Ton Veerkamp: “The World Different”

Four lectures on his Political History of the Grand Narrative,
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by Helmut Schütz at the Evangelical Stadtmission in Giessen, Germany

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Actually, instead of “Die Welt anders” Ton Veerkamp had wanted to call his book “Voice only.” Because according to the Bible, “God” is not a supreme being, but the voice that in the Torah of Israel authoritatively brings forward a basic order of freedom and equality. I strongly recommend his challenging book for reading.

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Introduction: Grand Narrative[1]

Although it seems to be outdated since the German reunification in 1989, Ton Veerkamp holds fast to the goal of changing the world—toward a society without exploitation, (5) "in which no one shall be a slave and no one shall be a master." Veerkamp understands (72) exploitation, as defined by Karl Marx, not as ethically reprehensible, but as an economic system within which parts of society preferentially appropriate the "surplus product" earned by producers. And he understands the Bible as the document of a "Grand Narrative" that keeps alive the longing for "freedom and equality."

A Grand Narrative is something (421) in which the majority of people in a society can "dwell," in which they can also find their individual lives and through which they know where they belong. In modern times there were two Grand Narratives that have understood themselves as non-religious, first, that of the bourgeoisie, whose vision was "emancipation from traditional dependencies," and second, the "labor movement's narrative of liberation from dependence on private ownership of the

1 All quotations given after a mere page number refer to Ton Veerkamp, Die Welt anders. Politische Geschichte der Großen Erzählung © Institut für Kritische Theologie Berlin e. V. according to the edition published in Berlin © Argument Verlag 2013. The text of these quotations has been translated into English by myself.

means of production and on human solidarity.” In today’s liberalism, (14) which knows only individuals competing for as much profit as possible, there is no longer a Grand Narrative; people remain “unhoused.”

Lecture 1: The Making of the Torah and the Prophets

Israel and Judah under the domination of Assyria, Babylon, and Persia

Hellas and Israel

Ton Veerkamp begins (15 ff) by comparing ancient Israelite and ancient Greek society. The Grand Narrative of the ancient Greeks is influenced by the epics of Homer and by philosophies of the origin and becoming of all things. The so-called pre-Socratic philosophers are beginning to work in the same period as the biblical prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, that is, since the 6th century BCE.

In Hellas, there is freedom only for a few powerful people. In the exercise of their power, they have the choice between moderation and intemperance (*hybris*); the system of rule as such is regarded as an unchangeable fate (*tychē*) to which people must submit with necessity (*ananke*). The state reformer Solon wants to introduce a legal system that limits the rulers’ abuse of power, among other things by cancelling debts.

When Nehemiah takes similar measures in Israel, (16) namely “a cancelation of debts and a land reform,” he can draw on oppositional visions of a social law that already exist in the country. Here, it is not a wise man like Solon, (17) but God himself through Moses who is “the real lawgiver.” Here (18) there are no tragedies, no tragic heroes who must necessarily fail because of what fate assigns them. Rather, the laws of the legal order, which God himself “is,” are basically understandable to all people. Therefore, people are also responsible for what happens to them.

In Israel, (20) there should basically be neither slaves nor masters. Although this is practically never the case here either, Israel places its own “class society under the radical critique of its Grand Narrative.” Israel, according to Veerkamp, wants “the enabling of egalitarianism,” Greece only wants “the taming of tyrants.” This is also (21) “the deepest reason for the commandment of separation from the nations,” which is never about a religious superiority of the monotheistic religion or even about a moral arrogance of the Jewish people.

Different Readings

Ton Veerkamp pleads (24 ff) for reading the Grand Narrative of the Bible once again as faithfully as possible to the original. For 2000 years, we Christians have read it “al-

legorically," that is, "in another way"—no longer in relation to Israel and the place of this one people in the midst of the nations but as a history of salvation for the whole world. This becomes a problem if Jews are forced to accept the Christian reading, e.g. that Jesus Christ died for them as well.

Veerkamp is also skeptical (25) about the consequences of the historical-critical method because it destroys the overall text of the Grand Narrative in a way similar to the destruction of social structures "in the age of bourgeois society." In essence, (26) Veerkamp is seeking an effective "defragmentation program" to re-read the individual texts of the Bible as parts of a whole. The Bible as a whole emerges due to changes in the ancient Israelite society and has a changing effect on this society.

Josiah and the Torah

Of central importance for the Grand Narrative of Israel is (33 ff) the story of the finding of the Torah in the Temple of Jerusalem under King Josiah in 623 BCE. At this time the Assyrian empire is collapsing, so that the opportunity seems favorable to break away from the dependence on Assyria and to consolidate the independence of Jerusalem and Judea as a middle power between Egypt and Mesopotamia. Therefore, Josiah abolishes the Assyrian-influenced state cult, which was also practiced in Jerusalem from the middle of the 8th century until the time of Hezekiah.

For example, (41) in Jerusalem, in the Valley of the Sons of Hinnom (*ge bne-hinnom*), which would later become Gehenna or Hell, the sacrificial site where children were sacrificed to Molech is destroyed. "Molech" by itself simply means "king"; in fact, it is their own god, Yahu, to whom these sacrifices were made.

This is why Veerkamp adheres to the Jewish rule of not pronouncing the name of God, designated YHWH in the Hebrew Bible; he paraphrases it with the word "the NAME," capitalized. "One reason the NAME was never again to be pronounced as *Yahu* (Yahweh) was the effort to eliminate any confusion of the NAME with the city demon Yahu, which continued deep into Persian times."

The (40 f) cultural revolution that Josiah carries out, a veritable iconoclasm, is presented not as modernization but as a return to the ancient Torah. By transforming (42 f) the former spring festival of Pesach into a festival of liberation from the slave house, Josiah firmly anchors the Torah in the memory of the people.

Twenty years after Josiah's death, the kingdom of Judah nevertheless perishes. According to prophets such as Jeremiah, the kings' policies before and after Josiah were to blame. However, the remnant of Judah's upper class, who fled to Egypt, rather blames Josiah's chaos policy and Jeremiah's propaganda for the downfall.

The Structure of the Grand Narrative

The Bible (50) is not orthodox, but multi-layered. It consists of many books and is nevertheless coherent, although not without contradictions like a party program. According to Veerkamp, the Bible does not apprehend God as a “supreme being” but as the description of a function. This definition is reminiscent of Martin Luther’s sentence, “Whatever you . . . hang your heart on and trust in, that is actually your God.”[2]

Thus, Ton Veerkamp means, “There is no *being* called God, just as there is no *being* but only the *function* ‘king.’” The word “God” describes (51) what in a social order is functioning “as a central organizing principle for authority and loyalty.” This is meant in ancient times by asking, “What is his [god’s] name?”

In Israel, (53) this name is unpronounceable, “the NAME is ‘*voice only*.’” He has no form; you mustn’t make an image of Him and worship it. He is filled with what He does; He leads out of the slave house, He liberates. The old familiar word “god” gets a new name, a new content. (55) “The NAME is the cipher for a basic order that excludes slavery, Baʿal is the cipher for a society of great owners that imperatively presupposes slavery.”

The Language of the Grand Narrative

Nevertheless, (56) the Bible cannot avoid letting the NAME appear in a metaphorical way of speaking as a (predominantly male) person. That is why misunderstandings are inevitable. “In fact, the God Yahu, who was worshipped in Samaria and Jerusalem, was an ancient Near Eastern god like all other ancient Near Eastern gods, the religion of Israel in principle no different from the ancient Near Eastern religions as well.”

But something happens (57) to the metaphor of the king. Israel’s God is no longer thought of in analogy to absolutely ruling human kings, but only the NAME may rightly be called “king.” Because only this true king does not enslave like other kings, but he frees from all slavery. Whoever wants to take the Bible seriously must note that nowhere here God is to be put in a row with human rulers, but every kind of rule is criticized by the liberating and right-creating action of God. This is also true (59) of ancient Judea, which “was always a class society.”

The majority of the population at that time, however, understood the NAME rather “normal” like any other God, and the Bible can be read until today as if God was a tyrant like other human lords. But this is how you transgress the first command-

2 Martin Luther, Großer Katechismus, Auslegung des ersten Gebots, Bekenntnisschriften der evang.-lutherischen Kirche (BSLK) 560,22-24: “Worauf du nu . . . Dein Herz hängest und verlässest, das ist eigentlich Dein Gott.”

ment. “The task of theology is to break down such false consciousness and produce *knowledge*. It was always a minority that raised the contradiction between ‘God as Lord’ and the NAME and tried to introduce a completely different policy. This was the business of the prophets.”

Elijah, Elisha, Amos, and Hosea

In (60) the 6th century BCE, the great prophets prepare a completely new social order. A text like Exodus 6:2 ff shows that the NAME in Israel appears as something completely new; before that, the God of Israel was just like all the other gods of the nations, “an El Shaddai, the God who exercises violence, an all-powerful one, a *Pantokratōr* like Zeus.”

The prophets want the returnees from Babylon to build a new social order of the free and equal together with those who stayed at home, which is also put into practice to some extent in the 5th century under Ezra and Nehemiah.

In (61) the books of Kings (1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 13), however, it is retrospectively reported how already the prophet Elijah in the 9th century BCE in the northern kingdom of Israel fights against King Ahab, Queen Jezebel, and the worship of the god Baʿal, and how his successor Elisha with the anointing of Jehu as king sets in motion a bloody overthrow and the worship of the god Yahu. In fact, name suffixes with *-ya* or *-yahu* at the end and *Yo-* or *Yeho-* at the beginning appear for the first time in the historically transmitted king lists of this period. Before that, many names had the suffix *-ʾel* or *-baʿal*. The stories (62) about Naboth’s vineyard testify to the resistance against “the state turning land into marketable goods” already at that time. That the prophet Elijah is “introduced as a legendary figure . . . without any connection to what has gone before,” without mention of his father’s name, that is, without “history,” (63), “as if fallen from heaven, and he also disappears again—into heaven (2 Kings 2),” indicates the character of such a prophetic intervention “in the social process” that takes place “without continuity, it is not a stage of development, it is the revolution.”

However, (64) in the eyes of the prophet Hosea, King Jehu had already come to power through a normal military coup rather than triggering a social revolution. And according to a “stele found in 1993 during excavations at Tel Dan in what is now northern Galilee,” the names of kings Ahab and Jehu are historically vouched for, but unlike what the king books report, it was not Jehu but King Hazael of Damascus who killed Ahab’s successors. Jehu’s military coup is retrospectively reinterpreted as a social revolution.

From a historical perspective, “Israel was a normal ancient Near Eastern entity, with *Yahu* as the state god and Jehu as a vassal appointed by the middle power Aram-

Damascus. After the crushing of Aram-Damascus by Assur, Israel, in turn, was able to rise to a middle power under Jeroboam II.”

And now the first historically and not only legendarily attested prophets come into play. For example, Amos, a fig grower from the southern kingdom, stands up against King Jeroboam II, opposes the cult of Yahu in Bethel, and resists exploitation.

To (65) the prophet Hosea in the Northern Kingdom, God is “an order that sets free from Egypt”; among the people there should be “bonds of humanity . . . , cords of love” (Hosea 11:4). But in fact, the Assyrians take over the role of the Egyptians, and already under their own king, Israel has become a slave house. Hosea exercises practical criticism of the institution of “king.” With him, (67) “the state god *Yahu* becomes the NAME YHWH, a complete contradiction to all gods.”

Deuteronomy

The 5th Book of Moses, (68) also called Deuteronomy, 2nd Law, contains venerable paragraphs of law, but according to Veerkamp was probably compiled after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE in a Judea without a king. It does not preach (72) that exploiters should graciously treat the exploited more fairly; rather, exploitation as such is abolished in a “social order of the free and the equal.” The “God” who stands for this, and is thus quite different from a heavenly tyrant, can expect not to be feared but to be loved (Deuteronomy 6:5). After the devastation of Jerusalem, Deuteronomy rejects all illusions of state and draws on Hosea.

In retrospect, (70) it considers the refusal to enter the land as the most serious incident during the desert migration. The number 38 plays a special role (Deuteronomy 2:14). For 38 years lie between the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 and the crushing of the Medean Empire by the Persian king in 549.

Veerkamp (74) locates Deuteronomy in the circles of those who, between 587 and 520, in areas spared from war, took advantage of the historical coincidence that the great power of Babylon failed to “settle a new elite class.” There are many legal regulations in a thoroughly (75) “regulated anarchy” (Christian Sigrist) that can be compared with today's “acephalous” societies without central state institutions, as in Afghanistan or West Africa.

Since (77) one cannot abolish the deeply rooted inclination to the sacrificial cult, it is strictly regulated and only permitted in a central place; (80) child sacrifices and the cult of the Queen of Heaven do not exist after 400 BCE in any case.

Precisely because (78) Israel is supposed to be a holy people, its everyday life is desacralized, freed from all idolatrous cults. Decentralized regulation is given to “tax administration, the legal system, and warfare.” There does not have to be a king in Israel; but if there is one, (79) he should—read and embody the Torah!

Jeremiah

In (81) the year of the death of the last great Assyrian king Assurbanipal, 627/626 BCE, the prophet Jeremiah begins working, in the thirteenth year of Josiah's kingship (Jeremiah 1:2). He may have belonged to the oppositional underground movement until then and helped to prepare Josiah's policy change.

When (82) God again becomes a normal god among other gods and goddesses in the kingdom of Judah under the reign of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah (608-587), King Jehoiakim tears up Jeremiah's words of God that Baruch had written down. Josiah, on the other hand, had torn his clothes in grief when the Torah was read to him. Jeremiah represents only a small minority at the royal court, is not listened to, is persecuted, and finally taken to Egypt by the remaining elite fleeing from Judea.

Jeremiah (83 f) foresees a future for a king from the house of David who does "justice and truth" and like the prophets Hosea, Micah, Amos, and Isaiah opposes all temple worship. Priestly mediators between God and people are no longer needed, (86) for God himself will inscribe his Torah on their hearts (Jeremiah 31:33).

Similarly, (87) the Letter to the Hebrews later will regard the temple cult replaced by "trust in the Messiah." But such a society without cult, sought by the opposition to the temple hierarchy after 515 B.C. (Isaiah 1, Amos 5, Micah 6 and Psalm 41, Jeremiah 7:21 ff and 31:31-34), had "at no time been politically feasible."

Ezekiel

The (93) priest Ezekiel belongs to the Jerusalem upper class, which is deported to Babel in 597. There, a "completely new view of God (*marʾot ʾelohim*)" comes over him, through which he realizes that the cult objects that Josiah's sons have brought back to the temple are something abominable, not worthy of worship. In uniquely expressionistic language, Ezekiel "relentlessly but not hopelessly" proclaims (96) the NAME as the God who is "investigable," who wants (97 f) a state and (99 ff) (in contrast to Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Jeremiah) also a cult that exclusively serves justice.

In (98) Ezekiel 34 Veerkamp views a prime example of the description of a class society ("pushing, shoving, fat sheep, lean sheep"). Not a king, as there has been until now, but an "exalted one in your midst" from the house of David is to bring about "a blessed time" in which "spirit of life is breathed into parched bones." The (101) "territory in the breadth of the sanctuary, stretching in length from the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea (Ezekiel 45:7 f)," which this exalted one receives, "likewise separates and unites the house of Israel and the house of Judah." Besides Jehoiakin's grandson Zerubbabel, who is then really appointed by the Persians as commissioner for Judea, however, "the grand priest of the new sanctuary is given a position of power equal to that of Zerubbabel," as can be read in the prophet Zechariah.

The (100) book of Leviticus will regulate the cult in the spirit of Ezekiel. In Ezekiel 40-48, the conflict between the later ruling Zadokite and the lower Levitical priests is already apparent. Zadok, as a descendant of Aaron, had been an important priest at the time of King David.

Chapters (98 f) 38 and 39 are already apocalyptic: God himself will lead the battle against “Gog from the land of Magog.” Here already, (98) the “world of peoples is a world in which ‘a country of peasants, of calmed ones, living in safety, without wall, without bars, without doors’ cannot exist, 38.11.”

Deutero-Isaiah

In (88) the Hebrew Bible, the four books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings belong to the Former Prophets. The Latter prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Book of the Twelve Prophets are all structured in the same way: the announcement of judgment on one’s own people is followed by judgment on the nations and the promise of a new beginning.

In the book of Isaiah, only chapters 1-39 refer to the prophet of that name, called in 740 BCE, who both criticizes the people and provides comfort “in the Assyrian crisis of the 8th century.” (89) In chapters 40 to 66, words of other prophets are added after the return from Babylon.

Theological science calls their most important representative “Deutero-Isaiah,” the second Isaiah. He belongs to the *Gola*, that is, to those carried off to Babylon, and is convinced that the God of Israel uses the Persian king Cyrus as his instrument to return the people to their land.

Deutero-Isaiah (90 ff) is familiar with the Persian religion, in which the powers of light and darkness are eternally at war with each other, but he himself represents a completely different theology of creation, for everything that the God of Israel creates is very good. This is not an explanation of the world but political theology. Deutero-Isaiah (92) dares to think that the Persian Empire and all of creation are basically designed only to give the Israelites the strength to move away from Babel.

Inspired by Isaiah 40-48, “the doctrinal poem about the Creator” in Genesis 1:1-2.4a became the Bible’s prelude and “the foundation of all politics that aims at and hopes for the transformation of the world.”

Genesis

This brings us to Veerkamp’s analysis of Genesis, the 1st Book of Moses. (102) Our theories of the origin of the world and the evolution of life are “neither invalidated nor confirmed” by Genesis 1. Rather, everything has its origin in the power of the

Creator and God of Israel. “Creation means to Israel—and we add: to humanity—that there is always and everywhere an alternative to all prevailing conditions.”

Veerkamp’s consideration of the book of Genesis follows the Dutch theologian Frans Breukelman, who described the structure of the book as a succession of different begettings (*tholedoth*).

The “begettings of heaven and earth” introduce the Hebrew Bible (103) as a “biblical anthropology”: (102) “The human being as image and likeness of God is man and woman, Genesis 2-3, man and his brother, Genesis 4. The orders in which humans actually have to live are in sharp contrast to the deepest and most intimate togetherness of men and women and to the solidarity (‘brotherhood’) among humans. Man is dominating woman, man is murdering his brother. The eating of the forbidden fruit, the confusion of that image of God which is humankind, with the claim to divine power over creation, of man over woman, of man over his brother,” stands as a symbol of this (103) “errant path of men (*chataʾ*, the very original sin) on which they walk to this day.”

The actual “Book of the Begettings of *ʾAdam*, Humankind” is divided into a total of nine begettings:

1. The forefathers each beget “a firstborn among many brothers and sisters” (5:1b-6:8).
2. Noah copes with “the great flood” (6:9-9:17).
3. Shem, Ham, and Japheth are the “origin of the world of nations” (10:1-11:9),
4. Shem in particular “the origin of the Semitic peoples” until Abram (11:20-26).
5. Terah’s begettings contain (11:27-25:11) “the whole history of *Abram* (‘exalted father’) who became *Abraham* (‘father of a multitude’).“ Conspicuously absent is a chapter of “Abraham’s begettings” because Isaac is “the only, only-begotten son” claimed by “the NAME (Genesis 22!)”
6. Ishmael is mentioned as the “origin of the inhabitants of the wildernesses of the south” (25:12-18).
7. Isaac’s begettings also include, in retrospect, the begetting of Isaac by Abraham, as well as the entire history of Jacob, “the firstborn who was not the firstborn and yet became the firstborn,” up to the peace “between the hostile brothers Esau and Jacob” (25:19-35:29).
8. The chapter (103 f) of the begettings of Esau or Edom (36:1-37:1) “is necessary because Edom plays a fateful role in the history of Judea, as a beneficiary of the misery after the destruction of Jerusalem up to the role of the Idumeans (Edomites) Antipater and Herod (see Obadiah, Psalm 60:2, Psalm 137:6, and the like).”

9. Jacob's begettings contain the “story of Joseph and his brothers” (37:2-50:26).

Thus, the narratives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, which were originally handed down separately, are merged into one family history; in the background is the interest in establishing the “unity of the two houses,” the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah in one country.

Several times the fathers move back and forth between the promised land and Mesopotamia or Egypt. (104 f) “The political situation of the firstborn among the nations between the great powers that dominated the ocean of nations provides the basic framework of the Torah narrative.”

By describing not so much the past (105) as “the actual conditions in Egypt in the 6th century BCE,” Genesis 47:23-26 proves to be (106) “not so much a book about past history as political future music for the people of the Babylonian or Egyptian exile.” For (105) the last kings of Jerusalem had oriented themselves internally and externally to Egypt, and the elites of Judah who had not been deported to Babylon had emigrated to Egypt. “A radical new beginning imperatively presupposed liberation from Egypt, from Egyptian politics, and from Egyptian conditions.”

Ezra and Nehemiah: Establishing of the Torah Republic

Before Veerkamp discusses the three middle books of the Torah, he deals with the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. In them, (123 f) he identifies the fundamental document of Israel’s political history, namely the establishment of a Torah republic.

What happened (107) between 515 and 445 BCE is not clear, not even whether Nehemiah came to Jerusalem as a Persian governor with Judean roots in 445 or 384, since there were two Persian kings named Artaxerxes.

A distinction must be made between the Judeans “who remained in the land after the destruction of Jerusalem” and those “who were carried off to Babylon.” The latter, called *Gola*, soon again formed a ruling class. The former, the *Pleta*, suffered at the hands of the *Gola*.

Thus, Judean society remained full of class antagonisms, and the newly built temple remained “a normal Phoenician institution with a Phoenician cult.” Ezra and Nehemiah tried to change this. Ezra tried to get the *Gola* to adhere to the Torah. Nehemiah, through comprehensive social reform, wanted to overcome (108) the “evil and disgraceful condition” of the *Pleta*. Some of it succeeded, some only rudimentarily, and much not at all.

The project of reuniting the two houses of Judah and Israel failed because Zerubbabel, a leader of Davidic origin, refused the offer of the inhabitants of Samaria to build the temple together with the *Gola*. Thus, (109) for the books of Chronicles, the

unity of the two houses no longer exists as a goal of politics. (110) “The north, therefore, is no longer found in this work of history.”

The inevitable cult (111) was “decontaminated” by the narration of the binding of Isaac in Genesis 22 explaining to the people that God Himself, the NAME, had commanded to compensate the sacrifice of the firstborn son by an animal sacrifice; only the firstborn of the cattle and the firstlings of the harvest had to continue to be sacrificed.

Nehemiah, (113 ff) as an emissary of the Persian court, tries to clean up the antisocial chaos reflected in the prophetic books of Trito-Isaiah, Haggai, and Zechariah. He strengthens the opposition, which probably includes Nehemiah’s brother Hanani, has the city wall rebuilt against Samaria’s opposition, and takes measures against famine, the mortgaging of landed property, and the sale of young women as slaves in the countryside. He enforces debt cancellation and land reform against influential people freed from levies and administrators (*Chorim* and *Seganim*) who have appropriated fields and vineyards of small landowners. Further, (116) Nehemiah settles “people of priestly and Levitical origin” in the city, “probably besides craftsmen.” Special taxes are levied to finance the construction of houses; the governor pays part of the costs himself. Judea has at that time probably 50000 inhabitants, Jerusalem 5000.

The chapters (117 ff) Nehemiah 8-10 contain the notarized founding documents of the Torah Republic, which (118) are “adopted with clear minds by all the Israelites, men and women (a rare example of inclusive language, especially here!) and the older children (all who could listen and understand).” 13 priests, together with the priest and scribe Ezra, guarantee the authority of the Torah, and 13 Levites are responsible, in a double sense, for the edification, forming and educating, of the people.

After the proclamation of the Torah, (119 ff) the people initially is weeping; to celebrate the establishment of the Torah republic, a harvest festival is transformed into the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*), at the end of which is the joy of the Torah (*Simchat Torah*). Thus, (123) the Judeans take advantage of the little leeway under Persian sovereignty to adopt “a basic order of autonomy and egalitarianism.” (125) “For the first time, a polity was established that radically departed from the exploitative order of the ancient Near East, insofar as global conditions permitted.”

To protect the experiment, Israel’s separation from the nations has to be decreed, intermarriage is forbidden, (126) the Sabbath in connection with provisions for the Sabbatical and Jobel year becomes a sign of “the intentional segregation of the Jewish people.”

The Five Books of Moses

Veerkamp understands (129) the five books of Moses as a history book of the Torah republic, dating from the mid-5th century to the 2nd century BCE.

“Much of the narrative material in today’s Torah is probably older, but the Torah, and thus the thematic orientation of the narrative material, originates in the Torah republic period and is reflective of the political and socio-economic struggles of that time.”

The sanctuary in Jerusalem (129 f) has to ensure that the Torah is accepted by the population. To this end, a Grand Narrative is created by scribes and priests in several attempts “in which the important groups of the people of Jerusalem and the peasant families shared their own stories.”

In the process, (130) the Book of Genesis describes “how Israel became the firstborn among the nations and was promised a land.”

The Book of Exodus is about liberation from slavery and the “obligations of the covenant,” which are carried out in the Book of Leviticus as the “discipline of freedom.”

In the book of Numbers, the people falls into despair “seven times with their leadership and with the God of leadership” and in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses once again proclaims the “discipline of freedom.”

Veerkamp understands (131) the books Exodus and Numbers with their narration of the “painful and desperate walk through the wilderness” in a narrower sense as “the history book of the Torah republic” with its inner conflicts in the Persian and Hellenistic times.

Beside (129 f) the first four priestly edited books of the Torah, the Levitically oriented Deuteronomy is given its place almost unchanged. This leaves open the possibility of telling the same Grand Narrative differently.

Leviticus

The Book of Leviticus (131 f) strictly regulates the cult, which is unavoidable in terms of ancient oriental normality, according to the rules of the Torah: “liberation and discipline of freedom.”

First, the transgressions that make sacrifices necessary are described, then “the right cult and the holy life” are presented. Through the slaughter or burning of offerings, (132 f) the seriousness of a misstep against the God of liberation is expressed. In addition, there are also sacrifices to express gratitude or on the occasion of self-obligations.

As (136 f) a further festival, Yom Kippur is introduced (at the earliest in the 4th century BCE); it is supposed to cover Israel's misdeeds, i.e. to make them harmless; God alone can forgive.

The Torah (133 f) regulates exactly what priests are allowed to do. They may not arbitrarily —"creatively"—develop the cult beyond the Torah, may not detach themselves from the Torah's goal of liberation. This is the meaning of the "narrative about the cruel punishment of Nadab and Abihu."

In Israel, (134 ff) only the NAME is holy; it distinguishes Israel as a holy, liberated people from other peoples. The cult, according to Leviticus 10:10-11, is to serve exclusively this distinction of holy and unholy, clean and unclean, in the sense of instructing the people in the Torah.

Indirectly, (140) it can be inferred from various provisions of the Book of Leviticus that, contrary to Ezekiel 44:28 and Deuteronomy 10:9, priests do own land and also slaves and live "from indirect and direct exploitation." But (141) "the 'social code' in Leviticus 25" documents "the 'specialness' of Israel: Shabbat year, Jobel year, and its consequences for property law and debt law." As slaves of the NAME, Israelites would no longer be allowed to be enslaved by anyone; land ownership would not be allowed to be accumulated in the possession of individuals.

Exodus

The (142) book of Exodus recalls in its title the togetherness of the northern and southern kingdoms by listing the names of all the sons of Jacob. It contains three parts: Liberation, Covenant, Tent of Meeting. (143) The people of Israel are to become servants of the God "who liberates from servitude among humans—the fundamental figure of all *emancipation*."

When on the way to the mountain of the covenant water and bread are undrinkable or missing, according to Veerkamp the people is protesting rightly, its grumbling is "more than ill- tempered grousing." The NAME proves to be a physician, healing the water and the people. (144) Even when wistful memories of Egypt arise in connection with a famine, there is no counter-revolution (yet).

"'Bread from heaven' serves the satisfaction of justified needs, all get what they need . . ., but no more. . . . Stockpiling is nonsensical, treasuring for the purpose of later business even more so. An entirely new economy is being tried out in the wilderness."

Prior to the erection of the Tent of Meeting are the legal orders of the Book of the Covenant; that is, (145) "Politics in the Torah Republic is *executive* in the strict sense of the word: it has to carry out the will of the NAME, only that, nothing else."

Between the instruction to building the tent and its execution, Exodus 32-34 tells of the “Golden Calf,” the building of the tent outside the camp, and the “renewal of the covenant with a new Torah.” This is reminiscent of the Golden Calves that King Jeroboam had erected in the northern kingdom of Israel (1 Kings 12:26 ff). That is, here the “Temple in Jerusalem” rebuilt around 520-515 B.C. is attacked as a new Golden Calf to secure the rule of the priests. However, it is said (147) to have been the people who demanded that the priesthood cast off “the reins of the Torah, … the discipline of freedom.” “Instead of opposing the people in its call “for a counter-revolution, for new leadership by new gods ... Aaron spoke to the people's mouths.” By (148) having Moses punish the people through the Levites, the book of Exodus (in contrast to Numbers 16-17) endorses “the Levites’ violent attempt to enforce their order against the people and against the Jerusalem priesthood.”

After the incident with the Golden Calf, Moses is to set up the Tent of Meeting, not yet built at all, “outside the camp” (Exodus 33:7); thus it is to “embody the *transcendence* of the NAME, as an absolute authority over the people and their respective orders.” By speaking directly to the NAME in this tent, Moses alone challenges the power of the priests.

In that the NAME moves on with the people, (149) but does not allow himself to be seen “face to face,” but only “in his hindsight,” it is shown that it is only afterward that one can discern whether it is really the NAME who has asserted himself in a particular situation. “A past like the German one from the years 1933-1945” or like the aberration of the Golden Calf in Israel (150) “is not undone, it must be remembered again and again, but it can become a steppingstone to a new beginning.”

Thus, (150 f) the Book of Exodus reflects the brokenness of ancient Judean society, in which the priesthood was both “servant of a normal god, interchangeable with the gods of the world, and teacher of Moses’ Torah, and thus a servant of the NAME that overrules all the gods (orders) of all peoples.”

Numbers

The book of Numbers (151) contains many laws that are updated during the time of the Torah republic.

Chapter 3 about the tribe of Levi is introduced like a tenth chapter of the *Tholedoth* of the book of Genesis, namely as the begettings of Aaron and Moses. Once again, (152) it is about the “fear of the displeasure of God . . . who was denied his first-born.” By having a “son of Israel,” namely the tribe of Levi, “make himself available exclusively to the service of the sanctuary,” all other child sacrifices become unnecessary and forbidden.

The main part of the book of Numbers is the "narrative of Israel's wandering in the wilderness." It tells of bloody conflicts (seven plus one in all) in which (153) "the disputes in the Torah republic" express themselves.

Conflict 1 (chapter 11): When a reactionary mob (*ʾassaphssuph*) (154) demands luxuries "that only the wealthy in Egypt and Judea could afford," the people overeat and fill the "pleasure tombs." Moses is assisted by 70 spirit-filled elders to relieve him.

Conflict 2 (chapter 12): After (155 f) Aaron and Miriam reproach Moses for "transgressing the prohibition of exogamy," Miriam, in particular, is punished, perhaps related to "Noadiah the prophetess, the adversary of Nechemiah (Nehemiah 6:14)." The position of Moses and the Torah is not questioned.

Conflict 3 (chapters 13-14): (156) Scouts reporting "of 'giants' with their overpowering orders" and (157) the people being condemned to "endless wandering through the wilderness" is reminiscent of the supremacy of Hellenism. (157 f) "The wilderness: this is Jerusalem of the fourth and third centuries."

Conflict 4 (chapters 16-17:5): When the Levite Korah (159) argues to Moses and Aaron the Deuteronomy view that "there should be no priests and teachers above the *Qahal ʾAdonay*, the assembly of the NAME" (Exodus 19:6), which the Aaronites interpret differently, this opposition is literally condemned to the ground.

Conflict 5 (chapters 17-18): The people (160) show solidarity with the Levites, protesting against Moses and Aaron. 14.700 people suffer death. Aaron's greening staff is kept as "a memorial against possible future disturbances." (161) The sanctuary becomes "a deadly matter for the people"; there is "an outer ban mile, which the people were forbidden to cross, and an inner ban mile, which was for the Levites." Numbers 16-18 reflects how the priests secure their rule in Jerusalem in the 4th century BCE.

Conflict 6 (chapter 20): When the people again litigates against Moses for lack of water, the NAME commands Moses and Aaron to give the people water. But since Moses does not give the people "what they need and what they have a right to, 20:12 f," and (162) calls "the people adversaries, rebels (*morim*)," he is not allowed to "lead this people into the land."

Conflict 7 (chapter 21:4-9): This is about a people who has become reactionary and set out back to Egypt. A plague of snakes is cured by "making the people see what they had done: they had to look up for the snake, which Moshe nailed to a piece of wood and held aloft." This demythologizes a popular cult practice mentioned in 2Kings 18:4.

"Both narratives, 20:2-13 and 21:4-9, show that neither the people nor the leadership is without fault. One cannot a priori condone protest and sedition by the people, and restoration of order by the leadership cannot a priori be portrayed as lawful. Each incident deserves a differentiated consideration. In this respect, Numbers 11-21 can serve as a model for any historical narrative.”

Conflict 8 (chapter 25): (168) A place of worship for the Phoenician deity Baʿal in the Moabite town of Peor is the setting for the basic conflict of the people; by associating with women of foreign peoples, Israel “submits to a social order that was opposed to the order of the NAME.”

The legend about Pinchas (165) shows “that in Jerusalem the struggle for the strict prohibition of marriage with non-Israelites was fought tooth and nail.” The final “legal decrees on women’s inheritance rights” make it clear that at all costs, “inheritance property should be prevented from migrating to other peoples.”

The Unity of the Twofold Torah

As already mentioned: Even if the priesthood in Jerusalem basically established a normal ancient oriental rule, (167) the Levites can nevertheless “bring their view of the Torah into the overall Torah of Israel” in Deuteronomy.

The Deuteronomy resounds from “beyond the Jordan,” that is, from outside and not from within the Tent of Meeting. Thus, it reminds us that no one has really “arrived” in Israel yet. “The sanctuary is Golden Calf throughout, the Torah republic is the wilderness, the people are facing the Jordan, and Moshe still has to undertake to explain this Torah.”

Lecture 2: Hellenism and Roman Empire

The Scriptures of Tanakh, Apocalypticism and Paul’s Messianism

Hellenism

With Hellenism, (168) something appears in the world for the first time “what today we would call the globalization of markets,” (172 ff) and—what Alexander the Great’s teacher, the philosopher Aristotle, lamented—the transition from a moderately regulated domestic economy to commercial capitalism, (173) which allows the “acquisition of money to become a purpose in itself.”

Coinage (176 ff) was originally introduced in the temples as payment for offerings (according to Bernhard Laum, see Leviticus 27). Sacred coins have existed since the 7th century BCE; at first, the temple guarantees their value, so it is something like a central bank that puts money into circulation. Under the Persians, the state takes

over this function, but only to hoard the money. This ultimately leads to the downfall of the empire.

It is only through the Hellenistic state that money is put into circulation. (178) “State treasury and temple treasury meant nothing else than the *annihilation of money*. For the same reason, temple robbery was money creation. Only circulating money keeps the economy going, because only in this way, it can fulfill the function of means of exchange and payment (means of transaction).” (179) In the late 4th century, “the whole population begins to think in terms of coinage.” So it can be said of Hellenism, “For the first time in history, money ruled the world.” (176) Coinage, however, also limits the fraud of using false weight stones to weigh out the precious metal long used as a medium of exchange (Deuteronomy 25:13, Leviticus 19:35, Amos 8:4 f, and Micah 6:11 f).

By (179) transferring elements of the Greek polis into the urban culture of the dominated peoples, Hellenism creates a “contrast between city and country.” Cities (184) have a different structure depending on whether it is a parasitic city, a commercial city, or an agrarian city. “Parasitic is a city that lives on imports from the surrounding and more distant countryside without supplying the countryside with its own products by way of equal exchange.” Many cities, (180) such as Alexandria, Antioch, Seleucia, are newly founded, among others, to secure military rule.

But now as before, (170) the Hellenistic-dominated areas are agrarian societies; thus the state income increases with the size of the conquered lands, which is also needed to cover the costs of the wars. (180) “Standing armies and the ever-ready navy are often a much heavier burden on regional populations than the wars themselves.” However, (170) in the last three of the six wars fought between the Ptolemies and Seleucids (219-217, 202-200, and 170-168 BCE), “southern Syria (Judea, Palestine) in particular” are suffering.

For (180 f) the upper classes, a relatively uniform Hellenistic culture emerges; but the differences of the conquered territories remain. (182) In the Seleucid Empire, the king appropriates most of the land and has it cultivated by slaves or tenants. “In Judea and parts of Samaria, smaller free landowners were able to hold on; in Galilee, large landholdings with semi-free tenants predominated.”

But the population (186 f) has to pay a temple tax and many other levies in addition to high tributes to the empire. (188) “Through the privatization of state finance by way of annual leasing of taxes, the surplus product was now divided among three ‘entitled parties’: State, commerce and private finance.” If extraordinary events occur, such as “drought, plant diseases, insects,” farms have to be abandoned. This creates “an underclass that is practically excluded from social life” and increases the army of day laborers, beggars, robbers, or low-level service providers in the city.

Jerusalem (185) becomes a parasitic city over the course of the 3rd century BCE; “the countryside worked, as it were, for the city for free.” While (188 ff) members of the upper classes adapt to the new Hellenistic culture with its temples, educational institutions, and sports facilities, even to the point of surgically reversing circumcision, the lower classes are marginalized.

Writings

How does the Grand Narrative develop during the Torah republic? (192) “The ideological activity of the scribes, Levites, and perhaps other circles in the 4th century consisted primarily in the final editing of the Torah, the writing of the prophetic tradition, the creation of their own version of the review of Israel’s past, and the collection and composition of songs that could be used in the liturgy. In addition, there was the collection and composition of ‘instructive’ texts.”

They are grouped by the Jews under the heading of *Ketuvim* (books or writings) “in the third division of Scripture.” It contains two parts of four books each: 1. Psalms, Proverbs of Solomon, Job, Five Scrolls (Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, and Esther); 2. Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles.

Thus the Hebrew Bible is complete; it includes the Torah, the Prophets and the Writings; it is also called in abbreviated form ***T**a**N**a**Kh*** from **T** as ***T**orah*, **N** as ***N**eviim* and **Kh** as ***Kh**etuvim*.

Psalms and Proverbs

According to Veerkamp, (119) the Psalms are no individual songs in our sense, but “the whole of the Scriptures is breathing in these song collections and in each one of these songs. . . . The ‘I’ of the Psalms is the whole people, exemplarily concentrated in the despised, persecuted, saved, and liberated member of the people.”

By (194) calling on God to “rise up,” Veerkamp argues, the desire is expressed that the basic social order of the Torah might yet reassert itself against its enemies. (199) “Many psalms exposed the deep social fissures in Judean society in the hope that they could be healed.” They are (195) “structured by the double contrast between the *rashaʿ*, the law-breaker and thus criminal, and the *tzadiq*, proven—the one who proves himself by the Torah—on the one hand, and by the contrast between the *rashaʿ* and the *ʿani weʾevjon*, the bent and impoverished, on the other.”

In both (196) Psalm 37 and the Book of Proverbs, “there is such an unwavering ‘trust in God,’ such great confidence in the power of a Torah asserting itself against all and everything, that one can read this song as a counter-song against the Book of Job.” The book of Proverbs also embeds the contradiction just mentioned “in the contrast

between *chakam* (wise man) and *kessil* (foolish man). Crime is foolishness and foolishness is a crime; probation is wise and reasonable."

Veerkamp, however, has trouble with the Psalms' personal address to God. (200) Only "because of the poverty of the language and the novelty of the subject matter," Veerkamp thinks, citing Lucretius, would the Psalms address the a-personal instance of the "God" of their social order personally, e.g., as king, shepherd, or rock. "The four letters YHWH, which obscure rather than reveal the name 'God,' are, as I have said, always conjugated as the subject of a verb with the third person singular-masculine, suggesting an absolute-masculine instance. This idea is actually forbidden in Scripture, but it proves almost ineradicable."

Job

While (199) the great prophets like Isaiah announced new things, *Qohelet* (called *Ecclesiastes*) sees nothing new under the sun. "And Job is questioning social reality even more radically than Qohelet." As God's servant, (201 f) Job stands for the nation of Israel as a whole, which can no longer realize the Torah in the prevailing Hellenism. While (203) Job's friends are hoping in God's inscrutability, Job is suffering unbearably from God himself. It is not the connection between deeds and consequences in the general human sense that breaks down here, but (204) "that he, the one beaten in his health, finds himself abandoned by all men—and thus by 'God'—on a garbage heap, that is unacceptable, here his right to humanity is incurably violated, now it is no longer the right but the wrong that is 'God'."

Veerkamp insists that Job finally loses his illusions about the God of the Torah in 4:25. For this reason, and not because he would be crawling on his knees, he keeps silent and discards everything. He does not regret what he said against God. (206) "For the small world of Judea, the Hellenistic transformation of the economy was a real globalization: destruction of any prospect of *autonomy* and consequently of *egalitarianism*." (204 ff) God himself transformed, society now consists only of law-bending.

In chapters 32-37, (210 ff) a radical critique is made of the preceding chapters 3-31. Elihu concedes to Job that he is guilty of nothing, but he paints a well-Grecian image of God in his majesty. (212) "The God of Elihu is so far above the world that he has nothing to do with it." He cannot, therefore, be accused of any wrong.

In the same spirit, the first God speech 38-39 shows "a creation without heart and soul, without sense and understanding, precisely without Adam, humanity." This God of an eternal and unchanging world order does not care about humans without rights.

In the second speech of God 40-41, in the images of the Leviathan and Behemoth, the Hellenistic great powers of Egypt and Syria appear, against which the powerless Job can and will say nothing.

“Only in 42:7 ff, a hope breaks through that the world order, ‘God,’ is changeable, that she/he can and will—and must—turn back. Not a happy ending, but a good ending!”

Qohelet (Ecclesiastes)

According (213) to Klara Butting, the Book of Qohelet serves to “unmask progress as destruction and to recognize the nullity of progressive destruction.” Veerkamp says, “It is not about the metaphysical transience of human existence, but about the unpredictability of life in a society in which that rule no longer applies according to which probation creates good, crime creates evil.” That is, (214) although the word “*tov,* good” does not occur in “any other book of Tanakh . . . relatively as often as in Qohelet, 53 times,” Qohelet regards, “unlike in Genesis 1:1 ff ... the good on a par with the evil, 7.14,

> In days of good, stay in good,
> in days of evil, realize:
> God has made this too
> on a par with that . . .”

With melancholy, Qohelet confines himself to the small things of life and “political prudence”; to him, (215) “the world of old, the world of proving oneself against the Torah, has passed away.”

Jesus Sirach

The (216) Book of Jesus Sirach (about 200 BCE) is no part of the canon of the Hebrew Bible, but it is (221) a revealing document of the attitude of those who “rejected the new spirit of the age, . . . but were deeply imbued with it.”

Yeshua ben Sira (219) praises “the Torah, he praises the great figures of Israel’s past,” but (217 f) he assumes, as a Hellenistic-influenced man, that only wise men exempt from physical labor can lead the state. His (219) sympathy is for the poor, his indignation for the rich; but (220) far short of Torah is his sentence, “Treating slaves well is in one’s own interest.” From public life, Jesus Sirach has withdrawn. (221) “With him and his kind, the Grand Narrative has become a guide to a personally blameless life.”

Maccabees: The Failure of Politics

When (225 f) Antiochus IV entered Jerusalem in 167 BCE and erected a statue of Zeus in the temple to incorporate the god of Israel into the pantheon of the Hel-

lenistic world order, the Maccabean revolt ensued. (226) “Opposition became resistance, and the resistance took the form of guerrilla warfare. It was led by the family of Mattathias, a Levite priest from Modin, a market town in southern Samaria.”

More important than the conflicts between Levites and Zadokites or between Samaria and Judea is the economic “contradiction between the local Hellenistic center of exploitation and the exploited, especially in the countryside, between the city and the countryside.”

When Judah Maccabee conquers Jerusalem, he purifies the sanctuary as Josiah had done before; December 14, 164 BCE, therefore, becomes a festival day “for Judaism, Hanukkah, renewal.”

Subsequently, Judah’s brothers, Jonathan and Simon, and (227) the latter’s son, John Hyrcanus, play important roles in political leadership and in the annexation of Idumea, Philistia, Galilee, and Samaria. “Nominally, this large territory remained part of the Seleucid Empire, and John Hyrkanos remained ethnarch, a ‘leader of the people’ appointed by the imperial government. Only the latter’s son, Aristoboulos, assumed the title of king in 103 BCE.”

Neither the Romans nor their own people “accepted the monarchy of the successors of the Maccabees, the Hasmoneans.” As a corrupted ruling class, they exploited the people just as the Ptolemies and Seleucids had. (228) “The population may have felt the conquest of Jerusalem by the Romans under Pompey (63 BCE) at first as a liberation . . ., but soon they had to learn that here Beelzebub had cast out the devil.”

Between (239) 170 BCE and 70 CE, social disintegration continued in Judea. While Judah Maccabee is held in high esteem by “assimilationist” Jews abroad, he is “virtually erased from Israel’s history; he is nowhere mentioned in the Talmud.” This is due to the conflict of the *Perushim* (Greek *Pharisaioi*, English “Pharisees”) with the ruling Hasmoneans.

“The Hasmoneans ruled from above and from outside; their raison d’état was dictated to them by the Hellenistic environment. According to the *Perushim*, the *Judean* state had to be rebuilt from within and from below. In doing so, they invoked an oral tradition that had been carried through uninterruptedly from Moshe to the great popular teachers of the present day.” They draw a line from Moses, Joshua, the elders of the Judges period (Judges 2:7), and the prophets to Ezra and Nehemiah, “the men of the Great Assembly. These spoke three words: be careful in judgments, appoint many disciples, make a fence around the Torah.”

In (241) the first century, the Pharisees are opposed by the Sadducees (Zadokite priestly elites) and Herodians (Hasmonean court elites). (242) Dropout communities and the Essenes, “who *in the world* lived turned away *from the world* (see John 15:18 f; 17:9 ff),” exist on the other side.

“From its politicians, the people hoped less and less; for some of the people help could come only from heaven. The hour of messianism struck.”

Apocalypticism (“Apolitical Politics”)

The hope for a Messiah who would bring salvation to the people of Israel from heaven was prepared from the 2nd century BCE in the apocalyptic texts, which sang “a completely new song” in contrast to the Hellenistic-influenced wisdom. “The background of apocalypticism is the knowledge that the elementary social structures in the coexistence of people were destroyed in the Hellenistic period. The visible and experiential is therefore mere appearance; behind it something quite different is taking place.”

Veerkamp paradoxically regards apocalypticism as an “apolitical politics” that can only “pray and persevere” and withdraws from realpolitik. “What the prophets said and did was no longer possible under the conditions of definitively lost autonomy. Apocalypticism or messianism was *one* answer; the answer of the Pharisees and rabbinic Judaism was the *alternative*.”

Psalm 74 (228 ff) is a document of apocalyptic thought: (230) “Since the people can do nothing, God no longer acts, and since God no longer acts, the people can do nothing.” Therefore, the psalm calls for the “rebellion of God” to reassert “his legal order against the prevailing legal order.”

Daniel

The only (238) apocalyptic writing included in the Hebrew Bible is the Book of Daniel. It contains (233) a doctrine of the state under Hellenistic conditions and does not want to simply accept the new conditions. “The great ancient Oriental empires (Babel, Media, Persia)” are characterized as “predators,” as “exploitative states”; Hellenism surpasses them all by its “universality and destructiveness.”

In the visions (234) of Daniel 7, the state is abolished by “a *senatorial* court” with “the wisdom and life experience of an older generation” by means of the opened books of the Torah. The law called for in Psalm 74 will be put into effect (236) by “humankind coming to power with all its humaneness.” The (237) Son of Man (*bar enosh*), more appropriately translated as “like a human,” is understood in Daniel 7:27 as “the people of the saints of the Most High,” that is, those “who listen to the Torah.” Under Hellenistic conditions, Israel can come to its rights only “if conditions in all humankind are set in order.”

But (238) active politics is not possible in the Book of Daniel; the “removal of oppression” is expected from heaven. “This passivity, along with universality and finality, is the third essential element of Daniel’s vision and later of that messianism we

will find in the disciples of Yeshua of Nazareth." Politically powerless, (239) the apocalypticists are understanding, "The politics of the Hasmonean kingship cannot bring about the turning point because it seeks to defeat Hellenism by the means of Hellenism." They hope for heaven, "which is not an afterlife, but a sudden insight that seizes the people in a flash. This is the initiative of the *ʿathiq yomin*, the 'advanced in days,' *politics of heaven for the earth*."

Septuagint

We set out into the world of the New Testament (243 f) with the help of the Greek translation of the Tanakh. At least since the middle of the 5th century BCE, people in Judea and Mesopotamia did not use Hebrew but Aramaic as their colloquial language, and Greek in northern Egypt. So it is no coincidence (244) that there, in Alexandria, the Hebrew Bible is translated into Greek. Even if it is only a legend that this Septuagint is said to have been translated by 70 scholars independently of each other literally in the same way, it is nevertheless a "transcultural peak performance," especially (245) since it is impossible to translate "the whole of one culture into the whole of another culture."

Linguistically, the Septuagint is not pure Greek, but "a *Hellenized* Jewish text," similar to Martin Buber's 20th century "*Verdeutschung*" ("Germanization") of the Bible to preserve the Hebrew character of the Tanakh in the German language. Nevertheless, (246) an alienation of the Grand Narrative is inevitable. By gentiles, it can be seen as one of many philosophies.

By (247) translating the "NAME" as *Kyrios* = "Lord" or *ho theos* = "the God," they had to put up with "tyrannical associations" and could not avoid the misunderstanding as if the NAME belonged "to the species of the gods."

In (248) Exodus 3:14, the Hebrew statement about the God who is happening is not translated into the other structure of the Greek, admittedly, with the concept of essence or entity (*ousia*), but "with *egō eimi ho ōn*, 'I am the one being'." But this does not prevent the Christians, later, to understand God in the Greek sense as an unchangeable highest being.

Veerkamp mentions (252) the Judean scholar Aristoboulos, "active as a teacher of the young king Ptolemy VI (180-143)" and concerned with "the philosophical themes of Greece," who "proposes to read the Torah allegorically" in order to "bring to light the hidden but actual contents behind and between the lines." He wants to make clear to his "Greek contemporaries that the way of life and ideas of the Judeans are quite *reasonable* in the Greek sense of the word." This Judean philosophy (252 f) reaches "its apex in Philo" and later influences the efforts of the "Greek church fathers" and Augustine to explain "their theology to the 'Gentile' world."

While the Hebrew Bible consisted of the “three main divisions, Torah, Prophets, Writings,” since the 2nd century BCE, the arrangement of the Septuagint familiar to us Christians, with its other three-part division of historical, poetic, and prophetic books, was probably not made until the Christian period. “The structure, which differs from that of the Hebrew Bible, is only the outside of the structural difference between the two Bibles. The Christian Bible has a linear, salvation-historical structure; the Hebrew Bible of Judaism has a convergent structure centered around the Torah, the land, and the sanctuary in Jerusalem.”

From a Christian point of view, the Old Testament stops with Malachi, “where at the end the coming of the prophet Elijah is announced. Elijah will ‘turn the heart of the fathers to the sons, and the heart of the sons to the fathers, that I come not and smite the land with the ban.’ Then there is the ‘New Testament’ in our Bibles, where, according to common Christian sensibilities, the Jews— as deniers of the Messiah—were struck with the ban of Malachi 3:24 (or 4:6).”

In contrast to this, at the end of the Tanakh, there is the repatriation edict of the Persian King Cyrus in the Book of Chronicles “with the request to return to Jerusalem.”

Paul: People and Nations—Torah Impracticable

In his political interpretation (253) of Paul’s letters, Veerkamp follows the Dutch theologian K. H. Kroon and the German theologian Gerhard Jankowski.

Paul, a Jew with Roman citizenship from the city of Tarsos, “in the thirties of the 1st century CE” belongs to the “party of the Perushim (Pharisees) in Jerusalem” and devotes himself to the task of “instructing the Jews in the Diaspora to a Pharisaic way of life and to fight the numerous novel, modernistic or chaotic forces in Judaism at that time.” (254) One day, “on the road to Damascus . . . he realizes ‘in a flash’ (Acts 9:31) that not only the path of cultural assimilation but also the Pharisaic path of ‘separation from the nations’ led to a dead end and that both were political aberrations. He must then have made some contacts with the Messianists who saw the Messiah in Yeshua ben Joseph of Nazareth.”

Three years later he meets Peter and James in Jerusalem and agrees with them on a division of labor: “*Shaʾul*, now Paul, was to devote himself to propaganda for Messianism among the gentiles, *Cephas* (Peter) among the members of his own people.” After 14 years, in 49/50 CE, Paul’s “idiosyncratic form of messianism” is questioned by the “Jerusalem messianists”; but the division of labor remains.

According to Veerkamp, (255) “it is not by chance that a Jewish man, who was at the same time from the Diaspora and a Torah specialist, versed in the traditions of his people, understood the complete novelty of the Roman project”; the Roman Empire

is in such a way safeguarded by "a worldwide operating and centrally directed military machinery" that (256) a "local, temporarily successful Messiah figure" cannot do any good.

Paul is convinced, first, that only a worldwide victory of the Messiah over the Roman Empire could also help the Judean people, "and second, that this Messiah would not be victorious in a 'Roman' way, but in such a way that everything military would be reduced to absurdity." If the Messiah had not died on the cross but had triumphed militarily, "the Messiah of the world would have become a new Caesar, more terrible and diabolical than all the Caesars before him. . . . The Crucified One is victorious over the world system of the Roman Empire through the resurrection, and all military counter-strategies are doomed to failure."

How do, (258) in Paul, **cross and resurrection** relate to each other? The defeat of the Messiah, who fails "at the execution device for rebellious slaves, . . . is overcoming the system" through the resurrection of the Messiah. It means (259) "the complete change of the conditions under which life must be lived."

Possibly it is (259 f) the bloody "clashes between the Jewish and Greek ethnic groups in the cities of Syria-Palestine and in North Africa," especially "in Alexandria in the year 38," through which Paul begins to realize (260) "that the policy of separating the peoples would only lead to further disasters. Only in the Messiah, this murderous enmity could be overcome. Where Jews and Greeks came together in Messianic communities, death was overcome, so to speak. Resurrection is manifested in the *Body of the Messiah*, as Paul called the Messianic community. The political vision of Messianism in the version of the Diaspora Jew Paul and his disciples consists in peace between the people and the peoples, the *goyim.* The Messiah Jesus by his 'failure' leads all striving for political and military power ad absurdum and thus makes possible the solidary living together (*agapē*, 1 Corinthians 13!) between the people and the gentiles, the *goyim.* This, he says, is the only way to peace and a life without fear for the Jews and for the Greeks."

Based on these insights, the **Torah** becomes questionable to Paul because it is "no longer feasible under Roman conditions." (261) "If—Paul says—I try to live by it, I arouse enmity, even murderousness, on the part of the others, the *goyim.* On the other hand, I cannot and must not condemn the Torah as if it were evil. The good Torah, the opposite of the system, confirms the power of the system."

But (263) through the Messiah Jesus the system is overcome. "Whoever, like the Messiah, wants to live consistently—that is, politically—according to the good Torah, is punished by the system with a barbaric death; but whoever is forced to live according to the laws of the actually existing order, whoever, in fact, cannot live in any other way than 'blasphemously,' would be guilty of death according to the actu-

al Torah. For a Jew, who really wants to be a Jew, actually, no life is possible. The Greek who only wants to be Greek cannot help but persecute the Jews because by their very existence they question the Greeks and their world order, so he too can only be Greek in a distorted way. This means *law of the flesh*, all cannot but be enemies to each other. The way out is the Messianic *inspiration* (*pneuma*, spirit). The inspiration consists in trying to live *Messianically*.” In this respect, (262) “the Messianic community is the *absolute* antithesis of the Roman world system, *Body of Messiah* versus *body of death*.”

Veerkamp gives detailed reasons (267) for how “Israel is not seen off in Paul, but is led to its goal. . . . Only through the revolution of the Messiah, which finally ends the murderous struggle between Jews and Greeks . . . the Jewish people in the land as well as in the Diaspora, can preserve its identity and live according to its own orders. The unity in the Messiah Jesus is therefore not a mishmash. People are different and remain different, but diversity is no longer poisoned by the sting of enmity.”

Is there (268) a **new people of God** in place of Israel? Im Hinblick auf Exodus 32.10 sagt Veerkamp, “With Paul, Israel is not to be destroyed, but it is to be absorbed into a new ‘great people power.’ Paul foresees a conflict arising, and he takes a stand on it.”

In Romans 9-11, he says (269) that the calling of a new people of God “does not mean the casting out of the old people.”

In Galatians 4, Paul introduces (270) “as a witness against those who want to impose the Torah as a compulsory obligation on everyone else . . . by his allegorical reading of Genesis 16 or 21” (271) “the idea about the *two covenants*” that was to prove disastrous; “the result was an irreconcilable opposition between *law* (Jews, slavery) and *gospel* (Christians, freedom).”

In 2 Corinthians 3:4-6.12, it is clear that Paul (272) is “not interested in the narratives about the words and deeds of the Messiah.” He is concerned “not with the replacement of the old people of God with a new people of God, but with a new creation and thus a new heaven and a new earth, with a new humanity.”

Despite (281) Galatians 3:28 (“here is neither man nor woman”), Paul does not really overcome the **patriarchal structures**. He (282) exhorts “women to respect the classical role of women in Greco-Roman society, even in the church, admittedly until the Messiah comes.”

Likewise, “Paul does not shake the social institution of **slavery**; he accepts it as he accepts the Roman authorities.
. . . It can be endured because the Messiah is coming and will order conditions in the world so that there will be neither slaves nor masters.”

Paul does not deal with the **economic contrast rich-poor** in Galatians 3:28, he only hints at it in 2 Corinthians 8:13 f. “There the church in Corinth is to give so much to the church in Jerusalem, which is suffering because of the famine in Judea at that time, that there is material ‘equality’.”

Luke and James will devote much more space to this question. (282 f) “Messianic communities at the end of the first century struggled mightily to reconcile the Messianic vision of unity as equality with circumstances that for the time being could not be shaken.”

But Veerkamp says, (283) “Paul and the late first-century texts placed solidarity (*agapē*) at the center of that morality which the prevailing conditions demanded of people. This word had the quality of a revolutionary virtue in Paul; therefore, in this context, *agapē* should always be translated as solidarity; he dedicated a hymn to it, 1 Corinthians 13.”

Letter to the Ephesians

Of (273) “the texts produced in Paul’s school after the *Judean War*,” Veerkamp considers at length the Epistle to the Ephesians. (274) “The accumulation of such words as ability, effect, power, strength, rulership (*dynamis, energeia, kratos, ischys, kyriotētis*), which point to the assertiveness of God, that is, to the assertiveness of the order for which ‘God’ stands, serves to strengthen the ones ‘trusting’ who stand in resistance to the counter-power of the system.”

The struggle against the “Roman world order” is waged “not only against flesh and blood but also against supernatural effects and powers or demons and gods of the empire.” “Standing firm and resisting are the crucial tasks of the Messianic community.”

Ephesians 2 explains (276) “the root of Pauline Messianism.” After the destruction of the temple, “the God of Israel dwells . . . in the Messianic community,” namely in the (277) “*sōma tou Christou*, corporation of the Messiah,” the “assembly or congregation (*ekklesia*) of equitable Jews and gentiles (*goyim*)” as a “house of peace.” Since the Jewish influence on the community has already declined, the author reminds “those who are of the *goyim* that they were once ‘distant, had no hope, and were godless (*atheoi*) under the world order’ . . . for their religiosity was, in his eyes, trapped in a world order of violence and exploitation represented by the gods of the *goyim*.” In place of Roman citizenship, “the right of fellow citizens of Israel (*sympolitai*)” is the basis of the Messianic community, which is “as it were a toehold of peace in the enemy territory of a humanity disfigured by war and civil war.”

However, (278) the standard Paul set in Galatians 3:28 for “unity in the Messiah,” that is, the “united new humanity,” in Ephesians does not lead to the questioning

but to the exaltation of the patriarchal structures of society. (279) “There is precisely not the relationship in which *agapan*, to be in solidarity, and *phobein*, to have reverence, are mutual; rather, men are in solidarity and women have respect.” But (280) the “repeated exhortations in the pastoral and Catholic letters to women to be submissive to men” show that women may well have demanded true reciprocity of *agapē.*

There is (279) the same disparity between masters and slaves: “masters acting justly, slaves obediently.” (280) “There is no longer a syllable here of ‘being one in Messiah’ with the masters.”

Letter to the Hebrews

The (283) Letter to the Hebrews is not a Pauline letter, but to Veerkamp, it nevertheless belongs politically in the same line. “What Paul did with the Torah, the Letter to the Hebrews did with the cult. Both Torah and cult have reached their goal in the Messiah Jesus.”

Here (283 f) the “Tanakh is read consistently toward the Messiah.” “This typological allegory makes the Messiah the very content of the Tanakh.” The Letter to the Hebrews answers the question of how to proceed after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple.

Joshua had indeed (285) “led the people into the land, but not into the *katapausis*,” not into the “rest of the completed creation.” Instead, only “the custom of the Shabbat, the *sabbatismos*” took place in the land. Only the Messiah will reach “the rest of accomplishment,” but to this, he must become a very special high priest, for whose function the Letter to the Hebrews invents the word *metriopathein*, something like ‘suffering in measure’.” He is feeling and suffering with the “ignorant and erring.”

Installed is this high priest “not according to the traditional order of Aaron,” but there is (286) a “change of Torah” (*nomou metathesis*, 7:12), reminiscent of Jonathan the Maccabee, who, though a Levite, “allowed himself to be installed as high priest in 153 BCE.” The Letter to the Hebrews considers necessary “after the catastrophe of 70 . . . a new and this time definitive change in the priestly order. The Messiah assumes this leadership according to the order of fatherless and motherless Melchizedek, as a high priest who is both the king of truthfulness and the king of peace.” He makes “superfluous every other priesthood once and for all because he has offered himself as a *qorban*, a near-sacrifice.”

According to Veerkamp, however, (287) Hebrews 8:13 does not mean that the “new covenant . . . is abrogating Judaism.” Israel is not disinherited, but as with Jeremiah, the old covenant needs renewal. “Just as the Torah, according to Paul, does not lead

to the goal, so, according to the Letter to the Hebrews, the cult does not lead to the goal. It cannot cancel the transgressions or sins, therefore the sacrifices must always be repeated. 'Sin' . . . is not individual moral imperfection, but involvement in the crimes of the system. Neither Torah nor cult can resolve this entanglement." But, (288) "if the Messiah sacrifices himself, all other sacrifices cease to have meaning." The Letter to the Hebrews shares (10:4) the cult critique of the prophets (Isaiah 1:11; Jeremiah 7:21 ff; Micah 6:6, see Psalm 40:7). (289) "Indeed: the Letter to the Hebrews is the foundational document for the end of religion." Since the Messiah has offered "the highest of all sacrifices," namely himself, no further sacrifice is meaningful or necessary.

"The community lives in the system, but is no longer part of the system." The "daily experiences in the time of persecution" can be endured (290) by trusting in the "coming state" (Hebrews 13:14), which is "to be taken literally." However, since there is "no real strategy of radical world transformation" for Christians, there is soon a "putting off to the hereafter." By "abolishing religion through a super-religion, the disenchantment of cult magic with the 'blood of bulls and goats' through the meta-sacrifice of the Messiah," ultimately there is a "*theology of satisfaction* that depoliticized messianism. All is done, nothing was left for the people but the recognition of the sacrifice. Nevertheless: the concern of the letter, a life without cult and the expectation of a completely different political order, the *polis mellousa*, signifies a conclusion of the Corpus Paulinum worth considering."

Lecture 3: From the Gospels to the Making of Christianity

The Influence of the Judean War on the Gospels
and the Development Leading to the Church Fathers

The Judean War

In great detail (291) Ton Veerkamp describes the *Judean War* since without it the Gospels would not have been written as they were. "The *Judean War* was a civil war. The driving political contradiction was not between the Roman imperial government and the Judean population as such, but between the various strata and classes, each of which had a different relationship to the Roman Empire."

After the reign of Herod the Great, (292 f) society was extremely unstable around the year 6 CE. Judas the Galilean, whose father Ezekias had been executed by Herod as a guerrilla leader, "called the Galileans to revolt against the Romans in year 6 because they were taking a census. We know this census from the Christmas narrative. So Luke has Yeshua of Nazareth being born in the very year of the census when Judas Galilaios began his revolt." The (293) latter's sons Jacob, Simon, and Menachem

“played a leading role in the resistance against the Romans” and were all executed; his grandson Ezekias was among the besieged at Massada and committed suicide in a hopeless situation. (294) “It seems that our evangelists, despite hidden admiration, wanted to emphasize the futility of a military struggle against Rome and wrote down the gospels of Yeshua ben Joseph of Nazareth in Galilee as a counter-narrative against the Galilean messiahs from the house of Judas Galilaios. This Yeshua of Nazareth was executed with two guerillas (*lēstai*) under Pontius Pilate. This is about the only thing we know for sure about Yeshua of Nazareth: a Galilean crucified under Pontius Pilate. Some of his disciples, mainly Galileans, remained in Jerusalem.” It is conceivable that they had “some sympathy for militant resistance”; in any case, both James the brother of John was executed by Herod Agrippa I, and James the brother of Jesus was executed by the high priest Ananaios II. “The Gospels, written after the war, do not give a good account of the leaders of the Messianic community, the apostles. The recurrent accusation that the apostles had little confidence (*oligopistoi*, little trust) in the narrative figure Messiah Yeshua of Nazareth points to the period before the *Judean War*, where they showed sympathy for Galileans like the sons of Judas Galilaios and preferred to rely on the sword—that is, on a militant messianic strategy (Simon Peter in the Garden of Gethsemane).”

Veerkamp (295) gathers a great deal of information about the social structures. “In Judea, there was still a land-owning small peasantry, in Galilee large-scale land ownership had prevailed. The parables about the (land) lord not staying on his estates and demanding an annual account are indeed typical of conditions in Galilee.” In addition to the tenants of the estates, there were day laborers, beggars, and people who “performed poorly regarded services. . . . Many of these people lived in misery. Even more so were those who were disabled or suffered from contagious skin diseases.”

The crime was high. “Among the *lēstai* were not only guerrilla fighters, but also robbers and ambushers. In general, there will have been a smooth transition between guerrilla warfare and banditry, as today can be seen in a country like Colombia.”

In (296) Matthew, when Jesus calls “the marginalized ‘weary and burdened’” to whom “he holds out the prospect of ‘rest’ (11:28),” he is inviting, as it were, “the rearguard of wandering Israel through the wilderness,” that is, those “who could not keep up” (Deuteronomy 25:18), to “join him, because he himself was a humiliated one (*praÿs*, *ʿani*) and without any reputation (*tapeinos*, *shophel*). It is only when these people *become aware* of the *intolerability* of their lives that, unless they are—and this will probably (have been) the majority—jaded by the cares of daily life, they are ready to rise up against circumstances.”

Judea (298) is dominated by a domestic exploiting class composed of large landowners, priestly and Herodian elites, and “the Roman Empire and its administrative and

supervisory personnel in the country itself" as an external exploiting class. There is a variety of burdens on peasants and artisans: poll taxes, land taxes, rent taxes, special levies for the military and the ruler, "fines, . . . road taxes, market taxes, house taxes, salt taxes, etc." Private customs tenants are especially hated. (299) "The upper class of artisans was traditionalist, for this reason, hostile to Rome, and inclined to the party of the *Perushim* (Pharisees). They were an accepted and official opposition, so to speak, and were skeptical, if not hostile, to the revolt. They played no role in the war. ... The strata above the stratum of the very poor and the destitute will then have been the bearers of militant resistance, probably joined by sections of the destitute strata in the course of the warlike conflicts."

The (301 f) occasion for the *Judean War* is the robbery of the temple treasury by the procurator Gessius Florus (64-66) and (302) the refusal of the high priest Eleazar to make offerings to Rome. "Elites devoted to Rome took Eleazar's action as a declaration of civil war; they requested troops from the Romans and the Herodians."

In response, insurgents from the surrounding area burned important buildings: (303) "The three buildings, the palaces of the high priest and the Herodian king and the building of the central debt administration, held the ruling structure together. . . . The revolt took on features of a 'class struggle'." Menachem, a son of Judas the Galilean, enters Jerusalem "like a messianic king" and has "the high priest and his followers killed" but soon he himself is killed, and now it was the priests who "subsequently organized war against Rome." (304) "The radical phase of the revolution had lasted little more than a few months."

The priest Josephus, who reports on the *Judean War*, is in charge of coordinating the uprising in Galilee, where he has to deal with John of Giscala, who to him "is nothing but a common criminal and bandit." When the Romans end "the struggle in Galilee by the autumn of the year 67," John makes his way "with a few hundred people to Jerusalem," where he foments civil war with the help of "guerrillas from the countryside." When John (305) wants "the office of the high priest . . . to be determined by lot during a people's assembly," he loses his "credit with the priests," he becomes the leader of the Zealots, who have "in their power except Idumea the whole extreme south of the province of Judea," and with them eliminates "the priestly elites completely."

Meanwhile, "in the countryside south of Jerusalem" there is further guerrilla fighting "under the leadership of Simon bar Giora," who appears "outside the walls of Jerusalem in April 69" and is in contact with the grandson of Judah the Galilean at Massada. "He proclaimed the liberation of the slaves and a comprehensive redistribution of the land. The Romans, meanwhile, had other concerns. Emperor Nero had committed suicide in May 68; three army leaders were fighting to succeed him. Ves-

pasian left Judea, handed over command to his son Titus and prevailed against the pretenders to the throne. This explains the successes of the guerrillas in the south during 68.”

Subsequently, John and Simon fought each other until Titus (306) besieged Jerusalem in 70 and John had the high priest Elazar ben Simon murdered.

“After four months of siege, the Romans took the city. . . . They killed the opponents and the useless (‘old and weak’) in Jerusalem and left the able-bodied alive. . . . John was sentenced to life imprisonment, Simon was executed. . . . According to Josephus, 1.1 million people lost their lives in the siege of Jerusalem. The number is certainly exaggerated. However, it can be said that countless perished in the *Judean War*, at least one-fifth of the total population. The leaders of the resistance had ultimately led the people to their doom. This is how the Perushim saw it. Their successors, the rabbis and their disciples, judged the leaders of the uprising harshly. The second generation of the disciples of Yeshua (Jesus) of Nazareth expressed similar views.”

The (307) *Second Judean War* of 132 to 135 “under the military-political leadership of Simon bar Kokhba” is “supported by the distinguished Rabbi Aqiva,” but (308) has no chance against the Roman Empire under Emperor Hadrian. “The vehement anti-messianism of the rabbis dates from times after this war.” (309) “Whether the survival of ‘national identity’ can be attributed to the warriors of the two Judean wars may be doubted. Rather, it was scribes and *Perushim* who laid something like the foundations for a later Jewish polity at Javne. Their concept of asserting space *within* the Roman Empire, rather than *against* it, where a Torah-like life would be possible, gave birth to Judaism. Certainly, they thus fulfilled the mandate of ‘separation from the nations’ as a survival strategy since Ezra and Nehemiah.”

Veerkamp (309-315) also deals broadly with the events leading up to the fall of Judaism in Alexandria (115-117), which, as stated, (309) were “behind the Pauline and Deuteropauline vision of the unity of Greeks and Judeans in the Messianic communities.”

The conclusion of this section: (315) “The history of Israel in the land and in the Diaspora has been a terrible history of catastrophe during the last two centuries before our era and the first century after the turn of the ages. Our Messianic texts reflect this catastrophic history.”

Gospels

To mark (315) the difference of Paul and his disciples, including the Letter to the Hebrews, in contrast to the Gospels, Ton Veerkamp uses the Hebrew word *davar*, which can mean “word” as well as “deed” and “fact” brought about by the word. To Pauline Messianism, “the one fact, *davar*, of the suffering, death, and resurrection

of the Messiah alone is important. The four 'gospels,' however, place this fact, which is also crucial for them, in the context of the concrete, that is, the political life of the Messiah, and thus in the context of the political life of their Judean people. They recount the many *devarim*, facts—words and deeds—of the Messiah, culminating in word-and-deed (*davar*) of his death and resurrection." It is the "catastrophe of 70" that makes it necessary to focus on "his flesh, his concrete-Jewish existence in his people." "Each Gospel has its own narrative, they all had their *kairos*, their own political time."

The (316) words *euangelion* ("gospel") and *euangelizein* ("to evangelize") come from the "mindscape of the Messianic communities trained by Paul. . . . In the first century, the word has a political meaning: the content of the message is the victory of the Messiah over the system. The bowed and humiliated people, as addressees of 'evangelism,' must understand that times will change and the time of the Roman system will pass."

Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John "regard the Passion of the Messiah as the Passion of the Judean people and the Passion of that people as the Passion of the Messiah. Whoever reads the 'Gospels' without the *Judean War* may understand all sorts of things, elevated morality, sublime religion, but his understanding misses the point that is dealt with in these four." (316 f) "The 'Gospels' deal with the 'disturbance' of Messianism by the war and its outcome: the Messiah had not come and had delivered his people to destruction by Rome. Just as the Tanakh is determined by the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of Babel, so the Messianic writings by the second destruction perpetrated by Rome."

Writings (321) that—such as the Gospel of Thomas—do not correspond to the Gospel of Mark in their "basic form and basic intention" can, according to Veerkamp, be "all kinds of things, but definitely not a *Gospel*."

Matthew, Luke, and even John, (317) among others, "are also *Mark critics*. They dealt with him, but they did not want to stop at what Mark told, or better: *how* he told it. All four relate the 'failure' of the Messiah, if as a criterion is applied his acceptance by the Judean people. This is clearest in John. It is with him, however, that the failure is transformed not only into a victory but into the *absolute and final* victory."

Overall, according to Veerkamp, the Gospels conceive of themselves as "*Pauline criticism*." But he does not play Paul and his critics off against each other, "as if the evangelists were the only representatives of a true Christianity and Paul had been the forger."

Mark

In analyzing the Gospel of Mark, Veerkamp draws on research by Andreas Bedenbender.[3]

Mark (317) uniquely relates “an oral tradition about the *Devarim Yeshua Meshiach*, the words and deeds of the Jesus Messiah, . . . to the actual history of the Judean War.” Messianism as it was before the war is no longer possible to him. (318) His Gospel ends with the fear of women and that, “after the death of the Messiah, he has an ‘angel’—the transformed youth who had to flee naked when Jesus was arrested—send the disciples back to Galilee.”

“Gospel” in Mark means “that the Messiah Jesus announces in word and deed the ‘Gospel of God’ and that the Messiah himself *is* the Gospel of God.” It begins with the “voice of the one calling” in the “wilderness of the survivors of the *Judean War*.” (319) “The confrontation with Rome is decided by the defeat of the year 70, but differently than the Romans think. The victory is in the words and deeds of the Messiah.” These are showing “that the Kingship of God is near”; however, it is not yet *here*. (319 f) “The Kingship of God is the quintessence of the Grand Narrative of Israel, it is the social order, world order, of the God of Israel, the NAME. To Mark, it consists in the healing of the people.”

Military resistance (320) against Rome ends in despair. “The Messianic community must and can go back to Galilee to find the new and true way. . . . Resurrection in Mark only means ‘he is not here,‘ not in the mass graves of his people around Jerusalem. But is this a way to walk on?”

The other evangelists (3e20 f) follow up on this question and answer it differently. Matthew and Luke, among others, make use of a tradition of sayings that scholars call the “source of sayings Q” and that also has “its root in the early oral tradition about the *Devarim Yeshua*.”

Matthew

Distinct from Mark, (322) to Matthew Jesus is “from the beginning (1:11) the Messianic King, that is, ‘Son of David,’” but quite different “from the Zealot kings Menachem son of *Judas Galilaios* and Simon bar Giora.”

In the title, Matthew borrows from Genesis 5:1; with the “book of the begetting of Jesus Christ (*Yeshua Messiah*), the son of David, the son of Abraham,” he begins a new chapter of the “Grand Narrative.” Jesus’ begetting is described as “a passive oc-

3 Summarized, his research on the Gospel of Mark can be found in the following (highly recommended!) books: Andreas Bedenbender, Frohe Botschaft am Abgrund. Das Markusevangelium und der Jüdische Krieg, Leipzig 2013, and Andreas Bedenbender, Der gescheiterte Messias, Leipzig 2019.

currence" and interpreted in three ways: as a story of Joseph's trust, as a story of persecution by Herod, and as "the story of the emigration to Egypt and the return to the land that is not to be Judea but Galilee, the land of the *Devarim Meshiach* and the land of the nations, *Galilaia tōn ethnōn* (4:15)." (323) "The movement in Matthew runs from the Galilee of the nations to 'all the peoples,' *panta ta ethnē*, 28:19." In the main body of the Gospel (4:12-25:46), Matthew presents in "five great passages . . . the deeds and the speeches of the Messiah, and then recounts his death and resurrection."

In Matthew, (324) Jesus does not abrogate the validity of the Torah; oral tradition also remains binding; "Pharisaic rabbis" are to be criticized only if (324 f) "their conduct of life is contrary to their teaching." (325) As with Paul (Romans 2:5 f), it is "the works of humans that will justify or condemn them on the day of judgment (*krisis*) (25:31 ff). It is the works of mercy or solidarity (*eleos*) for which trust (*pistis*) in the Messiah gives the strength. . . . But different from Paul, to him the Torah remains the necessary framework for judgment, mercy, and trust. Here worlds are separating Matthew from Paul."

According to 28:19-20, (326) "the content of the mission is to train the nations in the teaching of the Torah centered by the Messiah around judgment, mercy, and trust." Thus, Matthew has the disciples "go from Galilee with the Torah . . . to the nations."

Luke and Acts

Two interconnected works are attributed to the evangelist Luke. (326) In his Gospel, "Luke is writing to a Greek and must take account of the latter's scholarly love of order." The Acts of the Apostles belong closely to the Gospel and "are concerned with the reconciliation of the two main Messianic trends."

"Should Luke have known Matthew, then his work is a clear criticism of his gospel." (327) "You cannot win the nations with a Torah-led Messianism." His "complete work begins in the Jerusalem temple and ends in Rome, it begins in the center of the Judean people and ends in the center of the Roman Empire." (328) In the Gospel, "all the ways of the Messiah . . . lead to Jerusalem"; in Acts, "all the ways of those inspired by the Messiah . . . go out from Jerusalem"—in fact, (329) they lead "away from the ruins of Jerusalem," and, as the Judeans reject the Messiah (Acts 18:6), "to Rome!" This way, however, (329 f) "does not mean the end of Israel, but Paul undertakes everything so that the hope of Israel may be fulfilled—if need be, by a detour through the nations."

John

In (330) John, contrary to Paul, Matthew, and Luke, the "nations (*ethnoi*, 'Gentiles') are playing no role at all . . . With him, the mission of the Messiah refers to Israel."

However, he strives for the restoration of all Israel, not only Judea but also “Samaria as the ‘daughter of Jacob’ (John 4). And the goal of Messianic politics is the great synagogue in which all the children of Israel in Samaria and worldwide are gathering. The Messiah is the unity of Israel. . . . Nowhere does John speak of a mission to the nations.”

In John 1:14—“The Word happens as flesh, has his tent among us”—by the flesh is meant (331) “the concrete social existence, with all its vagaries, vulnerable, transitory, but ‘among us,’ that is, not among us people generally, but among Jewish people of the first century.”

John’s Gospel is written for Jews who “profess the Messiah Yeshua,” and sharply delimits itself against “the Perushim and their followers in the Jewish communities of the Diaspora.” They are opponents and competitors, but not enemies; the actual political enemy is Rome.

Opposite to Pontius Pilate, “Yeshua advocates nothing but ‘separation from the nations.’ His kingdom is ‘not from this world order,’ which corresponds to the expression ‘like all the nations,’ *kekol hagoyim* of 1 Samuel 8:5. The King of Israel is the God of Israel, no one else.”

John thus sees the world like Judas the Galilean, but totally rejects his means. (331 f) “To him, the Galilean fighters are simply criminals, robbers, and murderers (10:8-10). John’s Gospel is an uncompromisingly anti-Zealot text. *Enemies*, however, are the leading priests (*archiereis*), for they solemnly and publicly declared, ‘We have no king unless Caesar’ (19.15).”

John is equally hostile to those “who, after initial allegiance, have separated themselves from the Messiah and his community, 6:66”; this is common practice with him as “in all sects of all times. *Goyim* and Jews can be tolerated if necessary, but apostates (heretics) cannot.” However, “The Jews as such in John are not enemies, not even opponents, they are rather a confused crowd . . ., wavering and irresolute . . . They are manipulated by the enemies, the leading priests, and thus incited to enmity.”

To John, (333) the “framework of the messianic narrative . . . is no longer the procession from Galilee to Jerusalem, but the festival calendar.” Rejecting Zealot messianism, Jerusalem to him is “not the city of David, but the place of the festivals, especially the place of Pesach. John, like a priest . . . composes his gospel along the lines of the great festivals of Israel.”

John has some material in common with the Synoptics but builds it into the Gospel in his own way. (334) “The Messianic wedding is the future of Israel, the terminally ill son or servant of the royal official is the present of Israel. Between these signs the life of the Messiah takes place. The other signs can be assigned to the main works of

the Messiah: the mobilization of paralyzed Israel (John 5:1 ff), the feeding of starving Israel (6:5 ff), the healing of blinded Israel (9:1 ff), and the revival of dead Israel (11:1 ff). The *works* are testifying to the credibility of the Messiah."

Also to John, "the cross of the Messiah—and therefore the cross of the Judean people—is not the great defeat . . . but the decisive beginning of the long but irreversible process of the rising of the Messiah and Israel. It is therefore the victory, 16:33." (335) "The disciples of Yeshua, says John, must live without Messiah, admittedly they will live from the inspiration of this Messiah who has passed away, though *ascending* (*anabainōn*)," in the "*agapē*, the solidarity in the Messianic community."

Thus, (334) it is true for John against Matthew and Luke, "Not the Torah (Moshe!) as the permanent reference also for the Messiah, not the nations as the real addressees of the Messianic message, but the *mandatum novum*, the new Torah of the solidarity of the Messianists among themselves and the concentration *on Israel and only on Israel*, that is the way of the Messiah, the way that is the Messiah, 14:6. Hardly anyone understood this message." (335) "It has sectarian overtones"; this is evident, for example, when Jesus insists that his disciples are to drink his blood and to chew his flesh. "Later, the group around John took to joining the other non-Pauline groups. In the appendix to John's Gospel," they are "formally summoned to join 'Peter' and abandon their sectarian isolation."

The Four Gospels

"All four Gospels share the criticism of the 'twelve apostles,' the other companions of the Messiah and his family . . . John's community was the Messianic community, in which the Messiah's mother and women from her environment played an important role. Not only she; also the daughter of Jacob in John 4 and the two women in Bethany (John 11) point to a community in which, unlike in Jerusalem, women set the tone. The four are again unanimous in their criticism of the congregation of the brothers of the Messiah in Jerusalem. From the point of view of all four evangelists, it must have failed completely in the period before the Judean War." This is indicated, for example, by the fact that Peter "and that is, the leadership of the Messianic Jewish communities" did not want to "take up the *cross*—that is, defeat."

"It is imperative to read these texts against the backdrop of shattered messianic expectations at the time of the *Judean War*. The acceptance of the cross means: to take note of the fact that the liberation of Israel cannot be achieved in a militant, even military way. . . . All four Gospels place the Passion at the end of their narratives. The Passion of the Messiah was a process in two respects. On the one hand, the Passion is the result of the Messiah's life process. On the other hand, it is brought about in a process as a trial. . . . What the Gospels agree on is that the

priests, along with the Romans themselves, were responsible for Jesus’ execution, that is, not the Jews, not even the Pharisees.” (339) “They also have in common that the Messiah, under the still (!) prevailing circumstances, can be none other than the maltreated *evyon weʿanaw*, the needy and bowed down: ‘Take my yoke upon you and learn from me that I am a bowed down and humiliated one (*praÿs . . . kai tapeinos*),’ Matthew 11:29. The maltreated Messiah is the maltreated servant of the NAME in Isaiah 53. . . . The triumphant ‘Son of Man’ of Daniel 7 is preceded in all Gospels by the ‘suffering servant’ of Deutero-Isaiah. Only in this way can the Messianic community after 70 come to terms with the catastrophe of the Messiah and his people.”

“The other common Messiah conception is the Messiah as counter-David, not a pseudo-David who wants to take the city by storm. The four Gospels all show—against the background of the *Judean War*—the counter-image of Zechariah 9:10 ff: ‘Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion, exult loudly, daughter of Jerusalem, there, your king is coming to you, a truthful one and a liberator he is, a humbled one (*ʿani*), riding on a donkey, on a colt. ‘I wipe out chariots from Ephraim, cavalry from Jerusalem, I wipe out the bow of war, I say to the nations, Peace!’ . . . All four gospels took their cue from the image of Zechariah 9. But they do not find a common answer to the question of what to do after the catastrophe of 70.”

Veerkamp is in favor of letting “these four attempts stand in their own right.” (340) “The ideological heterogeneity of our texts was seen as a great difficulty even in the second century. But there is an inner harmony: all want to make clear that the defeat of the Messiah and the Judean people is not the last word. That is why all let the resurrection be heard as a final chord, not a triumphant one, but a victory. A disciple of John wrote, ‘The world order passes, but he who does the will of God remains until the coming world age’; 1 John 2:17.”

Revelation

Ton Veerkamp places the Revelation “in the world of the four gospels.” In it, the “victory over the world order” becomes “the finale of Israel’s Grand Narrative . . . The book depicts the great battle against the beast and views the New Jerusalem, the great and final alternative to Rome, descending from heaven.”

As (341) in the Book of Daniel, there is an astute political analysis and “apolitical politics.” The Roman Empire is portrayed as “a vast commercial association” within which “even the ‘bodies and souls of men’ (18:11-17)” are traded. It is destroyed “not by the people it oppressed, but ‘by a strong angel’ . . . (18:21).” In contrast (342) to Daniel 7, it is not the Son of Man but a slaughtered lamb, i.e., “a massacred Israel, . . . that ultimately is victorious over the Roman world order. Both the notion of ‘lamb’ (‘Lamb of God,’ John 1:29) and the focus on Israel suggest proximity to John's Gospel.”

Revelation "presupposes a war situation that was critical to the Roman Empire." One (340) of three wars could form its background: "the first Judean War 66-70, the war in the Diaspora 115-117, and the second Judean War 132-135." (345) In the end, everything becomes new. "The enemy, the whore Babylon, Rome, which destroyed ancient Jerusalem, is no more. Jerusalem will exist, admittedly a completely new Jerusalem, a city that has never existed before, a city without a temple. . . . The city of Israel will also be a city for the peoples, the problem of Messianism, Israel and the nations, will finally be solved, definitive solution of a definitive problem."

Grand Narrative—Messianistically Interpreted

Veerkamp draws the conclusion that the "main texts of what later will be called the *New Testament*" reflect different varieties of a Messianism that belongs as "one of the many different directions" to first-century Judaism.

But what happens when, at the latest after the second Judean War 132-135, "a comprehensive change in the prevailing world order is no longer to be expected"? Revelation's hopes for a "new Jerusalem from heaven," Matthew's for training the nations in the Torah, and Luke's for "reconciliation of the main Messianic trends" are disappointed. "Messianism was at first nothing more than another splash of color in the colorful world of the Oriental subculture of the Roman Empire. The gathering of the scattered children of the God of Israel into a synagogue succeeded, but the synagogue was organized by rabbinic Judaism, the successors of John's fiercest opponents."

One did hold to the texts of the congregations "which adhered to the Torah as obligatory *halakha* to the Messianists . . ., but they ceased to be an independent tendency. For some, even this was too much. Marcion, who admitted only a purified version of Luke's Gospel, had no small following around the middle of the second century. From this time at the latest, the need to bring order into the ideological chaos and to develop a general doctrine binding the congregations became apparent. Thus, the Grand Narrative of Israel will be transformed into another Grand Narrative, that of Christianity."

From the Pastoral Epistles to Justin and Ignatius

The (347) word *christianoi* is used in Acts 11:26 and 1 Peter 4:16, that is, only toward the end of the 1st century for the "followers of a very definite Messiah, Yeshua ben Joseph of Nazareth."

The word *Christianismos*, to be translated as Christianity, "no longer means Messianism, certainly not in the Jewish sense of the word. The word has been formed analogously to the word *Ioudaismos. Ioudaismos* we know from the Epistle to the Galatians (1:13f) and it means nothing else than what the rabbis call *halakha*, the

way of life of Torah-observant Judeans. For the first time the word *Christianismos* appears in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch as an antithesis to *Ioudaismos*.”

Beginning in the middle of the 2nd century, with a dispute between the Christian Justin and the Jewish scholar (348) Tryphon “about the legitimate reading of Scripture . . . two fundamentally different readings of the Grand Narrative” begin to emerge. With Talmudic Judaism and Christianity, two different Grand Narratives are developing. “The construct of *salvation history* was the lens through which Christians began to read the Grand Narrative of Israel.” On the Septuagint and the “Messianic writings . . . was erected the edifice of a binding doctrine based on the *universal* (*Catholic*) creed.”

The Pastoral Epistles of 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus and 1 Peter and the texts of the “*Apostolic Fathers*, named after those who are said to have still known the apostles but were not apostles themselves” are at the beginning of this process.

With (349) Bishop Ignatius of Antioch begins the tendency to (351) no longer read “the Gospel *from the Scriptures*,” but “the Scriptures become intelligible only when they are proclaimed *in response to the Gospel*.” (352) “According to Ignatius, *Joudaismos* (Jewish way of life) and *Christianismos* (Christian way of life) are mutually exclusive.”

Ignatius, by the way, belongs to those who, according to Veerkamp, strive with a certain “lasciviousness to become a witness (martyr) in a bloody way.”

As before, (353) the Roman Empire is “the great enemy.” The situation for Christians can change “by leaps and bounds, within a few months.” That is why Ignatius calls for “discipline and fidelity to the line” for the “underground movement that Christianity always had to be until 313.”

An (354) *orthodoxy* (*right* opinion) emerges in the sense of a salvation-historical reading of the Tanakh; “against *heterodoxy* (*different* opinion) or *kenodoxy* (*senseless* opinion) or *kakodoxy* (*bad* opinion),” on the other hand, is warned in order to prevent divisions.

Pseudo-Barnabas and Diognet Letter

With (354) the “Epistle of Barnabas, known as *Pseudo-Barnabas*” begins the teaching of the “disinheritance of the Jews” by the Christians. “Not only was the heir replaced by a new heir, but also the Shabbat by a new holiday.” (356) “Instead of a Messianic community of Jews and *Goyim*, we have a Christian community that wants to do without Jews on principle.”

But instead of rejecting the Old Testament, as Marcion suggested, it is used “as evidence against the Jews.” Christians “well suspected that without the Grand Narra-

tive of Israel their Christianity would have to become a plant without a root, an intermediate between a Gnostic sect and an Oriental mystery religion."

From the middle of the 2nd century, Christian apologists "asserted their views as the true religion against Judaism and paganism." The "Letter to Diognētos" went so far as to portray the entire religion of the Jews as "nonsensical, . . . superstition, boasting, unserious, just 'not worth talking about' (*oudenos axia logou*)."

Crossroads: Judaism and Christianity

On the one hand, (357) according to Daniel Boyarin, alienation between Judaism and Christianity begins as a "process of development of two mutually exclusive orthodoxies with the consequence that they defined each other as 'heretics' (*minim* or *hairetikoi*) with the purpose of establishing their own identity against each other."

On the other hand, within Christianity, the dispute "continues to play out between the two main branches of messianists, between 'Peter'—or more precisely Matthew—and 'Paul'." There should emerge "a consistent and contradiction-free doctrinal edifice" in which "neither those who wished to hold to the Jewish *halakha* nor those who, like Marcion, had rejected the whole Grand Narrative of Israel could find a place."

Irenaeus and Quartodeciman Controversy

Irenaeus describes around 180 "in his book *Adversus Haereses*, *Against the Divisions*" (358) the Christian doctrine already like "the classical three-part creed." With the doctrine of creation in Genesis 1 he distinguishes himself from Gnosticism; but in the "irenic creed," before the article about Jesus, the reference to "Israel's becoming the firstborn of the nations, its enslavement, liberation, leading the people through the wilderness, training them in the discipline of freedom so that they inherit the land to live there as freed slaves" is completely missing. (359) The liberation becomes at most already here "a spiritual liberation from the dominion of sin."

In the so-called "Quartodeciman Controversy," the Western Church and Alexandria around the middle of the 2nd century decided to celebrate Easter "on the first Sunday after the full moon of spring" while "the Eastern communities, especially those in Anatolia and Syria, celebrate it on the 14th and 15th days of the month of Nisan, that is, two weeks after this new moon, on alternate days of the week, as Pesach is celebrated to this day among the Jews." The Good Friday and Easter liturgies increasingly confront "God's acts of liberation for Israel" with "Israel's rejection and killing of the Messiah."

From *halakha* to Doctrine

Originally, (360) both Christianity and Judaism want "another world, a new earth under a new heaven." This corresponds to a particular way of life, be it the "Jewish *ha-*

lakha according to Torah and Talmud” or the “Messianic *halakha*, the *imitatio Christi*, the following of the Messiah, standardized by the living process of the apostolic tradition.”

To Christians, Jesus is the Messiah who unites “the *whole—panta ta ethné*, all peoples” under his head. “It is no longer about the one people, but about all peoples, about the whole, not about Israel, but about the new humanity in general. Christianity could become the universal religion because it was not so much a [single] *people’s* religion as [all] *the peoples’* religion.” (361) “In contrast, Judaism had to insist on the actual way of Israel and on the gift of the Torah. The gift of the land and the dwelling (*shekina*) of the NAME in the place He had chosen remained for Judaism the object of messianic hope.” Judaism, therefore, “cannot be a general religion. It lives with a Grand Narrative in which the peoples—and not only as enemies—appear and must appear, but it is not a narrative *for* all peoples.”

But Judaism, too, since “after the catastrophes of the *Judean Wars* in the 2nd century” the hope of “returning to the place where the God of Israel will make his NAME dwell” has been pushed into the distant future, has to formulate a “doctrine” in a completely new way, (362) in order to “organize the temporary standby.” (361) “The first writing of the oral tradition from the early 3rd century, the *Mishna*, formed the heart of the ‘doctrine,’ *Talmud*,” which, however, “unlike an orthodox dogmatics . . . allows different, even contradictory opinions of the discussants to stand side by side.”

For a discussion (362) of Judaism, Veerkamp indicates to Daniel Boyarin; he himself, in the following, pursues the question of how the Christian communities with their “monarchical organizational structure” faced the “challenges posed by the Roman world order.”

Lecture 4: Transforming the Grand Narrative into the Creed of the Church

From the Underground Church in Roman Principate
to the Place-Assigning Church in Roman Dominate

The Crisis of Rome and the Christian Counter-Model

In order to explain the social background in the Roman Empire, (386) Ton Veerkamp distinguishes between two phases of the Empire, the Principate and the Dominate, after the period of the Republic. In the Principate, the emperor is officially first among equals; only in the Dominate does he become the absolute autocrat.

The crisis, (363 ff) which is overcome toward the end of the 3rd century by the transition to the Dominate, begins in the 1st century BCE with the fact that, (366) since

the civil wars, “large landholdings and large monetary assets characterize the social structure in the most important areas of the Roman Empire” and (367) the productivity of the estates becomes worse and worse. The “landless peasants” become more and more “dependent on the landowners”; the tenant (*colonus*) practically becomes a bondman or serf. At the same time, rural exodus leads to the growth of cities with poor lower classes. (364) For the “population in the countryside” in Italy and Greece, for example, one can say, “It was just enough to live, but hardly enough for more.” But “in times of need,” especially in the provinces, people are “poor in the absolute sense of the word.”

For the time “under the adopted emperors from Nerva to Marcus Aurelius (98-180)” it is still true that in the “core areas they can ensure the supply of the population.” But then, (367 ff) between 235 and 284, soldier emperors come to power by coup. They try, as Septimius Severus is said to have advised his sons as early as 211, to make the soldiers rich in order to solve their problems, and the state has to finance its expenditures in an inflationary way because of a lack of productivity increase. As a result, money loses more and more of its value.

Economically, (368) the Roman Empire remains “an agrarian society” with large parasitic cities, that is, dependent on supplies from the countryside. In the “chaos of the 3rd century,” Christians “through their cohesion, especially in the times of need after 235 exerted a growing attraction on non-Christians.” They are “found in the urban circles of crafts and services.”

Familia and *Pietas*

Roman society (369) has long been held together by the system of *familia* and *pietas*. “The basic unit of Roman society was the *familia*,” over which the “father, *pater familias*, . . . exercised an almost absolute authority.” And this is to be accepted by *pietas* without discussion. *Pietas*, then, is not piety in our sense, but the performance of duty.

The father’s duty (369 f) “consisted in caring for the members of the familia.” Apart from slaves, the families of the upper class include the “clientele” as a population group devoted to the father—“and only to him.” (370) “The emperor’s duty of care extended those groups of Rome’s population that did not belong to a clientele, and especially to the army, the imperial court, and the imperial officials, who were, so to speak, a kind of imperial clientele. Beyond that, the emperor had to look after the welfare of the entire empire.”

Since the gods of Rome are “the celestial guarantors of paternity and thus of the cohesion of the Roman order,” refusing to sacrifice to the gods is practically tantamount to refusing *pietas* to the emperor.

“*Pietas* as a basic political attitude was working in the Republic as long as society was clearly structured. On the one side stood the senatorial nobility from the old families, on the other the politically constituted bourgeoisie, the *plebs*, composed mainly of free peasants.” But already during “the great wars of the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE, a class of wealthy landowners” developed, who as *equites* (“knights”) “had to place themselves at the disposal of the Republic in time of war with horse and armor.” (371) Larger domains or *villas* (estates “with dwellings for tenants”) emerge, whose owners often live in the cities and on which “*pietas* is replaced by the discipline of work organized by administrators.” (372) The urban lower class is “entitled to the allotment of bread and other foodstuffs” but also enjoys the brutal gladiatorial games, which are not banned until the end of the 5th century. “*Panis et circenses*, bread and games (social welfare and events): this was the ‘social policy’ of the Empire.”

Renaissance of Antiquity: Apuleius and Plotinus

Apuleius’ tale (372) *Metamorphoses* of a man “transformed into an ass” and in the end “redeemed from this agonizing existence by the goddess Isis” expresses “man’s longing for a different and better life.”

“Social revolutions,” however, (375) “did not occur in the empire, at most in the periphery ... among certain factions of the Zealots in the Judean War, among the so-called Circumcellions, who in the 4th century raided the villas of the large landowners on the fringes of the Donatist unrest and attempted to appropriate the land, and among the Bacaudes in Gaul and Spain from the late 3rd to the early 5th century.”

The (374 f) mystery religions and Gnosticism (but only partially Judaism and Christianity) express their discontent “with the actual world order” in a rather escapist way and conceive of “earthly-present life as pure preparation for life in heaven.” (376) Christianity reacts to the insecurity of urban life with its “free market economy” in a different way “than Gnosticism or the mystery religions” in that it “rejects the prevailing *world order*—that is, its ‘gods’—but not the world as a material habitat. Gnosticism makes of this the condemnation of the material world itself no matter how people organize it, can organize it, or should organize it. It doesn’t know virtue, that is, no good life in the evil world.”

Emperor Diocletian persecutes Christians without mercy in order to restore the “orienting power” of the old gods. (377) The philosopher Plotinus (204-270) endeavors to “renew the Grand Narrative of antiquity” and, against the Gnostics, draws from Plato’s philosophy “a thoroughly structured picture of the universe in which everything and everyone have their place.” (378) “Only in thinking—that is, in the spirit—the soul finds its true life,” overcoming “material life with its heaviness and its tribu-

lations." (379) "This is elitist in the strict sense of the word. Only those who can afford to harness others to themselves can find their way into the world of the spirit."

For two reasons, "Plotinus' thought continued to have an effect in Christianity." First, "Ammonios Sakkas (180-242) is the common teacher of Plotinus and such Christian theologians as Clement of Alexandria and Origen," and (380) second, "Plotinus' moral philosophy offered the possibility of superelevating the Messianic critique of the world order without falling into the dull dualism of Gnosis."

Christian Countermodel: *Ecclesia* and *Dilectio*

By (381) the 3rd century, Christianity "had become a social phenomenon that the central government could no longer neglect." Both Emperor Decius (249-251) and Valerian I (253-260) instigate persecutions of Christians to guarantee national security; they rely on a hatred of Christians that is prevalent "especially among the lower classes and among the consistently conservative elites."

Under (382) Gallienus (260-268) and his successors, there is a "de facto tolerance until Diocletian unleashed a great and very bloody persecution of Christians in 303 that lasted until 305 in the west and 311 in the east. The accusations against Christianity were baseless. Christians lived secluded lives and kept away from public events with their inevitable worship of gods, but were otherwise rather 'good citizens'." With wide discretionary powers in Roman criminal law, "the authorities' attitude toward Christians was unpredictable." (383) To be sure, some "officials of the church made themselves at home in Roman society," but many Christians regarded "death—especially the death of the martyr—as the very birth of true and eternal life."

To many, (384) "the Christian communities seemed . . . both attractive and sinister." Contributing to the appeal of the Christian community, apparently, was the impression that it was "a place where people could find support and assistance. To be sure, slaves remained slaves, women women, rich rich, poor poor, but never miserable; rather, all were preparing for an eternal life in which all would be equal without distinction. And this expectation had the effect of a certain mutual high esteem."

In this context, Veerkamp focuses on the term *dilectio*, "esteem," coined by Tertullian, which is not to be confused with "love, even charity." (385) "Only through the narrative of *dilectio* does charity confer dignity; without it, it destroys dignity. Through *dilectio*, charity becomes solidarity, *agapē.*"

At a time when "paternity, the model of *pietas* and *familia* . . . was no longer able to hold society together," *dilectio* "appealed to more and more people. It evolved from a model of a sectarian enclosure to a dwelling place for all people, it became a grand narrative."

Certainly, it is necessary to be careful not to idealize conditions; even in Christian communities there were “oppressive rules of behavior” toward women and slaves that were adopted “uncritically from the environment.” (386) Undoubtedly, however, “in many places the church took over functions of state welfare.”

New Roman Empire: Principate and Dominate

When Emperor Diocletian came to power in 284, he ensured a comprehensive reform of the empire. Forty years later, the *tetrarchy* (government of four) he introduced becomes the sole rule of the absolute monarchy. He establishes (387) a comprehensive bureaucracy separate from the military and a well-thought-out tax system, implements monetary reform, and enforces rules for urban commerce. “For the first time, the central government could make policy in the comprehensive sense of the word, fiscal policy, economic policy, social policy, cult policy. The state began to interfere directly in all areas of citizens’ lives.”

In the period from Augustus (27 BCE) to Gallienus (268 CE), the emperor is “only first among equals in rank, that is, princeps.” In the new “state absolutism,” he is “lord (*dominus*) of all, including the noble landowners and the army commanders.” The principate becomes the dominate.

With Constantine, (388) the emperor “begins to regard himself as ‘*Servus Dei*, servant of God,’ and as ‘*episcopos koinos*, a general bishop, a bishop of bishops, so to speak,” with the right to “convene synods when the unity of the Church and thus of the Empire was in danger. There was no separation between religion and politics.” After Constantine, “the ancient tolerance of the empire toward the various forms of worship” was gradually abolished until, under Theodosius (378-395), “Christianity was the only religion admitted.”

Colonate

To answer the question (389) of whether there are also “new relations of production” in the Dominate, Veerkamp points out that still “in agriculture almost the entire economic product is produced.” Admittedly, there is no “general and homogeneous economic system, called *colonate*, for the whole Roman Empire of the Dominate,” but the trend is toward this direction. “The *coloni* (tenants) were not slaves, they could not be sold. But they were *physically* bound to the estate and the landowner, they were *serfs*.”

While the estates with their *coloni* had to pay a poll tax and land tax, (390) from the middle of the 4th century “the ecclesiastical landed property and the ecclesiastical functionaries were exempted from taxation. Here developed a situation that we know from the Middle Ages: two privileged classes, nobility and clergy, facing a mass of unfree people.”

In many cases, the remaining smaller landholdings in the countryside were incorporated into the estates of the "great and noble landowners," who in this way "became 'paternal protectors' of the tenants and those peasants who sought the protection of the landowners because of the pressure of taxation; the system is therefore called *patrocinium.* Such structures were internalized and have lasted almost 'forever'."

In the cities, the previously voluntary associations of tradesmen, the *collegia*, "become compulsory associations. In order to secure the next generation in the respective trades, the profession of the father was made compulsory for the children."

When in the West "because of the encroaching Germanic peoples" the state "was less and less able to enforce its bureaucratic system of coercion, . . . in the 5th and 6th centuries the flight to the countryside took on ever greater dimensions. Craftsmen settled around the villas of large landowners, with the result that in the early Middle Ages (from the 6th century) the villa economy became a self-sufficient economy" and "the cities lost their political importance" by the turn of the first millennium.

"In the West, the Christian Church was able to become the political counter-instance to the landowning nobility . . . In the East, on the other hand, a state-absolutist feudality emerged"; the church, (392) "like the secular landlordship, . . . remained subordinated throughout to a powerful state apparatus."

Social Places and Christian religion

Put simply, (392) in the Principate there is "a kind of free market economy"; from the end of the 3rd century, "a chain of financial and social policies . . . behind the backs of politicians leads to something like a state-fixated system," the Dominate.

"The new state of the Dominate endeavored to assign people established places in the social order." (393) "In general, the search for places, the conquest of places, the assignment of places became the main feature of an epoch that was called the 'time of *Völkerwanderung*—the migration of peoples'. Place-allocation was a coercive act: the binding of dependent peasants to the landlord's soil, the binding of tradesmen and their families to the respective trade, the settlement of new ethnic groups."

Christianity has no choice but to become the "state ideology of the dominate" and to make "people ideologically 'settled,' settled in the comprehensive sense of the word, fixed abode and acceptance of the social place where every man was forced to live." Emperor Constantine (306-337) is not himself a Christian, but since the persecution of Christians cannot consolidate the unity of the empire, he now uses this church itself for this purpose, helping it to overcome its own internal conflicts (394) by ruling into it.

“The division of the empire after the death of Theodosius in 397 . . . led to the development of two types of the Christian grand narrative, the western ‘Catholicism’ of Rome and the eastern ‘Orthodoxy’ of Constantinople. ‘Catholic’ and ‘Orthodox’ were both . . . They had become a *religion* in the strict sense of the word, *religion* of the state in the East and *religion* without the state in the West.”

The (395) Principate still had tolerated “a multiplicity of opinions and forms of worship” and insisted “on a minimum consensus to honor the basic order (the gods of the empire).” But “the more chaotic the conditions at and even within the borders of the empire, the greater the need to impose unity and uniformity everywhere. Even within ideology, positions have to be clearly established. Other opinions, *heterodoxies*, are a danger and must be suppressed.”

In contrast, (396) internal Christian disputes were of no interest to the state until the 4th century. Without chance was “the attempt of Emperor Julian, 361-363, to dismiss Christianity from its political role and return to the ideological tolerance of the Principate.”

In the Dominate, then, “God” is practically made the epitome of a “*basic order* of the indissoluble unity of large scale land-holding devoted to the state and absolute state favoring large landed estate.” In any case, the Christian God “to the political leadership cannot be anything else than a state god (*Dominus*).”

A “hold-out religion” in the principate, in which it is important “to keep away from political participation as much as possible, to attract as little attention as possible, and to strengthen, comfort, and materially support one another,” has become (397) a “mass movement” that “cannot return to the catacombs, . . . cannot remain an element of the subculture . . . That is why it is a moralistic short-circuit to speak here of the Constantinian Fall of the Church, which would have surrendered itself . . . to the state because of material advantages. . . . The state in the Dominate was dependent on a general ideology, on an internalization apparatus.”

Transformation of the Grand Narrative: From Nicaea to Chalcedon

Christianity (397) in the 4th and 5th centuries “has to represent the unity of all people in the empire”; therefore, its “doctrine must be made free of contradictions. The state had an important word to say in the formulation.”

The basic problem at issue (399) at the Council of **Nicaea**, according to Veerkamp, is how to “*think* authoritatively” the scene Mark’s Gospel describes at “the baptism of the Messiah in the Jordan,” that is, how does the one “God of Israel (‘Father’)” relate to (400) “the God of the Messianic communities (‘Son’).” Origen (185-245) had called Jesus a divine creature or a second God. To the priest Arius, “the ‘Son’ was a creature, a mere instrument, created as the first to bring into existence through him

the further creation." Viewing Arianism in the East as a threat to the unity of the Empire, Constantine "called for a general synod at Nicaea." There, in 325, it is stated, "We believe in *one* God, Father All-Ruler. . . . And in *one Lord* Jesus Christ, begotten only of the Father . . ., equal in essence with the Father . . ."

But (401) this explanation does not satisfy anyone. Especially about the "term *homoousion*, equal in essence," there is a further dispute. The "term *ousia* (essence)" is "rejected at the Synod of Sirmium (now Mitrovica in Serbia) . . . as unscriptural." Instead, it is proposed, "the Son be to the Father . . . 'according to the scriptures in every respect similar (*homoios*).' One smuggles into the word *homoousion* an *iota*, *homoiousion*, a suggestion of goodness"—but even the similarity of essence is no good for a workable compromise; civil war-like struggles ensue. (402) "The notion of *ousia*, according to which there is only one supreme being who exists always and everywhere, confirmed the monarchical structure of politics in the colonate: one center, one authority, one god." But according to the "Trinity theology" of John's Gospel the Messiah *is* not something else than the FATHER, he does not bring a *new and different religion*. . . . This unity is what theologians were trying to *concept*ualize."

At (400 f, note 293) another council in **Constantinople** in 381, the deity of the Holy Spirit was also bindingly decided. A single word leads to the "dispute between the Western and Eastern Churches: The Latin Church added to the phrase 'who proceeds from the Father' the word *filioque*: 'Who proceeds from the Father *and the Son*.'" It insists that "the *inspiration of sanctification*" does not only come from God understood as All-Ruler but at the same time from the liberating Messiah Jesus.

Further, (403) there are disputes about how to "think the unity between 'God' and 'human'" in the Son of God. Origen had taught that "Jesus Christ had a 'divine soul,' that is, a single (*monē*) and divine nature (*physis*), and thus was not a true human."

The so-called *Monophysites* claim, in a somewhat attenuated form, "the human constitution 'mingled' with the divine constitution in such a way that it dissolved into the divine constitution." Their fighting term is: "*Theotokos*, God-bearer," because according to them "the Virgin Mary gave birth to a true God and not to a true man."

The catchword of the opposing *Nestorians* is "*asynchytos*, unmixed": they understand "the incarnation of the Logos only analogously to, say, the cohabitation of a man with his wife or the indwelling of the statue of God in a temple"; they (404) "advocated a real duality at the expense of the unity of the person."

According to Veerkamp, in both cases "the essential connection with the people from which Jesus came falls by the wayside." In the case of the Monophysites, "the 'physical' bond of the Christ with his people (Mary!), from whom he was born, is broken. Mary would not have given birth to a Jew, but to a God-being." And with the Nestorians, "the human in Christ remains accidental."

Two synods at **Ephesus** in 431 and 449 (“Robber Synod”) bring victory to the Monophysites. Since this is not recognized in the West, the emperor calls “all church leaders from East and West to **Chalcedon** in 451” for another general council. There a compromise is found (405 f) in which the “term *homoousios*” is applied not only to Jesus’ consubstantiality with God, but also to his consubstantiality with us humans. “The Council was concerned to emphasize clearly the unity of Jesus Christ . . . At the same time, however, it is also concerned to emphasize the *human* in Jesus Christ.” (407) The unity of the person of Jesus is preserved by starting from “two *physeis*, ‘consistencies.’ . . . The two ‘consistencies’ must not be mixed and interchangeable (against the Monophysites), they must not be torn apart and divided (against the Nestorians), they remain what they are. . . . The two consistencies are held together by what is called ‘persona’, *prosōpon* . . . Jesus Christ, therefore, has one ‘face,’ not two.“

The abstract way of speaking can only be understood if one takes seriously the concluding sentence, “As the prophets of old taught us about him and Jesus Christ himself.” Because this “sentence says: What this means cannot be learned from Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, but only in the Tanakh and the Gospels.”

“Anti-Jewish Christian Tradition”

Ton Veerkamp concludes, (408) “Both phrases: ‘Jesus Christ is truly man’ and ‘Jesus Christ is truly God’ mean: Jesus is the Jew who is narrated as taking this and no other political position in the political struggles of his people, and who for this reason exemplifies the order of autonomy and egalitarianism that alone is rendered in Israel by the vocable ‘God’.”

But factually, (409) “the Jews, real Israel, were not a constant challenge of the doctrine and narrative of Christianity; rather, they became something *illegitimate, other, foreign, hostile*. There were Christian attacks against the Jews as early as the second half of the 4th century . . . The Christian narrative became virtually anti-Jewish throughout. Christianity’s monopoly on religion made the existence of the Jews something highly precarious, life-endangering. The first steps on the road to Auschwitz were taken in the 4th century.”

To be sure, (409) the Theological Declaration of Barmen 1934[4] is “a declaration of war against German National Socialism” by interpreting “what was said at Nicaea/Constantinople and Chalcedon precisely as a political and not a religious

4 Wording of the 1st thesis: “Jesus Christ, as he is testified to us in the Scriptures, is the one Word of God which we are called to hear, to trust, and to obey in life and in death. We reject the false doctrine as if the Church could and must acknowledge as the source of her preaching other events and powers, figures, and truths as God’s revelation.”

proposition: . . . Jesus is 'God' therefore means: Hitler's fascism is not 'God'." But the Barmen Declaration is still silent "about the annihilation of the Jews that was already in the offing in 1934."

In this respect Veerkamp says very clearly: "Therefore no one has the right to invoke the occidental, supposedly 'Jewish-Christian' tradition against supposed dangers that would emanate from Islam today. It never existed, there was at best an 'anti-Jewish Christian tradition.' The fact that parts of Christianity began to think differently in the last decades of the 20th century must make it possible for us, on the one hand, to take an almost illusionless view of our past and, on the other hand, to consciously accept our otherness. To want to be a non-Jew for good reasons should never again mean having to be anti-Jew. This is not as self-evident as it sounds, even today."

Augustine

Finally, Ton Veerkamp makes some remarks about "Christian doctrine and Christian orientation to life" (411) as formulated by Augustine (354-430), referring to his "Twenty-two Books on the State of God."

"The work is a principal document of the Grand Narrative of the Christian West." (412) According to Ulrich Duchrow, it is "a political theology." It is "not primarily about the life of a Christian who takes up the struggle against his vices and passes." Rather, Augustine "has developed into a Christian theologian" who "assumes his responsibility for the c*ivitas terrena*, the state, and society." However, in employing "for the domestic economy . . . the model of *Ecclesia and Dilectio* to tame the *Pater Familias*," he does not go beyond the Letter to the Ephesians. And at the level of "society and the state," justice means (413) "giving everyone the right to which he can lay claim in his social place." He "was simply unable to hear the actions of the *circumcellions* as echoes of the Grand Narrative of autonomy and egalitarianism."

Therefore, (414 f) "Augustine's orientations for Christian living in the real world remain 'ambiguous': adaptation to prevailing conditions and thus justification of the forcibly assigned social places in the colonate, on the one hand, hope for another world order, a new heaven and a new earth beyond the real history of the 'sixth day' on the other. All in all, Augustine acted as an ideologue of the colonate, which we have come to know as a system of economic-social place allocation. But his 'eschatologization' now nevertheless introduced the virus of doubt about the self-evidentness of the place allocation. Again and again, people have asked themselves why 'the seventh day' should lie beyond the six days and should be a Saint Never-never-day." (415) "Both are to be found with him: Criticism *and* justification of the world."

Thus, "the Grand Narrative of Israel" is in Augustine "*suspended* in an *alienated* shape, both. *Suspended* because we—the peoples—would never have heard the

Grand Narrative of Israel without Christianity, which was deeply shaped by Augustine. *Alienated*, because we have heard the narrative of Israel only in the alienated guise of a Christian religion.“

Epilogue: “Language Rushed Off”

By (421) transferring “their completely different world from earth to heaven for the time being, like Islam transfers the kingdom of peace to paradise,” the Christians are ultimately “concerned with earth and not with heaven. Let every death be temporary, let the gangsters not think that they can leave as dead dust. They will revive to receive their reward, eternal fire. Say the tales. The Muslims believed this even more fiercely than the Christians and the Jews, the fire of judgment blazing in almost every sura of the Koran.”

But in that (422) Christianity and Islam served to maintain the power of “Christian and ‘Mohammedan’ rulers, . . . Grand Narratives became *Grand Religions*. In them the Grand Narratives are *suspended*, *abolished* and *preserved* at the same time.“

Veerkamp casts a sidelong glance at the “poor of the Occident” who “in the 19th century left the prisons of Christianity in bright droves” and created “their own Grand Narrative.” Today, (423) Veerkamp also regards the Grand Narrative “of the labor movement, the narrative of those who took seriously the narrative of the bourgeoisie, true freedom, true equality, and true solidarity, not only in the church, but also in the factory,” as “almost completely forgotten . . . All narratives are only rumors now. Now and then one can hear them, fleeting, crippled often. . . . One does not know who is still listening, if anyone is listening at all. For some, the tales are food for the journey.”

In the end, Veerkamp places a “word by the poet John Bobrowski,”[5]

Language
rushed off
with the tired mouth
on the endless way
to the neighbor's house.

5 The English translation is my own, H. S.