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# The Biblical-Semitic Aspect of Hermeneutics: An Introduction to the Field of Study

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great joy and great privilege to present to you the concern and the approach of the "Biblical-semitic aspect" of hermeneutics. This theme will be developed according to the following outline:

1. Introduction
2. The background of logical dualism since Plato and Aristotle
3. The hermeneutical crisis at the beginning of the 21. century
4. The „Biblical-semitic aspect" in the hermeneutics of Biblical Theology
5. Summary and Theses

## 1. Introduction

The foundational background of the hermeneutical approach of the „Biblical-semitic aspect" is the insight that the Western-postmodern framework of understanding is foundationally alienated on the basic structural level from the framework of understanding of the Biblical revelation in the shape of Holy Scripture. This alienation had profound effects in the past and present on the life of Christians, both in Christian churches and in Christian theology as well as in Christian missions.

This means regarding our context of theological work that a re-orientation toward the processes of understanding of the Biblical texts becomes necessary, which will enable us to do a more authentic hermeneutical work even at the beginning of the second decade of the new millennium, a work which is legitimized and authorized by the original text of Holy Scripture in a better way.[1]

## 2. The background of logical dualism since Plato and Aristotle

On the whole, contemporary Christianity in the Western hemisphere is not sufficiently aware of the fact that their perception of reality and their thought pattern is shaped by the logical dualism[2] of the foundational philosophers of the occident, Plato (427-347 BC)[3] with his student Aristotle (384-322 BC). The empirically constricted perception of „reason" of Aristotle destroyed the holistic understanding of reality of the Old Testament, at the latest since the time of scholasticism. Regarding this Aristotelism, G. Patzig aptly remarks:

A recourse to Aristotle could limit itself to his auxiliary means of logic, moreover, it was possible to incorporate his results in one´s own theories, finally, it was permitted, in

one´s struggle against all authorities, to claim the free use of reason of Aristotle, oriented toward experience. The recourse to Aristotelian logic, easily communicated through reference books and trivial schools, was common in Hellenism, in Patristics and Scholasticism.[4]

In the sphere of Church and Christian missions a certain lenience might be appropriate due to inadequate information.[5] But also here, a tension between „Sunday Christianity" on the one hand, and „Workday Christianity" on the other hand, cannot be denied. On this, A. Hirsch aptly remarks:

> How have we moved so far from the ethos of discipleship passed on to us by our Lord? And how do we recover it again? The answer to the first question is that Western Christendom was so deeply influenced by Greek or Hellenistic ideas of knowledge. By the fourth century AD the Platonic worldview had almost completely triumphed over the Hebraic one in the church. Later on it was Aristotle who became the predominant philosopher for the church. He too operated under a Hellenistic framework. Essentially, a Hellenistic view of knowledge is concerned with concepts, ideas, the nature of being, types, and forms. The Hebraic view, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with issues of concrete existence, obedience, life-oriented wisdom, and the interrelationship of all things under God. It is quite clear that, as Jews, Jesus and the early church operated primarily out of a Hebraic understanding, rather than a Hellenistic one.[6]

However, this lenience cannot be granted in the field of theology, be-cause its essential task is to reproduce the speaking of God ("theo-logy") and thus God´s own speaking in a reliable and trustworthy way. For this would mean a suppression of the very truth which was stipulated in the revelatory structures of the Hebrew language of the Old Testament. Therefore it is urgently necessary to provide a re-orientation toward the Biblical theology of the Hebrew Old Testament in order to develop the Biblical-semitic foundations of the salvation-historical revelation of God both for the Old Testament and for the New Testament.[7] On this, G. Gloege aptly remarks:

> The Biblical message of God's willful benefits categorically excludes dualism in its strict sense. Already in the OT the election of Israel means ... as well as the testimony of creation ... its overcoming. The faith in the one Lord of history and the one Creator of the world excludes ... dualism.[8]

The logical dualism, however, is not only obvious in the field of theological hermeneutics, but also in systematic theology. I think of the concept of the predestination of man, emphasized by Reformed theology, which was certainly advanced in a very prominent way in the *Institutio Christianae Religionis* as the theological *magnum opus* of Calvin. So, for example, in *Inst.*, Book Two, Chapter Twelve, Section 5:

> When the Spirit declares that by the eternal decree of God the two things were connected together, viz., that Christ should be our Redeemer, and, at the same time, a partaker of our nature, it is unlawful to inquire further. He who is tickled with a desire of knowing something more, not contented with the immutable ordination of God, shows also that he is not even contented with that Christ

who has been given us as the price of redemption. And, indeed, Paul not only declares for what end he was sent, but rising to the sublime mystery of predestination, seasonably represses all the wantonness and prurience of the human mind. ... (Eph. 1:4-7).[9]

This concept of predestination is hardly communicable in contemporary Christianity of Western provenience. Because the perception of the entirely free will of man and therefore also of the Christian, is clearly shaped by a philosophical image of humans. In contrast to this, Holy Scripture emphasizes a responsible will of man which he exercises in the immanent creation. Here, the interchange between action and reaction of God toward man is foundational, which has been termed as the "reciprocity determined by God" by A. van Ruler.[10]

However, Scripture does not testify to an absolute freedom for man because this could only be verified from the transcendental position of God. This transcendental position of God as infinite creator, however, is not accessible for man as a finite creature.

Nevertheless, what is accessible for man, is (a) God´s self-revelation in the (b) salvation history of humanity (experience). When the (c) Biblical text (testimony = transmission/tradition) is considered, God shows himself as a God who enters the salvation history with man, who acts in space and time. From this results a narrative context which becomes the foundation of tradition and the testimony. Let us compare on this the introductory words of the Covenant treaty in Ex 19:4-5, respectively, their written record in Ex 24:4:

You have seen yourselves what I did to the Egyptians and how I brought you on eagle´s wings to myself. And now, if you will listen to my voice and keep my covenant, you will be my treasure before all nations; because the whole earth is mine. ...

## Revelation, Experience and Tradition as Structural Levels of Salvation History
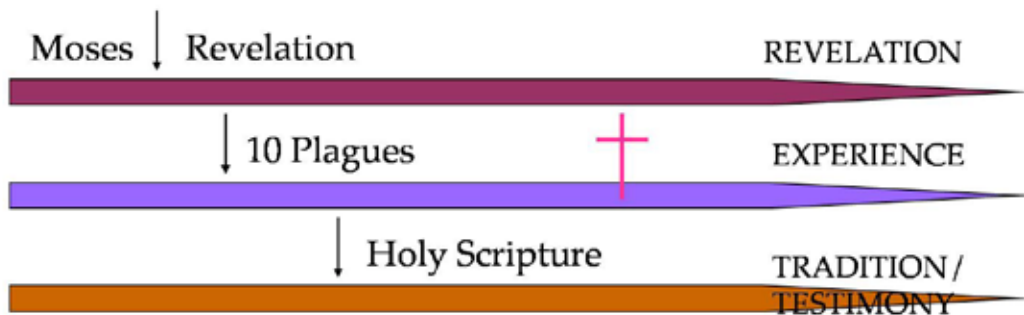
Then Moses wrote down all commandments of the LORD. Early the next morning he built an altar at the foot of the mountain as well as twelve pillars according to the number of the twelve tribes of Israel.
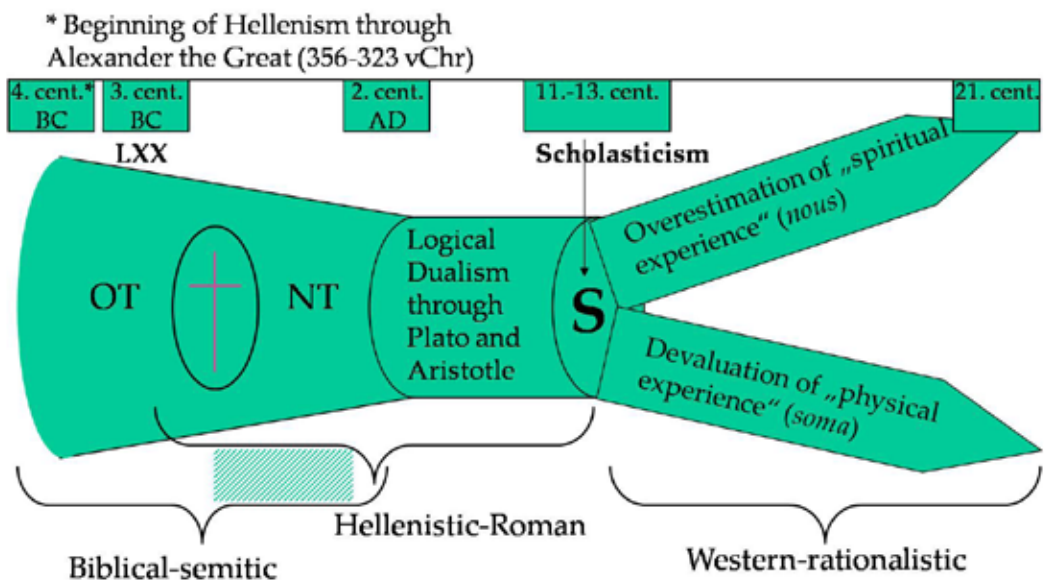
This is the testimony which Jesus also called „confessing before men". From this developed a „narrative theology" (later interpretation), which, however, does not depend upon a-historical narratives, but, on the contrary, emphasizes the physical reality of the work of God in space and time.

However, the philosophical foundations of the occident have also profoundly influenced the perception of reality of the Western churches, theology and missions. This becomes also visible in the historical perspective:

Here, we can essentially recognize and distinguish three phases. The first phase comprises the Hebrew Old Testament and partially also the Greek New Testament, inasmuch as it contains roots and traces of the Hebrew language and thought forms. Hence, this phase extends from the historical beginnings of the orient until the 2. century AD, taking place geographically mainly in the area of the „fertile crescent", i.e. the region of Egypt, Palestine and Mesopotamia.[11] During this phase the Biblical-semitic perception of reality was established as God's chosen sphere of communication.

In the second phase from the 4. century to the 11. century, the Hellenistic-Roman cultural sphere intervenes into the thought world of the orient. In this process, the logical dualism of Plato and Aristotle was introduced into the

## Logical Dualism
### in Church, Theology and Missions



* Beginning of Hellenism through Alexander the Great (356-323 vChr)

4. cent.* BC | 3. cent. BC | 2. cent. AD | 11.-13. cent. | 21. cent.

LXX

Scholasticism

OT  NT

Logical Dualism through Plato and Aristotle

S

Overestimation of „spiritual experience" (nous)

Devaluation of „physical experience" (soma)

Biblical-semitic    Hellenistic-Roman    Western-rationalistic

perception of reality of the European and Mediterranean cultural sphere and thus became a significant force of shaping culture. Also the movement of the Gnosis in the 2. century derives some roots and facilitation from Greek philosophy. This phase began with the Hellenization through Alexander the Great and ended with Scholasticism[12] in theology and in humanities in general.

Here we can oberserve that Scholasticism in Islam began much earlier than in the West – namely, in the 9. and 10. centuries – which led to divisions within Islam during the following 200 years.[13]

The third phase brought about the disruption of the perception of reality in Scholasticism through the Western-rationalistic framework of perception, as it is reflected, for example, in the theology of Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) or Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). As a first example may be mentioned God´s inability to suffer, which means that God indeed feels compassion for man according to his behavior, but not according to his own experience. Anselm argues in his *Proslogion*, chapter 8, as follows:

> But how are you compassionate, and, at the same time, passionless? For, if you are passionless, you do not feel sympathy; and if you do not feel sympathy, your heart is not wretched from sympathy for the wretched; but this it is to be compassionate. But if you are not compassionate, whence comes so great consolation to the wretched? How, then, are you compassionate and not compassionate, O Lord, unless because you are compassionate in terms of our experience, and not

compassionate in terms of your being. Truly, you are so in terms of our experience, but you are not so in terms of your own. For, when you behold us in our wretchedness, we experience the effect of compassion, but you do not experience the feeling. Therefore, you are both compassionate, because you do save the wretched, and spare those who sin against you; and not compassionate because you are affected by no sympathy for wretchedness."[14]

Here, the gnostic structure of the understanding of God becomes visible, which is diametrically opposed to the structure of incarnation and condescension as revealed in the salvation-historical action of God.[15] A second example is the „law of non-contradiction" within Western logic, which is followed by Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologiae*. Thomas argues regarding the question of the omnipotence of God in Part I, Article 3, on the question: „Whether God is almighty", as follows:

> I answer that, All confess that *God* is *omnipotent*; but it seems difficult to explain in what His omnipotence precisely consists: for there may be *doubt* as to the precise meaning of the word 'all' when we say that *God* can do all things. If, however, we consider the *matter* aright, since power is said in reference to possible things, this phrase, "*God* can do all things," is rightly understood to mean that *God* can do all things that are possible; and for this reason He is said to be *omnipotent*. Now according to the *Philosopher* (Metaph. v, 17), a thing is said to be possible in two ways. To *sin* is to fall short of a perfect action; hence to be able to *sin* is to be able to fall short in action,

which is repugnant to omnipotence. Therefore it is that *God* cannot *sin*, because of His omnipotence.[16]

Here, Thomas explicitly refers to „the philosopher", i.e. Aristotle. - Another example: In Part I, Article 4, he asks the question: „Whether God can make the past not to have been?"

> I answer that, … there does not fall under the scope of *God's* omnipotence anything that implies a contradiction. Now that the past should not have been implies a contradiction. For as it implies a contradiction to say that *Socrates* is sitting, and is not sitting, so does it to say that he sat, and did not sit. But to say that he did sit is to say that it happened in the past. To say that he did not sit, is to say that it did not happen.[17]

Also here we see a rationalistic perception of God. A division of reality into nature and grace, a division of immanent reality and transcendent reality.

From this follows an over-emphasis of „spiritual reality" (the rational perception in the *nous*) and a devaluation of the „physical reality" (the experience in the *soma*). This phase continues until today, which means that we have, after all, lived through an entire millennium of logical dualism. But we have not yet overcome this logical dualism by far. Because contemporary theology as well as the church and missions repeatedly exhibit profile points which demonstrate a deeply gnostic and dualistic structure.[18]

Because of this gnostic inclination a loss of credibility occurred, accompanied by a growing insignificance of many churches and fellowships.[19] Here we see a structural and communicative loss of relevance. However, this deficit is not yet understood in large segments of Christianity and it is partially even suppressed and intentionally denied.

Even where the goal of overcoming the gnostic inclination is recognized,

# Faith and Reason
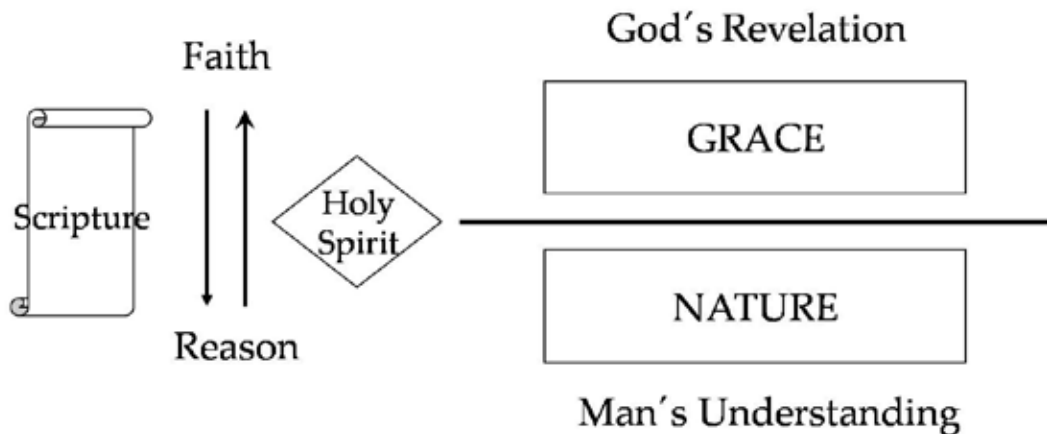
there is the need for a structural hermeneutical key.[20] This key is the hermeneutical and theological formulation of the „Biblical-semitic aspect" in order to develop the basic structures of the self-revelation of God in the OT and NT.

## 3. The hermeneutical crisis at the beginning of the 21. century

The contemporary hermeneutical crisis becomes obvious and more tightened by the fact that the weight of global Christianity has shifted during the past ten years in a historically unique way. Because the majority of Christians no longer lives in the Western world but in the non-Western world (2/3 world).[21] This can be seen in the following chart:

In order to understand this change, this basic reversal, it is helpful to observe the development of the next 15 years as a forecast.[22]

Today there are already 300 million more Christians in the non-Western world than in the Western world (which equals the population figure of the USA). In 2025 there will be more than twice as many Christians in the non-Western world. This is an epoch-making change which is unique in church and missions history.[23]

We see that the growth of Christians in the 2/3 world results in a renewal of the task of missions also in the Western world as it effects a shift in global hermeneutics.[24] Through this process, however, the authority of interpretation of Western theology over the value systems of mankind living together is being questioned on a foundational level.

This became again very obvious in January 2010 at the World Economic Forum in Davos/Switzerland, as in previous years, e.g. in the report "Faith and the Global Agenda: Values for the Post-Crisis Economy".[25]

## Christians worldwide (in Mio.)
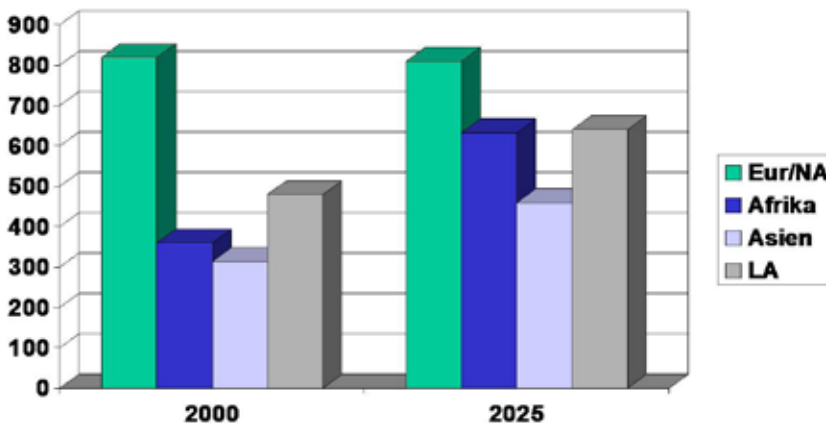
Especially Islam after the catastrophe of 9/11 gained an unmistakable hearing with an increased self-confidence. Thus the Summit on the Global Agenda in Dubai/U.A.E. from 7.-9. November 2008 published the following declaration:

> Religion is high on the global agenda. The claim that religion would inevitably decline with modernity – the core of the secularization thesis – has been proved wrong. Today's global challenges of war and peace, democracy and human rights, and economic and social development all have an important religious dimension.[26]

The Global Agenda is part of the World Economic Forum held at the end of January 2009 in Davos/Switzerland. The official report „Islam and the West" aptly remarks concerning the theme of „freedom of religion":

In the contemporary era of globalization, with its increased cross-border flows of people and ideas, an ageold problem in Muslim-West relations has gained greater visibility – proselytism.[27] ... The ongoing controversy over proselytism suggests that this universal impulse within both Christianity and Islam is likely to generate tensions and complicate dialogue on other issues in years to come.[28]

This is true both in the political and the theological dimension because both aspects form an essential unity in Islam which cannot be separated.[29] This means regarding our topic that Western theology needs to gain new certainty about its own hermeneutics according to Biblical theology of the Old and New Testaments, in order to face up to the conceptual challenges and questions of Islam and to be able to answer them.

## Majority of Christians in the non-Western World (in Mio.)
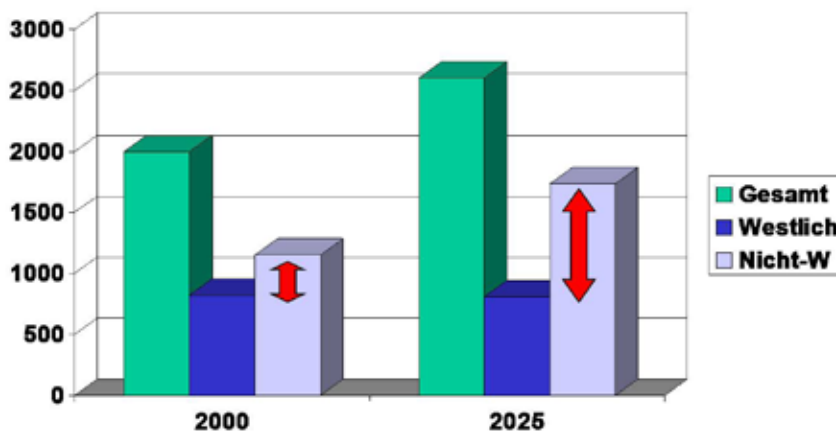
An apposite example for the inadequate Biblical-theological foundation in the OT can be observed in the approach of „contextualized Christology" by M. Parsons. In his book „Unveiling God: Contextualizing Christology for Islamic Culture", he argues for a „christological monotheism" as a starting point of contextualization for the Islamic culture.[30] However, he begins his foundation of Christology only in the time of the Second Temple (515 BC – 70 AD),[31] followed by the description of monotheism in first century Judaism.[32] In his comparison of Second Temple monotheism and Islamic monotheism, Parsons claims that the earliest christology orginates from Second Temple Judaism.[33] In doing so, however, he misses the fact that the christological concepts of „creation wisdom" and „Mashiach" were considerably earlier present in the Hebrew writings of the OT.

Here again we see that the Biblical-semitic foundations must be searched for much earlier within the history of revelation of the OT. In the following we will present two paradigmatic approaches to the understanding of the Biblical texts in order to appreciate them from a hermeneutical perspective.

### Dramaturgical-systematic Approach (K. Vanhoozer)

In order to certify and secure the propositional force of the Biblical texts and salvation history, K. Vanhoozer[34] pursues a dramaturgical-systematic approach. In his first main work „Is There a Meaning in This Text?"[35], he interacts with postmodern hermeneutics. The background of this can be found in the development of literary theory where both the author and the text as well

as the reader are ultimately relativized so strongly that there remains no more reliable certainty of the proposition of texts. Consequently also no revelatory quality and certainty of proposition in Biblical Theology can be achieved.

In contrast to this, Vanhoozer emphasizes that human language is a creational gift of God which enables man to communicate and therefore to achieve a relative certainty of interpretation. This is the testimony of transmission and tradition. However, his approach is structured in an Augustinian-philosophical way, and not in a Biblical-semitic way:

> My Augustinian strategy – faith seeking textual understanding – begins with a biblical theme and develops it philosophically. Language, I submit, is a gift of God, to be used gratefully and responsibly as we communicate with others. ... My argument, then, is that there is a "design plan" for language.[36]

Vanhoozer does indeed refer to the creation structure of language, but without considering the Biblical-theological basic structures in order to develop them further. His concern to overcome the postmodern relativism in the process of understanding is heading into the right direction. However, he falls short of making fruitful the structural elements of the Biblical-semitic world view in the OT. Instead, Vanhoozer offers in his second main research work a dramaturgical-systematic approach in order to overcome the postmodern relativism.

In the book „The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology"[37], he uses the metaphor of "drama" in order to

outline the dynamics of the salvation history of God with humans including the Christian church. The drama could be understood as the summary of the three steps of the semitic self-understanding: revelation, experience, documentation. For this purpose he defines some foundational theological categories in a new way, in order to express in these categories the value and the necessity of theological work.

In doing so, he is intentionally concerned about overcoming the dichotomy of doctrine and life which follows from the logical dualism of Western theology. His concern is to lead theology out of the *propositionalism*[38] shaped by scholasticism (priority of logical-rational statements) of modern theology.[39] Instead, he introduces the concept of „divine communicative action"[40], which unfolds in the metaphor of „drama". Vanhoozer expounds on this:

> This book sets forth new metaphors for theology (dramaturgy), Scripture (the script), theological understanding (performance), the church (the company), and the pastor (director). ... Its goal is to refute, once and for all, the all-too-common dichotomy between doctrine and real life. Christian doctrine directs us in the way of truth and life and is therefore no less than a prescription for reality.[41]

Although Vanhoozer emphasizes the Biblical canon as a text source, he does not begin his theological development of the salvation-historical "drama" with the self-revelation of God in the OT. Only the structure of the „covenant" – i.e. the documentation of revelation and experience according to Ex 19:4 and 24:4 – between God and his peo-

ple is taken as a basis. However, this only functions as a "basis for conversation", but not in a soteriological sense which would facilitate and define this relationship between God and his people in the first place. Vanhoozer explains:

> ... both the matter and the form of Scripture are theo-dramatic: the drama is largely dialogical – a covenantal conversation between the Word of God and the words of prophets, kings, priests, apostles, disciples, believers, and unbelievers – and so is the script.[42]

Here, however, we need to emphasize that the "drama" also needs to be "lived out", or else the semitic existentiality and materiality would be neglected. Instead, he immediately begins with the incarnated Christ as the basis of his theology:

> At the heart of Christianity lies a series of divine words and divine acts that culminate in Jesus Christ: the definitive divine Word/Act. ... Yet what faith struggles to grasp is "what we have seen and heard" (1 John 1:3). Doctrine is the response to something *beheld* ... . For the "word of life" is nothing less than the life of Jesus, the Word – a *historical* drama.[43]

Through his christological focusing, Vanhoozer is *de facto* completely fading out the Old Testament salvation history. Also the foundational structure of the „covenant" in the OT is not appreciated within its semitic background and its unique revelatory quality.

On this, D. Novak[44] has presented a „semitic-juridical approach" in his book „Covenantal Rights: A Study in

Jewish Political Theory".[45] He demonstrates that the life of the people of God with God and with each other is structured as a covenant relationship. Only on the basis of this covenant relationship God administers also laws for life with him and among the people.[46] This covenant of God with his people is theologically qualified through God´s election, righteousness, mercy, worship, martyrdom, covenant loyalty and obedience toward the Torah.[47] Thus, Novak aptly remarks:

> In God´s choice of Abraham and his descendants, his direct covenant with at least some humans, however few they are within humankind as a whole, is now Scripture´s primary concern. ... The covenant, like creation, is the result of God´s unfathomable command. And just as humans are created to be communal beings, so are the Jews elected as a people. In both cases, the locus of the person is within the authentic community.[48]

Even though Vanhoozer does not treat this theological quality of the covenant, he at least mentions the literary scientist Meir Sternberg in a footnote while agreeing with his following thesis:

> The drama of doctrine is rooted in Israel´s history and is narrated with a high degree of literary sophistication so as to establish a worldview.[49]

Regrettably, however, he does not recognize the Biblical-semitic background of the OT which would indeed provide his dramatic-systematic approach an absolutely certain reference to reality. In order to do this, let us now turn to the above mentioned approach by M. Sternberg.

### Narrative-literary approach (M. Sternberg)

The explanatory power and the reference to reality of Biblical texts is allocated by M. Sternberg to the Biblical narrator. Thus, Sternberg begins his substantial monography „The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading" with the question:

> What goals does the biblical narrator set himself? What is it that he wants to communicate in this or that story, cycle, book? What kind of text is the Bible, and what roles does it perform in context?[50]

He then defines the term „narrative":

> ... the question of the narrative as a functional structure, a means to a communicative end, a transaction between the narrator and the audience on whom he wishes to produce a certain effect by way of certain strategies.[51]

Sternberg aptly observes that the Bible is a dialogue between an author and an audience. This shows that the Biblical writings are works of literature which must be studied and understood through poetics.[52] This means that the Biblical texts cannot be adequately understood through a source-oriented research but rather through a discourse-oriented analysis. The text itself is a pattern of meaning and effect,[53] as Sternberg explains:

> What does this piece of language – metaphor, epigram, dialogue, tale, cycle, book – signify in context? What are the rules governing the transaction between storyteller or poet and reader?[54]

Sternberg demonstrates that the Biblical stories present a discourse which is based upon three principles. These are the ideological, the historiographic and the aesthetic principle:

(1) The ideological principle is visible in the passages of legal texts, in the divine or prophetic moralisations, the thematic structures – like for example, promise and fulfilment -, and in the exemplification of heroic figures[55]

(2) The historiographic principle is visible in the comments on names and places, in genealogies, as well as in chronologies; here, the inner value of facticity becomes obvious, which is emphasized through metahistorical reference points, as for example, rituals of remembrance[56]

(3) The aesthetic principle means an enhancement of imaginatory power which is generated by privileged material, e.g. dialogue, motivation, inner conversation, heavenly counsel, untestified or untestifiable events; likewise this principle is visible, for example, in the literary functions of symmetry, repetition, word play, word chains, change of perspective as well as ring composition[57]

In presenting his narrative-literary approach, however, Sternberg does not demonstrate how the qualitative reference to reality between the Biblical text and reality in space and time is to be established. He concedes that the history in space and time in the OT was of foundational importance for Israel. Because their unique history provides the substantiation of Israel´s election as the people of God among the nations.[58] Sternberg explains that historical questions are inadequate and that reality can only be achieved through interpretation:

# The Biblical-semitic World View



REVELATION
(Meta-Physics)

EXPERIENCE (Physics)

TRADITION (Testimony, Narrative)
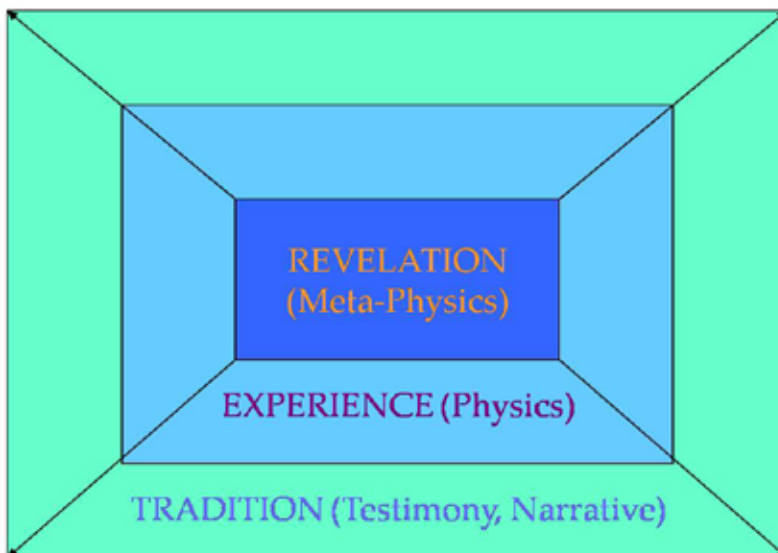
... no, or almost no, facts concerning the sources of the Bible apart from those we ourselves make by inference from the Bible as source. The movement from text to reality cannot but pass through interpretation.[59]

Particularly at this instance, Sternberg could have developed the revelatory quality of the Old Testament discourse, if he would have perceived the ideological principle as revelation, the historiographic principle as experience and the aesthetic principle as tradition, respectively, as testimony of the self-communication of God.

Therefore we will now look more closely at this "Biblical-semitic aspect" in hermeneutics.

## 4. The „Biblical-semitic aspect" in the hermeneutics of Biblical Theology

It is foundational for overcoming the logical dualism and the contemporary hermeneutical crisis to refer back to the revelatory quality of the salvation facts in the OT which are then fulfilled and unfolded in the NT. On this note R. Rendtorff rightly emphasizes the approach of *Biblical* Theology. To him is

> … the basic prerequisite for a Biblical theology, the insight, that the Bible of Israel was from the beginning the Holy Scripture of the Christian community. This means that Christian theology does not only begin with the message of the New Testament. Therefore the significance of the Old Testament for the Christian church and theology cannot be evaluated from the New Testament or from a theology which is derived from it.

This would contradict the history of formation of the Christian Bible and the theological decisions which were made in this history, in a categorial way.[60]

Here, the initial question arises, what is to be understood by the term "semitic", and its implications for the person of Jesus Christ. But what exactly is the meaning of "semitic" in our context? Concerning this, H. Spieckermann offers this precise definition:

> *Semites.* The term "semitic" was initially used in 1781 by *A.L. Schlözer* (1735-1809) for the supposed original language of the Syrians, Babylonians, Hebrews and Arabs, and later on advanced by *J.G. Eichhorn* (1752-1827) for the languages which are related to Hebrew … . The term Semitic refers to Noah's son *Shem*; he and his brothers Ham and Japheth are considered, according to the table of nations in Genesis 10, to be the ancestors of all nations on earth after the Flood (V. 32). … The dominant concern is to derive *Abraham*, the patriarch of Israel, in a direct genealogical line from Sem (Gen 11,10-32), and to secure predominance for him as early as possible (Gen 9,26f) … .[61]

Here we see that the thought structure of the Biblical-Hebrew language has been personified in Shem and Abraham as the chosen bearers of divine revelation. From this follows that the Biblical-semitic thinking exerted a formative and structuring force upon the access of the people of God to reality. The salvation-historical fulfilment of divine revelation took place in the person of Jesus Christ, as it is formulated in a foundational way in the prologue to the Gospel of John,

chapter 1:1-11 as well as in chapter 3: 16. Therefore, U. Kühn in his current Christology draws a precise picture of the "historical Jesus":

First of all … there is the growing insight into Jesus´ integration into the Judaism of his day and the Old Testament/Jewish tradition. It is the Jew Jesus in whom the Christian faith sees the salvation of the world (see John 4:22). This historical localization is foundational for the Christian faith. … whereas his roots in the semitic realm remain formative and unsurpassable, imposing and presenting a challenge to other cultures, even though Christianity has immigrated into other cultures as well. In terms of content, it is particularly the faith in Yahweh, creator and savior of the world, and the obligation toward the Torah as the good commandment given by God toward life, which are formative for Jesus from his origin in Judaism.[62]

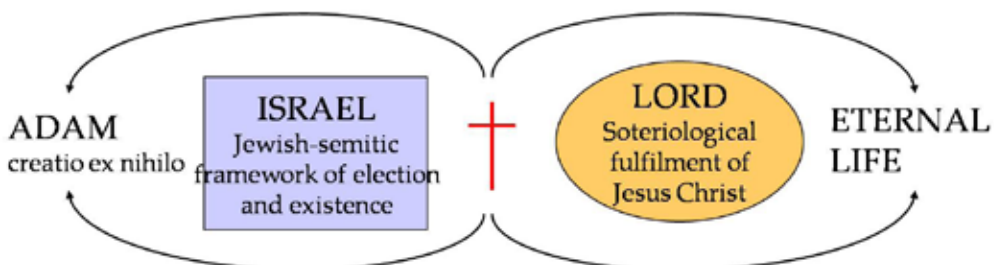Here it is rightly understood that the „Biblical-semitic aspect" is unique and indispensable for the understanding of the person of Jesus from the Old and New Testaments. In the NT the proclamation of Jesus is of central importance because he is the incarnated fulfilment of salvation history. This is commonly designated in Johannine theology by the term "word", the *logos* (Jh 1:1ff).

But not only the New Testament Gospels but also the person and proclamation of Paul witness to the semitic framework of understanding of the Hebrew OT, thus forming the "axis" of the theology of the New Testament.

On this, J. Dunn aptly remarks:

… the language of Paul´s thought, the currency of his theology, remained Hebraic through and through. I refer not only to his anthropological understanding …, but also to the analytical tools and categories which he used – not least, his use of the Adam narratives …, of the imagery of atoning sacrifice and redemption …, of divine Wisdom …, of God´s righteousness …, of history in terms of apocalyptic disclosure and climax …, and of the church of God … . … He pressed back behind

## Creation-theological reasoning and Jewish-semitic embracing of Pauline theology



ADAM
creatio ex nihilo

ISRAEL
Jewish-semitic framework of election and existence

LORD
Soteriological fulfilment of Jesus Christ

ETERNAL LIFE

Moses to Abraham, behind Abraham to Adam, and behind Israel´s election to God´s primal act of creation, of giving life to the dead and calling things without existence into existence (Rom. 4.17).[63]

In this instance Dunn rightly emphasizes the interrelatedness of Judaism and Christianity in the person of Paul and in the movement of *Messianic Judaism.* He expounds on this:

… Jesus and the first Christians were Jews, and remained Jews. … But Paul too remained a Jew (cf. his own self-description according to Acts 22.3 - `I am a Jew´); he still described himself in one of his later letters as `an Israelite´ (Rom. 11.1). … what later became known as `Christianity´ was still a movement *within* Second Temple Judaism, most accurately described at this period as a form of messianic Judaism, its

adherents marked out among their fellow Jews by their belief in and beliefs about Jesus.[64]

Thus, being a Christian means to walk on the way which Jesus has presented, a way of salvation through the creative power of God.[65] The gospel of the way of Jesus is at the same time the overcoming of the world views and projections of reality of Greek philosophy. Again, let us compare the world views of Plato, Aristotle and the Biblical-semitic world view.

Initially, the holistic reality was divided into the spheres of idea and reality by the worldview of Plato. Here originates the dualistic thinking regarding the perception of reality. His student Aristotle, again went one step further by only considering the empirically feasible reality as a valid sphere of reality. Through this process, reality

# Comparison of World Views
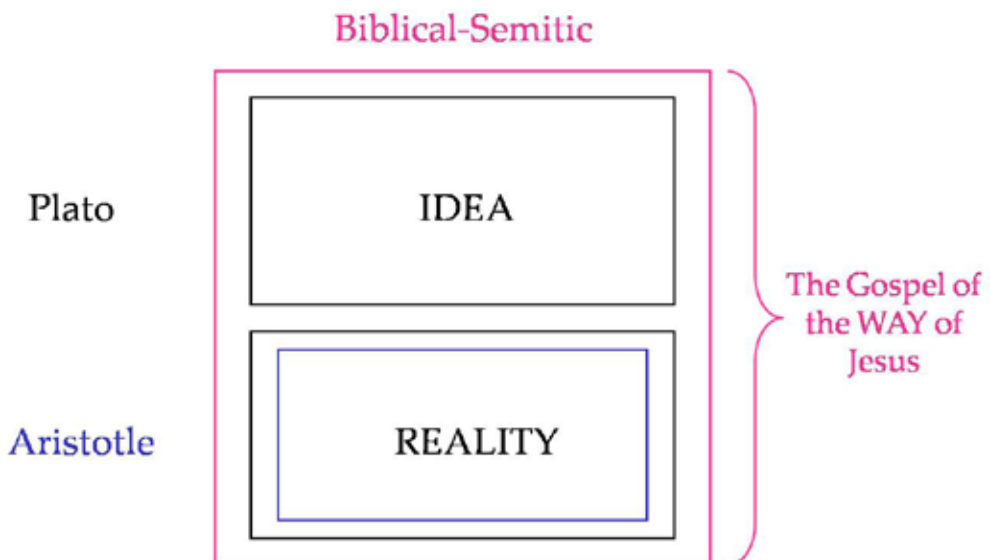
was reduced to the realm of the empirically feasible, to the space which is controllable by experiment and measurement. In contrast to this, according to the Biblical-semitic understanding, reality presents itself as a holistic entity which comprises both the invisible realm of ideas and the visible realm of reality.

Because of this world view the New Testament gospels proclaim the way of Jesus Christ. This way is a dynamic and comprehensive process of participation and implementation of the kingdom rule of God in space and time. Thus, Hirsch aptly remarks:

> Platonic dualism is the belief that the world is separated into spiritual and nonspiritual, sacred and secular realms. ... The result of the dualistic understanding of life and faith is that ... it separates in practice what is essential to a holistic biblical worldview and spirituality: an all-of-life-under-God approach.[66]

Therefore the development of the Biblical-semitic aspect in Biblical theology is a central task of Biblical exegesis, hermeneutics and theology for the future. This task is about the development of the foundational perception of the relationship structure between God and his people. This concern is also emphasized by M. Wilson in his book „Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith".[67] Thus he rightly emphasizes the continuing significance of the OT for contemporary Christianity as for early Christianity before:

> ... the Old Testament is the theological key for opening the door to the New Testament. The theology of the early Church was Hebraic to its very heart; it was Old Testament

theology now raised to its ultimate spiritual significance in the coming of Jesus. Accordingly, today´s Christian must be aware of what would be lost if this Old Testament theological background were suddenly discarded. What theological pillars would begin to shake and then start to crumble?[68]

He also begins with the foundational importance of the covenant relationship of God and his people.[69] On this basis, the key dimensions of Old Testament theology, like e.g. monotheism, creation, fall, electing love as well as the kingdom rule of God.[70] However, these concepts are not individually developed through exegesis, as it would be necessary, in order to achieve a better understanding of the Biblical-semitic pattern of thought.[71] It becomes obvious that an important way of access to this basic perception is the reality-shaping content of key terms and key concepts of the Hebrew Old Testament. Here we might mention as examples: DABAR, BERIT, OLAM, YADA´, AMAN, MELEK – to mention but a few concepts.

By the example of the first term „DABAR" we shall demonstrate how the Biblical-semitic basic structure of the Hebrew pattern of understanding is different from the Western pattern of understanding.[72] In the Western-rationalistic pattern of understanding, word and deed are structurally separate, therefore the relationship between God, man and his neighbor is in principle divided.

In contrast to this, word and deed in the Biblical-semitic pattern of understanding form an undissolvable unity which becomes a holistic movement of

approach from God to man and from man to his neighbor. Here, WORD and DEED do not function contrary but rather complementary to each other.

This holistic character of *dabar* has been aptly summarized by Otto Procksch:

> Every *dabar* is filled with power which can manifest itself in a variety of energies. This power is being felt by the one who perceives the word and absorbs it into himself; but it is also valid independently from this absorption in its objective effects which the word generates in history. ... Only in the Hebrew *dabar* is the concept of FACT, including its energy, so vividly present in the concept of WORD, that the word appears as a factual power which is and remains forceful, which runs and has power to give life.[73]

Thus, the example of this first concept shows that different life worlds also contain different thought patterns. Therefore the otherness of the pre-conditions of thought and concepts needs to be investigated in order to make the Biblical-theological content fruitful for the present. In this sense, the other Biblical-theological key terms should be researched and evaluated in an analogous way.

### Wisdom-based "Son of Man" Christology (H. Gese)

The origins of Christology already in the early layers of the OT are demonstrated by H. Gese.[74] In his article „Wisdom, Son of Man and the origins of Christology as a consistent unfolding of Biblical theology"[75], he explains how the later writings of the OT assimilate the earlier traditions, particularly from the special aspect of wisdom.[76]



Biblical-theological Dimensions of Christology
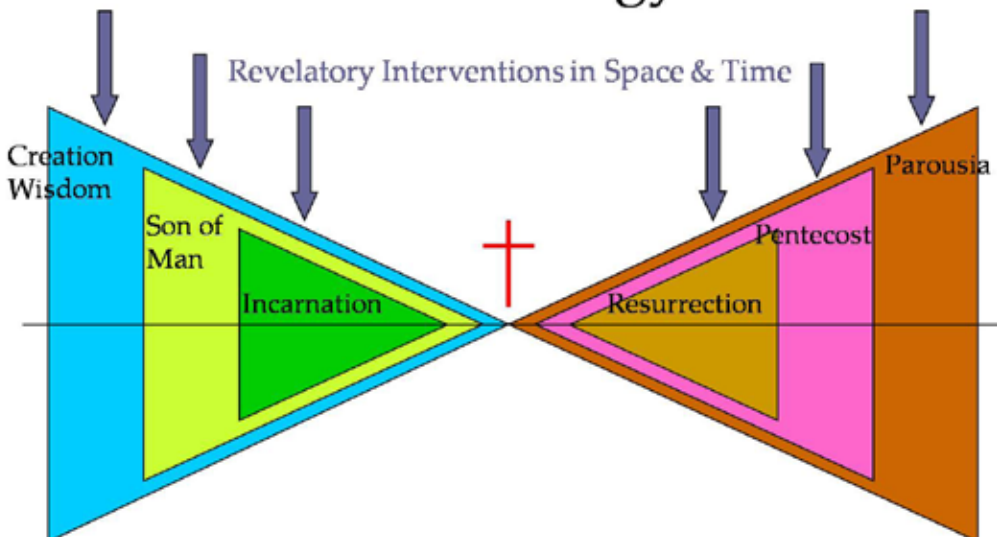
Here we see six different transcendental revelatory interventions in space and time: creation wisdom, Son of Man, incarnation, resurrection, pentecost, and the parousia. In this process, these Biblical-theological dimensions of Christology unfold in an additive way, so that the dimensions, once introduced, continue to be effective. According to Gese, wisdom provides crucial insights into the connection of OT and NT, because it is the manifestation of the revelation of God in the form of the creation order[77]:

> The creation reveals the order, the cosmic nature which has been conferred to it by the Creator, and it testifies in it and with it to the Creator himself. The understanding of the world order becomes the understanding of the wisdom *of God*.[78]

The divine wisdom, however, is not only to be understood as creation power, but calls man in the condition of sin also to repentance to God.[79] In addition to this creation wisdom we see in Daniel 7:13-14 the Old Testament expectation of the Son of Man as a further fulfilment of wisdom.[80] Here, the Aramaic term „Bar Enash" is used, which probably was retained in the vernacular of the Jewish tradition after the exile until the coming of Jesus Christ.[81] The Son of Man „comes in the heavenly clouds and is being led before God, to him the kingdom of the rule of God over the earth is being handed over for ever. ... the paradox is emphasized that it is a human who is exalted into the transcendental world, in the heavenly "clouds", and who appears before God."[82]

Because of this, the Son of Man transcends the rule of David because he is exalted into the revelatory figure of Moses and placed into an eschatological perspective.[83] The third fulfilment of wisdom takes place in the incarnation of the Messiah in Jesus of Nazareth. Here we see a „mysterious relationship of identity" between Jesus and the Son of Man.[84] However, his Messianic work remains a mystery, unless it is revealed by God himself.[85] In the synoptic gospels, Jesus appears as „proclaimer of the eschatological wisdom", so that he is recognized „with his messianity as an earthly manifestation of wisdom itself".[86] However, this is not only valid for the time of the incarnation, but is fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus.[87] Gese aptly summarizes his „wisdom christology":

> But in the sense of *wisdom* tradition there is only the full christological perspective: Jesus is the appearance of wisdom itself, because he is the revelation of full transcendence.[88]

In another instance, Gese discusses the earthly reference of the Davidic covenant which provides the christological background for the theological unfolding of the Son of God in the OT.[89] David, as king of the city state of Jerusalem, installed the Ark of the Covenant of God again on Mount Zion.[90] This meant an affirmation of the covenant of Israel with Jahwe and the establishment of the dynasty of David, as B. Birch observes:

> This connection with the ark signals the development of a Davidic or royal theology in Israel, an effort to understand the development of Davidic dynasty as a further expression of Israel´s Yahwistic covenant faith.[91]

David receives God's promise of a never ending dynasty of his descend-

ants, which is tied to the place of Zion, geographically and spiritually (Ps 132:12; 89:4; 2 Sam 23:5). Thus, Gese aptly remarks:

> As Jahwe takes possession of this property and premises of David by committing himself for ever to it, electing this property and premises, then also the davidic family, the house of David, is elected for ever. ... From the archaic legal perceptions of property follows a profound relationship between the election of Zion and the election of the davidic family by God. Both seems to be essentially one and the same, only interpreted into two different directions.[92]

These and further Biblical-theological basic structures need to be developed in the future in order to specify the profile of the Biblical-semitic thought structure also in Western theology. Our question of the Biblical-semitic aspect of hermeneutics has shown the necessity to find a new and foundational level of understanding. Only the readjustment of the theological view of the Biblical aspects from a Western to a Biblical-semitic view will enable the proclamation and mission of the church to effectively communicate the gospel into non-Western cultural spheres, like, for example, into Islamic countries or in the Far East.[93]

### *The Analysis of the Structural Fitting of Thought Patterns*

Regarding the task of the structural fitting of thought patterns, Western theology and its hermeneutical research are still in their beginnings.

We have to realize that the patterns of thinking and understanding of the cultures of the Old Testament, Judaism and the New Testament are considerably different from Islamic, Western and Asian cultures on a foundational structural level. The matrix of understanding and the shapings of perception do not fit together. As long as the fitting of thought patterns is not improved, the content of the Gospel cannot be communicated without significant losses, distortions and reductions.

Languages and cultures are comprehensive systems of understanding and access to reality. Thus, E. Alfonso emphasizes that a language is the self-definition and delimitation of a community from other communities:

> The idea of language and its use are today perceived as inseparable from the way in which individuals and communities understand themselves and relate to each other ....[94]

These need to be taken seriously in theology and missions in order to be able to communicate the gospel in word and deed to its fullest extent. Therefore the development of the „Biblical-semitic aspect" will be a central task of protestant theology and missions in the future. This leads us to the following ten summarizing theses of our introduction:

### 5. Summary and Theses

(1) Logical dualism as the foundational thought structure of the Western perception of reality stands in an axiomatic way in opposition to the revelatory quality of Holy Scripture from an epistemological perspective.

(2) Throughout the history of theol-

ogy, logical dualism has never been overcome on the structural level, with the result that individual efforts of rehabilitation could not prevent the philosophical appropriation of theology.

(3) This foundational conflicting condition has been perceived so far only on a rudimentary level by the Christian church and missions of the Western world, and it is up to now sometimes consciously supplanted and denied.

(4) Protestant theology up to now has only partially accepted the challenge to overcome logical dualism in its various disciplines.

(5) The gnostic decline of contemporary Christianity has been exported by church and missions into the non-Western world and generated an impairment and distortion of Christian witness in the non-dualistic cultures of the 2/3 world.

(6) The Biblical-semitic interpretation of the person and work of Jesus Christ takes its preparatory dimensions of revelation in the OT seriously, and recognizes its fulfilment in the testimony of the NT gospels.

(7) Also in the biography and theology of Paul we see the foundational continuity of his semitic framework of understanding regarding the divine election and salvation of the people of Israel within a soteriological-eschatological union with the people of God from among the nations.

(8) Against this background, the proclamation mandate of Jesus Christ requires that the structural fitting of thought patterns in the communica-

tion of the gospel from one language and culture into another needs to be accounted for and developed, in order to facilitate a legitimate, authentic and authoritative proclamation.

(9) Until today, in Biblical exegesis and theology there are a few individual aspects of understanding of the Biblical-semitic background in the Old and New Testaments, however, without providing a systematic and hermeneutical overcoming of logical dualism.

(10) Therefore, the approach of the „Biblical-semitic aspect" of hermeneutics in Biblical theology is an innovative research subject which will fertilize in a foundational way the task of theological research in the coming years.

Thank you very much!

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## ENDNOTES

[1] For an introduction to the variety of contemporary hermeneutical approaches, cf. Barton, John (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Green, Joel B. (ed.). *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995); Goldingay, John. *Models for Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994); Thiselton, Anthony C. *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (London: HarperCollins, 1992).

[2] The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines "dualism": "in philosophy, the use of two irreducible, heterogeneous principles (sometimes in conflict, sometimes complementary) to analyze the knowing process (epistemological dualism) or to explain all of reality or some broad aspect of it (metaphysical dualism). Examples of epistemological dualism are being and thought, subject and object, and sense datum and thing; examples of metaphysical dualism are God and the world, matter and spirit, body and mind, and good and evil. Dualism is distinguished from monism, which acknowledges only one principle, and from pluralism, which invokes more than two basic principles." - www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/172621/dualism

[3] Plato distinguishes the transcendental sphere of perfect forms and the immanent sphere of the imperfect material world, as J.M. Dillon explains: „... the existence of an intelligible realm, in which are situated the Forms, paramount among which is the Form of the Good; and that this material world is a realm of flux and imperfection about which nothing certain can be known—knowledge is of perfect and permanent objects of knowledge, namely, the Forms." – Dillon, J.M. "Plato, Platonism", in: Porter, Stanley E.; Evans, Craig A. *Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*. Electronic ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

[4] Patzig, G. „Aristotelismus", *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3. Aufl. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1957), I: 602. – In German: „Ein Rückgriff auf Aristoteles konnte sich auf seine logischen Hilfsmittel beschränken, man konnte darüber hinaus seine Resultate in eigene Theorien einbauen, schließlich durfte man sich im Streit gegen alle Autoritäten auf den freien, an Erfahrung orientierten Vernunftgebrauch des Aristoteles berufen. Rückgriff auf aristotelische Logik, durch Handbücher und Trivialschulen bequem vermittelt, war im Hellenismus, in der Patristik und Scholastik allgemein."

[5] But also here the issue is the protection of the *continuity of reflection* between the historically grown Christianity and the contemporary shapes of Christian faith and culture.

[6] Hirsch, Alan. *The Forgotten Ways. Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006), p. 122.

[7] Symptomatic for the neglect of Biblical Theology of the Hebrew OT is the fact that the „Evangelical Theological Society" in the USA has published in its *Journal of the Evangelical Society* (JETS) during the last seven years - *JETS* vol. 46, No. 1 (March 2003) to *JETS* vol. 52, No. 4 (December 2009) – only five articles on Biblical Theology. This amounts to a portion of only 2,4 percent measured by a total of 208 articles. These are: Block, Daniel I. „How many is God? An Investigation into the Meaning of Deterononmy

6:4-5", *JETS* 47/2 (2004): 193-212; Sprinkle, Joe M. "Law and Narrative in Exodus 19-24", *JETS* 47/2 (2004): 235-252; Beale, Gregory K. "Eden, the Temple, and the Church´s Mission in the New Creation", *JETS* 48/1 (2005): 5-31; Yates, Gary E. "Narrative Parallelism and the `Jehojakim Frame´: A Reading Strategy for Jeremiah 26-45", *JETS* 48/2 (2005): 263-281; Lee, Chee-Chiew. "Gojim in Genesis 35:11 and the Abrahamic Promise of Blessings for the Nations", *JETS* 52/3 (2009): 467-482.

8 Gloege, G. „Dualismus. II. Theologisch", *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3. Aufl. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1958), II: 274. – In German: „Die biblische Botschaft von Gottes Willenszuwendungen schließt den D[ualismus] in strengem Begriff grundsätzlich aus. Bereits im *AT* bedeutet Israels Erwählung … ebenso wie das Zeugnis von der Schöpfung … seine Überwindung. Der Glaube an den einen Herrn der Geschichte und den einen Schöpfer der Welt schließt … den D[ualismus] aus."

9 Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion.* II,12,5 - www.reformed.org/master/index.html?mainframe=/books/institutes

10 On the structure of „theonomic reciprocity", cf. Van Ruler, Arnold A. „Hoofdlijnen van een pneumatologie", in: Van Ruler, Arnold A. *Theologisch Werk VI* (Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1973), p. 35; cf. Welker, Michael. „Was ist `Schöpfung´? Genesis 1 und 2 neu gelesen", *Evangelische Theologie* 51 (1991): 208-224.

11 The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* gives the following definition: The Fertile Crescent includes a roughly crescent-shaped area of relatively fertile land which probably had a more moderate, agriculturally productive climate in the past than today, especially in Mesopotamia and the Nile valley. Situated between the Arabian Desert to the south and the mountains of Armenia to the north, it extends from Babylonia and adjacent Susiana (the southwestern province of Persia) up the Tigris and Euphrates rivers to Assyria. - www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/205250/Fertile-Crescent

12 Scholasticism defines „the philosophical systems and speculative tendencies of various medieval Christian thinkers, who, working against a background of fixed religious dogma, sought to solve anew general philosophical problems (as of faith and reason, will and intellect, Realism and nominalism, and the provableness of the existence of God), initially under the influence of the mystical and intuitional tradition of patristic philosophy, and especially Augustinianism, and later under that of Aristotle." - www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/527973/Scholasticism

13 Already under fatimidic rule (9. cent.) the first universities (*al-azhar* in Cairo) were established on the basis of philosophy and logic. The Islamic scholar *al-Fârâbî* (10. cent.) is considered in science as the „second teacher" after Aristotle. *Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Ġazali* (11. cent.) is accredited with introducing the Aristotelian logic into Islamic Shari'a. However, he dissociated himself in his later work *Tahafut al-falasifa* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers, lat. *Destructio philosophorum*) from the philosophy of Scholasticism, thus introducing the demise of philosophy in Islam and therefore being responsible for the strengthening of orthodoxy. This was later controverted by *Abu*

l-Walid Muhammad b. Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Rušd* (Averroës, 13. cent.) in Andalusia. However, at that time the Islamic empire was already in decay. – Cf. Gibb, H.A.R.; Kramers, J.H. (ed.). „Al-Ghazzali", *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), pp. 111-112.

[14] Canterbury, Anselm of. *Proslogion* - www.fordham.edu/ halsall/basis/ anselm-proslogium.html#CHAPTER VIII; cf. Schmitt, F.S. (ed.). *S.Anselmi: Opera Omnia*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1946): 106.5-14.

[15] On the structure of the condescension of God as the gracious movement toward man in salvation history, cf. Piennisch, Markus. *Kommunikation und Gottesdienst: Grundlinien göttlicher Zuwendung in Bibel und Verkündigung.* Studium Integrale Edition Pascal (Neuhausen: Hänssler, 1995), p. 10ff.

[16] Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologiae.* - www.newadvent.org/summa/ 1025.htm; cf. McGrath, Alister E. (Hg.). *The Christian Theology Reader*. Second Edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 206-207, 670.

[17] Aquinas, *Summa* - www.newadvent.org/summa/ 1025.htm - See on this Is 65:24: „And before they call, I will answer; while they are still speaking, I will answer their prayers." Thus God can also answer prayers before the time and therefore he can pre-determine already in the past what will take place in the present.

[18] A theological example in the field of apologetics is given by N. Geisler, who enumerates twelve steps of defending the Christian faith and who postulates already in the second point this assumption: "Opposites cannot both be true". – Cf. Geisler, Norman L. *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), pp. 36-37. Regarding the question of non-contradiction of logic, cf. Geisler, Norman L.; Brooks, Ronald M. *When Skeptics Ask: A Handbook on Christian Evidences* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), p. 13.

[19] Symptomatic and exemplary is the critical self-reflection by Kinnaman, David; Lyons, Gabe. *Unchristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity … And Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007).

[20] Exemplary are the movements of the „Emerging Church" as well as the „Missional Church": Kimball, Dan A.; Altson, Renee N.; Beckwith, Ivy. *The Emerging Church. Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003); Frost, Michael; Hirsch, Alan. *Die Zukunft gestalten: Innovation und Evangelisation in der Kirche des 21. Jahrhunderts* (Asslar: Gerth, 2008); Cole, Neil; Sweet, Leonard. *Organic Church: Growing Faith Where Life Happens* (Hoboken: Wiley & Sons, 2005); Jue, Jeffrey K. "What´s Emerging in the Church? Postmodernity, The Emergent Church, and The Reformation", *Themelios* 31/2 (2006): 20-39; Yarnell, Dan. "The Spirit says `yes´: exploring the essence of being church in the 21st century", *Evangel* 26.1 (2008): 9-14; Wilks, John G.F. "A Spiritual Evangelical Church?", *Evangel* 26.3 (2008): 72-79; Frost, Michael; Hirsch, Alan. *Der wilde Messias: Mission und Kirche von Jesus neu gestaltet* (Schwarzenfeld: Neufeld, 2009).

[21] Regarding the effects of this shift and the attendant increasing diversity of Christianity, including the assessment of the relationship with other religions and cultures, cf. Mortensen, Viggo. „What is Happening to Global Christi-

anity?", *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, 43/1 (2004): 20-27; Jenkins, Philip. *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Küenzlen, Gottfried. *Die Wiederkehr der Religion. Lage und Schicksal in der säkularen Moderne* (München: Olzog, 2003).

[22] Christians worldwide (in mio.):

| Year | 2000 | 2025 |
|------|------|------|
| Eur/NA | 820 | 810 |
| Africa | 360 | 633 |
| Asia | 313 | 460 |
| LA | 480 | 640 |

Source: World Christian Encyclopedia.

[23] Majority of Christians in the non-Western world:

| Year | 2000 | 2025 |
|------|------|------|
| Total | 2000 | 2600 |
| Western | 820 | 810 |
| Non-Western | 1153 | 1733 |

Source: World Christian Encyclopedia.

[24] Examples for international hermeneutical questions and issues are given by: Yung, Hwa. *Mangoes or Bananas? The Quest for an Authentic Asian Christian Theology* (Oxford: Regnum, 1997); Tiénou, Tite. *The Problem of Methodology in African Christian Theologies* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1984).

[25] See on this the report „Faith and the Global Agenda: Values for the Post-Crisis Economy", *World Economic Forum*, Geneva, Switzerland, 2010. - www.weforum.org/pdf/faith/valuesreport.pdf. Contributions from an Islamic perspective include, e.g., "Spiritual Values in the Face of Global Problems" by Mustafa Cagrici (pp. 23-24); „Post-Crisis Reforms: Some Points to Ponder" by Muhammad Taqi Usmani (pp. 51-54).

[26] Both the constructive and destructive shaping power of faith and religion is highlighted: „Faith is often part of the problem; tensions among religious communities can impede international cooperation, political stability, social cohesion and economic growth. But it is also potentially part of the solution: these communities are often among the most important forces mobilizing around core values such as human dignity, solidarity and social responsibility." - www.weforum.org/pdf/GAC/Reports/SocietyandValues/Faith.pdf

[27] The *Merriam-Webster´s Online Dictionary* defines the verb "proselytizing". "1: to induce someone to convert to one's faith 2: to recruit someone to join one's party, institution, or cause". - www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/proselytizing

[28] *Islam and the West: Annual Report on the State of Dialogue, Executive Summary*, p. 13. - www.weforum.org/pdf/C-100/Summary.pdf

[29] Regarding the missionary activity of Islam which presently issues the „call to Islam", cf. Riddell, Peter. „The Call to Islam: Diverse Methods and Varied Responses", *Stuttgarter Theologische Themen,* vol. 4 (2009): 35-59.

[30] Parsons, Martin. *Unveiling God: Contextualizing Christology for Islamic Culture* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2005), pp. XXI, XXIII; Parsons explains: "Whilst christology involves more than explanation of christological monotheism, it is this aspect of Christian belief which is most contested in Islamic contexts, due to the Qur´anic denials of Jesus´ divinity and widespread misunderstanding of the trinity as tri-theism" (p. XXIII).

[31] Parsons, *Unveiling,* p. XXV.

[32] Parsons, *Unveiling,* pp. 47-74.

[33] Cf. Parsons, *Unveiling,* p. XXIX: "…

compare the monotheistic context of second temple Judaism from which the earliest christology emerged, with present day Islamic monotheism ...".

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35 Vanhoozer, Kevin J. *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Leicester: Apollos, 1998).

36 Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, pp. 204-205.

37 Vanhoozer, Kevin J. The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005).

38 Stanley J. Grenz et al. defines propositionalism as follows: „*proposition, propositionalism.* A proposition is a meaningful, logical statement (or assertion) that can be confirmed in some manner, such as by sensory observation, and so can be subjected to scientific inquiriy. Propositionalism presents and defends theological truths by setting them forth as a series of propositions that can be reasonably demonstrated to be true. Propositionalism serves as an important reminder that the Christian faith has a rational and, hence, scientifically demonstrable dimension. Critics accuse propositionalists of reducing the faith to a cognitive level and thereby missing the sense of wonder, awe and mystery about God and salvation; the importance of the affective, emotive and intuitive dimensions of human life; and the importance of the practical outworking of Christian commitment in a life of service to God and others." – Grenz, Stanley J.; Guretzki, David; Nordling, Cherith Fee. *Pocket Diction-*

*ary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), pp. 96-97. For further discussion of propositionalism, cf. Vanhoozer, Kevin J. „Lost in Interpretation? Truth, Scripture, and Hermeneutics", *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48/1 (2005): 89-114.

39 Vanhoozer aptly remarks: „Scholastic theologians are by no means the only ones prone to „Greek" think. Modern theology as a whole, conservative and liberal, is a long series of debates over which set of concepts – which "-ism" – best names and thinks God. ... Modern theology is overdependent on a single form: *dedramatized propositions*, statements about God taken out of their context in the economy of divine communicative action." - Vanhoozer, *Drama*, p. 269.

40 Vanhoozer, *Drama*, pp. 277-278: "*Divine communicative action* is the better rubric, and this for several reasons: (1) it overcomes the personal/propositional dichotomy inasmuch as communicative action is both a "saying" and a "doing"; (2) it corresponds to the biblical depiction of God as a communicative agent who does many things with words besides transmitting knowledge; (3) it better accounts for the diversity of Scripture itself, that is, the plurality of literary forms; (4) it enriches the notion of canonical authority by insisting that the church attend not only to propositional content (i.e., revealed truths) but to all the things God is doing communicatively in Scripture to administer his covenant; (5) it encourages us to view the Bible as a means by which we relate personally to and *commune* with God."

41 Vanhoozer, *Drama*, p. xii; on the Christian life he further explains: „For the way one lives *bodies forth* one´s

beliefs about the true, the good and the beautiful … . The purpose of doctrine is to ensure that those who bear Christ´s name walk in Christ´s way. Far from being irrelevant to "life", then, doctrine gives shape to life "in Christ." – Vanhoozer, *Drama,* pp. 15-16.

[42] Vanhoozer, *Drama,* p. 272.

[43] Vanhoozer, *Drama,* p. 17; cf. footnotes 56, 57.

[44] David Novak is Chair of Jewish Studies as Professor of the Study of Religion at the University of Toronto. - www.law.utoronto.ca/faculty_content.asp?AdjID=318&cType=Adjunct&itemPath=1/3/3/0/0 &contentId=353

[45] Novak, David. *Covenantal Rights. A Study in Jewish Political Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[46] Novak, p. 25.

[47] Novak, pp. 84-116.

[48] Novak, pp. 84-85.

[49] Vanhoozer, *Drama,* p. 18.

[50] Sternberg, Meir. The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), p. 1.

[51] Sternberg, *Poetics*, p. 1.

[52] Cf. Sternberg, *Poetics*, p. 2: „Poetics is the systematic working or study of literature as such. Hence, to offer a poetics of biblical narrative is to claim that biblical narrative is a work of literature."

[53] Sternberg, *Poetics*, p. 15.

[54] Sternberg, *Poetics*, p. 15.

[55] Sternberg, *Poetics*, p. 41.

[56] Sternberg, *Poetics*, p. 41.

[57] Sternberg, *Poetics*, pp. 41-42.

[58] Sternberg, *Poetics*, p. 31.

[59] Sternberg, *Poetics*, p. 16.

[60] Rendtorff, Rolf. *Theologie des Alten Testaments: Ein kanonischer Entwurf.* Bd. 2: Thematische Entfaltung (Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 2001), p. 313. – In German: „… die Grundvoraussetzung für eine Biblische Theologie die Einsicht, dass die Bibel Israels von Anfang an die Heilige Schrift der christlichen Gemeinschaft war. Das bedeutet, dass christliche Theologie nicht erst mit der Botschaft des Neuen Testaments beginnt. Darum kann man auch nicht die Bedeutung des Alten Testaments für die christliche Kirche und Theologie vom Neuen Testament oder einer von diesem abgeleiteten Theologie her beurteilen. Dies würde der Entstehungsgeschichte der christlichen Bibel und den in dieser Geschichte vollzogenen theologischen Entscheidungen grundsätzlich widersprechen."

[61] Spieckermann, Hermann. „Semiten". *Evangelisches Kirchenlexikon. Internationale theologische Enzyklopädie,* ed. Erwin Fahlbusch et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), IV: 208-209. The semitic language group, which is distinct from the hamitic and indo-european (p. 209), can be separated into eastern-semitic (Accadian, Assyrian, Babylonian), south-semitic (Arabic, Ethiopian) and northwest-semitic languages (Ugaritic, Aramaic, Phoenician, Hebrew). The semitic languages share basic commonalities in phonology, morphology, syntax and vocabulary, therefore they are homogenous regarding their thought structures. – See Allen P. Ross. *Introducing Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), pp. 11-15. This is the reason for the special access of the Biblical-Hebrew thinking toward the Arab language and world view, which facilitates a "hermeneutical correspondence", an equivalence in the frame of under-

standing. – cf. Piennisch, Markus. „Die hermeneutische Bedeutung des narrativen und monotheistischen Ansatzes für die Mission", *Stuttgarter Theologische Themen*, Band 1 (2006): 87-88; Streck, Michael P., „Semiten". *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 4. Aufl. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), VII: 1199; Müller, Hans Peter, „Semitische Sprachen". *RGG*[4], VII:1199-1202.

[62] Kühn, Ulrich. *Christologie*. UTB. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003, pp. 284-285. - In German: „Als erstes … ist die zunehmende Einsicht in Jesu Einbindung in das zeitgenössische Judentum und die alttestamentlich-jüdische Tradition zu nennen. Es ist der Jude Jesus, in dem der christliche Glaube das Heil der Welt sieht (vgl. Joh 4,22). Diese historische Verortung ist für den christlichen Glauben grundlegend. … wobei aber seine im semitischen Bereich liegenden Wurzeln prägend und unüberholbar bleiben und eine Zumutung an andere Kulturen darstellen, so sehr das Christentum dann auch in andere Kulturen eingewandert ist. Inhaltlich sind es besonders der Glaube an Jahwe den Schöpfer und Erretter der Welt und die Bindung an die Tora als das von Gott gegebene gute Gebot zum Leben, die für Jesus von seinem Ursprung im Judentum her prägend sind."

[63] Dunn, James D.G. *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), pp. 718-719.

[64] Dunn, James D.G. „Paul´s Conversion – A Light to Twentieth Century Disputes", in: Adna, Jostein et al. (Hg.). *Evangelium – Schriftauslegung – Kirche: Festschrift für Peter Stuhlmacher zum 65. Geburtstag* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), pp. 78-79.

[65] As an example of an ethics of the way of Jesus, cf. Hays, Richard B. *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996), pp. 239-253.

[66] Hirsch, Alan. *The Forgotten Ways. Reactivating the Missional Church (*Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006), p. 237.

[67] Wilson, Marvin R. *Our Father Abraham. Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), p. 5.

[68] Wilson, p. 113.

[69] Wilson, p. 11.

[70] Wilson, p. 113. At the beginning he refers to the thesis of J. Barr that ultimately a substantial distinction between Greek and Hebrew world view cannot be made. However, the restriction of Wilson is to be affirmed, that there is no translation withoud loss from one language into another: „By downplaying any distinction between Greek and Hebrew manners of thinking, Barr does not take into adequate consideration such nonverbal aspects as the historical, cultural, and social-psychological setting from which the respective thought derives. Furthermore, he gives the impression that one may translate from one language to another without any major loss." (p. 7); cf. Barr, James. *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961).

[71] Wilson, however, outlines as examples the Hebrew concepts of "spirituality", "salvation", "faith" and "communion" (pp. 174-189).

[72] For a detailed Biblical-theolgical development of the term „DABAR", cf. Piennisch, Markus. „The `Biblical-Semitic Aspect´ in the Basic Structure of the WORD-DEED of God (DABAR)",

*Stuttgarter Theologische Themen*, vol. 3 (2008): 101-118.

[73] Procksch, O., „'Wort Gottes' im AT". *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Bd. 4, hg. Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1942), pp. 89-100, quotation pp. 90-91. - In German: „Jeder *dabar* ist mit Kraft erfüllt, die sich in den verschiedensten Energien kundtun kann. Diese Kraft wird empfunden von dem, der das Wort vernimmt und in sich aufnimmt; sie gilt aber auch unabhängig von dieser Aufnahme in den objektiven Wirkungen, die das Wort in der Geschichte hat. … Nur im hebräischen *dabar* ist der Dingbegriff mit seiner Energie im Wortbegriff so lebendig empfunden, dass das Wort als dingliche Macht erscheint, die da kräftig ist und bleibt, die da läuft und Kraft hat, lebendig zu machen." - Regarding the current Messianic Jewish theology, R. Harvey confirms this holistic approach to thinking: „Messianic Jewish thought is holistic, not dualistic. Much of Western Christian theology has been influenced by Aristotelian dualism, Enlightenment rationalism, and contemporary materialism. Jewish, or Hebraic thought, does not dichotomise the soul from the body, the spiritual from the physical and the material, or the individual from the community. It keeps them in relationship, as aspects of a whole, rather than parts that can be divided up." - Harvey, Richard. „The Impact of Christianity on the Development of Messianic Jewish Thought", *Stuttgarter Theologische Themen*, Vol. 2 (2007): 73.

[74] This refutes the thesis of Parsons that the Christology of the OT only begins in the time of the Second Temple. – Parsons, *Unveiling*, S. XXIX. Cf. Wassermann, Peter. „Son of God and Son of Man: Part 1 – Testimonies of the Old Testament", *Stuttgarter Theologische Themen*, vol. 3 (2008), p. 18: „It is beyond question that thoughts have been transmitted from culture to culture, especially in the Hellenistic area and therefore in the area of the later OT (Second Temple period). The Greek philosophical culture did not, however – neither then nor now – develop a "culture" of the two honorary titles "Son of God" and "Son of Man" as they occur in the OT or NT, which might have any noteworthy significance for our investigation." – Regarding the state of research on the question of the *THEIOS ANER*: Gnilka, Joachim. *Das Evangelium nach Markus*. EKK II/1, Mk 1,1–8,26 (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 2008), p. 60.

[75] Gese, Hartmut. „Die Weisheit, der Menschensohn und die Ursprünge der Christologie als konsequente Entfaltung der biblischen Theologie", *Alttestamentliche Studien* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1991): 218-248.

[76] Gese, pp. 218-219.

[77] Gese, pp. 219, 222.

[78] Gese, p. 222. – In German: „Die Schöpfung offenbart die Ordnung, das ihr vom Schöpfer verliehene kosmische Wesen, und bezeugt in und mit ihr den Schöpfer selbst. Die Weltordnungserkenntnis wird Erkenntnis der Weisheit *Gottes*."

[79] Cf. Gese, p. 224: „The very conscious, theologically intended personification of wisdom, which like a prophet with divine authority, even like the divine *dabar* itself, calls man to repentance, threatens him with judgment, admonishing him to repentance (Prov. 1:20-33) … (italics Gese).

[80] Gese, p. 231.

[81] Cf. Wassermann, „Son of God and

Son of Man: Part 1", p. 20; compare also Ezekiel 2:1ff where the term BEN ADAM is translated by Luther with „child of man". On this, Wassermann remarks: „In Arabic, similar to the Hebrew, the term Son of Adam (IBEN ADAM) is used. The construction of BEN with the word ADAM indicates in the semitic language the affiliation to the rational being, the human, who can hear and understand God. The opposite to this is an irrational being, the animal, which – although being a life-form biologically as well – however cannot perceive God." (p. 20). – See also Stanton, Graham. *The Gospels and Jesus*. Second Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). He quotes two rabbinic instances for the Aramaic term *bar enash*, which otherwise occurs very rarely (pp. 249-250). – On the BEN ADAM motives as a description of an earthly man in relation to God in Ezekiel, cf. Rendtorff, Rolf. *Theologie des Alten Testaments: Ein kanonischer Entwurf*. Bd. 1: Kanonische Grundlegung (Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 1999), pp. 217-220.

[82] Gese, p. 232. – In German: Der Menschensohn „kommt in den himmlischen Wolken und wird vor Gott geführt, ihm wird das Königtum der Gottesherrschaft über die Erde für ewig übergeben. ..., es wird Gewicht auf das Paradox gelegt, dass ein Mensch es ist, der in die Transzendenzwelt erhöht wird, in den himmlischen „Wolken" und vor Gott erscheint."

[83] Gese, p. 233.

[84] Gese, p. 234.

[85] Gese, p. 235.

[86] Gese, p. 238.

[87] Gese, p. 238.

[88] Gese, p. 239. – In German: „Aber im Sinne der *Weisheitstradition* ergibt sich erst die volle christologische Perspektive: Jesus ist die Erscheinung der Weisheit selbst, weil er die Offenbarung der vollen Transzendenz ist."

[89] Gese, Hartmut. „Der Davidsbund und die Zionserwählung", *Vom Sinai zum Zion: Alttestamentliche Beiträge zur biblischen Theologie* (München: Kaiser, 1974), pp. 113-129; Wassermann, Peter. „Son of God and Son of Man: Part 2 – Testimonies of the New Testament", *Stuttgarter Theologische Themen*, vol. 3 (2008): 67-80.

[90] Gese, „Davidsbund", pp. 114-115.

[91] Birch, Bruce C.; Brueggemann, Walter; Fretheim, Terence E.; Petersen, David L. *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), p. 239.

[92] Gese, *„Davidsbund",* pp. 114-115. – In German: „Ergreift Jahwe Besitz von diesem Grund und Boden Davids, indem er sich für immer daran bindet, diesen Grund und Boden erwählt, so ist auch die Davidsfamilie, das Haus Davids, für immer erwählt. ... Aus den urtümlichen bodenrechtlichen Anschauungen ergibt sich eine tiefe Beziehung zwischen der Zionserwählung und der Erwählung der Davidsfamilie durch Gott. Beides scheint dem Wesen nach ein und dasselbe zu sein, nur nach zwei Seiten hin interpretiert."

[93] Regarding the question of the relationship between Christianity and culture, cf. Guinness, Os, „Mission modernity: seven checkpoints on mission in the modern world", in: Sampson, Philip; Samuel, Vinay; Sugden, Chris (Hg.), *Faith and Modernity* (Oxford: Regnum), pp. 322-352; Ng Kam Weng, "Current Concerns for Christian Intellectual Witness", NECF Malaysia Cross-Currents Consulta-

tions. www.necf.org.my; Piennisch, Markus. „Christian Theology in the Islamic Context: Missionary and Hermeneutical Perspectives", *Stuttgarter Theologische Themen*, vol. 2 (2007): 107-120.

[94] Alfonso, Esperanza. *Islamic Culture Through Jewish Eyes: Al-Andalus from the tenth to twelfth century.* Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern Literatures (London/New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 9.

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That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

1 John 1:3