APOCRYPHA AS TEXTS THAT HAD
NO FUTURE? REFLECTIONS
ON CHRISTIAN TEXTS OF THE PAST

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ABSTRACT

In contemporary Biblical Hermeneutics, the perception of a gulf between past and present mind-set has led scholars to seek for a transcending and universal moment within authoritative scriptures of Christianity (Schneiders, Bieringer). While authoritative texts are broadly accepted within Christianity on the basis of the conception of revelation and inspiration, the multitude of Early Christian Apocrypha has been broadly neglected in hermeneutical considerations so far. However, Apocryphal texts deserve our attention not only because of the quantitative aspect of the bulk of preserved Early Christian apocryphal literature but also because these scriptures reflect a certain dialogue with other texts, probably including texts that are regarded as canonical today. By this mirrored dialogue and commitment to Christian faith, a future perspective of hope and salvation is documented, which unites Christians of the past and today. Therefore, as testimonies of faith, Early Christian Apocrypha are necessarily relevant and crucial to hermeneutical attempts to bridge the gap between past and present.

Key words

Normativity of the Future, Biblical Hermeneutics, Early Christian Apocrypha, Early Christianity, Christian communities, Hypotexts, Testimonies of Faith, Sinngebung

1. "Texts That Create a Future"[1]
Transcendence of Texts as Hermeneutical Bond
in a Christian Perspective

The transcending moment of texts of the past has been seen as the departure moment for (contemporary) theories on hermeneu-

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[1] Cf. Reimund Bieringer.Texts That Create a Future: The Function of Ancient Texts for Theology Today. In: Mary Elsbernd et al. (eds.). *Normativity of the Future: Reading*

tics.[2] Especially biblical texts prove to be doubtlessly accepted to incorporate such a metachronic feature[3] because of their authority in Church history. Such an appreciation is based upon the perspective that there are traces of "God's dream for the creation"[4] perceivable and educible from texts of the past. In this future-oriented or eschatological perspective, texts of the past can function as "windows into the mysterious reality of the future".[5] In a sense and from a Christian perspective, the past as a reality is perceived as lacking crucial elements, mainly ethical ones, that just the future will provide. But a picture of the past that exclusively points to the opposition between the ethically deficient past, with some exceptions, and the eschatological future would not fully embrace a Christian view of the past. Essentially, the past is rather a necessary condition, which builds the foundation of transformation processes.

In this perspective, these transformative acts are enabled by the "creative power"[6] of the Spirit as the main constituent of Christian faith. The idea that "[t]hroughout the succeeding centuries until today the same Spirit has enabled Christian believers in being followers of Christ in their own times"[7] expresses both static and dynamic elements since the actual situation of a Christian believer as well as the process of tradition through all the history are taken into account. But as the Spirit is believed to continue this kind of enabling in the future, it is precisely this power that constitutes transcendence.

Inextricably related to this vision of the Spirit is the concept of revelation as another key component of Christian hermeneutical approaches

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Biblical and Other Authoritative Texts in an Eschatological Perspective. Leuven: Peeters 2010, pp. 91–116.

2 Cf., amongst others, Hans-Georg Gadamer. *Truth and Method*. London: Continuum 2003, p. 290; cf. Paul Ricoeur's concept of "decontextualization"/ "recontextualization" as a necessary "ability" of texts (Paul Ricoeur. The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation. In: Paul Ricoeur. *From Text to Action. Essays in Hermeneutics, II*. London: Athlone 1991, p. 83); cf. Sarah M. Schneiders. Feminist Ideology Criticism and Biblical Hermeneutics. *BTB* 19 (1989), pp. 3–10.

3 Bieringer. Texts That Create a Future, p. 105. "Metachronic" means that texts "are rooted in the past, formed by the present, but transcend both of them into future".

4 R. Bieringer – M. Elsbernd. Introduction. The "Normativity of the Future" Approach: Its Roots, Developments, Current State and Challenges. In: R. Bieringer – M. Elsbernd (eds.). *Normativity of the Future*, pp. 3–25, p. 11; cf. Bieringer. Texts That Create a Future, p. 107.

5 Bieringer. Texts That Create a Future, p.106.

6 Cf. Bieringer – Elsbernd. Introduction, p. 14.

7 Bieringer – Elsbernd. Introduction, p. 14.

paying attention to transcendence of texts.[8] Concessions to the possible "crookedness" of the ancient authors behind texts that became canonical cleared the path to a more tolerant and inclusive position within the concept of revelation. Even though the biblical text is considered as the "privileged locus of revelation"[9], a revelatory potential of the texts or traces of God's handwriting in the scriptures affect the position that texts which are not part of the Christian biblical canon or of the doctrine of the Church can contain traces of God's truth.

Such a concept builds upon an understanding of "biblical revelation in an inclusive way, i.e., to say that the biblical text is revelatory is not to say that it is the sole locus of revelation. Rather claiming the biblical text to be revelatory is intended to open our eyes for the revelatory dimensions of all of reality".[10]

2. Texts of the Past without a Future?
The Profile and Historical Value of Apocryphal Texts[11]

Canonical scriptures, patristic writings or documents of councils are (largely) unanimously regarded as authoritative texts and have in common that they *were*, *are* and are *supposedly will be* regularly accepted to be "constitutive for forming the communities that read them and live by them".[12] Beyond this internal identity building feature and on a more personal level, these texts have also effects on Christianity as a whole, the present Christians and their faith on a broader and more general level. Besides these texts with the crucial feature of authority,

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[8] The underlying revelatory concept is essentially influenced by the attitude of the Vaticanum II and the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, which, apart from the prevailing inspired character of canonical Scriptures, facilitates an opening towards other texts and documents. See also the document of the Vaticanum II on the "Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions" (*Nostra Aetate* [NA]), which declares that the Roman-Catholic Church appreciates that these religions "nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men" (NA 2).

[9] Bieringer – Elsbernd. Introduction, p. 17.

[10] Bieringer – Elsbernd. Introduction, p. 17. In reference to S.M Schneiders. *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco 1991, p. 45.

[11] These reflections focus on a general profile of apocrypha as documents of faith of a specific Christian group in the past without any evaluation of the content and theological background in order to illuminate any preliminary hindrance that would exclude apocryphal texts from hermeneutical reflections.

[12] Bieringer. Text That Create a Future, p. 107.

the history of Christian literature holds a manifold spectrum of documents that do not share the same general appreciation or influence.[13]

2.1 Apocrypha and Their Relation to Authoritative Texts

While authoritative texts were usually copiously transmitted and handed down to succeeding generations, apocryphal Christian texts are often short of a linear reception by subsequent generations up to present. Nevertheless, because of the simple fact that they represent an enormous number of early Christian writings, it would be negligent to disregard these writings in historical and hermeneutical reflections, regardless of their conformity with (contemporary interpretations of) Christian faith.

However, the differences and disparity between authoritative texts, either canonical texts or conciliar documents, and apocryphal texts are evident because the latter are not sharing the same impact and influence on Christian faith as the former *per definitionem* do.[14] With respect to the importance of the past and history as a necessary condition and situative resource for interpretations, it needs to be asked whether and in what sense apocryphal texts can be generally or partially reasonable or useful for (Christian) hermeneutical reflections. In order to add a more decisive dimension to the mentioned quantitative

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[13] For a number of instances of still effecting apocryphal themes, see: Paul A. van Stempvoort. *Und in ihrem Herzen blieben sie blind: Dichtung und Wahrheit in neutestamentlichen Apokryphen.* Konstanz: Bahn 1956. For example, the "presence" of ox and ass in nativity sets as influenced by *Ps-Matt* 14 (cf. Stempvoort. Und in ihrem Herzen blieben sie blind, pp. 23–24).

[14] While a definition of apocryphal literature and a selective evaluation of sources is beyond the scope of this paper, the focus in this paper should lie upon a more general reflections on apocrypha as Christian texts, which contain not exclusively canonical material but are somehow related to the known canonical account. Therefore, the documents which this paper has in mind should fulfil the criteria that the "Antike christliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung" has set to its selection (see: Christoph Markschies. Haupteinleitung. In: Christoph Markschies – Jens Schröter (eds.). *Antike christliche Apokryphen, I. Band: Evangelien und Verwandtes. Teilband 1* (AcA I/1), Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2012, pp. 5–9). The difficulties to find an ultimate, covering definition of apocryphal literature has often been recognized in the recent decades, e.g., see Albertus F. J. Klijn. Review of "Neutestamentliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung herausgegeben von Wilhelm Schneemelcher. 5th ed. Tübingen 1987". *Vigiliae Christianae* 48 (1988), p. 305: "It appears impossible to give a definition of these writings." Tobias Nicklas tried to approach the "Apokryphenbegriff" by refuting the negative prejudices towards apocryphal texts (see: Tobias Nicklas. Semiotik – Intertextualität – Apokryphität: Eine Annäherung an den Begriff "Christlicher Apokryphen". *Apocrypha* 17 (2006), pp. 55–78).

aspect of apocryphal literature, which can hardly be entirely convincing, a closer look at the profile and the historical value of these texts should be taken.

In an attempt to specify apocryphal texts *ex negativo*, they have been regarded as non-canonical but still in a certain sense as *Christian* scriptures or, at least, as texts related to Christianity.[15] But this classification strikes just one aspect and involves the risk or effect that apocryphal texts are artificially set in opposition to canonical texts. Such a description as "counter"-scriptures easily suggests that there is a fixed and defined collection of scriptures with an antagonistic purpose.[16] This definition of apocryphal literature represses any relevance for theological hermeneutical reflections from the very start because, compared to the authority and effective history of the Christian canon of scriptures, apocryphal literature is sidelined at the best or neglected at the worst in Christian Church history.[17]

In regard to the debate on the development of the Christian Canon[18] and an actual "Paradigmenwechsel"[19] in the scholarly assessment of apocryphal literature, this does not seem as an equitable image of and fruitful approach to apocryphal sources anymore. An important effort to establish a more impartial encounter of apocryphal writings was made by D. Lührmann. He pointed at the logical historical order

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[15] Cf., amongst others, Archibald H. Charteris. *Canonicity: A Collection of Early Testimonies to the Canonical Books of the New Testament*. London: Blackwood 1880, p. xcvi: "[…] there is no doubt that the word Apocrypha came to denote what is in a particular way opposed to canonical. The apocryphal books were not, indeed, canonical, but neither were they secular: they *competed* with the canonical books for the regard of the Christian Church. For the most part they claimed to have an origin and authority fully equal to those of the *sacred books* which were usually accepted in the Church" (italics mine). A more recent example of scholarly opposition to the value of apocryphal literature can be found in Walter Rebell. *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen und Apostolische Väter*. München: Kaiser 1992, p. 16. Rebell sees apocryphal texts as somehow failed "Konkurrenztexte".

[16] Cf. the criticism of this prejudice by Tobias Nicklas. "Écrits apocryphes chrétiens": Ein Sammelband als Spiegel eines weitreichenden Paradigmenwechsel in der Apokryphenforschung. *Vigiliae Christianae* 61 (2007), p. 76.

[17] There are exceptions to this general "shadow existence" of scriptures that became apocryphal, e.g., *The Shepherd of Hermas*, which was regarded even as canonical by Irenaeus (see *Adv. Haer.* IV 20, 2).

[18] Cf., among others, Bruce M. Metzger. *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance*. Oxford: Clarendon 1987; Martin Hengel. *Die vier Evangelien und das eine Evangelium von Jesus Christus* (WUNT 224). Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2008; Markschies. Haupteinleitung, pp. 25–74.

[19] Cf. Nicklas. Paradigmenwechsel, pp. 70–85.

that texts can just be called "apocryphal" in contrast to "canonical" after a canon has been established. Because there are fragments of gospels extant from the time in which the canonical Gospels became such, he coined the term of *apokryph gewordener Evangelien*[20] to draw attention to the problem. This awareness raising ("Sensibilisierung") does not mean that a blind eye is turned to the depreciation of these scriptures by so-called "orthodox" by apologetic or patristic writers of the era before the canon was defined.[21] For the term ἀπόκρυφος has indeed been used to despise opposing views in this time.[22] Nevertheless, not only this term but also the rejection of scriptures that were considered as apocryphal or even as "heretical" in Early Christianity[23] by proponents of the so-called "Mainstream-Church" shows that they were part of the theological discussion and reality in the Early Church after all.

To avoid the mentioned risk of the deadlock that the Christian canon is the measure or reference point by which the quality and influence of apocryphal texts can only be rated in a destructive way, the relation of the Christian bible to an apocryphal text is better to be seen as a "privilegierter Hypotext"[24]. The specific apocryphal text, which stands in the tradition or in a certain dependence on the hypotext of the biblical material, is in this sense a "palimpsest" of biblical scriptures. The fact that persons behind apocryphal texts were obviously rereading, remaking and applying[25] biblical or Christian traditions illustrates that these persons saw themselves (to a certain extent or

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[20] Cf. Dieter Lührmann. *Fragmente apokryph gewordener Evangelien in griechischer und lateinischer Sprache in Zusammenarbeit mit Egbert Schlarb* (MThSt 59). Marburg: Elwert 2000, p. 10.

[21] Cf. Lührmann, *Fragmente apokryph geworener Evangelien*, pp. 8–9, where the 39th festal letter by Athanasius (367 CE) is seen "zurecht" (p. 8) as a mark in the canon development, at least in regard of the Gospels.

[22] The passages in which the term ἀπόκρυφος is used in a negative and derogative way are manifold, e.g., Irenaeus of Lyon. *Adv. haer.* 1,20,1 (FC 8/1,270,29–30: πρὸς δὲ τούτοις ἀμύθητον πλῆθος ἀποκρύφων καὶ νόθων γραφῶν); Tertullian. *Pud.* 10,12 (CCSL 2,1301,48): [the Shepherd of Hermas] *inter apocrypha et falsa iudicaretur.*

[23] Cf. the so-called "heresiologies" *Adversus haereses* by Irenaeus, *Refutatio* by Hippolytus, *Panairon* by Epiphanius of Salamis.

[24] Nicklas. Semiotik, pp. 66–73.

[25] With this phrase, I refer to Bieringer. Texts That Create a Future, p. 91: "Many texts of early Christianity were preserved, copied and handed down. They were read and reread, commented on and discussed. They had a central place in the life of Christian communities, in their liturgy and prayer, in their preaching and teaching."

completely) as followers of the Christian movement so that these interpretations were part of concepts of Christian identity.[26]

In addition to the reversing element of composition and interpretation within these concepts, it has often been assumed by scholars that a number of apocrypha were written and read in a conflict situation of prohibition or neglect although it would be daring to presume a context of oppression for all of these texts because they are usually lacking sufficient background information to confirm such a thesis. Paradoxically, a lot of sources which mainly invigorate the idea of an oppressive situation behind diverse texts are written by opposing authors who are regarded as so-called "orthodox", for instance, Irenaeus of Lyon or Epiphanius of Salamis, and who had or have, in this sense of "orthodoxy", authority in Church history. However, these "orthodox" writings cannot be the ultimate proof for an oppressive situation behind the apocryphal texts because, as mentioned above, the latter scriptures are lacking background information that would confirm a theological controversy with the former texts. Weighing the authoritative and apocryphal sources up against each other methodologically carries the risk of an artificial and void comparison since apocryphal texts *may* have been written for controversial purposes or for the justification of differing theologies to opponents, but, due to missing information on their context and due to deficient or lost answers to the "orthodox" view, the situation of conflict *per se* cannot be confirmed.

The idea of a dualistic rivalry between "orthodox" and "heretical" positions scotches an unbiased encounter of apocryphal literature though there are indeed some texts assumed to be written for a purpose which touches different views and interpretations of Christian doctrine and belief.[27] But, for a more fruitful estimation of such documents which do not (exclusively) contain canonical material or texts of Church authorities, it is useful to slightly alter this attitude and to stress the status of apocrypha as testimonies of faith.

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[26] Cf. Tobias Nicklas. Christliche Apokryphen als Spiegel der Vielfalt frühchristlichen Lebens: Schlaglichter, Beispiele und methodische Probleme. *Annali di storia dell'esegesi* 23 (2006), pp. 43–44.

[27] An example for such a presumption can be found in the "Gospel of Judas", cf. Heribert Schmid. Was hat der "Judasevangelist" eigentlich gegen die Eucharistie? In: Enno E. Popkes – Gregor Wurst (eds.). *Judasevangelium und Codex Tchacos: Studien zur religionsgeschichtlichen Verortung einer gnostischen Schriftsammlung* (WUNT 297). Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2012, pp. 71–98. The author argues that the Gospel of Judas represents a document on correct and wrong offering.

2.2 Apocrypha as Testimonies of Faith

Even if apocryphal texts are not conformable with the valid doctrines of Christianity from a present perspective, they are still documents or testimonies of a special interpretation and evaluation of faith by a past community or individuals, who regarded these peculiar traits as constitutive for their belief.[28]

In order to examine the historical value of apocrypha, a greater focus was laid upon the communities which were reading and interpreting Christian scriptures (biblical or non-biblical material) and which were writing these texts that became apocryphal.[29] The biblical text can be seen as a dialogue partner in a conversation[30] with this particular reading and believing group or individual, who actually produced documents of this conversation. Hence, Christian apocryphal texts themselves are primarily evidences or documents of believers, who were applying Christian traditions and who were transforming those into their actual situation by their interpretations. Even if the use of these texts happened within a special period of time, and, in several cases, this application was limited to this phase (for certain reasons, see below), the actualization can be seen as a hermeneutical reflection on the Christ-event since the texts represent particular interpretations of past communities, and, thereby, they prove to stand in a "Rezeptionsverhältnis"[31] with biblical texts or traditions of Christianity. This connection is mirrored in the documents themselves as they employ motives, themes, phrases, and figures that are also known

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[28] Cf. Nicklas. Paradigmenwechsel, pp. 80–81: "Trotzdem bezeugen die Texte geistesgeschichtliche, sozialgeschichtliche oder religionsgeschichtliche Entwicklungen, können für das Werden christlicher Identitätsentwürfe stehen, verschiedene Perspektiven innerkirchlicher Auseinandersetzungen spiegeln und vieles mehr."

[29] Cf. Nicklas. Paradigmenwechsel, p. 80: "Der historische Wert der Texte ergibt sich allerdings in vielen Fällen weniger auf der Ebene, dass ihr Inhalt allzu viel an Authentischem (oder gar Neuem) über die frühesten Jahre des Christentums verraten würde. In Einzelfällen *kann* dies durchaus der Fall sein – viel wichtiger aber ist, dass die Texte auf pragmatischer Ebene zu historischen Zeugnissen der Vielfältigkeit von Entwürfen des Christentums werden können."

[30] Cf. Gadamer. *Truth and Method*, p. 268; cf. also Hans-Georg Gadamer. Reflections on my Philosophical Journey. In: Lewis E. Hahn (ed.). *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*. Chicago: Open Court 1997, pp. 3–63, esp. p. 39–40; Brook W. R. Pearson. *Corresponding Sense: Paul, Dialectic, and Gadamer* (Biblical Interpretation Series 58). Leiden: Brill 2001, pp. 1–45, esp. pp. 28–37.

[31] Nicklas. Christliche Apokryphen, p. 28.

from the canonical account but could[32] include a certain variation or a new content of the adopted material.

The persons who were reflecting on Christian traditions and who were modifying the original material should be regarded either completely or at least to a certain extent as the followers of Christian ideas insofar as an engagement with Christian material in a sort of an "aktualisierende Fortschreibung"[33] expresses a certain commitment to a religious movement.

These documents took part in the continuity of Church as they were important for a certain person or community up to a point, but it still can be criticised that they are also lacking an essential feature of authoritative texts, namely their own continuity and influence to a global Church, either because they were omitted by accident or were removed from this continuity for any reasons. Even if they were in close connection to authoritative scriptures, this deficiency of subsequent acceptance may impede the consideration of apocrypha as useful sources for hermeneutical reflections. But it is exactly the receptive and reflective relation to preceding Christian material which carries an aspect of apocryphal texts that can include a transcending moment.

3. Faith that Creates Future: The Transcending Moment of Apocrypha

At first sight, apocryphal texts, and especially the peculiar category of those texts that were lost and happened to be found, can scarcely

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[32] The fact that there was some variation in the material that became apocryphal does not imply that the community was *per se* "heretical" or "anti-orthodox", but that it may also have been read by a community which, from a modern perspective, would be regarded as purely consistent with an "orthodox" doctrine. In order to prove a differing or opposing theology in and behind these texts, further analysis and insights to most of the texts is needed, which is often not the case. In this sense, an assumption of a heretical mindset seems often to be an *argumentum e silentio* or simply a prejudice.

[33] Erich Zenger. *Einleitung ins Alte Testament.* Stuttgart: Kohlhammer [7] 2008, pp. 420–421, (in reference to Odil Hannes Steck. Prophetische Prophetenauslegung. In: Hans Friedrich Geißer et al. (eds.). *Wahrheit der Schrift – Wahrheit der Auslegung.* Zürich: Theologischer Verlag 1992, pp. 198–244). The author uses this term to describe the actualizing continuation of prophetic scriptures, which became later also part of the canonical book. Regarding apocrypha as "aktualisierende Fortschreibung", he implies that the biblical material was considered as "gültig" (Zenger. *Einleitung*, p. 420) and that the variations adding new angles to the extant material were regarded as legitimate and even necessary adjustment to an altered context.

be seen as a "dynamic medium"[34], since they seem to fall short of a direct effective history because they were not transmitted or handed down up to the present and did not provide any further contributions to the living Christian attitude but dropped out of the timeline of Christian literature.[35] Reasons for the ceasing of apocryphal texts may lie in the circumstances of a long transmission process of a particular document or in the actual repression of apocryphal texts by ecclesial authorities[36] or, simply, in losing their doctrinal importance for the succeeding generation, which led to oblivion and corrosion of these ideas.

But this view represents only a modern and retrospective evaluation of these scriptures, which looks upon them from a distant perspective and, obviously, contributes to the idea of a "gulf between the past and the present".[37] If there is the feeling that this distance needs to be overcome, a judgement that is solely directed backwards is rather deepening and amplifying this gap than bridging it. Apocryphal documents can be seen as perfect occasions to prove this position, since they appear as "aliens" from the past in various dimensions: they may demonstrate bizarre looking theological positions, they may be odd because of their curious use of biblical material or they may not be really classifiable due to the lack of background information. In this perspective, they are excellent instances of alienation. Nevertheless, as testimonies of faith, they might well function as a dynamic medium and, thus, incorporate a transcending feature.

Insofar as the members of communities in which apocryphal texts were written saw themselves as followers of Christ, the interpretative framework of these scriptures incorporates a Christian mindset and a claim to truth regarding their interpretations of Christian identity. On the basis of these presuppositions, the group that stands behind an apocryphal text and its interpretation of truth share an "antizipatorischen

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[34] Schneiders. Feminist Ideology Criticism, pp. 5–6.

[35] This appreciation concerns the bulk of apocryphal literature, but there is some exceptional use of texts regarded as apocryphal, e.g., *Proto-James* in present Orthodox Churches, the integration of apocryphal images and ideas in arts.

[36] Cf. Eusebius. *Hist. eccl.* VI 12. He shows the rejection of the *Gospel of Peter* by Serapion, the bishop of Antioch.

[37] Cf. the short discussion of Gadamer's and Ricoeur's view on this issue in Bieringer. Texts That Create a Future, pp. 92–102.

Charakter".[38] Christian faith draws upon experiences made in the past and, therefore, constantly reviews historical events and traditions,[39] but at the same time it is constituted by the hope that is based on these experiences.

Faith can be regarded as a reasonable answer of Christian believers to the inevitable question about the meaning of life. Within this kind of "*Sinngebung*", "Sinn" has been regarded as the "vierte Dimension der Zeit, ohne den die drei anderen [i.e., past, present and future] menschlich nicht gelebt werden können"[40] because it is the mental achievement which holds all dimensions for concrete perception of reality. As it can be presupposed to be a general human trait, it is an unifying element through all ages.

Hermeneutics "reminds us that biblical faith cannot be separated from the movement of interpretation that elevates it into language [...]. Such is the properly hermeneutical constitution of faith."[41] Hence, if the view of apocrypha as testimonies of faith is taken seriously, the texts do not lack an effective future from the perspective of those who applied or interpreted biblical material or even biblical faith.

Evidence to reasonably assume such a *Sinngebung* or *Sinnsuche* within ancient Christian apocrypha as applications of faith can be found precisely in the variation and adaption of well-known tradition because it proves the intense engagement with traditions of belief. The interpretations and forms of faith that are expressed by apocrypha are the crucial elements specifying that these texts of the past may have no future as regards their actual, present literary and theological

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[38] Jens Schröter. Historische (Re-)Konstruktion und theologische Wahrheit. In: Eva Ebel – Samuel Vollenweider (eds.). *Wahrheit und Geschichte: Exegetische und hermeneutische Studien zu einer dialektischen Konstellation* (AThANT 102). Zürich: Theologischer Verlag 2012, p. 31.

[39] Cf. Schröter. Historische (Re-)Konstruktion und theologische Wahrheit, p. 15: "christlicher Wahrheitsanspruch [gründet] in geschichtlichen Erfahrungen".

[40] Jörn Rüsen. Typen des Zeitbewusstsein – Sinnkonzepte des geschichtlichen Wandels. In: Friedrich Jaeger – Burkhard Liebsch (eds.). *Handbuch der Kulturwissenschaften. Band 1: Grundlagen und Schlüsselbegriffe*. Stuttgart: Metzler 2011, p. 366; cf. also L. Siep. Was für ein Leben? Was für ein Sinn. In: Matthias Hoesch – Sebastian Muders – Markus Rüther (eds.). *Glück – Werte – Sinn. Metaethische, ethische und theologische Zugänge zur Frage nach dem Guten Leben*. Boston: de Gruyter 2013, pp. 91–107; Jan Assmann. *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*. 6th ed. München: Beck 2006.

[41] Paul Ricoeur, Philosophy and Religious Language. *The Journal of Religion* 54 (1974), pp. 71–85, 85.

importance, but they incorporate the anticipatory attitude of faith of the persons behind the texts, and, in this sense, the texts *have* a future.

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ABSTRAKT

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Apokryfy – texty určené k zapomnění?
Zamyšlení nad křesťanskými texty minulosti

Současná biblická hermeneutika se zabývá otázkou, jakým způsobem je možné překlenout propast mezi minulostí a současností. Badatelé v této oblasti (Schneiders, Bieringer) přišli s přístupem, který hledá transcendentální a univerzální moment v křesťanských textech. Zatímco autorita těchto textů není na základě konceptu zjevení a inspirace křesťanských písem nikterak zpochybňována, množství raně křesťanských apokryfních textů bylo doposud z hermeneutických zkoumání vyloučeno. Tyto texty však zasluhují naši pozornost nejen proto, že je jich velké množství, ale zejména proto, že reflektují dialog s jinými texty, které jsou dnes součástí křesťanského kánonu. Právě díky dialogu s kanonickými texty a oddanosti křesťanství je v apokryfech zdokumentována víra v budoucnost v naději a spáse, která spojuje křesťany minulosti a současnosti. Křesťanské apokryfy nám tedy pomáhají překonat propast mezi minulostí a přítomností, a jsou proto nezbytnou až zásadní součástí hermeneutických zkoumání.

Klíčová slova
normativní charakter budoucnosti, biblická hermeneutika, raně křesťanské apokryfy, rané křesťanství, křesťanská společenství, „hypotexty", svědectví víry, Sinngebung