

SVENSK EXEGETISK ÅRSBOK

82



På uppdrag av Svenska Exegetiska Sällskapet
utgiven av Göran Eidevall

Uppsala 2017

Utgivare och redaktör: Göran Eidevall (goran.eidevall@teol.uu.se)
Redaktionssekreterare: David Willgren (david.willgren@altutbildning.se)
Recensionsansvarig: Rosmari Lillas-Schuil (rosmari.lillas@gu.se)

Redaktionskommitté:

Göran Eidevall (goran.eidevall@teol.uu.se)
Rikard Roitto (rikard.roitto@ths.se)
Blaženka Scheuer (blazenka.scheuer@ctr.lu.se)
Cecilia Wassén (cecilia.wassen@teol.uu.se)

Prenumerationspriser:

Sverige: SEK 200 (studenter SEK 100)

Övriga världen: SEK 300

Frakt tillkommer med SEK 50. För medlemmar i SES är frakten kostnadsfri.

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Omslagsbild: Del av 11Q19, "Tempelrullen", daterad till mellan första århundradet f.v.t och första århundradet v.t.

Svenska Exegetiska Sällskapet
c/o Teologiska institutionen
Box 511, S-751 20 UPPSALA, Sverige
www.exegetiskasallskapet.se



ISSN 1100-2298

Uppsala 2016

Tryck: Bulls Graphics, Halmstad

Innehåll

EXEGETISKA DAGEN 2016

<i>Eidevall, Göran</i> , 80 år senare: Exegetiska sällskapet, <i>SEA</i> och de exegetiska dagarna – tal vid exegetiska sällskapet 80-årsjubileum	1
<i>Crawford, Sidnie White</i> , Textual Growth and the Activity of Scribes.....	6
<i>Laato, Antti</i> , Rewriting Israel's History in the Apocalyptic Context: Animal Apocalypse in First Enoch	28
<i>Docherty, Susan</i> , Why So Much Talk? Direct Speech as a Literary and Exegetical Device in Rewritten Bible with Special Reference to Pseudo-Philo's <i>Biblical Antiquities</i>	52

ARTIKLAR

<i>Spjut, Petter</i> , Polemisk etikett eller saklig beteckning? En studie av svenskspråkiga opinionsbildares användning av termen "gnosticism" och dess implikationer för bibelvetenskaplig och kyrkohistorisk forskning	76
<i>Hedlund, Simon</i> , Who Are the ἀρσενικοῖται, and Why Does Paul Condemn Them (1 Cor 6:9)?	116
<i>Kelhoffer, James A.</i> , Simplistic Presentations of Biblical Authority and Christian Origins in the Service of Anti-Catholic Dogma: A Response to Anders Gerdmar	154

REPLIKER

<i>Gerdmar, Anders</i> , The End of Innocence: On Religious and Academic Freedom and Intersubjectivity in the Exegetical Craft – A Response to James Kelhoffer	179
<i>Kelhoffer, James A.</i> , A Diverse Academy Recognizes No Boundaries for Critical Inquiry and Debate: A Rejoinder to Anders Gerdmar	210

RECENSIONER

Aichele, George, <i>Simulating Jesus: Reality Effects in the Gospels</i> (Joel Kuhlin)	223
Amos, Roger, <i>Hypocrites or Heroes? The Paradoxical Portrayal of the Pharisees in the New Testament</i> (Tobias Ålöw)	226
Collins, John J., <i>Encounters with Biblical Theology</i> (Stig Norin)	230
Dochhorn Jan, Susanne Rudnig-Zelt, and Benjamin Wold (eds.), <i>Das Böse, der Teufel und Dämonen – Evil, the Devil, and Demons</i> (Torsten Löfstedt)	235
Ehrman, Bart D., <i>Jesus Before the Gospels: How the Earliest Christians Remembered, Changed, and Invented Their Stories of the Savior</i> (Joel Kuhlin)	239
England Emma och William John Lyons (red.), <i>Reception History and Biblical Studies: Theory and Practice</i> (Mikael Larsson)	243
Fewell, Danna Nolan (ed.), <i>The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Narrative</i> (Josef Forsling)	245
Gordon, Robert P. and Hans M. Barstad (eds.), <i>“Thus speaks Ishtar of Arbela”: Prophecy in Israel, Assyria and Egypt in the Neo-Assyrian Period</i> (Magnus Halle)	249
Giuntoli Federico and Konrad Schmid (eds.), <i>The Post-Priestly Pentateuch: New Perspectives on Its Redactional Development and Theological Profiles</i> (Jan Retsö)	256
Hayes, Elizabeth R. och Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer (red.), <i>“I Lifted My Eyes and Saw”: Reading Dream and Vision Reports in the Hebrew Bible</i> (Stefan Green)	261
Heilig, Christoph, <i>Hidden Criticism? The Methodology and Plausibility of the Search for a Counter-Imperial Subtext in Paul</i> (Joel Kuhlin)	264
Kim, Yeong Seon, <i>The Temple Administration and the Levites in Chronicles</i> (Jan Retsö)	268
Klein, Anja, <i>Geschichte und Gebet: Die Rezeption der biblischen Geschichte in den Psalmen des Alten Testaments</i> (Lars Olov Eriksson)	272
Klink III, Edward W., och Darian R. Lockett. <i>Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice</i> (Bo Krister Ljungberg)	274
Knoppers, Gary N., <i>Jews and Samaritans: The Origins and History of Their Early Relations</i> (Cecilia Wassén)	278

Markschies, Christoph, <i>Christian Theology and Its Institutions in the Early Roman Empire: Prolegomena to a History of Early Christian Theology</i> (Carl Johan Berglund)	282
Mettinger, Tryggve N. D., <i>Reports from a Scholar's Life: Select Papers on the Hebrew Bible</i> (Cian Power)	285
Neusner, Jacob och Alan J. Avery Peck (red.); William Scott Green och Günter Stemberger (rådgivande red.), <i>Encyclopedia of Midrash. Biblical Interpretation in Formative Judaism. Volume I-II</i> (Tobias Ålöw)	289
Porter, Stanley E. och David I. Yoon (red.), <i>Paul and Gnosis</i> (Paul Linjamaa)	291
Smith, Geoffrey S., <i>Guilt By Association: Heresy Catalogues in Early Christianity</i> (Martin Wessbrandt)	295
Strauss, Mark L. och Paul E. Engle (red.), <i>Remarriage After Divorce in Today's Church</i> (Bo Krister Ljungberg)	299
Willgren, David, <i>The Formation of the 'Book' of Psalms: Reconsidering the Transmission and Canonization of Psalmody in Light of Material Culture and the Poetics of Anthologies</i> (Anja Klein)	302
Wright, Tom, <i>The Day the Revolution Began: Rethinking the Meaning of Jesus' Crucifixion</i> (Mikael Tellbe)	306

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

Anders Gerdmar

Skandinavisk Teologisk Högskola
anders.gerdmar@teol.se

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

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

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

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

THE BOOK AND ITS BACKGROUND

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

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

The Genre and Audience

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

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

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

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

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

The Reception of the Book

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

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

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

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

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

Trying to Give a Fair Description of Roman-Catholic Doctrine

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

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

⁴ *SEÅ* 68 (2003)–70 (2005).

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

⁶ *Ibid.*, 168.

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

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

⁷ See above, 181.

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

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

¹⁰ Kelhoffer, “Simplistic Presentations,” 169.

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

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

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

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

¹¹ Kelhoffer, “Simplistic Presentations,” 159.

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

¹³ *Ibid.*, 45.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁷ Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 68f.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 69–70.

The Chimera of Objectivity and Exegesis as Intersubjective Dialogue

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

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

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

¹⁹ Kelhoffer, “Simplistic Presentations,” 156.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 54–55.

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁸ Ibid., 54.

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

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

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

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

³¹ Kelhoffer, “Simplistic Presentations,” 163.

³² Gerdmar, *Rethinking*, 300–342.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1016.

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁴⁵ Kelhoffer, “Simplistic Presentations,” 163.

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

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

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

⁴⁶ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 19.

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

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

⁴⁹ Kelhoffer, “Simplistic Presentations,” 165.

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

How Canon Became Canon

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁵⁰ Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 79–80.

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁵³ Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 80.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Apostolicity as Criterion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁶⁸ Kelhoffer, “Simplistic Presentations,” 171.

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

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

A Caricature of Respected Christian Leaders

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

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 171.

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁷² Kelhoffer, “Simplistic Presentations,” 171.

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

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

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

⁷⁴ Quoted above.

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

⁷⁶ Gerdmar, *Guds Ord räcker*, 28.

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

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

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

Erecting Boundaries That Can Impact Both Congregational Life and Academic Freedom

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

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

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

⁸⁰ Kelhoffer, “Simplistic Presentations,” 170.

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

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

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

⁸² In his initial pleasantries Kelhoffer also mentions this.

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

Using Speculation and Vague, Pejorative Categorisations

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

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

⁸⁴ Kelhoffer, "Simplistic Presentations," 177.

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

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

⁸⁷ Kelhoffer, "Simplistic Presentations," 159.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁹⁰ Kelhoffer, "Simplistic Presentations," 177.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 177, n. 73.

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

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

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

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

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

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

From Foul Play to Fair Play

In this response, I have shown

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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