.

Alleged Witnesses to an Early New Testament Canon

For G.’s arguments about the NT canon to be plausible, he needs, in chapter 4, to establish two facts – the apostolic origin of the NT writings, and a nearly instantaneous reception of those writings as Scripture by the whole church. In regard to the decisive authority claimed for the first apostles, G. marshals support from an assortment of NT verses,²³ apparently overlooking that a number of calls for, or claims to, unity in the NT actually betray contentious situations of *disunity* amidst the very apostolic authorities among whom G. would find unanimity. One can thus recognize here the operative effect of G.’s “flat” hermeneutic.

One of G.’s examples about unity in the earliest church is Eph 2:20, which proclaims that God’s household is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.”²⁴ What is peculiar about that appeal to Ephesians is that the letter’s later, deuteropauline author summons for himself – and for that pseudonymous letter – an apostolic authority that he could lay claim to only by impersonating an apostle such as Paul.²⁵

²³ Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 75–78.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 76.

²⁵ On the non-Pauline authorship of Ephesians, see, e.g., Helmut Koester, *History and Literature of Early Christianity*, vol. 2 of *Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982 [1980]), 267–72; Victor Paul Furnish, “Ephesians, Epistle to the,” *ABD* 2:535–42, esp. 539–41 (cf. 536–37, on the use of Colossians); Udo Schnelle, *The History and Theology of the New Testament Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998 [2nd German ed. 1994]), 300–303; Nils A. Dahl, “Einleitungsfragen zum Epheserbrief,” in *idem.*, *Studies in Ephesians*, ed. D. Hellholm et al. (WUNT 131; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 3–105, esp. 18–28, 48–60; Bart D. Ehrman, *Forgery and Counterforgery: The Use of Literary Deceit in Early Christian Polemics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 182–90.

Moreover, Ephesians reworks significant portions of Colossians,²⁶ an earlier letter also attributed to Paul but that a majority scholars today regard as pseudonymous.²⁷ As a result, the continuity claimed in Ephesians is most likely at least two steps removed from what could be construed as the apostolic time of Paul's activity.

Similarly, G. finds in Col 4:16 support for his inference of an early recognition of a NT canon of Scripture: "It is very possible that as soon as an apostolic writing came into existence it was regarded as the Lord's word and began to be read during worship."²⁸ No such claim can be supported by Col 4:16. The verse calls for that letter of "Paul" to be read in Colossae and in Laodicea, thereby asserting the letter's apostolic origins and reception in earlier Pauline congregations.²⁹ Due to the earthquake that struck nearby Laodicea in 60/61 CE,³⁰ it may have been impossible to refute Colossae as the intended destination for a pseudonymous letter, since there may not have been any Christ-believers from Colossae or Laodicea who could question such a letter's authenticity.³¹ Claims about apostolic origins and authority in Colossians

²⁶ In regard to the reuse of significant parts of Colossians in Ephesians, see Dahl, "Einleitungsfragen," 39–48; Furnish, "Ephesians," 536–37, and other studies listed in the preceding footnote.

²⁷ Even among some critical scholars, the Pauline authorship of Colossians is sometimes still affirmed. A point to which I will return, below, is G.'s complete disregard for such scholarly debates. For arguments that Colossians, like Ephesians, is a pseudepigraphon, see Koester, *Introduction*, 2:263–67; Victor Paul Furnish, "Colossians, Epistle to the," *ABD* 1:1090–96, esp. 1092–94; Schelle, *History and Theology*, 282–88; Ehrman, *Forgery and Counterforgery*, 171–82.

²⁸ Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 81–82.

²⁹ Col 4:16 (English translation mine): "And whenever this letter has been read among you, see to it that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans and that you, too, read the [letter] from Laodicea."

³⁰ See Tacitus, *Ann.* 14.27.1 (English translation mine): "In that year [60/61 CE], one of the famous cities of Asia, Laodicea, was overthrown by an earthquake and, with no relief from us, recovered itself by its own resources."

³¹ This inference is based on the likelihood that Colossae (roughly 18 km southeast of Laodicea) was also substantially damaged by that earthquake, which would be relevant for dating Colossians and for the possibly fictitious characterization of the

and Ephesians, on the one hand, and in *Guds Ord räcker*, on the other hand, are anachronistic.

What G. does not mention to his audience is that debates about the non-Pauline authorship of Colossians and, especially, of Ephesians were settled decades ago for most biblical scholars. Nevertheless, G. repeatedly presents Ephesians as a letter of Paul – without argument or even acknowledging any debate about the letter’s authorship.³² As a result, *G.’s readers never have an opportunity to make an informed decision* about those letters’ “apostolicity.”³³ Naturally, a reputable scholar can hold a differing view on a particular isagogic point, such as a NT writing’s authorship or dating. In that case, it would be expected, first, to acknowledge the existence of dissension among learned colleagues and, second, to argue for one’s own position. Time and again, in this book, G. does neither in his treatment of the NT and Christian origins. His assertion of the acceptance of the NT writings as Scripture by the whole church shortly after they were written is an oversimplification of a long, complex and sometimes haphazard process of canonization. The author’s responsibility for presenting such a spurious reconstruction is hardly mitigated by the book’s pastoral genre and polemical agenda.

Construals of Origins, “Heretics,” and Authorship

According to G., another indication of the existence of an emerging NT canon already in the early second century is the supposed “attacks of

addressees by its pseudonymous author. See further, James A. Kelhoffer, *Conceptions of “Gospel” and Legitimacy*, 234–37; James S. Murray, “The Urban Earthquake Imagery and Divine Judgement in John’s Apocalypse,” *NovT* 47 (2005): 142–61, esp. 150–58 at 157; Richard Bauckham, “Eschatological Earthquake in the Apocalypse of John,” *NovT* 19 (1977): 224–33.

³² See above, on Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 76; see also 103 (on Eph 4:11), 115 (on Eph 2:20), 187 (on Eph 2:18; 3:6–7), 188 (on Eph 4:2–6), and 195 (on Eph 4:11–16).

³³ Cf. above, on Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 54–55.

Marcion and the other Gnostics”³⁴ against such a canon. Several widely acknowledged points of scholarly consensus could be brought to bear to correct that inference. Marcion was not a “Gnostic;”³⁵ the “Gnostics” did not exist as an identifiable group in the second century;³⁶ and neither Marcion nor the vast majority of “gnostic” writings found at Nag Hammadi oppose a particular canon of Scripture; in fact, quite a number of “gnostic” writings develop and complement certain NT writings rather than oppose NT writings’ authority or canonical status.³⁷ In addition, G.’s uncritical presentations of the highly polemical and, at times, historically dubious antiheretical caricatures of “heretics” by Irenaeus of Lyons and other church fathers perpetuate misunderstandings about the origins of the NT canon, misunderstandings that bolster G.’s polemical agenda against viewpoints embraced by many Roman Catholics, and even by some Protestants.³⁸

³⁴ Swedish: “Markions och de andra gnostikernas angrepp” (Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räckter*, 82–83 at 83). The term *angrepp* (“attack”/“attacks”) could be singular or plural. Above, I infer that the plural (“attacks”) is meant.

³⁵ See, e.g., Judith M. Lieu, *Marcion and the Making of a Heretic: God and Scripture in the Second Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2015), 28–33, on Irenaeus’s mistaken linking of Marcion with “Gnosticism.” See also Michael L. Williams, *Rethinking “Gnosticism”: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1996), 23–26; David Brakke, *The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2010), 90–111, esp. 96–99, 111.

³⁶ See Williams, *Rethinking “Gnosticism,”* 29–53, esp. 44–45: even for Irenaeus, “gnosis” signifies false teaching, not one particular group of Christians. See also Karen L. King, *What Is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University; London: Belknap, 2003), 218: “By perceiving how thoroughly the study of Gnosticism is tied to defining normative Christianity, we have been able to analyze where and how the academic study of Gnosticism in the twentieth century reinscribes and reproduces the ancient discourse of orthodoxy and heresy.”

³⁷ See Williams, *Rethinking “Gnosticism,”* 54–79 and, among the writings found at Nag Hammadi, the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, where Paul is hailed as the great apostle and Eph 6:12 is cited (NHC II 86.20–26).

³⁸ It is not only Roman Catholics who are subjected to G.’s admonishment. For example, to exemplify the encroachment of unbiblical Catholic traditions in non-

Another tenet that would be exceedingly difficult to demonstrate historically is the clear demarcation upon which G. insists between the uniform apostolic faith and several lamentable, quasi-Catholic developments that came afterward, especially the rise of the monarchical episcopate. If we hold, as most scholars do, that the NT writings were composed ca. 50-140 CE, Ignatius of Antioch's calls for congregations to be subject to the bishop and the elders (ca. 110 CE) occur well within the so-called apostolic period, thereby blurring G.'s posited demarcation. Furthermore, the apostolic origin of several NT writings is highly doubtful. In addition to six likely pseudepigrapha that are attributed to Paul (Eph; Col; 2 Thess; 1 Tim; 2 Tim; Titus), 1 Peter and 2 Peter apparently stem from two different pseudonymous authors and have no direct connection to the historical apostle Peter.³⁹

Herein lies an irony in G.'s argumentation: much of his evidence for the supposedly apostolic origins of the NT writings comes not from Scripture but, rather, from subsequent church tradition.⁴⁰ Consequently, *a key tenet in his biblicist antidote to a slough of postbiblical Catholic views is itself postbiblical*. His commendation of beliefs about the Bible's origins based not on Scripture but on the musings of later church fa-

Catholic circles he cites at length a prayer to Mary read in March 2014 by Antje Jackelén, the current Archbishop of the (Lutheran) Church of Sweden (Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 145–47).

³⁹ The different Greek styles of 1 Peter and 2 Peter strongly suggest two different authors. In addition, the rather sophisticated Greek of the two letters renders highly unlikely the hypothesis that the historical apostle Peter (an illiterate fisherman whose mother tongue was Aramaic) wrote either of them. On these observations, see, e.g., Koester, *Introduction*, 2:292–97 (on 1 and 2 Peter); John H. Elliott, “Peter, First Epistle of,” *ABD* 5:269–78, esp. 276–78; idem, “Peter, Second Epistle of,” *ABD* 5:282–87, esp. 283; Schnelle, *History and Theology*, 400–403 (on 1 Peter), 425–27 (on 2 Peter); Ehrman, *Forgery and Counterforgery*, 239–59 (on 1 Peter), 259–63 (on 2 Peter).

⁴⁰ Although some attributions by Church Fathers concerning the authorship of biblical writings could be accurate historically, quite a number of them are likely legendary or based on later, unreliable traditions. In any case, scholarship usually recognizes the need for argumentation when embracing a later tradition as historically reliable.

thers is itself a paradigmatic example of the “heresy” he calls “Bible plus,” albeit an evangelical Protestant rather than a Catholic example.

To the best of my knowledge, G. has no “peer-reviewed” publications (nor even a conference paper) on any of his idiosyncratic views about the origins of the NT writings and canon. In an endnote, he acknowledges a single popular – and, it should be noted, apologetic – study on the subject.⁴¹ It is indeed possible for a scholar to make worthwhile contributions around the edges of a discipline – in G.’s case, weighing in on the categories used to describe the backgrounds of two NT letters, and on the history of biblical scholarship⁴² – and thereafter to make exceptionally contentious assertions about matters central to the discipline without ever engaging scholarship about those central matters. The result is nonetheless baffling.

The “Protestant Historiographic Myth” of Origins as a Rhetorical Weapon

Apparently informing G.’s conceptual approach to the unity of the earliest apostolic church is what Jonathan Z. Smith critiques as the “Protestant historiographic myth.” In an influential essay, Smith exposes as deeply problematic the apologetic aim of many 19th and 20th century biblical scholars and church historians to find a pure “essence” (German: *Wesen*) within earliest Christianity.⁴³ To varying degrees, that original

⁴¹ Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 201 n. 5 (referring to *ibid.*, 83), acknowledges one chapter in Michael J. Kruger, *Canon Revisited: Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), a study that likely was not vetted in a “peer-review” process. For a critique of that study as “fundamentally an apologetic work ... with an unfalsifiable thesis,” see Michael W. Holmes, review of *Canon Revisited: Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books*, by Michael J. Kruger, *Religious Studies Review* 39/3 (2013): 176.

⁴² See above, on Gerdmar, *Rethinking*; *idem*, *Roots*.

⁴³ Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1990), 1–45, esp. 39–45. Building on Smith, Petter Spijt, “The Protestant Historiographic Myth and the Discourse of Differentiation in Scholarly Studies of Colossians,” *SEÅ* 80 (2015): 169–

purity has been construed as having eventually been lost, due to the work of purported “heretics” who compromised an originally unadulterated gospel message as a result of influences, for example, from Judaism, Hellenism or “Gnosticism.” David Brakke critically encapsulates this approach, noting a precedent in Irenaeus’s late second-century polemics:

[T]he legacy of Irenaeus has continued to affect how historians think in at least two important ways. First, his view that Christianity started out as a single, fairly uniform religion and then became more diverse, whether for good or for ill, has remained influential. Scholars may not share Irenaeus’s confidence that Jesus himself taught a true Christian doctrine that later bishops faithfully preserved, but *they have at times reproduced his basic story in their own ways*. For example, the great nineteenth-century German theologian Adolf von Harnack argued that the essence of Christianity is to be found in the original preaching of Christ, but this essential Gospel developed into orthodox dogma through a process of adaptation to Greek culture (or “Hellenization”) that was both necessary and tragic.⁴⁴

Countering such a problematic oversimplification, Ismo Dunderberg criticizes “the dualistic conception of early Christianity as fundamentally divided into two opposed poles, with the early church at the one end, and the ‘gnostics’ at the other. This model,” holds Dunderberg, “obviously *presupposes too much unity at both ends*, at the ‘church’ end as well as in that of ‘the gnostics.’”⁴⁵

85 at 170, has recently pointed out that, as a result of utilizing the Protestant historiographic myth, “‘pure’ Christianity is placed *outside* of history and it is through subsequent interactions with the cultural and historical environment that the decline starts” (emphasis original).

⁴⁴ Brakke, *Gnostics*, 3 (emphasis added).

⁴⁵ Ismo Dunderberg, *Gnostic Morality Revisited* (WUNT 347; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 7 (emphasis added). Likewise, Brakke, *Gnostics*, 133, points out that even grouping together the allegedly “proto-orthodox” writings from early Christianity can result in distortions: “If the construction of a ‘Gnosticism’ obscured the characters of the persons and groups assigned to it, likewise the category ‘proto-orthodox’ can homogenize and so distort the diversity of pre-Constantinian Christianity.” See further, King, *Gnosticism*, 110–15; James A. Kelhoffer, “Second Clement and ‘Gnosticism’: The *Status Quaestionis*,” *Early Christianity* 8/1 (2017): 124–49 at 145–47; Brakke, *Gnostics*, 3–18.

However artificial or contrived, the identification of an ostensibly pure expression of apostolic teaching can serve as a powerful rhetorical weapon against whichever ancient or modern “impure” forms of Christianity one may wish to attack. In his study of the roots of theological anti-Semitism, G. ruefully critiques the essentialist presentations of ancient Judaism and of early Christianity by Harnack and other influential German theologians, and especially how those presentations undergirded anti-Semitism.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, *Guds Ord rækker* seems indebted to such a “Protestant historiographic myth” about the essential unity and doctrinal purity of earliest Christianity. Whereas Harnack’s characterizations combatted a feared Catholicization of German Protestant churches,⁴⁷ what is distinctive in G.’s line of reasoning is the adoption of an essentialist reconstruction of earliest Christian “apostolicity” to vaccinate Scandinavian evangelical churches against an epidemic of Catholic viruses.⁴⁸

Essentialist Characterizations: Biblical, Evangelical, Catholic

Another drawback of the book is a plethora of oversimplified presentations of biblical, evangelical and Catholic teachings. If there actually were, at present, a dominant Scandinavian evangelical position, a book like this one would hardly be needed. Gerdmar’s argumentative tone evinces, however, that he engages in what, for him, is a heated debate about defining his evangelical, charismatic tradition relative to (perceived) Catholic errors. Although he repeatedly and, apparently, accu-

⁴⁶ See Gerdmar, *Roots*, 141, 245–47, on Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums: Sechzehn Vorlesungen vor Studierenden aller Fakultäten im Wintersemester 1899/1900 an der Universität Berlin* (Leipzig: Hinrichs’sche, 1908).

⁴⁷ See, e.g., Wolfram Kinzig, *Harnack, Marcion und das Judentum: Nebst einer kommentierten Edition des Briefwechsels Adolf von Harnacks mit Houston Stewart Chamberlain* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2004), 6.

⁴⁸ To G.’s credit, his denunciations of Catholic teachings are devoid of anti-Judaism, in contrast to Harnack and others, who are justly critiqued in that regard in Gerdmar, *Roots*.

rately cites Catholic teachings in numerous official documents, his reading of those documents is consistently flat, overlooking the contexts, debates, compromises and reappraisals behind many of them. Despite his acknowledgment of considerable diversity nowadays on numerous issues among individual Catholic Christians,⁴⁹ G.'s process consistently follows the pattern of referring to official Catholic Church teaching, pointing out discrepancies with his construal of the biblical teaching, and implying that the views of any biblically literate Catholic would be irreconcilable with either the church or Scripture. It comes as no surprise that, in G.'s view, the charismatic evangelicals prevail on every issue over the stances he attributes to Catholicism. Still, the question remains: is there only one set of beliefs at the core of either of evangelical or Catholic faith? Such obvious oversimplification could nonetheless be attractive to those who would obfuscate complexities and porous borders between faith communities, trends and movements.

To me as an exegete, more troubling than G.'s simplistic presentations of evangelical and Catholic teaching is his disregard for diversity of expression within the biblical writings. According to G., "there is only one standard, the apostolic Christianity that we find in the New Testament."⁵⁰ For example, he concludes chapter 9 (on forgiveness, purgatory and penance): "The New Testament's teaching (*lära*, singular) about sin and grace is clear and leads to freedom and assurance based on grace and grace alone."⁵¹ Apparently, G. surmises that the disparate NT texts he discusses (from Mark; John; Rom; 1–2 Cor; Gal; Heb; and 1 John) in that chapter speak to one and the same "teaching about sin and grace."⁵² Some interaction with scholarship would doubtless yield a more complex picture of the NT theologies on those subjects.⁵³

⁴⁹ Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 40.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 181.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 177.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 166–76.

⁵³ Already Vincent Taylor, *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: A Study in New Testament Theology* (London: Macmillan, 1942). See also, e.g., Ingrid Goldhahn-Müller, *Die*

Gerdmar unquestionably writes with the best intentions of defending biblical truth and the church's well being, as he understands them. Probably few, if any, believers would question his central thesis that "God's Word is sufficient." The questions *what is* God's Word, and *for what* it is sufficient, are naturally beyond the scope of this article. Those questions merit much more satisfactory and nuanced answers from theologians, including theologians from evangelical Protestant traditions.

POSSIBLE REPERCUSSIONS OF GERDMAR'S BOOK FOR CONGREGATIONAL LIFE, ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND CONSTRUCTIONS OF AUTHORITY

An antiheretical treatise does not exist in a vacuum but, on the contrary, can often be seen to emerge from a concrete (if, sometimes, unspecified) situation or conflict. *Guds Ord räcker* has the explicit purpose of influencing people's beliefs and choice of congregational affiliation. Having discussed, above, several shortcomings of *Guds Ord räcker*, in this section I suggest some potential adverse effects. In addition, I outline some implications of G's argumentation and make a few points pertinent to the book's origin, marketing and overall message.

Erecting Boundaries Can Impact both Congregational Life and Academic Freedom

A plausible outcome of this book is the erecting, or reinforcing, of a wall between some Swedish evangelicals and the academy. In the long run, no one benefits from such segregation, except perhaps those who foster

Grenze der Gemeinde: Studien zum Problem der Zweiten Buße im Neuen Testament unter Berücksichtigung der Entwicklung im 2. Jh. bis Tertullian (Göttinger Theologische Arbeiten 39; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989); David Konstan, *Before Forgiveness: The Origins of a Moral Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2010); James K. Voiss, *Rethinking Christian Forgiveness: Theological, Philosophical, and Psychological Explorations* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015).

it. Gerdmar's *regula fidei* insists on trust in the Bible as he defines its origins, authority and unified message. His teaching in *Guds Ord räcker*, if accepted, guarantees that one is experiencing the richness of God's Spirit. His readers do not, however, have the opportunity to learn why other scholars may think differently from the way he does. At best, his call for "faith in God's Word" is a gross oversimplification of a rich and complex revelation and its reception. At worst, mandating such a confession of faith can amount to an idolatrous bibliolatry with a focus not primarily on faith in God but, rather, on whether one agrees with a particular theology of revelation. Giving assent to G.'s views about what is "biblical" could, as a result, become determinative of a person's standing in a faith community. Although G. eschews the authority and infallibility of a pope, he implicitly assumes such a prophetic role – a mediator of God's revelation.

If giving assent to G.'s views were mandated in a faith community, the potential for manipulation, extremism and misuse of power could be alarming. This may not be idle speculation, given that nine Swedish "Christian leaders" contribute forewords to *Guds Ord räcker* endorsing its teaching.⁵⁴ Together, G. and those leaders could aspire to comprise a kind of evangelical curia. Anyone under the influence of such leadership who would defy the leadership's teaching could risk being ostracized. Nevertheless, for some believers it may be reassuring and empowering to trust in an inerrant Bible whose truth is corroborated by their experiences of the Spirit in an extemporaneous charismatic congregational setting unencumbered by a rigid, traditional liturgy focused on the Eucharist.

The advice given in this book not to convert to Catholicism but, rather, to rely on God's Word alone could also inspire overconfidence among those convinced that they possess a, or the, correct understanding of the Bible, as confirmed by their ecstatic experiences. Incredibly, G. promises his readers, "If we fill ourselves with the truth of God's

⁵⁴ See above, on Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 9–19. Hopefully, the leaders who endorsed this book did not fully grasp its flaws and potentially deleterious effects.

Word, our life will be true (*blir vårt liv sant*) ... and we need no other canon.”⁵⁵ However well I may (or may not) understand the Bible, it would be ethically naïve to suppose that a correct understanding would *ipso facto* somehow make my life “true” – and, by implication, could render as *untrue* the lives of those who disagree with me. Society could well have reason to question the agenda of such overconfident followers of any religion or movement.⁵⁶

If giving assent to G.’s views were essential in an academic setting, serious questions could be raised, for example, about the students’ and the faculty’s academic freedom. A case in point is the new Scandinavian School of Theology (*Skandinavisk teologisk högskola*) in Uppsala that G. founded in 2014.⁵⁷ Of the nine people who endorse *Guds Ord räcker*, one is an adjunct instructor (*timplärare*) there,⁵⁸ and five of them are featured on the school’s homepage as “experienced servants of the Lord” who regularly give lectures on campus.⁵⁹ Additionally, one endorser serves with G. on the school’s governing board of trustees (*styrelse*).⁶⁰ Under what circumstances might it be permitted for a student or teacher to take issue with G.’s theological programme, as outlined in *Guds Ord räcker*, and, afterward, to remain in good standing at such an institution?

⁵⁵ Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 27–28. On the term “canon,” (*rättesnöre*), see n. 21.

⁵⁶ For me, personal faith has come to include a readiness to acknowledge and wrestle with the numerous interpretive problems and dissonant voices that we inherit from the diverse biblical writings. Such problems, which, in all honesty, we must eventually face, commend humility and dialogue between exegetes of different confessions (or none), among different churches, and between Christian churches and other religions.

⁵⁷ On the founding of this new school of theology in 2014, see below.

⁵⁸ On Carl-Erik Sahlberg as a *timplärare*, see <https://www.teol.se/om-oss/larare-administration>.

⁵⁹ Those endorsers are Joakim Lundqvist, Sven Nilsson, Carl-Erik Sahlberg, Stanley Sjöberg, and Stefan Swärd. See, under “MiniCampus,” <https://www.teol.se/utbildning/sthl/medverkande>.

⁶⁰ The current seven-member board includes Stefan Swärd. See <https://www.merinfo.se/foretag/Skandinavisk-Teologisk-H%C3%B6gskola-AB-5569735078/2k42r3a-1d3g5/styrelse-koncern>.

The Construction of Authority amidst Contemporary Conflict

How G. shores up his standing to argue in *Guds Ord räcker* is paradoxical. On the book's dust jacket, he is presented as "Th.D. and *docent* in New Testament Exegesis at Uppsala University, as well as the founder and President (*rektor*) of the Scandinavian School of Theology." He cites his academic credentials from Uppsala University as a substantial source of his qualification to censure foundational principles of academic biblical studies, apparently to vaccinate Swedish Evangelicalism contra Catholicism's contamination. However indirectly and unaware, Uppsala University, and the academy in general, have contributed to G.'s claim of authority to make the pronouncements in this antiheretical treatise.

It would be thoroughly unremarkable for an uneducated pious preacher to proffer these views about the NT and Christian origins. I wonder why an eminently qualified colleague would do so. A definitive answer may prove to be elusive. In an autobiographical essay, "Bibeln under attack" ("The Bible under Attack"), G. offers some clues when he expresses alarm that not only at a secular Swedish university he attended in the 1970s but also nowadays, at certain Swedish evangelical schools of theology, what he deems an unacceptably critical stance toward the Bible and its authority is taught.⁶¹ For G.'s faith, deeply shaken by his early university studies in theology, relief did not come until seven years later, when, he shares, "the Holy Spirit came into my life."⁶² Very recently, in the church newspaper *Världen idag*, he gives a similar account of his earlier struggles, concluding that the church needs "knowledgeable and well educated theologians, who can both defend God's Word and can themselves go deep in the Word."⁶³ In both of these memoirs, there

⁶¹ See Anders Gerdmar, "Bibeln under attack," no date, <http://www.livetsord.se/kronikor/bibeln-under-attack#.WJnuChIrLdQ>.

⁶² *Ibid.*, Swedish: "den helige Ande kom in i mitt liv."

⁶³ See Gerdmar, "Bibelkritiken höll på att förstöra min gudsrelation" ("Biblical Criticism Nearly Destroyed My Relationship with God"), *Världen idag*, 3 February

is a subtle advertisement promoting G.'s own school – previously, Livets Ord Theological Seminary, and now the Scandinavian School of Theology – in contrast to what he deems as less trustworthy evangelical institutions.

For G. decades ago, a charismatic experience of the Spirit and an uncompromising stance on Scripture's reliability opened a door to renewed faith. Numerous scholars, myself included, can sympathize with the crisis of faith that G. experienced as a young theology student. Several coping strategies could be explored, albeit not in this article.⁶⁴ What is significant to note from the aforementioned memoirs, I suggest, is the *argumentum a fortiori* ("from the greater to the lesser"). As G. tells it, biblical criticism nearly destroyed his relationship with God. Therefore, how much more will biblical criticism threaten to destroy the relationship with God for any layperson who engages in biblical criticism? In Swedish charismatic circles today, there is probably no one within biblical studies who has greater academic merits or more extensive university experience than does G. himself. The greater example (G.'s nearly destroyed faith) is a model to laypeople – including current and prospective students. A likely effect of his argumentation would be to inspire fear of the academy in certain conservative theology students, who may believe that a church-related institution is their only safe alternative.

As the apostle Paul's life teaches us, people can change in unanticipated ways, and unexpected challenges can lead to unforeseen responses and developments (Gal 1:15–17; cf. Acts 9:1–9). In 1977, the distinguished German NT scholar Eta Linnemann caused a stir when she renounced her Lutheran tradition, her professorship, and "the his-

2017, <http://www.varldenidag.se/gastkronika/bibelkritiken-holl-pa-att-forstora-min-gudsrelation/Bbbqar!ECQPoluvMnt8qrVK4F@pNg>.

⁶⁴ Already in 1977, James Barr's critique of fundamentalism appeared (*Fundamentalism* [London: SCM, 1977; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978]), and in 1984, Barr followed with numerous suggestions to recovering fundamentalists (*Escaping from Fundamentalism* [London: SCM, 1984] = *Beyond Fundamentalism: Biblical Foundations for Evangelical Christianity* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984]).

torical-critical method,” and eventually found a niche teaching at a Pentecostal seminary in Indonesia.⁶⁵ A contrast in how Linnemann and Gerdmar related to biblical scholarship after their respective alienations from Lutheran churches and after their charismatic experiences may also be observed: whereas the former disavowed her previous publications, even throwing them away and imploring others to do the same,⁶⁶ G. presents himself as a trustworthy authority largely on the basis of his academic standing as a *docent* in New Testament Exegesis at Uppsala University.

From Crisis to Attack: *Guds Ord räcker* in Its Argumentative Context

Doubtless, an expert in modern Scandinavian church history or the phenomenon of global Pentecostalism could add insights and contextualize *Guds Ord räcker* in ways that I (a Lutheran from the U.S. and living in Sweden since 2010) cannot. In such a contextualization, a few details could be relevant. In March 2014, pastor Ulf Ekman, the recently retired founder of the Word of Life charismatic megachurch and of the Livets Ord Theological Seminary in Uppsala, announced that he

⁶⁵ See Eta Linnemann, *Wissenschaft oder Meinung? Anfragen und Alternativen* (2nd enlarged ed.; Nuremberg: VTR, 1999); English translation: *Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology? Reflections of a Bultmannian Turned Evangelical*, trans. Robert W. Yarbrough (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001). The notion that the so-called “historical-critical method” is a single method is mistaken, however (see James A. Kelhoffer, “New Testament Exegesis,” 10–14).

⁶⁶ Linnemann, *Historical Criticism*, 20: “I regard everything that I taught and wrote before I entrusted my life to Jesus as refuse. I wish to use this opportunity to mention that I have pitched my two books *Gleichnisse Jesu ...* and *Studien zur Passionsgeschichte*, along with my contributions to journals, anthologies, and Festschriften. Whatever of these writings I had in my possession I threw into the trash with my own hands in 1978. I ask you sincerely to do the same thing with any of them you may have on your own bookshelf.” See further, Robert W. Yarbrough, “Eta Linnemann: Friend or Foe of Scholarship?” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 8 (1997): 163–89.

would soon convert to Roman Catholicism.⁶⁷ Only a few weeks earlier had come the sudden announcement that the church's seminary would close at the end of the spring 2014 term.⁶⁸ That seminary is where G. worked for two decades (1994-2014) as a lecturer and, eventually, as President (*rektor*); the vast majority of G.'s time there was in close collaboration with Ekman.

Gerdmar's response to those startling developments apparently included two related undertakings: writing *Guds Ord räcker* and, already in 2014, founding the Scandinavian School of Theology, where he continues to work as President, as lecturer in New Testament Exegesis and Homiletics, and with fundraising for the school.⁶⁹ Although it would be gratuitous to over-historicize this book, thereby reducing it to a response to the particular situation from which it apparently arose, exegetes routinely base their work on the supposition that information about a writ-

⁶⁷ See Ulf Ekman, "Därför lämnar jag Livets Ord och blir katolik" ("Therefore I Am Leaving Livets Ord and Becoming Catholic"), *Dagens Nyheter*, 9 March 2014, <http://www.dn.se/debatt/darfor-lamnar-jag-livets-ord-och-blir-katolik/>. See further, Ruth Moon, "Conversion of Sweden's Most Influential Pastor Causes 'Pain and Disillusion,'" *Christianity Today*, 14 March 2014, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2014/march/sweden-pentecostal-converts-catholicism-ulf-ekman-word-life.html>.

⁶⁸ See Mårten Gudmundhs, "Livets ord lägger ner sitt teologiska seminarium" ("Livets Ord Closes Its Theological Seminary"), *Världen idag*, 11 February 2014, <http://www.varldenidag.se/nyheter/livets-ord-lagger-ner-sitt-teologiska-seminarium/cbbnbk!1rm086K5uBxGCCgpep9frg/>.

⁶⁹ See <https://www.teol.se/en/about-us/faculty-and-administration/anders-gerdmar>. See further, Andréas Glandberger, "Skandinavisk Teologisk Högskola hotas av nedläggning" ("Scandinavian School of Theology Threatened with Closure"), *Aletheia – Blogg & Tankesmedja*, 16 June 2015, <http://aletheia.se/2015/06/16/skandinavisk-teologisk-hogskola-hotas-av-nedlaggning>, who reported in June 2015 that, according to a letter sent by Gerdmar on behalf of the school, a decision about whether to close the new school would be made later that month (i.e., at the end of the school's first academic year) and that, in the meantime, donations were actively being sought from individual believers, congregations and businesses with the hope of keeping the school open. See further, on the school's reported annual profit margins and organization as a privately owned foundation, <https://www.merinfo.se/foretag/Skandinavisk-Teologisk-H%C3%B6gskola-AB-5569735078/2k42r3a-1d3g5>.

ing's origin, audience and opponents is invaluable for understanding the writing's message and purpose. Curiously, *Guds Ord räcker* never mentions Ekman's conversion.⁷⁰

Several decades ago, some academics wondered why James Barr, already an established scholar at the University of Manchester and, subsequently, at Oxford University, would take the trouble to write *Fundamentalism* and *Beyond Fundamentalism*.⁷¹ David Parker explains that although “[f]undamentalism is often not taken seriously in scholarly circles,” Barr viewed it as a powerful and growing movement that threatened both the church and the academy.⁷² To the extent that any of Barr's critiques in *Fundamentalism* could be applied to *Guds Ord räcker* – and I think that some of them could be quite germane – Barr's concern about the alarming growth of fundamentalist churches and movements in Britain and America during the 1970s and 80s would seem to be forebodingly relevant even nowadays in some parts of Sweden. One can only speculate how, in the decades subsequent to G.'s crisis as a young theology student, he might have developed as a scholar and person of faith if he had found adequate guidance from the remedies offered in Barr's *Beyond Fundamentalism*.⁷³

⁷⁰ Elsewhere, in an interview published in the church newspaper *Världen idag*, G. acknowledges Ekman's leadership and influence: “There are few people who have meant so much for faith in the Bible (*bibeltro*) and for God's congregation in Sweden during the last decades as Ulf Ekman has” (David Högfeldt, “Ekmans ändrade bibelsyn är största frågan” [“Ekman's Changed View of the Bible Is the Largest Question”], *Världen idag*, 6 November 2015, <http://www.varldenidag.se/nyheter/ekmans-andrade-bibelsyn-ar-storsta-fragan/cbbokf!LXcQMq8yLH658CeGQ5FJ0Q/>).

⁷¹ See above, on Barr, *Fundamentalism*; *Beyond Fundamentalism*.

⁷² David Parker, “Deprogramming a Cult: James Barr and Fundamentalism in Australia,” *Colloquium* 17 (1984): 18–26, esp. 18–20 at 18. Parker summarizes part of Barr's critique that fundamentalism is “a dogmatic and rationalist type of Christianity which interprets the Bible to harmonise with its own conservative tradition by means of false hermeneutics based on the concept of inerrancy or infallibility and by use of an outdated pre-critical popular philosophical framework” (19).

⁷³ Barr, *Beyond Fundamentalism*, holds that believers can indeed remain faithful to their evangelical tradition while rejecting the pseudo-intellectual accoutrements of fundamentalism.

It will be interesting to see how G.'s theology, biblical interpretation and new school of theology unfold. Perhaps, with time, he will find a way to moderate from the peculiar views of the NT and Christian origins marshaled in a book published on the heels of a close colleague's conversion and abandonment of their long-time educational and ecclesial endeavors. One lesson to be gleaned from early church history is that the particularities of an individual's or a movement's inception are not necessarily emblematic of subsequent developments. Regardless of where G.'s journey takes him, the academy has a responsibility to speak out when its credentials are being co-opted to legitimize the dissemination of such misinformation.

The End of Innocence: On Religious and Academic Freedom and Intersubjectivity in the Exegetical Craft – A Response to James Kelhoffer

Anders Gerdmar

Skandinavisk Teologisk Högskola
anders.gerdmar@teol.se

This is a response to James Kelhoffer's review of my book *Guds Ord räcker: Evangelisk tro kontra romersk-katolsk* [*God's Word Is Enough: Protestant Faith versus Roman-Catholic*].¹ I will argue that:

- 1) it is surprising that Kelhoffer writes, and *SEÅ* publishes, a review of a confessional and popular book, written and available in Swedish, whereas the review is in English so that the reader cannot evaluate Kelhoffer's critique;
- 2) that Kelhoffer makes the mistake to apply scholarly rules of the game to quite another game, confessional theology, and that he himself thereby takes on a role that is confessional rather than scholarly;
- 3) that modern theological academia must be multi-vocal, whereas Kelhoffer seems to favour that one consensus should rule the academic work;
- 4) that Kelhoffer fails to show that my positions in the scholarly issues he addresses are characterised by unsound scholarship; and

¹ James A. Kelhoffer, "Simplistic Presentations of Biblical Authority and Christian Origins in the Service of Anti-Catholic Dogma: A Response to Anders Gerdmar," *SEÅ* 82 (2017): 154–78; Anders Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker: Evangelisk tro kontra romersk-katolsk* (Uppsala: Areopagos, 2016).

- 5) that Kelhoffer, through baseless speculations about myself and Christian leaders who have endorsed the book, goes beyond the pale and erects a wall between his department at Uppsala University and large portions of Swedish Christianity.

THE BOOK AND ITS BACKGROUND

One Sunday in March 2014, an elderly woman asked me: “Do I need to become a Catholic to be a real Christian?” The background was that her pastor, Ulf Ekman, had announced his conversion to the Roman-Catholic Church, which caused an earthquake in his great network.

As a theologian in the same circles, I felt obliged to give a pastoral response, so I wrote a blog which surprisingly was shared by thousands.² This confirmed that there was a need for pastoral advice in this confessional network. When people continued to ask similar questions, I decided to write a book.

The Genre and Audience

In the foreword, I clearly state the purpose and target group for the book. The book is pastoral, written for normal churchgoers in Swedish free-church circles, and in no way aimed for the scholarly community, as I explicitly state on page 21:

I’m primarily writing this book out of this pastoral (counseling) perspective, not as a debate book in order to discuss with my Roman Catholic Colleagues. That would have been another, thicker book with footnotes aiming to meet all counter arguments. The purpose of the book is to offer guidance to many brothers and sisters in the faith, not least in Pentecostal-Charismatic circles, who are confused and at a loss.

² Anders Gerdmar, “Varför jag aldrig valde att konvertera till Rom,” *Anders Gerdmar*, 13 March 2014, <http://www.andersgerdmar.com/swedish/varfor-jag-aldrig-valde-att-konvertera-till-rom/699/>; English version: idem, “Why I Never Chose to Convert to Roman-Catholicism,” *Anders Gerdmar*, 15 March 2014, <http://www.andersgerdmar.com/blog/why-i-never-chose-to-convert-to-roman-catholicism/708/>.

Appreciating the genre and context of the book is thus necessary. The audience neither wants nor needs long footnotes with isagogical discussions. In terms of method and intention, the parts referring to the Bible belong within the field of biblical theology. Most of the readership is fairly unaware of issues such as the historicity of Corpus Paulinum, and the book was not written to discuss such questions. There is a place for these issues, but this was not the place. Thus, the book could be compared to a pastoral book written by a Lutheran on baptism or Catholic on the pope, or a pamphlet against faith in Jesus.

Kelhoffer is of course right in that the questions discussed in *Guds Ord räcker* are far more complex than such a book can accomplish. Unfortunately, he fails to appreciate that most of the problems he addresses have to do with confessional tenets of faith, and had he appreciated that, his review would probably not have been written. This also results in Kelhoffer's misguided critique that my book does not have the interpretive and critical depth it would have had, had it been written for an academic audience. Apparently, Kelhoffer's main concern is of another kind, namely to voice his own agenda.

The Reception of the Book

The reception of the book has been predominantly positive, with many reviews in both journals and blogs. Thankfully, a typical remark has been that the book is both to the point and friendly in tone. As an example, a leading Roman-Catholic blogger wrote a post called "Anders Gerdmar has not written an anti-Catholic book."³ The friendly tone is

³ Bengt Malmgren, "Anders Gerdmar har inte skrivit en antikatomsk bok," *Bengts Blogg*, 11 August 2016, <https://bengtalmgren.wordpress.com/2016/08/11/anders-gerdmar-har-inte-skrivit-en-antikatomsk-bok>. For more blog reviews, see <http://victura.nu/bloggat-om-guds-ord-racker>. Some reviews are written by scholars, see, e.g., Docent Dr. Christian Braw, "Gedigen granskning av den katolska katekesen" ("Substantial Scrutiny of the Catholic Catechism"), *Dagen*, 19 September 2016, http://www.dagen.se/kultur/gedigen-granskning-av-den-katolska-katekesen-1.778848?cx_art; Docent Dr. LarsOlov Eriksson, "Romersk-katolsk teologi jämförs med evangelisk"

natural to me, with many close friends and relations who are Roman-Catholic. I also cherish my opportunities to minister to Roman-Catholic charismatics.

It thus seems as if my aim to give pastoral advise to people has been accomplished, and combining a pastoral role with a scholarly one is quite common for theologians. I was ordained as *Verbi Divini Minister* before I pursued a scholarly career, and I see no problem combining the two roles.

It is therefore peculiar that Kelhoffer, as a chair in New Testament Studies, with such a fervour attacks a book which in no way is addressed to the scholarly community. That *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok* publishes it as a peer-reviewed article, and that the reviewers approved it, is also surprising. Having myself been responsible for the editing of the annual,⁴ I have never seen any article addressing a pastoral book like this. It would be as surprising should Kelhoffer attack the confessional writings of a Roman-Catholic, an agnostic, or a feminist fellow exegete.

Trying to Give a Fair Description of Roman-Catholic Doctrine

Furthermore, Kelhoffer tries to describe my book as an “antiheretical treatise,” whereas even people who do not agree consider the book friendly and to the point.⁵ Yet, Kelhoffer criticises my way of defining what he calls “evangelical, charismatic tradition relative to (perceived) Catholic errors.”⁶ Firstly, I have not said that the Roman-Catholic church is heretical, nor that my discussion is anti-heretical. “Heresy” is normally distinguished from “schism.” It should not be used lightly, and

(“Roman-Catholic Theology is Compared to Protestant [Theology]”), *Världen Idag*, 9 September 2016, <http://www.varldenidag.se/recension/romersk-katolsk-teologi-jamfors-med-evangelisk/BbbphC!CGgfXZqIKTe3jXQc3ijGUQ/>. The latter notes that “Gerdmar’s presentation is objective (*saklig*) and illuminating (*upplysande*).”

⁴ SEÅ 68 (2003)–70 (2005).

⁵ Kelhoffer, “Simplistic Presentations,” 170, 173.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 168.

I do not. The only context is when I talk about heresy is in connection with Marcion and the Gnostics. I hold them to be heretical, a view that I share with most Christians.

Secondly, Kelhoffer is almost the first to criticise the tone in the book. As already noted, a Roman-Catholic blogger wrote that: “Anders Gerdmar *has not written an anti-Catholic book*,”⁷ and I do neither, as Kelhoffer claims, engage in any “heated debate.” I clearly state that “it is no secret that the book is written to argue for a Protestant position.”⁸ But instead of majoring on all kinds of popular Roman-Catholic piety, building a “straw man” and then criticising it, as many considerably more polemical books do, I chose to let the official Catechesis of the Catholic Church (CCC) describe Roman-Catholic faith.⁹ Kelhoffer argues that my reading is “consistently flat, overlooking the contexts, debates, compromises and reappraisals behind many of them.”¹⁰ However, every reader understands that discussing all of these questions would take several volumes, and that would not be a pastoral book. The CCC is an official teaching aid in the Roman-Catholic church, and of course, there is a world of theology and documents behind the CCC. I also know that there is a whole continuum of opinions among Roman-Catholic theologians (some of which I have known for almost 40 years), and I could have chosen to discuss only one of the party lines. But that had not been fair, and in an attempt not to misrepresent Roman-Catholic faith, or to present a biased view, I used the Catechesis.

⁷ See above, 181.

⁸ Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 23. Swedish original: “Det är ingen hemlighet att boken är tillkommen för att ge skäl för en evangelisk position.” Worth noting here is that I do not confess to be evangelical, which is how Kelhoffer labels me. That is something else than the German *evangelisch* or the English “Protestant.”

⁹ It is available online: http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM accessed 2017-06-02; a Swedish version is found here: <http://www.katekesen.se>.

¹⁰ Kelhoffer, “Simplistic Presentations,” 169.

RELIGIOUS AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM:
A CASE FOR FREEDOM OF FAITH AND INTERSUBJECTIVITY

Kelhoffer fails to appreciate that I am expressing opinions of faith and not scholarly ones. Under the heading “The Bible and Tradition,” Kelhoffer states that my notion of God’s Word is “particular to recent and contemporary fundamentalist Protestant traditions.”¹¹ Firstly, the view of Bible and tradition is a matter of faith, and not one of scholarship. As scholars we can describe, but not prescribe faith. Roman-Catholic doctrine has certain views, and they are, of course, matters of faith, just as Protestant doctrines. But there is no scholarly method to verify or falsify any of them.

When Kelhoffer therefore criticises my view of the Bible as being arbitrary, he himself is taking a confessional position, criticising my faith, and that of classical Christianity and of Protestantism.¹² For example, according to Luther, the Bible is God’s Word inspired by the Spirit of God.¹³ The same view is expressed in the foundational documents of Protestantism. The preface of *Confessio Augustana* says: “...the doctrine of which, derived from the Holy Scriptures and pure Word of God...” *The Lausanne Covenant*, which is accepted by most of the evangelical world, states in article 2 that: “We affirm the divine inspiration, truthfulness and authority of both Old and New Testament Scriptures in their entirety as the only written word of God.”¹⁴ In my pastoral capacity I agree to these tenets of faith, and as for *Confessio Augustana*, this would be the norm for ordained ministers in the Church of Sweden.

Faith is anyone’s right, even an exegete’s. Kelhoffer, the present author, or any other individual is, from an academic perspective, free to

¹¹ Kelhoffer, “Simplistic Presentations,” 159.

¹² For this, see Ingemar Öberg, *Bibelsyn och bibeltolkning hos Martin Luther* (Skellefteå, Artos, 2002).

¹³ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁴ *The Lausanne Covenant* is available online here: <http://www.lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant>.

think or believe whatever he wants about the Bible. However, Kelhoffer is not correct when he suggests that I am of the opinion that biblical truths do not need to be interpreted. This is contradicted firstly by *Guds Ord räcker*,¹⁵ and secondly by my scholarship, where I have specialised in how ideology and theology influences exegetes in their interpretation, especially in connection with antisemitism.¹⁶

When Kelhoffer criticises my view on tradition, he misrepresents my view on post-biblical creeds. Using the term “Tradition under the roof of Scripture” I argue for a positive view of tradition—but different from a Roman-Catholic one—which accords with a *Sola Scriptura*-position:

One can see Scripture as a roof under which a range of different things can exist, culturally different and time-conditioned expressions of faith, traditions, if you like. This is not wrong, but self-evident.¹⁷

I also say that the Nicene creed is “tradition in the best meaning of the word, but still subordinated to Scripture;”¹⁸ it can be seen as a summary of central scriptural tenets.

In sum, my views are not, as Kelhoffer states, “particular to recent and contemporary fundamentalist Protestant traditions,” but rather commonplace in a Protestant faith environment. But most importantly, all of these questions are confessional in character, to which scholarly rules do not apply.

¹⁵ Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 28, 61, 70, 134f, 155.

¹⁶ See Anders Gerdmar, “Exegesis, Postmodernism, and Auschwitz: On Human Dignity and the Ethics of Interpretation,” *Studia Theologica* 51 (1997), 113–143; idem, *Rethinking the Judaism-Hellenism Dichotomy: A Historiographical Case Study of Second Peter and Jude* (ConBNT 36; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2001); idem, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism: German Biblical Interpretation and the Jews, from Herder and Semler to Kittel and Bultmann* (Studies in Jewish History and Culture 20; Leiden: Brill, 2009); idem, “Baur and the Creation of the Judaism-Hellenism Dichotomy,” in *Ferdinand Christian Baur and the History of Early Christianity*, ed. Martin Bauspiess, Christof Landmesser and David Lincicum (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), to mention a few examples.

¹⁷ Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 68f.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 69–70.

The Chimera of Objectivity and Exegesis as Intersubjective Dialogue

Kelhoffer argues as if there only existed one scholarly truth and no place for different interpretations. He fears that if my interpretations were correct, they would “foster the construction of a parallel moral and religious universe.”¹⁹ Firstly, this makes my book too important. Secondly, there is no such thing as *two* competing universes—there are many, and scholarship today is not uni- but multivocal.

During the 20th century, the Humanities and Social Sciences, including religion and theology, underwent a significant change, a *hermeneutical turn*. This is the discovery that there are indeed *many* symbolic universes, and that the positivistic idea of objectivity is only a chimera. Hans-Georg Gadamer says: “It is the tyranny of hidden prejudices that makes us deaf to what speaks to us in tradition;”²⁰ here, “tradition” could also refer to the texts we are interpreting. Some “truths” are so self-evident to us in the scholarly, cultural, and research tradition in which we are raised, that we are not aware of the prejudices and *Vorverständnis* which are there even before we begin our investigation.²¹ Instead, we must appreciate the necessity of people with different symbolic universes finding ways of cooperating instead of ostracising the Other.

During my doctoral study, research and teaching at Uppsala University 1995-2005, a majority of the members of the Higher Seminar in

¹⁹ Kelhoffer, “Simplistic Presentations,” 156.

²⁰ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 282, as noted in Björn Skogar, *Viva vox och den akademiska religionen: Ett bidrag till tidiga 1900-talets svenska teologihistoria* (Stehag: Symposium graduale, 1993), 24.

²¹ Cf. Ludwig Wittgenstein: “Die Idee sitzt gleichsam als Brille auf unsrer Nase, und was wir ansehen, sehen wir durch sie. Wir kommen gar nicht auf den Gedanken sie abzunehmen” “Where does this idea come from? It is like a pair of glasses on our nose through which we seewhatever we look at. It never occurs to us to take them off.” Ludwig Wittgenstein, L. 1986 (1945). *Philosophical investigations*. Translated by G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell), 45 (§103).

New Testament Studies were ordained or active in different confessional seminaries. There were Roman-Catholics, liberal and High-Church Lutherans, pastors from free-churches, feminists, perhaps someone with agnostic leanings. Faith was basically no issue: the discussion focussed on the subject matter. To me this was a fruitful experience, getting to see new perspectives. Sharp discussions on methods and results were normal. Outside the seminar the scholars were pastoring and writing confessional pieces on baptism, the Eucharist, prayer, worship, mysticism, or feminism.

An article by the feminist scholar Jane Flax, "The End of Innocence,"²² became a hermeneutical wake-up call for me, showing that all scholarly activity is dependent on perspective. This perspective stimulated the writing of a New Testament methodology where also Kari Syreeni contributed, the first chapter being called "Hermeneutical exegesis."²³ Under the heading "Fair Play" we stated the following:

We see exegesis as a cooperation between different scholars, just as you in a sport agree on different rules. The truth is that this belongs to the great advantages of the academy: different perspectives enrich one another.... The academy is the place of this interaction, and here, no reading has the monopoly, neither any of the modern nor the post-modern reading ... exegesis with a hermeneutical perspective can help us to show how interpretation is affected by our spectacles.²⁴

Different games have different sets of rules. In handball, it is forbidden to kick the ball, in soccer it is forbidden to touch the ball with your hands. When in the university, the scholar discusses scholarly problems, when in church, she preaches Mariology or *Sola Scriptura*. But in the scholarly game, no reading has inherent precedence, the value is in the strength of the arguments.

²² Jane Flax, "The End of Innocence," in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, ed. Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (London: Routledge, 1992).

²³ Anders Gerdmar with Kari Syreeni, *Vägar till Nya testamentet: Metoder, tekniker och verktyg för nytestamentlig exegetik* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2006).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

Thus, in evaluating my book, Kelhoffer applies a scholarly set of rules to a book that follows another the set of rules, those of faith. I on my part defend the right of my fellow scholars to write whatever they wish in their confessional environments. However, in a scholarly discussion at Uppsala University or at Scandinavian School of Theology, only the academic set of rules should apply, and what cannot be convincingly argued in an intersubjective way has no weight in that discourse. Seemingly, Kelhoffer has also misunderstood the concept of intersubjectivity in the book mentioned. Intersubjectivity is a self-critical and respectful interaction between two interpreters:

Every fellow-player (*medspelare*) is a subject and since the rules of the game are those of scholarship, hypotheses and readings should be intersubjectively testable. That is, all fellow-players are able to see and assess each other's readings, and challenge them to prompt further re-examination and in-depth study.²⁵

Thus, even though Kelhoffer has the freedom to express whatever he likes regarding for example, Mariology or Pentecostal-Charismatic views; he can do so as a private person, but not in his capacity as an academic authority.

In fact, even the historical-critical method is biased. Daniel Patte rightly points to the need of a non-hierarchical relationship between "critical" and "ordinary" readers;²⁶ the exegetes often believe that they have the "true" interpretation, in contrast to people's "interested uncritical interpretations":²⁷

We presuppose that by contrast with these interpretations our critical interpretations are at least partially free from pre-understandings and partially objective;

²⁵ Gerdmar with Syreeni, *Vägar till Nya testamentet*, 12. Swedish original: "Varje medspelare är ett subjekt och eftersom det är vetenskapens spelregler som gäller bör hypoteser och läsningar vara intersubjektivt prövbara. Det vill säga: alla medspelare kan se och pröva varandras läsningar, och utmana till omprövning och fördjupning."

²⁶ Daniel Patte, *Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: A Reevaluation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 62.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 54–55.

that is, they are presentations of truths about the text ... that should be acknowledged by everyone.²⁸

Instead, any exegete unavoidably operates out of some kind of ideological perspective, such as one of faith or one of “methodical atheism.” From a hermeneutical perspective, methodical atheism is no more objective than methodical theism.

It is no longer possible to accept a hierarchical model where the historical-critical professor acts as a schoolmaster, lecturing others as to what is the proper interpretation, perhaps even imagining that she is objective, innocent and “just telling the truth.” Such a dated Enlightenment-oriented religious stream becomes an “academic religion,” where the professor is the high priest, the canon is whatever is in vogue, and initiation is to acknowledge a certain academic creed.²⁹

The sound aspects of post-modern interpretation put a halt to such a development. Objectivity is a chimera—in academia we should instead promote intersubjective dialogue between peers, as equals, each one acknowledging his or her perspective. Therefore, I cannot accept Kelhoffer’s way of telling what perspectives are acceptable. A Protestant Pentecostal-Charismatic stance is not more biased than a liberal Lutheran or a Roman-Catholic stance.

SOME EXEGETICAL ISSUES: IS PSEUDONYMITY AXIOMATIC? OR: CONSENSUS AS ARGUMENT

Kelhoffer raises some exegetical questions, and I am more than happy to answer them.³⁰ Below I argue that Kelhoffer oversimplifies the debate on Pauline pseudonymity, and that my views on canonicity is in line with one honourable line in the debate about canon.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 54.

²⁹ For the term “Academic religion,” see Skogar, *Viva vox*, and the very title. Unfortunately, he does not major on the term as such.

³⁰ To discuss all his questions would take much more space, so I choose the most important ones.

Firstly, Kelhoffer criticises my use of “Paul” when mentioning Ephesians and Colossians. Firstly, in my book, I do not enter into any isagogical debate, since this would be irrelevant to the audience. This was rather introduced by Kelhoffer. Moreover, as noted above, I do not deem it advisable to footnote a pastoral text or one written with the purpose to edify, nor a sermon, with isagogical questions. Few churches or denominations would. A church normally reckons with a canon, and lectionaries and different teaching aides are used without much isagogy. From a canonical point of view, the texts form a unity. Furthermore, as I will discuss below, the canon and its limits is another matter of faith that scholarship never can finally settle. It can describe, but not prescribe.

Secondly, as for pseudonymity, to Kelhoffer, the “debates about the non-Pauline authorship of Colossians and, especially, of Ephesians were settled decades ago for most biblical scholars.”³¹ To him, the pseudonymity of the two letters seems axiomatic, and he quotes a range of predominantly tertiary sources to support his view. Contrary to what one would expect from a scholar aiming for objectivity, Kelhoffer refers to no sources that support the authenticity of the letters, even though roughly 50% of the modern commentators on these letters do support their authenticity (see below). Due to my doctoral work on 2 Peter and Jude, I am well aware of the problems of pseudepigraphy, and in that study, I was able to show how a picture of two letters so petrified in research tradition could be turned upside down through reversed heuristics.³² I have also analysed research traditions long enough to not simply sing along with the choir.³³ In fact, the power of such traditions can often be stronger than the arguments themselves.³⁴ A scholar does not eas-

³¹ Kelhoffer, “Simplistic Presentations,” 163.

³² Gerdmar, *Rethinking*, 300–342.

³³ This has been a theme in my research ever since the beginning, see, for example, Gerdmar, *Rethinking*; idem, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, both quoted above.

³⁴ This is also true of the anti-Jewish and antisemitic prejudices in exegetical research tradition (see, e.g., *ibid.*).

ily break with the dominant research tradition, and the recalcitrant easily becomes ostracised. These are just the mechanics of “Normal science,” as described by Thomas S. Kuhn in his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.³⁵

Kelhoffer here simply follows one research tradition when he refers to a broad consensus, as if the pseudonymity of the letters were axiomatic. But this is to oversimplify the problem. I teach my students that “consensus is a road sign, but never an argument,”³⁶ which basically means: “go and look in that direction, but remember that only arguments count, not how many scholars agree.”

The debate on Ephesians and Colossians is not, as Kelhoffer indicates, settled. It is true that anyone reading the original texts of Ephesians and Colossians sees that they linguistically differ from other parts of the Pauline corpus, and some themes are treated here which are not discussed in other parts of Corpus Paulinum. But the discussion is ongoing. In a recent Brill volume, Paul and pseudonymity gets a thorough treatment.³⁷ For example, questions of language and style are intricate indeed.³⁸ Given that only Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles are presented as written by Paul only—the rest seem to have co-authors or amanuenses involved³⁹—the question of Paul’s own style is extremely difficult.³⁹

³⁵ Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970).

³⁶ See my early contribution, Anders Gerdmar, “Consensus as Argument: Methodological Remarks on the Jesus Seminar,” *SEÅ* 62 (1997), 175–87.

³⁷ Stanley E. Porter and Gregory P. Fewster, eds., *Paul and Pseudepigraphy* (Pauline Studies 8; Leiden: Brill, 2013).

³⁸ So Andrew W. Pitts, “Style and Pseudonymity in Pauline Scholarship: A Register Based Contribution,” in *Paul and Pseudepigraphy*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Gregory P. Fewster (Pauline Studies 8; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 113–52.

³⁹ Rom: Paul as author, Tertius as amanuensis (16:22); 1 Cor: Paul and Sosthenes plus “my greeting with own hand” (16:21); 2 Cor: Paul and Timothy; Gal: Paul, probably with amanuenses (see 6:11: “with my own hand”); Eph: Paul, no mention of amanuensis; Phil: Paul and Timothy; Col: Paul and Timothy, probably amanuensis (see 4:18: “My, Paul’s, greeting with own hand”); 1 Thess: Paul, Silas, Timothy; 2 Thess:

As for pseudonymity, there is no agreement that such a device was accepted in early Christianity. To the contrary. Donald Guthrie, discussing Acts of Paul, which was forged by a presbyter, comments that “[t]he condemnation of the Asian presbyter ... who admitted the production of the Acts of Paul shows clearly enough that where the pseudonymous device was recognised it was not merely not tolerated but emphatically condemned.”⁴⁰ The presbyter was condemned and deprived of his office,⁴¹ as Tertullian notes:

... let men know that in Asia the presbyter who compiled that document, thinking to add of his own to Paul’s reputation, was found out, and though he professed he had done it for love of Paul, was deposed from his position. (*Bapt.* 17)

Moreover, the Muratorian Canon rejects the letters to the Laodiceans and the Alexandrians as forgeries on lines 63–67:

... there is current also (an epistle) to the Laodiceans, (and) another to the Alexandrians, (both) forged in Paul’s name to (further) the heresy of Marcion, and several others which cannot be received into the catholic church for it is not fitting that gall be mixed with honey.⁴²

Paul, Silas, Timothy, with Paul’s “signature” in 3:17: “I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the mark in every letter of mine; it is the way I write”; 1 Tim: Paul; 2 Tim: Paul; Tit: Paul; Philem: Paul and Timothy, although it is indicated that Paul did not hold the reed (see v. 19: “I, Paul, write this with my own hand”). On amanuenses, see E. Randolph Richards, *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul* (WUNT II:42; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1991); and Jonas Holmstrand, “De paulinska breven,” in *Jesus och de första kristna: Inledning till Nya testamentet*, ed. Dieter Mitternacht and Anders Runesson (Stockholm: Verbum, 2006), 240–79, 243, who wisely abstains from terms as “authentic,” “psedopauline” and “deuteropauline” due to the complexity of the questions of authorship.

⁴⁰ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990), 1019.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1016.

⁴² Translation is from Armin D. Baum, “Authorship and Pseudepigraphy in Early Christian Literature: A Translation of the Most Important Source Texts and an annotated Bibliography,” in *Paul and Pseudepigraphy*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Gregory P. Fewster (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 21.

Hence, there is evidence of churches rejecting a forger, but there is no evidence of churches accepting a forgery. It is also very plausible that the early church “remembered” which texts were authentic and which letters Paul had written. Until it is proven that pseudonymous texts were accepted as authoritative in first century Christianity, we need to be careful in accepting hypotheses of pseudonymity.

In fact, it is only much later that Ephesians and Colossians came to be regarded as pseudonymous. Colossians is accepted as Pauline by, for example, Irenaeus (*Haer.* 3.14.1), Tertullian (*Praescr.* 7), and Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 1.1). Its authenticity was first questioned in 1838, when Ernst T. Mayerhoff claimed to have found un-Pauline thoughts in the letter.⁴³ Moreover, Kelhoffer mentions the popular view that Colossians was written after the earthquake in 60/61 CE, since the disappearance of the city would make it impossible to refute that the letter was pseudonymous. This, however, remains a both highly hypothetic and unlikely scenario, yet to be substantiated. Lacking external proof, we are left with internal arguments, which places the questions of authorship in a quagmire with license for much speculation.

The first to question the authenticity of Ephesians was Edward Evanston in 1792. However, it is the first Pauline letter to be attested in early Christianity,⁴⁴ and Kelhoffer is not correct when he argues that the “debates about the non-Pauline authorship ... especially of Ephesians were settled decades ago for most biblical scholars”.⁴⁵ The consensus (even though I have argued that consensus is not an argument) in the case of Ephesians, is not at all that clear, as Harold W. Hoehner has

⁴³ Ernst Mayerhoff, *Der Brief an die Colosser, mit vernehmlicher Berücksichtigung der drei Pastoralbriefe kritisch geprüft* (Berlin: Mayerhoff, 1838); cf. Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians-Philemon* (WBC 44; Grand Rapids: Zondervan), xlii. Whatever “un-Pauline thoughts” are, the argument easily becomes circular, since one first has to decide that the thoughts of the undisputed letters are the Pauline thoughts, and then exclude the other letters.

⁴⁴ See Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 1–6.

⁴⁵ Kelhoffer, “Simplistic Presentations,” 163.

shown, listing all the commentators. Between 1901 and 2001, 52% (116) of these were for Pauline authorship, 40% (91) were against, and 8% unsure.⁴⁶ Between 1991 and 2001, the number was 50/50.⁴⁷ In fact, the classical issues of suggested impersonal nature of Ephesians; language and style; purported “un-Pauline” theology of Ephesians; and literary relationship between Colossians and Ephesians are all disputed, and to dogmatically say that the question is settled is simply not correct. It also remains to be proven that there were “Pauline schools” which could have produced forgeries of Pauline letters,⁴⁸ and that early Christianity would accept such products. Noteworthy is that Kelhoffer dismisses other “likely pseudepigrapha” including 1–2 Peter (but not Jude!?) by referring to consensus alone—not to any argument.⁴⁹

Therefore, the question remains: who is bowing his knees in Ephesians (Eph 3:1, 14 – note the anacoluthon)? Is it a forger, a disciple or the apostle? The question is very important, since a pseudonymous authorship of Ephesians and Colossians, among other things, heavily affects the understanding of Pauline Christology and ecclesiology.

In summary, in my book, I neither argued *for* nor *against* any pseudonymity of the letters, since isagogical discussions were irrelevant. Nevertheless, responding to Kelhoffer I note that his demand for a consistent isagogical treatment of New Testament texts used in pastoral or confessional contexts is unrealistic. As I have shown, when Kelhoffer, in connection with pseudonymity, describes the reference to Paul as author as “exceptionally contentious assertions about matters central to the discipline” he is not correct. They are not exceptionally contentious, since half or more of the commentators on Ephesians believed in its authenticity. Therefore, my views are not idiosyncratic, and the issue of Pauline pseudonymity is not that self-evident. In the name of objectivity, I think

⁴⁶ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 19.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 20. Hoehner includes complete lists of these commentators.

⁴⁸ See e.g., John Reumann, *Variety and Unity in New Testament Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 105–28.

⁴⁹ Kelhoffer, “Simplistic Presentations,” 165.

Kelhoffer should have admitted to the unresolved status of the matter instead of neglecting the views of a large group of scholars.

How Canon Became Canon

Here I will argue that the limits of the canon is a faith decision, not something scholarship can decide, and that my views on canon history well accord with an honourable line of scholarship, whereas Kelhoffer critiques me for oversimplifying the long process of canonisation.

Firstly, the acceptance and reception of a canon is a normative matter of faith, whereas the historical development of it is a descriptive matter of history. The canon of, say, James Joyce or Winston Churchill is established only by enumerating the works written by that author whereas a canon of sacred texts is established by a faith community recognising them as sacred.

In my book, I am expressing a belief which is fundamental in Protestant faith, namely that the biblical texts are inspired. To believe or not believe in any canon is anyone's right, but scholarship cannot tell what is sacred and not, since it eludes scholarly verification or falsification. I also express the belief that the canon became as it is through the work of the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures...

... (what I call canon proper [*reell kanon*]) is a work by the Holy Spirit and was given to the Body of Christ as divine revelation. The Body of Christ in different places, independently of one another, acknowledged the biblical texts as the Word of God, since they understood that these are holy, inspired texts, and began using them in the worship just as they used the Old Testament...⁵⁰

This is close to what the nestor of textual and canon criticism Bruce M. Metzger says in his classic book on the canon:

...a high degree of unanimity concerning the greater part of the New Testament was attained among the very diverse and scattered congregations of believers not only throughout the Mediterranean world, but also over an area extending from Britain to Mesopotamia.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 79–80.

⁵¹ Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and*

Secondly, my context and purpose is to argue against the Roman-Catholic view that the canon was established through decisions by the (Roman-Catholic) Church.⁵² My argument is partly historical: we do not have evidence that this is how canonisation took place. In spite of Kelhoffer's denial of this fact, I do tell the audience that the process was complex: some texts were antilegomena, there was a variation between the canon of different churches,⁵³ and so, with broad strokes of the brush, I try to explain how the New Testament emerged.

The scholarship around canonicity is large and active, with different opinions.⁵⁴ Again, to pretend that there is only one picture in the scholarly universe is simply an oversimplification. Not being a Marcion scholar, I am nevertheless standing in a long tradition which emphasises Marcion's and the Apologetes' importance⁵⁵ for the emergence of the canon. Metzger states that the church may well have established its canon as early as Marcion, but to him:

It is nearer to the truth to regard Marcion's canon as accelerating the process of fixing the Church's canon, a process that had already begun in the first half of the second century. It was in opposition to Marcion's criticism that the Church first became fully conscious of its inheritance of apostolic writings. As Grant aptly puts it, "Marcion forced more orthodox Christians to examine their own presuppositions and to state more clearly what they already believed."⁵⁶

Restoration (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 75, 254.

⁵² I am not alone in saying this, cf., e.g., Harry Y. Gamble, "The New Testament Canon: Recent Research and the Status Quaestionis," in *The Canon Debate*, ed. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 267–94, 291.

⁵³ Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 80.

⁵⁴ As indicated by Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders, eds., *The Canon Debate* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), a 579 page long book showing a variety of scholarly opinions on the diverse issues in the canon debate.

⁵⁵ For Marcion in recent research, see John Barton, "Marcion Revisited," in *The Canon Debate*, ed. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 341–54.

⁵⁶ Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 99.

Later research, such as Barton's, minimise Marcion's influence,⁵⁷ but a suggestion as Metzger's remains a possibility. If 2 Pet 3:16 is early, this would support an even earlier beginning of the process.

Mentioning Marcion, Kelhoffer criticises my formulation: "attacks of Marcion and the other Gnostics."⁵⁸ He is right that later research has problematised the use of the (highly disputed) term Gnostic for Marcion, as well as the use of the term of gnosticism at large.⁵⁹ However, there are affinities between later "Gnostics" and Marcion, and to Heikki Räisänen, "The much-debated issue of whether or not Marcion was a gnostic is largely a question of definition," and he talks of Marcion's thought as "a brand of Paulinism already open to gnostic influence."⁶⁰

Also, the dates of the canonisation process are disputed, from the date of Canon Muratori,⁶¹ to suggestions that already Origen includes a canon list which could be regarded original.⁶² Trobisch's fascinating sug-

⁵⁷ According to Barton, "the New Testament books, or at any rate the central 'core' of the Gospels and the Pauline and Catholic Epistles, were already used very widely in the time before Marcion, and continued to be so used after him" (Barton, "Marcion Revisited," 343).

⁵⁸ Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 82–83 at 83. Swedish: "Markions och de andra gnostikernas angrepp."

⁵⁹ The finds of the Nag Hammadi corpus was a game changer, as already appreciated by Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 107. "The much-debated issue of whether or not Marcion was a gnostic is largely a question of definition.... Marcion's notion of an inferior creator God, his negative view of the world and corporeality, and his criticism of the Old Testament come close to views commonly considered "gnostic," but other views of his do not.... The roots of Marcion's theology are in Paul's thought. Perhaps one can speak of 'a brand of Paulinism already open to gnostic influence.'" Antti Marjanen and Petri Luomanen, eds., *Companion to Second-Century Christian 'Heretics'* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 107. See also Barton quoted above.

⁶¹ Peter Balla, "Evidence for an Early Christian Canon (Second and Third Century)" in *The Canon Debate*, ed. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 372–85, 381.

⁶² Edmon L. Gallagher, "Origen via Rufinus on the New Testament Canon," *NTS* 62 (2016): 461–76, concludes: "If the argument favouring the basic authenticity of this list proves persuasive, then scholars will need to give consideration to this passage in

gestion of a very early canon manifested as “The First Edition of the New Testament” is also worthy of consideration,⁶³ and the research into the connection between the emergence of the codex, the use of *Nomina Sacra*, and an early canon may also support an early date.⁶⁴

In summary, in my book *Guds Ord rücker*, I have described the canonisation, as one should in a popular book, with broad strokes, but even in contemporary research the perspective I have presented is as legitimate as any other. My central historical thesis in the book does hold water. What Kelhoffer calls my “idiosyncratic views” are not peculiar at all.

Apostolicity as Criterion

Kelhoffer is able to gather more theology from my book than I thought was there:⁶⁵ he argues that I am expressing the “Protestant historiographic myth,” although he does not provide any examples from my text. His problem is that I refer to the unity of the earliest apostolic church, and am talking about the “sharpness, fullness and breadth (*bredd*)” of apos-

their histories of the canon. The recent dominant view has maintained that lists of Christian Scripture began to appear only in the fourth century with the work of Eusebius and those who followed him, an idea that also plays a significant role in the fourth-century dating of the Muratorian Fragment. The late dating of that text, though having gained popularity in the wake of the publication of Hahneman’s book, has never won a consensus.”

⁶³ David Trobisch, *The First Edition of the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). For a seemingly balanced view on Trobisch’s suggestions, see Everett Ferguson, “Factors Leading to the Selection and Closure of the New Testament Canon: A Survey of Some Recent Studies,” in *The Canon Debate*, ed. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 295–320, 312.

⁶⁴ See Tomas Bokedal, *The Scriptures and the Lord: Formation and Significance of the Christian Canon. A Study in Text, Ritual and Interpretation* (ThD Diss., Lund University, 2005), 128–56.

⁶⁵ See Umberto Eco et al., *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) and his musings over the eisegesis of the reviewers of *The Name of the Rose*.

tolic Christianity. Again, what I am doing in *Guds Ord räcker* is presenting a Protestant view on authority, not any religio-historical analysis. From a theological point of view I see no problem in stating that the Holy Spirit was able to form a sharpness, fullness and breadth in Apostolic Christianity. On apostolicity as criterion in early Christianity, F. F. Bruce concludes that “the teaching and example of the Lord and his apostles, whether conveyed by word of mouth or in writing, had axiomatic authority to them.”⁶⁶ From a historical point of view, of course the diversities in early Christianity must be explored as I have when criticizing the oversimplification of New Testament historiography that the Judaism-Hellenism dichotomy meant.⁶⁷ But that is less than relevant to the readers of *Guds Ord räcker*.

THE ETHICS AND THE POSSIBLE REPERCUSSIONS OF
KELHOFFER’S ARTICLE FOR CONGREGATIONAL LIFE,
ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND CONSTRUCTIONS OF AUTHORITY

The academic issues brought up by Kelhoffer are worth discussing, but in the last part of his article, he turns to foul play. He attacks not only me but the nine Christian leaders who have endorsed the book, and who represent a growing constituency in Swedish Christianity, by calling us an “evangelical curia,”⁶⁸ and warning others about coming under their, and my, influence.

In the heading above, taken from Kelhoffer’s article, I only substituted my name for Kelhoffer’s when he warns against our influence, since his way of arguing has implications for the relationship between congregational life and the Department of Theology at Uppsala University.

⁶⁶ F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988), 255.

⁶⁷ In my dissertation (Gerdmar, *Rethinking*), I tried to sketch a view of the early development beyond the Judaism-Hellenism dichotomy, and in *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, I discussed how an anti-Jewish bias had distorted the historiography of early Christianity.

⁶⁸ Kelhoffer, “Simplistic Presentations,” 171.

Kelhoffer now enters the areas of church politics and academic politics, and criticizes not only my opinions in the book reviewed but also things irrelevant for a scholarly evaluation. The general tone in his presentation of my book is also highly ironical. For example, talking of “Gerdmar’s *regula fidei*,”⁶⁹ as if I had presented my own views as authoritative, Kelhoffer is purporting that I mean that my “teaching in *Guds Ord räcker*, if accepted, guarantees that one is experiencing the richness of God’s Spirit.”⁷⁰ I have neither expressed, nor thought anything of the kind. He also finds the following sentence in my text outrageous (although he does not quote it correctly): “If we fill our lives with the truth of God’s Word [here, he omits ‘and the Spirit of truth’] our life becomes true—and as exciting as it can be, and we need no other canon.”⁷¹ I cannot see that this is against the mainstream of Christian tradition, but Kelhoffer surprisingly calls for society(!) to take action and “question the agenda of such overconfident followers of any religion or movement.” Kelhoffer is free to have any opinion he wants on faith, but again he misrepresents my text and my views.

Finally, Kelhoffer claims that my views would lead to “an idolatrous bibliolatry with a focus not primarily on faith in God but, rather, on whether one agrees with a particular theology of revelation.” This being a baseless caricature of the message in the book, Kelhoffer only criticises a straw man of my theology.

A Caricature of Respected Christian Leaders

Furthermore, Kelhoffer goes beyond the pale when he not only critiques my book, but warns against the consequences of assenting to the views expressed there. This includes warning against what he ironically calls an

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 171.

⁷¹ Ibid., 171; cf. Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 27–28. Swedish original: “Om vi fyller oss med Guds ords sanning och sanningens Ande blir vårt liv sant – och hur spännande som helst, och vi behöver inget annat rättesnöre.”

“evangelical curia,” comprised of myself and the nine respected Christian leaders who endorsed my book. Kelhoffer argues that:

If giving assent to G.’s views were mandated in a faith community, *the potential for manipulation, extremism and misuse of power could be alarming*. This may not be idle speculation, given that nine Swedish “Christian leaders” contribute forewords to *Guds Ord räcker* endorsing its teaching. Together, G. and those leaders could aspire to comprise a kind of evangelical curia. Anyone under the influence of such leadership who would defy the leadership’s teaching could risk being ostracized (italics mine).⁷²

See also Kelhoffer’s footnote 54 where he states: “Hopefully, the leaders who endorsed this book did not fully grasp its flaws and potentially deleterious effects.”

The first question is whether this is the verdict of the chair of New Testament Exegesis at Uppsala University, or if it is to be understood as a private opinion. If the first is the case, a high official of a state university is caricaturing, not only a colleague, but a great portion of Swedish Christianity, both their historical traditions and current practice. This would be less than wise. Is a classical Protestant position, as presented in my book, to be ostracized from a Swedish state university?

Secondly, the Christian leaders (by Kelhoffer ironically put within quotation marks) and called “an evangelical curia,” are indeed highly respected in Sweden. Among them are legends like Olof Djurfeldt, the long-term editor of the Christian newspaper *Dagen*; docent Dr. Carl-Erik Sahlberg, once a high-ranking candidate for archbishop in the Church of Sweden and instrumental for the “Miracle in Clara,”⁷³ a rare combination of social work and evangelism; pastor Stanley Sjöberg, a leading free-church pastor for half a century; pastor Sven Nilsson, nestor of the charismatic movement; Stefan Swärd and Stefan Gustavsson,

⁷² Kelhoffer, “Simplistic Presentations,” 171.

⁷³ “Miraklet i Klara” (The Miracle in Klara) was a documentary in national Swedish TV describing the remarkable Christian social, evangelistic and charismatic work in S:ta Clara, an independent parish in Church of Sweden tradition in Stockholm. The visionary leader of this was docent Carl-Erik Sahlberg, who also teaches at Scandinavian School of Theology.

leading evangelical profiles; Hans Augustsson and Linda Bergling, with highly respected counseling ministries; and more. Where is the evidence that these leaders are forming any curia, or are perceived as one, other than in Kelhoffer's imagination? Furthermore, given Kelhoffer's demands for thorough scholarly argumentation, *where is the evidence to substantiate Kelhoffer's offensive and insulting talk of "manipulation, extremism, and misuse of power?" and that "[a]nyone under the influence of such leadership who would defy the leadership's teaching could risk being ostracized.*"⁷⁴ Does he understand that such statements attack large portions of Swedish Christianity? And does he understand that such statements indeed erect a wall between his institution and these groups?

A final example of this tendency is Kelhoffer's suggestion that my advice to rely on God's Word alone would lead to an "overconfidence among those convinced that they possess a, or the, correct understanding of the Bible, *as confirmed by their ecstatic experiences.*"⁷⁵ But there is no mention of such an argument in the book, rather, I state that every kind of prophecy and similar charismatic phenomena is subordinated to the written Word of God,⁷⁶ and so, his statement seems rather to be another attack on Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity according to Kelhoffer's own unsubstantiated picture of the same. He is free to do so, but it represents a large group in the constituency of the Department of Theology at Uppsala University. What is more, in Sweden, the movement is on the rise, serving 250 000 people, while classical free-churches and evangelical Lutherans are at 305 000, declining.⁷⁷ As the fourth "church tradition" with 500–600 million adherents,⁷⁸ it also represents the fastest growing constituency of Christianity world-wide (the four

⁷⁴ Quoted above.

⁷⁵ Kelhoffer, "Simplistic Presentations," 171 (emphasis mine).

⁷⁶ Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 28.

⁷⁷ Statistics are from Torbjörn Aronson, pers. comm. 2017-06-12.

⁷⁸ Todd M. Johnson, David B. Barrett, and Peter F. Crossing, "Christianity 2010: A View from the *New Global Atlas of Global Christianity*," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 34/1 (2010): 29–36; cf. World Christian Database, <http://www.worldchristiandatabase.org/wcd>.

“traditions” being Roman-Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, and Pentecostal/Charismatic⁷⁹). To my mind, informing this growing movement in the areas of exegesis and hermeneutics is an important task, whereas Kelhoffer without substantiation expresses his prejudice about this “fourth tradition” of Christianity.

Erecting Boundaries That Can Impact Both Congregational Life and Academic Freedom

Kelhoffer’s remarks about an evangelical curia, and his attack on classical Protestant views of the Bible and its interpretation not only lack substantiation, but are also “erecting boundaries that can impact both congregational life and academic freedom.” The latter is a quote from Kelhoffer’s article, suggesting that the standpoints in my book would erect such boundaries, but it is Kelhoffer’s views that threaten to do so.⁸⁰ If Kelhoffer’s views would be the only legitimate ones in his department, the relationship between large parts of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity and Uppsala University would be at risk. Uppsala University is a state university, and its professors are public servants. Is a confession to certain tenets of exegetical research tradition obligatory to be part of the New Testament department at Uppsala University? Of course not.

Moreover, Kelhoffer, again without any evidence, questions the academic freedom of the teachers and students at Scandinavian School of Theology (*Skandinavisk teologisk högskola*). This is baseless. The teachers are well qualified, a majority from Lund and Uppsala University, and those of our graduates that have pursued academic careers, have continued their studies in prestigious universities. Several have earned their doctorates.⁸¹ As for Kelhoffer’s questioning of religious freedom, students come from, and graduates are serving in, a variety of Christian

⁷⁹ For this categorisation, see Douglas Jacobsen, *The World’s Christians. Who They are, Where They are, and How They Got There* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

⁸⁰ Kelhoffer, “Simplistic Presentations,” 170.

⁸¹ Under its present and previous brand (Livets Ord Theological Seminary) the school has graduated 102 theologians with Bachelor’s or Masters degrees.

denominations (ranging from Roman-Catholic to free-church contexts). In the academic classroom of Scandinavian School of Theology only one thing counts: intersubjectively testable arguments. Suggesting anything else without substantiation is a break against collegial spirit.

Kelhoffer also questions my standing as docent at Uppsala University due to my positions in *Guds Ord räcker*. As for my own credentials or integrity, I will not try to vindicate myself.⁸² I can only note that my doctorate and docent competency from Uppsala University have never been questioned, nor has my teaching abilities at the same institution, where I also mentored new academic teachers for a number of years. I have been elected into several scholarly societies, I am active in international research, in publishing, conferences and different networks. Kelhoffer surprisingly suggests that my academic standing should be incompatible with writing pastorally or arguing confessional theological standpoints. But every exegete, including agnostics, read the texts through the spectacles of their ideology. And Kelhoffer's suggestion that I could not combine my academic standing as docent in New Testament exegesis at Uppsala University and my pastoral role just because I stand for a classical Protestant view of the Bible is not feasible. The university did not grant me the doctorate or the standing as docent based on anything but my scholarly and pedagogical work. According to the Swedish law of freedom of religion, they could not ask about my faith, even though I know that my road may have been steeper because of my former church affiliation.⁸³ To question someone's credentials on the grounds of her faith is as wrong for a liberal as for a conservative colleague.

⁸² In his initial pleasantries Kelhoffer also mentions this.

⁸³ This meant extra work for me when applying to the doctoral program just because I was member of Word of Life, and I had to earn my credentials the hard way. The same was true for Roman-Catholic scholars in Sweden a generation before, according to my friend and first supervisor René Keiffer RIP, who in spite of highest marks on his research was side-stepped for promotion because of being Roman-Catholic. Such things of course has been a constant experience for women, as well as for different minority groups.

Using Speculation and Vague, Pejorative Categorisations

In trying to contextualise *Guds Ord räcker*, Kelhoffer admits that he, as a Lutheran from the U.S. and living in Sweden, cannot put his evaluation into context. I agree; his judgement of the Christian leaders and the Swedish situation shows a lack of understanding and discernment. Kelhoffer also tries to give a psychological background to my book. That Ulf Ekman's conversion was a decisive factor is no secret, and Kelhoffer questions why I am not mentioning Ekman.⁸⁴ The answer is that there is something called honour; I did not want the book to be considered a personal attack, because it was not. In spite of obvious disagreements, I also acknowledge the many good things Ekman has done, for example that he, as a rare Pentecostal-Charismatic leader in Europe, invested 20 years of efforts in building an academic institution. Kelhoffer, again merely speculatively, suggests that the writing of *Guds Ord räcker* had to do with the closing of Livets Ord Theological Seminary. However, the new school, Scandinavian School of Theology, is founded on a vision and a calling, it was not founded in reaction to the Roman-Catholic Church or anything else. Moreover, the bylaws of the school expressly states its "openness to all of the Body of Christ."⁸⁵ Thus, Kelhoffer's speculations lack foundation.

Even more questionable is his use of the term "fundamentalist" to describe my views.⁸⁶ This kind of "name calling" is of course inappropriate in scholarly works. According to Kelhoffer, my views are "particular to recent and contemporary fundamentalist Protestant traditions."⁸⁷ Us-

⁸⁴ Kelhoffer, "Simplistic Presentations," 177.

⁸⁵ *Stiftelseurkund och stadgar för Stiftelsen Skandinavisk teologisk högskola* (Sverige, 2014).

⁸⁶ The meaning of the term has changed considerably since *The Fundamentals*, published from 1910 to 1915, which represented classical Protestant views. Today, the term "fundamentalist" is even less helpful in scholarly contexts than when Barr wrote his books.

⁸⁷ Kelhoffer, "Simplistic Presentations," 159.

ing the word fundamentalist, he is not only wrong, but employs a highly ambiguous and pejorative term, something which scholars should never do. Firstly, the term is highly disputed, and often used in relation to American right-wing politics, or Islamic or Hindu fundamentalism. That is, it is often used for anything that one abhors. Secondly, his use of the term fundamentalist is an *ad hominem* argument, which also is unworthy of scholarly discussion. Kelhoffer qualifies the term by referring to the outdated and highly Americo-centric books by James Barr, who writes that:

while the word 'fundamentalist' does carry the suggestion of narrowness, bigotry, obscurantism, and sectarianism, it remains an open question whether this suggestion, though unpleasant, is not a true and just one.⁸⁸

It is not fair to refer to such descriptions when evaluating me or my book. Kelhoffer also refers to David Parker to describe fundamentalism (the title of Parker's work is "Deprogramming a Cult" [!]):

a dogmatic and rationalist type of Christianity which interprets the Bible to harmonise with its own conservative tradition by means of false hermeneutics based on the concept of inerrancy or infallibility and by use of an outdated pre-critical popular philosophical framework.⁸⁹

Returning to a psychological reflection, Kelhoffer muses on what would have happened had I "found adequate guidance from the remedies offered in Barr's *Beyond Fundamentalism*."⁹⁰ Kelhoffer then refers Barr's view that "believers can indeed remain faithful to their evangelical tradition while rejecting the pseudo-intellectual accoutrements of fundamentalism."⁹¹ However, if Kelhoffer only had trusted my hermeneutical-exegetical perspective, as practiced in my research and *Vägar till Nya*

⁸⁸ James Barr, *Fundamentalism* (London: SCM, 1981), 3.

⁸⁹ Kelhoffer, "Simplistic Presentations," 177, n. 72; cf. David Parker, "Deprogramming a Cult: James Barr and Fundamentalism in Australia," *Colloquium* 17 (1984): 18–26, 19.

⁹⁰ Kelhoffer, "Simplistic Presentations," 177.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 177, n. 73.

testamentet, he would not have needed to speculate like this. It certainly does not present “outdated pre-critical popular” views, but a philosophically quite fresh and realistic approach:

The hermeneutic is primary, and exegesis “rests” in the hermeneutic ... This does not mean an unrestrained subjectivity, but an exegesis with a hermeneutical consciousness of the conditions of subjectivity and the demands of intersubjectivity.

The purpose is an exegesis which is hermeneutically conscious, but that is also as far as one gets within the academic rules of the game. With only those rules, one can hardly answer the questions put in confessional or other contexts where Bible texts have direct relevance for faith.... In fact, it begins with our identity as interpreters and our community of interpretation, then to exegesis of texts, then to attempts to integrate the results into our situation in life, et cetera....

What we as professional exegetes can offer is methods, techniques and tools—and hermeneutical reflection—plus our suggestions for interpretations of New Testament texts. This does not mean that we see exegetes or other scholars as priests in an academic religion. It is churches or other communities and individuals that must grapple with the text out of the respective interpretive environment and tradition, or in dialogue with other traditions. It is in order to support the interpreter on his or her way to an individual, responsible, intersubjectively testable interpretation we have presented techniques, methods and models for New Testament exegesis ... and we need hermeneutical consciousness using them.⁹²

⁹² Gerdmar with Syreeni, *Vägar till Nya testamentet*, 134–35. Swedish original: “Hermeneutiken är alltså primär, och exegetiken ’vilar’ i hermeneutiken.... Det betyder inte heller en ohämmad subjektivitet, bara utan en exegetik med hermeneutiskt medvetande om subjektivitetens villkor och intersubjektivitetens krav. Målet för exeges av nytestamentliga texter är då en saklig, hermeneutiskt medveten exeges, men det är också så långt man kommer med akademins spelregler. Med endast dessa spelregler kan man knappast svara på de frågor man ställer i konfessionella eller andra sammanhang där bibeltexten har direkt relevans för tron.... Faktiskt med början i vår identitet som tolkare och vår tolkningsgemenskap, sedan till exeges av texter, sedan till försök att införliva resultatet i vår livssituation, etc.... Vad vi som fackexegeter kan erbjuda är metoder, tekniker och redskap – och hermeneutisk reflektion – samt våra förslag till tolkningar av nytestamentliga texter. Det betyder inte att vi ser exegeter eller andra forskare som präster i en akademisk religion. Det är kyrkor eller andra gemenskaper och individer har att brottas med texten utifrån repektive tolkningsmiljö och

This was and is my interpretive strategy, and if using Barr's and Parker's definitions, there is certainly nothing "fundamentalist" in any of my books, but rather twenty years of scholarship, from my first scholarly article⁹³ to my latest, with a thoroughgoing hermeneutical and ideology-critical perspective. This does not collide with my pastoral position. What I, or any other docent at Uppsala University does in church, Roman-Catholic, liberal or conservative Lutheran, free-church—or if she does not attend any—and whether she is writing books on *Sola Scriptura* or on the Rosary, is none of the business of the Uppsala University staff.

From Foul Play to Fair Play

In this response, I have shown

- 1) that my book *Guds Ord räcker* is a pastoral book written for a popular and confessional audience, not meant for the scholarly guild;
- 2) that the book, contrary to Kelhoffer's description, has been well received, both for its attempt to objectivity and its friendly tone;
- 3) that my views on the Bible and the relationship between Scripture and tradition are confessional and can neither be verified nor falsified with scholarly methods; and
- 4) that the exegetical talking points brought up by James Kelhoffer are precisely *talking points*: my views on Pauline pseudonymity, or the formation of the canon, or the emergence of early Christianity are not extreme, but as well argued as any other, and shared with a considerable part of the scholarly guild.

The last part of his article has to do with Kelhoffer's ethics where he speculates about groups in Swedish Christianity, using vague and pejo-

tolkningstradition, eller i samtalet mellan olika tolkningstraditioner. Det är för att stödja tolkaren på vägen till en sådan egen, ansvarig, saklig och intersubjektivt prövbar tolkning som vi här presenterat tekniker, metoder och modeller för nytestamentlig exegetik.... och en hermeneutisk medvetenhet när vi använder dem."

⁹³ Anders Gerdmar, "Exegesis, Postmodernism, and Auschwitz – On Human Dignity and the Ethics of Interpretation," *Studia Theologica* 51 (1997), 113–43.

rative descriptions. Even worse, he is caricaturing a whole group of respected leaders as an evangelical curia with baseless insinuations of them ostracising people with other views. This is foul play, and should not have been accepted in a scholarly periodical. However, to my mind there is a way forward. As Kari Syreeni and myself note in the foreword to *Vägar till Nya testamentet*, scholars with different background can agree on methods. Their diverse backgrounds are not decisive, and different perspectives can be enriching.⁹⁴ In our cooperation, we called this “fair play.” In closing, I would like to quote another author:

A university shall not allow discrimination based on religious confession or other factors. *Opportunities to study and conduct research in theology and religious studies shall be open not just to liberal Lutherans, (liberal) Catholics and (liberal?) agnostics but, indeed, to all who value critical examination and scholarly methods of inquiry.*⁹⁵

Rereading this text, which is from Kelhoffer’s own installation lecture at Uppsala University, I see that we are very much in agreement when it comes to both methodological and hermeneutical questions.

Let us, then, open up for dialogue between all competent exegetes with different perspectives: liberal or conservative Lutherans, liberal or conservative Catholics, agnostics and Pentecostal-Charismatics, and more. In doing so, real “fair play” can begin, and anyone interested in informed readings of the New Testament can benefit from the products of our common toil. But a precondition for this is an “end of innocence”—the naïve idea that others are biased, but I myself am not.

⁹⁴ Gerdmar with Syreeni, *Vägar till Nya testamentet*, 8, 13.

⁹⁵ James A. Kelhoffer, “New Testament Exegesis as an Academic Discipline with Relevance for Other Disciplines,” *CurBR* 11 (2013): 221 (emphasis mine).

A Diverse Academy Recognizes No Boundaries for Critical Inquiry and Debate: A Rejoinder to Anders Gerdmar

JAMES A. KELHOFFER

Uppsala University

james.kelhoffer@teol.uu.se

Therefore, I believe it is essential to “move” biblical interpretation’s primary place from the academy to the church and [to move] its framework to the universal Christian faith. Then biblical interpretation will be in its correct milieu.¹

οὐ γάρ ἐστιν κρυπτὸν ὃ οὐ φανερόν γενήσεται οὐδὲ ἀπόκρυφον
ὃ οὐ μὴ γνωσθῆι καὶ εἰς φανερόν ἔλθῃ (Luke 8:17)

I would like to thank Anders Gerdmar (G.) for such a thoughtful and stimulating response to my review article of his book *Guds Ord räcker*.² The issues at stake are significant and deserve to be debated in academic forums, including this journal, and can be meaningful for scholars, lay

¹ Anders Gerdmar, “Bibelforskningens primära ‘plats’” [“The Primary ‘Place’ of Biblical Scholarship”], *Stefan Swärd: Allt mellan himmel och jord*, 15 December 2012, <http://www.stefansward.se/2012/12/15/har-kommer-ett-till-gastblogginlagg-av-anders-gerdmar-2>. Swedish original: “Därför tror jag att det är väsentligt att ‘flytta’ bibeltolkningens primära plats från akademien till kyrkan och dess ram till den allmänliga kristna tron. Då får bibelforskningen sin rätta miljö.”

² Anders Gerdmar, “The End of Innocence: On Religious and Academic Freedom and Intersubjectivity in the Exegetical Craft – A Response to James Kelhoffer,” *SEÅ* 82 (2017): 179–209, responding to James A. Kelhoffer, “Simplistic Presentations of Biblical Authority and Christian Origins in the Service of Anti-Catholic Dogma: A Response to Anders Gerdmar,” *SEÅ* 82 (2017): 154–78, review of Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker: Evangelisk tro kontra romersk-katolsk [God’s Word Is Sufficient: Evangelical Faith against Roman Catholic (Faith)]* (Uppsala: Areopagos, 2016).

people, and the general public. In his response, G. outlines five main objections to my review. This rejoinder will address each of those objections.³

My principal theme will be that scholarly arguments made in a popular book are subject to scholarly review. Gerdmar's claim to an exemption from such critique on the grounds that he addresses a popular audience amounts to a plea for special treatment. Since G. repeatedly presents his theology as if it were consistent with sound exegetical scholarship, he applies a double standard to assert credibility from scholarship without engaging in pertinent scholarly debates on some level, even in a popular book. This is where G.'s use of his scholarly credentials is relevant: he writes as a "docent" in New Testament Exegesis at Uppsala University, and uses that academic standing to add weight to his teaching. This rejoinder will also object to G.'s inference that calling into question one scholar's views of biblical literature suggests a lack of tolerance for diverse viewpoints. On the contrary, any worthwhile academic discourse requires the freedom to both give and receive critique and to engage in debate.

APPEALS TO SCHOLARSHIP IN A POPULAR BOOK MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW

First, G. holds that an academic journal should not review a popular book and that, in any case, such a review should have been published only in the same language as the book under review.⁴ I am of the opin-

³ I thank the editors of *SEÅ* for offering Gerdmar the opportunity to respond to my review article and for allowing me to respond in this rejoinder. Due to the journal's publication schedule, after G.'s response arrived I was given one week to submit this reply. Given the word limit and schedule prescribed by the editors, this rejoinder is selective.

⁴ Gerdmar, "Innocence," 179: "[I]t is surprising that Kelhoffer writes, and *SEÅ* publishes, a review of a confessional and popular book, written and available in Swedish, whereas the review is in English so that the reader cannot evaluate Kelhoffer's critique."

ion that any material in the public domain pertinent to scholarship can, and should, inform academic discourse. The question of what is pertinent can, and should, be debated. But, in any case, it is unclear to me just who within, or outside of, the academy would be qualified to judge for the academy as a whole what should or should not be subject to scholarly review. One Swedish theologian, Christian Braw, describes G.'s book as last "fall's most discussed book in Swedish Christendom."⁵ It is perhaps not surprising that a writing of such interest, by an exegete and supported by numerous interpretations of biblical literature, would be of interest to an exegetical journal.

To be shielded from critique of the scholarly positions taken would, in effect, remove the author from a shared discourse, placing him outside of it – or even above it – unless and until he decides that he is engaging with scholars rather than a popular audience. Gerdmar chose to publish his views in a popular book rather than, first, to subject them to "peer review" and, subsequently, to produce a version for the general public. In this journal, moreover, he has the opportunity to defend those views in an academic forum.

The objection to my responding in English to a Swedish-language book is curious. Gerdmar himself wrote an impressive monograph in English, treating German-language exegetes and theologians.⁶ I believe that readers of that monograph can evaluate his earnest critiques and, likewise, that readers of my review article can evaluate my assessment of G.'s Swedish-language book. Presumably, G. and I would agree that biblical studies is an international and multilingual discipline. I do not understand an insistence that the book be reviewed only in Swedish. One

⁵ Christian Braw, "Gedigen granskning av den katolska katekesen" ["Substantial Scrutiny of the Catholic Catechism"], *Dagen*, 19 September 2016, http://www.dagen.se/kultur/gedigen-granskning-av-den-katolska-katekesen-1.778848?cx_art. Swedish: "höst-ens mest omdebatterade bok i svensk kristenhet."

⁶ Anders Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism: German Biblical Interpretation and the Jews, from Herder and Semler to Kittel and Bultmann* (Studies in Jewish History and Culture 20; Leiden: Brill, 2009).

reason I chose to write in English is that several issues stemming from his book merit attention and debate in an international context.

As G. sees it, the mixing of the popular/ecclesial with the academic is inappropriate. He is naturally entitled to his views on that matter, but it would be unreasonable to insist that all people in the church or the academy affirm the same limits and distinctions as he does. Notably, G. himself has recently reviewed in a church newspaper a popular, nonconfessional book on the historical Jesus written by two exegetes.⁷ This first objection is not compelling as an indictment of a scholar for writing the review or of a journal for deciding to publish it.

A CRITIQUE OF APPEALS TO SCHOLARSHIP IS NEITHER CONFSSIONAL NOR ANTI-CONFSSIONAL

Second, I am alleged to require that “scholarly rules of the game” apply to “confessional theology,” a requirement that G. labels as itself “confessional.”⁸ It is true that G.’s book has to do with faith – a contrast he draws between two types of Christian faith, the charismatic evangelical and the Roman Catholic. My article states clearly that my purpose is not to take sides in that confessional debate. Above all, what I respond to is that *Guds Ord räcker* defends G.’s views on faith with numerous seemingly academic arguments, including problematic arguments about biblical literature and that literature’s purported origins, apostolic unity, and nearly instantaneous canonization by the church. I focus on stances

⁷ Anders Gerdmar, “Jesus var ingen misslyckad profet” [“Jesus Was Not a Failed Prophet”], *Världen idag*, 13 February 2017, <http://www.varldenidag.se/recension/jesus-var-ingen-misslyckad-profet/Bbbqba!G5mAkykZBosYBVCH@zfhfg/>, reviewing Cecilia Wassén and Tobias Hägerland, *Den okände Jesus: Berättelsen om en profet som misslyckades* [*The Unknown Jesus: The Story about a Prophet Who Failed*] (Stockholm: Langenskiöld, 2016).

⁸ Gerdmar, “Innocence,” 179: “Kelhoffer makes the mistake to apply scholarly rules of the game to quite another game, confessional theology, and that he himself thereby takes on a role that is confessional rather than scholarly.”

that G. presents as based in biblical scholarship to support a confessional theology. I do not demand that G.'s – or anyone else's – theology follow particular "scholarly rules." In the use of scholarship to prove his views or disprove Roman Catholic views, G. does not merely express his opinions about faith but also acts in his capacity as an established scholar. My review article is neither confessional nor anti-confessional when noting that some of G.'s attempts to defend his faith or to attack another faith are inconsistent with scholarly opinions that he himself has affirmed in previous publications – for example, concerning hermeneutics and opposition to an essentialist historiography.⁹

One of my review's central contentions is that the choice of genre and forum is not a license to escape critique for misusing, or presenting skewed views of, scholarship. Those who appeal to scholarship to promulgate their views should, in all fairness, be prepared to face feedback, and even critique, from fellow researchers. The author does not seem ready to meet that prerequisite for participating in a mutual give-and-take academic discourse about his argumentation in *Guds Ord räcker*. In his reply to my review, G. dismisses my objections to his scholarship as if I were making confessional attacks on his faith, a dismissal that reduces our differences to two contrasting confessional opinions. I must reject that relativist oversimplification of our disagreements.

Even a popular book – perhaps especially a popular book – ought to have such a solid foundation in scholarship that it can withstand scrutiny, since its audience is most susceptible to being misled by an unbalanced presentation. Therefore, as an exegete I take seriously the potential of popular books both to inform and to mislead the general public. I also believe that a popular audience is capable of handling more complex alternatives and ambiguities than emerge from *Guds Ord räcker*. For these reasons, I do not see G.'s second objection as a serious challenge.

⁹ See Kelhoffer, "Response to Anders Gerdmar," 160–61, 166–68.

THE ACADEMY MUST BE BOTH
MULTI-VOCAL AND OPEN TO CRITIQUE

Third, G. thinks I hold “that one consensus should rule the academic work.”¹⁰ This objection inaccurately attributes to me an extreme and intolerant position, with the implication that his own view is unfairly marginalized. In fact, I agree with G. that “modern theological academia must be multi-vocal.”¹¹ Nothing that I wrote affirms a single consensus for academic work. My calling attention to certain views that are untenable in the light of scholarship does not amount to an affirmation of a monolithic “consensus.” Again, this would reduce our differences to two opposing dogmatic views.

A similarity may be noted in the argumentation in *Guds Ord räcker* and in this third objection: in both, numerous complexities and possible nuances are reduced to *a choice between two posited alternatives*. In the review, I characterize G.’s contrast between evangelical and Catholic positions as oversimplified, if also rhetorically advantageous for the aim of dismissing one alternative while commending the other. This third objection implies another questionable dichotomy: either the author’s views must be exempted from critique, or there is a problem with intolerance in the academy. That objection is a misuse of postmodernist and intersubjective principles, principles that rightly have a place in academic discourse. I acknowledge that no person is completely objective, but that does not mean that any person’s views, including my own, are exempted from critique. Since at least as far back as the 1800s, it has been commonly accepted that the results of anyone’s research may be questioned. In short, *the academy must be both multi-vocal and open to critique*. A multi-vocal setting without freedom to give and receive critique would not be a worthwhile academic milieu.

¹⁰ Gerdmar, “Innocence,” 179: “[M]odern theological academia must be multi-vocal, whereas Kelhoffer seems to favour that one consensus should rule the academic work.”

¹¹ Ibid.

A further example of an either-or dichotomy concerns reference to the so-called “historical-critical method.” As G. sees it, “even the historical-critical method is biased,” and the only acceptable alternative for scholarship today is to foster an “intersubjective dialogue.”¹² Elsewhere in his response to my review, G. cites an article in which I address the questions, “What is the relationship between newer and more traditional methods in New Testament Exegesis, and Is the so-called historical-critical method just *one* method?”¹³ My position of affirming a plurality of methodological approaches and perspectives within biblical studies should be clear from that article.

To refer to the “historical-critical method” as if it were a single method is therefore an egregious simplification.¹⁴ To label the method as “biased” is a desperate attempt to use postmodernity to his advantage, destabilizing scholarly consensus and opening the door to legitimizing as proper scholarship pre-critical assertions about biblical literature. Although I agree with G. about the need for “intersubjective dialogue,” for humility among all scholars, for awareness of one’s blind spots and agendas, and for every voice to be heard, no amount of intersubjectivity is going to erase the gains of 200 years of historical criticism.

When, in my review, I mention that “uncritical views” about biblical literature, such as those voiced in *Guds Ord räckter*, can “foster the construction of a parallel moral and religious universe,”¹⁵ I do not, as G. alleges, suppose that there are only “two competing universes.”¹⁶ Rather, my point is that there are certain views that fall outside the diverse cho-

¹² Gerdmar, “Innocence,” 188–89.

¹³ James A. Kelhoffer, “Nya testamentets exegetik som akademiskt ämne med relevans för andra ämnen,” *SEÅ* 77 (2012): 55–70 at 63–67; English translation (referenced in Gerdmar’s reply): “New Testament Exegesis as an Academic Discipline with Relevance for Other Disciplines,” *CurBR* 11 (2013): 218–33 at 224–26; revised version: *Conceptions of “Gospel” and Legitimacy in Early Christianity* (WUNT 324; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 3–18, at 10–14.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Kelhoffer, “Response to Anders Gerdmar,” 156.

¹⁶ Gerdmar, “Innocence,” 186 (emphasis original).

rus of scholarly voices that fervently engage in academic debates. No amount of listening to other voices is going to increase the likelihood that the apostle Paul would, as G. assumes in *Guds Ord räcker*, have written a letter like Ephesians.¹⁷ Nor would any amount of philosophizing about a “hermeneutical turn” render as plausible G.’s explanation that the whole church instantaneously accepted the NT writings as Scripture.¹⁸ Nor would a multi-vocal dialogue be likely to compensate for G.’s disregard in *Guds Ord räcker* for diversity of expression within the biblical writings.¹⁹

Therefore, my review article should not be construed as an expression of intolerance. Nor, in light of this journal’s invitation to G. to participate in a debate, can this journal be deemed intolerant. Nobody is excluded, and each person’s viewpoints are expressed freely and openly. This third objection shifts the focus of the debate from questionable appeals to scholarship to claims of academic intolerance and attributes to me an extreme hierarchical and positivist position that I do not affirm and that cannot be derived from my critiques of G.’s argumentation or from my other publications.

A POPULAR AUDIENCE DESERVES TO KNOW ABOUT RELEVANT DEBATES AND UNCERTAINTIES

Fourth, G. is unconvinced that his views are “characterised by unsound scholarship.”²⁰ This part of his response addresses only part of my objection that the book embraces several pre-critical positions, presents them as if they were backed by sound scholarship, and never hints that those positions are debated among scholars. That is problematic, especially when addressing a popular audience that can hardly be expected to see

¹⁷ See Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 76, 103, 115, 187, 188, 195.

¹⁸ Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 81–83; idem, “Innocence,” 195–98.

¹⁹ See further, Kelhoffer, “Response to Anders Gerdmar,” 169.

²⁰ Gerdmar, “Innocence,” 179: “Kelhoffer fails to show that my positions in the scholarly issues he addresses are characterised by unsound scholarship.”

through the oversimplifications. Might it also be ethically questionable for G., as President of the Scandinavian School of Theology, to engage in fundraising among that same misinformed audience?²¹

Although the constraints of a popular book understandably limit how much could have been said about differing perspectives, the book's genre is no excuse for ignoring debates or perpetuating misinformation. Were G. presenting only his own theology, omitting any mention of scholarly debate could be understandable. But since the theology is presented as if it were consistent with sound scholarship, a double standard seems to lend credibility from scholarship while eschewing engagement in pertinent scholarly debates at least on some level.

It comes as no surprise that, in his response, G. can list recent publications that support some of his views about biblical literature and its origins. That he aligns himself, for example, with Donald Guthrie and David Trobisch illustrates how far from mainstream biblical scholarship he places himself. However, I must commend him for taking up some critical issues – for example, pseudonymity. I sincerely hope that he will continue to do so in his future teaching and publications, whether scholarly or popular.

THE ASSESSMENT OF POWER STRUCTURES IS AN INTRINSIC PART OF CRITICAL INQUIRY

Fifth, G. asserts that I have put forth “baseless speculations” and erected a wall between my university faculty and certain churches.²² Worth mentioning here is his explicit goal, cited at the beginning of this rejoinder, of moving biblical interpretation from “the academy” to “the

²¹ See Kelhoffer, “Response to Anders Gerdmar,” 176.

²² Gerdmar, “Innocence,” 180: “Kelhoffer, through baseless speculations about myself and Christian leaders who have endorsed the book, goes beyond the pale and erects a wall between his department at Uppsala University and large portions of Swedish Christianity.”

church.”²³ The aspiration is one of segregation and freedom for church-based biblical interpretation vis-à-vis the academy, a move that G. envisions as essential for ecclesiological and hermeneutical renewal. He has every right to define the habitus of his scholarship outside the academy and within what he recognizes as “the universal Christian faith.” Parts of *Guds Ord räcker* may be viewed as an attempt to realize that vision and to concentrate control over biblical interpretation within churches that affirm a, or the, universal view of the Christian faith, albeit not a Roman Catholic view.

The allegation that my review erects a wall is without merit. No member of my university faculty could do that. Nor, to the best of my knowledge, would any of us would want to do so. For most of my colleagues, academic theology does not separate itself from church life but fulfills its task when it enters into a critical dialogue with diverse pastoral realities. Nonetheless, even pastoral theology is expected to respect scholarly criteria and to be prepared to defend its own methods, assumptions, and conclusions.

Let us now consider the objection to my purported speculations. To gather toward the beginning of *Guds Ord räcker* the affirmations of nine recognized religious leaders as a collective imprimatur for the teachings set forth is a remarkable assertion of power seeking to influence others. It is relevant and appropriate in a review to suggest likely effects of a book in wider contexts, including congregational and educational milieux. Further, an important part of academic freedom is the right to analyze structures of power and their likely or actual consequences – whether positive, negative, or both.

In the article, I demarcate critiques of the book,²⁴ on the one hand, and “possible repercussions” of the book,²⁵ on the other hand. However tentative, the latter also have a rightful place in scholarly discourse.

²³ See the citation of Gerdmar, “Bibelforskningens primära ‘plats,’” at the beginning of this rejoinder (page 210, above).

²⁴ Kelhoffer, “Response to Anders Gerdmar,” 159–70.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 170–79.

Gerdmar's soliciting of approval from nine leaders and the choice to use their collective approval to bolster the validity of his views are within the legitimate purview of a scholarly review. Gerdmar is incorrect, however, to allege that I "attack ... the nine Christian leaders who have endorsed the book."²⁶ What I do take issue with is a likely *effect* of G.'s *collecting* their endorsements at the beginning of a dogmatic book, which amounts to the assembling of an evangelical curia – an implicit warning to anyone who would disobey their judgment. I continue to wonder under what circumstances G.'s institution, the Scandinavian School of Theology, would provide a tolerant and multi-vocal environment that would allow a student or teacher there to question aspects of *Guds Ord räcker*. Contrary to G.'s strenuous objections, there is no "foul play" in raising such questions.²⁷

Gerdmar also bemoans alleged speculations about his life, although he does not specify to what he objects or give an alternate explanation. In the review, I summarize how G. himself has openly described a crisis he faced in his 20s, when he nearly lost his faith as a young theology student.²⁸ Just three years ago, the conversion of a close colleague to Roman Catholicism and the sudden closure of the school where G. had worked for twenty years may likewise have been traumatic. It is perhaps not merely idle speculation to wonder if those crises play some role in the control he would now exert over his coreligionists and fellow academics, for *Guds Ord räcker* makes extraordinary demands on how people should read the Bible, define their faith, and reject the tenets of another faith.

²⁶ Gerdmar, "Innocence," 199.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ See Kelhoffer, "Response to Anders Gerdmar," 174.

FROM DENYING EXEMPTION FOR PRE-CRITICAL
STANCES TO HOPE FOR RAPPROCHEMENT

A final comment may be made about the title of G.'s response, an allusion to Jane Flax in regard to "the end of innocence."²⁹ All of us in the academy, in the church, and in society at large have the right and even the duty to raise questions and to critique of what we find problematic. The raising of questions should not presume a naïve or innocent objectivity, however. A central point in this rejoinder is the rejection of G.'s unfounded supposition that a popular book should not be subject to scholarly review. His first defense of the book is that it is a response to a pastoral situation.³⁰ The same could be said of much, if not most, Christian literature through the centuries, beginning with the undisputed Pauline and the Deuteropauline letters in the New Testament. The credulous excuse of defending one's tradition could, hypothetically, be mustered to shield some of the antisemitic theology that G. justly criticizes in other publications. A pastoral focus is no excuse for poor scholarship or questionable theology, and even the noble goal of building up, or defending, a religious movement can have lamentable consequences for insiders as well as outsiders. Therefore, a book like *Guds Ord räcker* deserves to be debated, even in an academic forum.

It is commendable to make academic subjects, including biblical interpretation, accessible to the wider public, and I would not say that G. has irreparably damaged his position in the academy by writing *Guds Ord räcker*. One problem that I have raised in this rejoinder is that the book makes claims based on the author's position as a scholar, and yet asserts an exemption from scholarly critique. It would be unfortunate if, as a result, some colleagues would be inclined to question G.'s readiness to participate in a mutual, multi-vocal, give-and-take academic discourse.

²⁹ See Gerdmar, "Innocence," 187.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 180–81.

Nevertheless, one can hope for better circumstances for reciprocal admonition, learning, and exchange. Gerdmar is as welcome as he always has been in the Uppsala University New Testament research seminar. During my first years in Uppsala, he occasionally attended the seminar and made constructive and appreciated contributions. The discourse in the seminar would be poorer were he not to return. I hope that he will receive not only my critiques of his latest book but also my standing invitation to participate in the seminar.