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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SUMMARY

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

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

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

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

⁷ *Ibid.*, 21–26.

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

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

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

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

⁹ Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 27.

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

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 46.

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

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

¹² Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 54–55.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 149.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 180.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 196.

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

CRITIQUE

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

The Bible and Tradition

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

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

¹⁸ Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 46.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Alleged Witnesses to an Early New Testament Canon

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

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

²³ Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 75–78.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 76.

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

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

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

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

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

²⁸ Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 81–82.

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

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

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

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

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

Construals of Origins, "Heretics," and Authorship

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Essentialist Characterizations: Biblical, Evangelical, Catholic

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁴⁹ Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 40.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 181.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 177.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 166–76.

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

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

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

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

Erecting Boundaries Can Impact both Congregational Life and Academic Freedom

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Construction of Authority amidst Contemporary Conflict

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁶⁸ See Mårten Gudmundhs, "Livets ord lägger ner sitt teologiska seminarium" ("Livets Ord Closes Its Theological Seminary"), *Världen idag*, 11 February 2014, <http://www.varldenidag.se/nyheter/livets-ord-lagger-ner-sitt-teologiska-seminarium/cbbnbk!1rm086K5uBxGCGpep9frg/>.

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

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

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

⁷⁰ Elsewhere, in an interview published in the church newspaper *Världen idag*, G. acknowledges Ekman's leadership and influence: "There are few people who have meant so much for faith in the Bible (*bibeltro*) and for God's congregation in Sweden during the last decades as Ulf Ekman has" (David Högfeldt, "Ekmans ändrade bibelsyn är största frågan" ["Ekman's Changed View of the Bible Is the Largest Question"], *Världen idag*, 6 November 2015, <http://www.varldenidag.se/nyheter/ekmans-andrade-bibelsyn-ar-storsta-fragan/cbbokfLXcQMq8yLH658CeGQ5FJ0Q/>).

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

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

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

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