METHOD AND MEANING
METHOD AND MEANING

Essays on New Testament Interpretation
in Honor of Harold W. Attridge

Edited by

Andrew B. McGowan and Kent Harold Richards

Society of Biblical Literature
Atlanta
METHOD AND MEANING

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“Barnabas, St., “Beatitudes,” “Matthias, St., “‘Pharisees,” “Philip, St.” et al. Pages


“Gospel of Thomas: Appendix: The Greek Fragments.” Pages 95–128 in Nag Ham-


“The Philosophical Critique of Religion under the Early Empire.” Aufstieg und
Annotations in the Eikon database at Yale Divinity Library (http://www.eikon.divinity.yale.edu)
Abbreviations


1QH a  Hodayot a or Thanksgiving Hymns a, in E. L. Sukenik, *The Dead Sea Scrolls of the Hebrew University* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1955), pls. XXXV–LVIII; figs. 14–17, 29–30


4QMMT  Miqṣat Maʿašē ha-Torah (Some of the Torah Observations), in E. Qimron and J. Strugnell, *Quarman Cave 4.V: Miqṣat..."
Ma'ase ha-Torah (Discoveries in the Judaean Desert X; Oxford: Clarendon,1994), I–VIII

AAS Acta apostolicae sedis
AB Anchor Bible
Abr. Philo, De Abrahalmo (On the Life of Abraham)
AcBib Academia Biblica
ACNT Augsburg Commentaries on the New Testament
Aen. Virgil, Aeneid
AGJU Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentum
ANF Ante-Nicene Fathers
Anima et res. Gregory of Nyssa, De anima et resurrection (On the Soul and the Resurrection)
Ann. Tacitus, Annales
Ant. Josephus, Jewish Antiquities (Antiquitates judaicae)
ANTC Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
ANTF Arbeiten zur neutestamentlichen Textforschung
ArBib The Aramaic Bible
ASOR American Schools of Oriental Research
AYB Anchor Yale Bible
Bacch. Euripides, Bacchae
Barn. Barnabas
BASOR Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
b. B. Bat. Baba Batra (Babylonian Talmud)
BET Beiträge zur evangelische Theologie
BETL Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicae lothariensis
BGBE Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese
b. Ḥag. Ḥagigah (Babylonian Talmud)
BHT Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
BINS  Biblical Interpretation Series
BJS  Brown Judaic Studies
b. Meg.  Megillah (Babylonian Talmud)
b. Sanh.  Sanhedrin (Babylonian Talmud)
b. Shab.  Shabbat (Babylonian Talmud)
b. Soṭah  Soṭah (Babylonian Talmud)
b. Ta‘an.  Ta‘anit (Babylonian Talmud)
BTB  Biblical Theology Bulletin
BTS  Bible et terre sainte
b. Yebam.  Yeḥamot (Babylonian Talmud)
b. Yoma  Yoma (=Kippurim) (Babylonian Talmud)
BZAW  Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW  Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
Cant.  Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentarius in Canticum canticorum* (Commentary on the Song of Songs)
Carn. Chr.  Tertullian, *De carne Christi* (The Flesh of Christ)
CBQ  Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CBET  Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBR  Currents in Biblical Research
CCSA  Corpus Christianorum, Series Apocryphorum
CD  Cairo Genizah copy of the *Damascus Document*
C. du. ep.Pelag.  Augustine, *Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum ad Bonifatium* (Against the Two Letters of the Pelagians)
Cels.  Origen, *Contra Celsum* (Against Celsus)
CH  Church History
Civ.  Augustine, *De civitate Dei* (The City of God)
ConBNT  Coniectanea neotestamentica or Coniectanea biblica: New Testament Series
Conf.  Augustine, *Confessionum libri XIII* (Confessions)
Conf.  Philo, *De confusione linguarum* (On the Confusion of Tongues)
Contempl.  Philo, *De vita contemplativa* (On the Contemplative Life)
Corrept.  Augustine, *De correptione et gratia* (Admonition and Grace)
CRINT  Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
CSSH  Comparative Studies in Society and History
Cur.  Augustine, *De cura pro mortuis gerenda* (The Care to Be Taken for the Dead)
CurBS  Currents in Research: Biblical Studies
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Title and Author</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cult. Fem.</td>
<td>Tertullian, <em>De cultu feminarum</em> (The Apparel of Women)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decal.</td>
<td>Philo, <em>De decalogico</em> (On the Decalogue)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descr.</td>
<td>Pausanias, <em>Graeciae description</em> (Description of Greece)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Det.</td>
<td>Philo, <em>Quod deterius potiori insidari solet</em> (That the Worse Attacks the Better)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deus.</td>
<td>Philo, <em>Quod Deus sit immutabilis</em> (That God Is Unchangeable)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dial. Adam.</td>
<td><em>Dialogue of Adamantius</em></td>
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<td>Dial. d.</td>
<td>Lucian, <em>Dialogi deorum</em> (Dialogues of the Gods)</td>
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<td>Dial.</td>
<td>Justin, <em>Dialogus cum Tryphone</em> (Dialogue with Trypho)</td>
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<td>Did.</td>
<td>Didache</td>
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<tr>
<td>Div. quae.</td>
<td><em>Augustine, De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>DJD</td>
<td>Discoveries in the Judaean Desert</td>
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<td>D.L.</td>
<td>Diogenes Laertius, <em>Lives of Eminent Philosophers</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>DSD</td>
<td><em>Dead Sea Discoveries</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>EAC</td>
<td><em>Écrits apocryphes chrétiens</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ebr.</td>
<td>Philo, <em>De ebrietate</em> (On Drunkenness)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eccl. Rab.</td>
<td><em>Ecclesiastes Rabbah</em></td>
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<td>EKK</td>
<td>Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enchir.</td>
<td>Augustine, <em>Enchiridion de fide, spe, et caritate</em> (Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ep.</td>
<td><em>Epistolarum</em></td>
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<td>Ep.</td>
<td>Pliny the Younger, <em>Epistolae</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ep.2.</td>
<td>Demosthenes, <em>Epistle 2</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ep. Pet. Phil.</td>
<td>VIII,2 <em>Letter of Peter to Philip</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ErFor</td>
<td>Ertrage der Forschung</td>
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<tr>
<td>ET</td>
<td>English translation</td>
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<tr>
<td>ETS</td>
<td>Erfurter theologische Studien</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exod. Rab.</td>
<td><em>Exodus Rabbah</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FG</td>
<td>Fourth Gospel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fid. symb.</td>
<td>Augustine, <em>De fide et symbolo</em> (Faith and the Creed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flor.</td>
<td>Ptolemy (the Gnostic), <em>Epistula ad Floram</em> (Letter to Flora)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort.</td>
<td>Augustine, <em>Contra Fortunatum</em> (Against Fortunatus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRLANT</td>
<td>Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fug.</td>
<td>Philo, <em>De fuga et invention</em> (On Flight and Finding)</td>
</tr>
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<td>GBS</td>
<td>Guides to Biblical Scholarship</td>
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<td>Gen. litt.</td>
<td>Augustine, <em>De Genesi ad litteram</em> (On Genesis Literally Interpreted)</td>
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<td>Geogr.</td>
<td>Strabo, <em>Geography</em></td>
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METHOD AND MEANING

GNO  

Gos. Bas.  
Gospel of Basilides

Gospel of Peter

Gos. Thom.  
Gospel of Thomas

Haer.  
Irenaeus, Adversus haereses (Against Heresies)

Hel.  
Euripides, Helena (Helen)

Her.  
Philo, Quis rerum divinarum heres sit

Hist.  
Cassius Dio, Historiae Romanae

Hist.  
Tacitus, Historiae

Hist. eccl.  
Eusebius, Historia Ecclesiastica

Hom.  
Homily

HNT  
Handbuch zum Neuen Testament

HTK  
Herders theologischer Kommentar

HTR  
Harvard Theological Review

HvTSt  
Hervormde teologiese studies

IAA  
Israel Antiquities Authority

ICC  
International Critical Commentary

IDBSup  
Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume. 
Edited by K. Crim. Nashville, 1976

Ign. Eph.  
Ignatius, To the Ephesians

Ign. Smyrn.  
Ignatius, To the Smyrnaeans

Inf. Gos. Thom.  
Infancy Gospel of Thomas

Inst.  
Quintilian, Institutio oratoria

JAOS  
Journal of the American Oriental Society

JBL  
Journal of Biblical Literature

JECS  
Journal of Early Christian Studies

JSHJ  
Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus

JSJ  
Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, 
and Roman Periods

JSJSup  
Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic 
and Roman Period Supplements

JSNT  
Journal for the Study of the New Testament

JSNTSup  

JSPSup  
Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha: Supplement Series

JTS  
Journal of Theological Studies

Jub.  
Jubilees

J.W.  
Josephus, Jewish War

KEK  
Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament 
(Meyer-Kommentar)
<table>
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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>LCL</td>
<td>Loeb Classical Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>Library of Early Christianity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leg.</td>
<td>Philo, <em>Legum allegoriae</em> (Allegorical Interpretation)</td>
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<td>Let. Aris.</td>
<td>Letter of Aristeas</td>
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<td>Life</td>
<td>Josephus, <em>The Life</em> (Vita)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LNTS</td>
<td>Library of New Testament Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marc.</td>
<td>Tertullian, <em>Adversus Marcionem</em> (Against Marcion)</td>
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<td>Mart. Polyc.</td>
<td>Martyrology of Polycarp</td>
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<tr>
<td>m. 'Abot</td>
<td>Mishnah 'Abot</td>
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<tr>
<td>m. Ber.</td>
<td>Mishnah Berakot</td>
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<tr>
<td>m. Bik.</td>
<td>Mishnah Bikkurim</td>
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<tr>
<td>Metam.</td>
<td>Ovid, <em>Metamorphoses</em></td>
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<td>Migr.</td>
<td>Philo, <em>De migratione Abrahami</em> (On the Migration of Abraham)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mor.</td>
<td>Plutarch, <em>Moralia</em></td>
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<td>Mor.ecl.</td>
<td>Augustine, <em>De moribus ecclesiae catholicae</em> (The Way of Life of the Catholic Church)</td>
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<td>Mos.</td>
<td>Philo, <em>De vita Mosis</em> (On the Life of Moses)</td>
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<td>m. Sukk.</td>
<td>Mishnah Sukkah</td>
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<td>MTS</td>
<td>Marburger Theologische Studien</td>
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<td>Mus</td>
<td>Muséon: Revue d'études orientales</td>
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<td>m. Yad.</td>
<td>Mishnah Yadayim</td>
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<td>Nat. d.</td>
<td>Cicero, <em>De natura deorum</em></td>
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<td>Nat. grat.</td>
<td>Augustine, <em>De natura et gratia</em> (Nature and Grace)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCBC</td>
<td>New Cambridge Bible Commentary</td>
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<tr>
<td>NETS</td>
<td>New English Translation of the Septuagint</td>
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<td>NGS</td>
<td>New Gospel Studies</td>
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<td>NHS</td>
<td>Nag Hammadi Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>NICNT</td>
<td>New International Commentary on the New Testament</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIGTC</td>
<td>The New International Greek Testament Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NovT</td>
<td><em>Novum Testamentum</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>NovTSup</td>
<td>Novum Testamentum Supplements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPNF</td>
<td><em>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTAbh</td>
<td>Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen</td>
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<td>NTL</td>
<td>New Testament Library</td>
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<td>NTS</td>
<td>New Testament Studies</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>NTTS</td>
<td>New Testament Tools and Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Num.</td>
<td>Plutarch, <em>Numa</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Num. Rab.</td>
<td><em>Numbers Rabbah</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>OLZ</td>
<td><em>Orientalistische Literaturzeitung</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Opif.</td>
<td>Philo <em>De opificio mundi</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Onir.</td>
<td>Artemidorus Daldianus, <em>Onirocritica</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Orat. cat.</td>
<td>Gregory of Nyssa, <em>Oratio catechetica</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pan.</td>
<td>Epiphanius, <em>Panarion (Adversus haereses)</em> (Refutation of All Heresies)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parm.</td>
<td>Plato, <em>Parmenides</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pecc. merit.</td>
<td>Augustine, <em>De peccatorum meritis et remissione</em> (Guilt and Remission of Sins)</td>
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<td>Pesiq. Rab.</td>
<td><em>Pesiqta Rabbati</em></td>
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<td>PGM</td>
<td><em>Papyri graecae magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri</em>. Edited by K. Preisendanz. Berlin, 1928</td>
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<td>Phaedr.</td>
<td>Plato, <em>Phaedrus</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>pl.</td>
<td>plate</td>
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<td>Plant.</td>
<td>Philo, <em>De plantatione</em> (On Planting)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post.</td>
<td>Philo, <em>De posteritate Caini</em> (On the Posterity of Cain)</td>
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<td>Praep. ev.</td>
<td>Eusebius, <em>Praeparatio evangelica</em> (Preparation for the Gospel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princ.</td>
<td>Origen, <em>De principiis</em> (Peri archôn) (First Principles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prob.</td>
<td>Philo, <em>Quod omnis probus liber sit</em> (That Every Good Person Is Free)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prot. Jas.</td>
<td><em>Protevangelium of James</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ps.-Mt.</td>
<td><em>Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ps.-Phoc.</td>
<td>Pseudo-Phocylides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTMS</td>
<td>Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resp.</td>
<td>Plato, <em>Respublica</em> (Republic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RevQ</td>
<td><em>Revue de Qumran</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rhet. Her.</td>
<td><em>Rhetorica ad Herennium</em></td>
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<td>RNT</td>
<td>Regensburger Neues Testament</td>
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<td>Sat.</td>
<td>Juvenal, <em>Satirae</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>SB</td>
<td>Sources bibliques</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBLDS</td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBLRBS</td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature Resources for Biblical Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBLSP</td>
<td><em>Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBT</td>
<td>Studies in Biblical Theology</td>
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<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Sources chrétiennes. Paris: Cerf, 1943–</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEÅ</td>
<td><em>Svensk exegetisk årsbok</em></td>
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ABBREVIATIONS

Sem  
SemeiaSt  
Serm.  
Sib. Or.  
SJ  
SNTS  
SNTSMS  
S. 'Olam Rab.  
Somn.  
Song. Rab.  
SP  
Spec.  
Spir. et litt.  
STDJ  
StPatr  
Str-B  
Strom.  
SubBi  
SubsHag  
SVTP  
Tanh.  
TDNT  
TENT  
Tg. Onq.  
t. Hullin  
THKNT  
Tim.  
T. Mos.  
T. Naph.  
TNTC  
TSAJ  
t. Soṭah  
TSR  
TU  
TynBul  
UBS  
UBSGNT  
Vatican Inv.  
VC
<table>
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<tr>
<td>Vir. ill.</td>
<td>Jerome, <em>De viris illustribus</em>, Lives of Illustrious Men</td>
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<td>Virt.</td>
<td>Philo, <em>De virtutibus</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>WBC</td>
<td>Word Biblical Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WGRW</td>
<td>SBL Writings from the Greco-Roman World Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>WUNT</td>
<td>Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y. Mak.</td>
<td>Makkot (Jerusalem Talmud)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y. Ned.</td>
<td>Nedarim (Jerusalem Talmud)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y. Shab.</td>
<td>Shabbat (Jerusalem Talmud)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y. Ta`an.</td>
<td>Ta`anit (Jerusalem Talmud)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZDPV</td>
<td>Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZNW</td>
<td>Zeitschrift für die neustamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</td>
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Many Methods: The Diversity of New Testament Scholarship

Andrew B. McGowan and Kent Harold Richards

There has never been a more diverse set of possibilities for understanding the canonical texts of the New Testament, other early Christian literature, and the history of the emergent Christian movement that was to become the Church.

Diversity in methods of reading the New Testament is of course as old as or older than the texts themselves. The first few generations of Christians struggled with basic questions of method and meaning in their own attempts to read and respond to the scriptures of Judaism. These attempts, various elements of development, interpretation and controversy, are documented both in the processes of composition as well as in canonization; without them the New Testament itself would not exist.

If the New Testament documents are themselves inscribed efforts at understanding the Jewish scriptures as well as the person and teaching of Jesus, they quickly became the objects of renewed interpretive debates, and the catalyst for further literary production. From arguments over esoteric and philosophically ambitious interpretation such as that of so-called Gnostics in the second century, through the methodological differences between the Alexandrian and Antiochene schools in the fourth century, the key doctrinal and other disputes that characterized ancient Christianity were centered on just how to read Christian and Jewish scripture.

Canons and Controversies

Fundamentalisms, casual or assertive, are perhaps never more vulnerable than when faced with the pluriformity of canonical scripture itself. While theological debates both mirrored and fueled the ways Christian social formations developed, the emergent institutional and cultural divisions between churches were mani-
fested not only in preference for distinct interpretive methods, but in decisions even about the actual canons to which those methods are to be applied.

Debates over the extent and content of scripture reflected contention over the authentic borders of Christianity itself. This can be seen as when Marcion championed a Gospel without supposed accretions, or when “Montanists” claimed the ongoing reality of the Paraclete outside as well as inside the written word. From the ancient divisions between groups aligned with Chalcedonian Christology on the one hand and others such as Armenian, Ethiopian, and Egyptian Christians on the other, through the millennial schism between Eastern and Western Churches, and on to the Reformation, each large and enduring division has been accompanied by the entrenchment of discrepancies between canons. Those discrepancies as well as the subtler, more diffuse, but equally profound cultivation of differences in how to read those books accepted, has lead to a lively debate.

Modern scholarship has added to these dilemmas, not only because of the increased awareness of cultural and canonical diversity through more immediate contact with different cultures and peoples, but also as a result of the discovery and publication of new sets of ancient documents pertaining to, or even purporting to be, scripture.

The Dead Sea Scrolls have raised unprecedented but unresolved problems in the presentation of extra-canonical Psalms interspersed with the familiar ones. The appearance of Ben Sira in Hebrew both there and in the documents of the Cairo Genizah has forced new perspectives. The Nag Hammadi codices shed remarkable light on the ways scripture could be re-written in the process of being read, as well as providing the now-famous Gospel of Thomas.

A Bible at the Center

Despite the differences just noted, the varied Christian traditions of the late-antique and medieval periods had in common tendencies to weave biblical traditions organically into their complex liturgical, spiritual, and doctrinal constructions. They continued to use earlier methods such as allegorical interpretation, if in new ways and with a new sophistication, tending at times to sophistry. They continued to use biblical texts for devotional practices such as lectio divina, and in the communal settings of eucharistic and other liturgies.

The Reformation brought the Bible to a quite new centrality in the West, via the principle of sola scriptura and the explosion of biblical translations, exemplified in the King James Version published four-hundred years before this volume, and provided its own layer of complexity to canonical issues. While an accompanying emphasis on “plain sense” of scripture was common, the exposure of
the Bible to the light both of the resources of emergent humanism such as that of Erasmus and of new emphases on evidence and rationality also heralded the arrival of modern critical scholarship, whether undertaken in pursuit of new theological wisdom, skepticism, or intellectual curiosity.

Like any other aspect of western thought, understanding of the New Testament and biblical literature generally was impacted profoundly by the Enlightenment and its successors such as Romanticism. Figures such as Spinoza and Hobbes noted issues that later scholars were to pursue more systematically. For the Hebrew Bible this was often the problem of Pentateuchal sources or the authenticity of Isaianic prophecies; the equivalent seed-bed for New Testament studies was the Synoptic problem and the closely related issue of the historical Jesus.

To a significant extent this volume reflects the current state of the modern biblical scholarship that emerged in the West from that time forward. This has come to include an array of technical and hermeneutical processes sometimes worked out as distinct “criticisms” but in fact often overlapping and interdependent. These have been used to establish the textual detail, as well as the canonical scope, of the New Testament; to consider its sources, literary composition, influences, and historicity; and to examine it in its ancient social, cultural, and religious contexts. This set of interdependent disciplines constitutes classical biblical criticism, which, while not necessarily a complete set of tools for considering the significance of the ancient texts in the modern world, cannot be dispensed with by any serious reader.

Before the mid-twentieth century, critical New Testament scholarship as a tool for exegetical and hermeneutical purposes was a largely Protestant phenomenon, enabled or allowed by the diffuse authority structures of those religious traditions but not universally accepted. The arrival of Roman Catholic scholarship in this modern sense was heralded by the encyclical *Divino afflante spiritu*, which affirmed the use of philological, historical, and literary studies to support faithful reading and understanding. This and other developments in scholarly ecumenism have meant that debates in the academy around biblical interpretation often have little correlation with expected confessional loyalties, and that even in New Testament studies the contributions of Jewish and secular scholars can and must have their acknowledged place, based on criteria of adequacy applicable in any discipline.

The second half of the twentieth century saw the emergence not only of additional methods, but also of approaches that generally assumed and often acknowledged established critical scholarship, yet sought to go beyond it. One broad set of methods has emerged from more recent philosophical and literary theory, wherein the literary character of the text has been reasserted not merely
as historic artifact for genre analysis, but as a dynamic reality whose life is inter-
dependent with the act of contemporary reading. There have also been renewed
calls for theological engagement, in particular with the canonical text, with what
has been termed a “second naïveté” that acknowledges the results of critical study
without reducing the text to them.

Scholars and readers have also become more aware of what was cultur-
ally specific and historically conditioned in pursuit of method, even in studies
undertaken with “scientific” rigor and intent; that the assumptions of western
modernity were not absolutes, and that the reality of Churches and academies
dominated by white males was not irrelevant to the limits of scholarship or to its
future prospects. The relationship between such new readings emphasizing diver-
sity and liberation and what has been termed classical scholarship is not always
clear, and their interaction along with debate continues.

This volume seeks to draw many, but of course not all, of these method-
ological threads together. Its aim has not been an exhaustive representation or
description, but an attempt to present the status quaestionis for many disciplines
and approaches. One of its purposes in doing so is to honor a scholar whose work
encompasses a remarkable breadth of method and content. Harold W. Attridge
is widely admired for his acuity and erudition, which has contributed authorita-
tively to textual criticism, exegesis, comparative literary and historical studies, and
numerous other areas in New Testament and cognate fields. He is also a valued
and respected colleague whose leadership has made a great contribution to the
academy, and the editors and contributors offer this as a tribute, with thanks.

To some, and indeed to many readers of those texts today, such complex
interpretive possibilities may seem confusing or unnecessary. This volume in its
collective voice suggests something rather different, namely, that careful attention
to questions of method in interpretation offers possibilities for fruitful readings
of the texts themselves, and insights into other unavoidable issues for any who
would read with understanding.

More than this, it suggests that interpretive method is not simply an issue
that arises after the text, when as in every period individuals and communities
have considered and contended about proper ways to read; rather, the individual
writings and the canon of scripture are actually the products of such interpretive
questions, and cannot adequately be understood except with attention to them.

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and Billie Jean Collins, for their support of this project and for ensuring its timely
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