

ERNST BAASLAND

Radical Philosophy of Life

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament*

Mohr Siebeck

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Ernst Baasland

Radical Philosophy of Life

Studies on the Sermon on the Mount

Mohr Siebeck

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Preface

Radical Philosophy of Life is the title of this book, and it sounds like, and is in fact, a program. The Sermon on the Mount offers exactly that. It leaves nobody untouched, and the interpretation should reinforce and by no means impair its radical message.

This sermon is indeed an extremely radical speech. How can such a radical message be fundamental for churches and a guideline for ordinary people? The label ‘radical’ has often been attached to the Sermon on the Mount. Its radical demands have been a program for ascetic and extreme ethical mountain-climbers, but they are not at all attractive for modern bon viveurs. The radicalism can also easily be perceived as irrelevant for people from other religions and philosophies. The title *Radical Philosophy of Life* gives an indication of what the sermon is all about and why this sermon has become the most influential speech ever.

When I started my projects on the Sermon on the Mount I was a bit embarrassed for adding another book to the seemingly endless number of books and articles on this topic. When finishing my voluminous book *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount* (2015), I was surprised that it was still possible to say something new about this speech. As a classical speech it can and must be reinterpreted in every generation, but every generation should hopefully also provide new insights.

The reviews were encouraging, and some of them noted that I had announced ‘forthcoming studies’. In 2015 I was careless enough to announce four forthcoming studies (“Pilgrims, Prophets and Sages: Radicalism in the Sermon on the Mount”; “Audience in the Sermon on the Mount”; “On composition and genre of the Sermon on the Mount”; “Auf der Spur einer ‘Grundsatzrede’ [“Inaugural Speech”] vor der Bergpredigt?”). The last one is already published (ZNW 110 [2019], 202–239), but three of them appear here (§§ 3–5).

In the kind reviews of my book I was challenged on three other issues: on the rhetoric of the speech, on the relation to the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew versus Luke) and on the interpretation of the sermon as wisdom literature versus an eschatological interpretation. These issues are the themes in §§ 2, 3, 4–8.

In *Parables and Rhetoric in the Sermon on the Mount* (2015), I studied all the parables and texts with a metaphorical character. In this present book I add only one exegetical study, on the wisdom text, Matt 6,34.

My interest in this book is to widen the perspective from the exegesis of Matt 5–7 to important issues in the scholarly debates, and I try audaciously in every paragraph to take fresh approaches, offer new perspectives, etc.

If we follow the outline in this book, in § 1, “History of Research”, I try to see this history in a much broader perspective and to differentiate more clearly between ‘influence’ and ‘interpretation’.

In § 2 – on ‘historical approach’ – I have a methodological agenda: I put general historiography in the forefront, which implies that some methods must be revised, and shed new light on the source problem and on the question of ‘authenticity’. Principles for reconstructions behind the text and the possibility of an analysis of a ‘Matthean community’ will be debated. The quest for the historical Jesus is and must be unavoidable; the problem is seemingly easy to handle because of the generally sympathetic attitude towards the Jesus-speech. But even in this case the methodology must be clear and transparent.

§§ 3 and 4 offer ‘literary approaches’, principles for composition analysis and discussion of the prospects for and alternatives to a rhetorical approach. § 4 discusses different approaches to the problem of audience and/or addressee, proposing a kind of reader-response analysis as a tool.

In §§ 5–7 ethical and theological questions are at stake. The question of ‘radicalism’ (§ 5) must be crucial in any interpretation of Matt 5–7 and in a book with the title *Radical Philosophy of Life*, the term ‘philosophy’ (§ 6) is consciously chosen. Not theology or eschatology, but philosophical reflection is the theme, and this yields a fresh approach to the understanding of the teaching of Jesus in a Jewish-Hellenistic context. § 7 analyses the ethical argumentation in Matt 5–7 and James in a new way, and tries to describe the kind of similarity between the two texts.

The last two paragraphs go into specific texts. § 8 provides exegetical remarks to one verse, Matt 6,34, and sees this wisdom-text in light of philosophical debates in the first century CE. § 9 deals with Matt 5,23f. I have previously presented a comprehensive interpretation of the parable. The text has been a stumbling-block for exegetes, and it has been almost entirely overlooked in parable-research. Parable-scholars can simply not apply their methods to Matt 5,23f. Some texts are like pebbles in the roads that can topple even big loads. To continue speaking figuratively, using another image: only a little stroke can fell the big oak.

As a retired scholar one does not have the busiest schedule, but without my two institutions (MF – Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society in Oslo and VID – Specialized University in Stavanger) I could not have finished this book. I am grateful to the libraries in Oslo, Stavanger, and Berlin

(Humboldt University), but due to Covid 19 public libraries have been closed in the final stage of this book. As a Norwegian working regularly at Humboldt University in Berlin, I need to have corrected many English idioms. I am grateful to Ellen and Piers Crocker for doing this task. I am also grateful to my colleagues Karl Olav Sandnes, Ole Jacob Filtvedt and Jostein Ådna for reading some articles. I want to finally express my gratitude to the editor, Jörg Frey, who from the very beginning of the work encouraged me to publish this book.

Stavanger/Oslo, Fall 2020

Ernst Baasland

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List of Abbreviations

2DH	two-document hypothesis
AASF.DHL	Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae: Dissertationes humanarum litterarum
AB	The Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
AJEC	Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity
AJT	<i>Asia Journal of Theology</i>
AKG	Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte
AnBib	Analecta biblica
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts</i>
ANRW II	Wolfgang Haase/Hildesgard Temporini (eds.), <i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt. II: Principat</i> , Berlin/New York: De Gruyter 1.1974ff
ASB	American Standard Bible
ASNU	Acta seminarii neotestamentici upsaliensis
AsTJ	<i>Asbury Theological Journal</i>
ASV	American Standard Version
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
AThR	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
ATLA	American Theological Library Association
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BBR	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BDAG	Walter Bauer/Frederick W. Danker/William F. Arndt/F. Wilbur Gingrich, <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . Chicago: Chicago University Press ³ 1999
BDR	Friedrich Blass/Albert Debrunner/Friedrich Rehkopf, <i>Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch</i> . Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht ¹⁸ 2001
BeO	<i>Bibbia e Oriente</i>
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium
BEvT	Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie
BFCT	Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie
BGBE	Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese
BGLRK	Beiträge zur Geschichte und Lehre der reformierten Kirche
BHT	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BibInt	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BibS(N)	Biblische Studien (Neukirchen-Vluyt)

<i>BiLe</i>	<i>Bibel und Leben</i>
Bill.	(Hermann L. Strack/)Paul Billerbeck, <i>Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch</i> , 4 vols., München: C.H. Beck 1922–1961
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
<i>BK</i>	<i>Bibel und Kirche</i>
<i>BR</i>	<i>Biblical Research</i>
<i>BT</i>	<i>The Bible Translator</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
Bultmann, <i>GST</i>	Rudolf Bultmann, <i>Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition</i> (FRLANT 27), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1921, ⁸ 1970
Bultmann, <i>HST</i>	Rudolf Bultmann, <i>The History of the Synoptic Tradition</i> , Oxford: Blackwell 1963
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BWV	Bach Werkeverzeichnis
<i>BZ (NF)</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift (Neue Folge)</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CahRB	Cahiers de la Revue biblique
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBNTS	Coniectanea biblica: New Testament Series
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>The Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQ.MS	The Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina
<i>ChW</i>	<i>Christliche Welt</i>
<i>CIJ</i>	<i>Corpus inscriptionum Judaicarum</i> , ed. Jean-Baptiste Frey, 2 vols., Città del Vaticano: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana 1936–1952
CNT	Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
ConBNT	Coniectanea biblica: New Testament Series
CRINT	Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
CSEL	Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum
CTM.A	Calwer theologische Monographien, Reihe A: Bibelwissenschaft
<i>CurrBS</i>	<i>Currents in Research: Biblical Studies</i>
<i>DSD</i>	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
<i>DTT</i>	<i>Dansk teologisk tidsskrift</i>
EBib	Études bibliques
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>EKL</i>	<i>Evangelisches Kirchenlexikon</i> . Heinz Brunotte/Otto Weber, eds., 3 vols., Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1956–1957; 3rd edition: Erwin Fahlbusch et al., eds., 4 vols., Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1985–1996
ET	English Translation
<i>ETL</i>	<i>Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses</i>
<i>EvK</i>	<i>Evangelische Kommentare</i>
<i>EWNT</i>	<i>Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i> , Horst R. Balz/Gerhard Schneider, eds., 3 vols., Stuttgart: Kohlhammer ³ 2011
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
FB	Forschung zur Bibel

FF	Foundations & Facets
FF	<i>Forschungen und Fortschritte</i>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
FS	Festschrift
GBS	Guides to Biblical Scholarship
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten (drei) Jahrhunderte
GNS	Good News Studies
GNT	Grundrisse zum Neuen Testament
Greg.	<i>Gregorianum</i>
GTB	Gütersloher Taschenbuch
HBS	Herders biblische Studien
HBT	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
HKNT	Handkommentar (Hand-Commentar) zum Neuen Testament
HSCP	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
HTKAT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
HTKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUTh	Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie
ICC	International Critical Commentary
Int.	<i>Interpretation</i>
IQP	International Q-Project
IS	Inaugural Speech
JAAR	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
JAC.E	Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum: Ergänzungsband
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JR	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
JSHJ	<i>Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KBANT	Kommentare und Beiträge zum Alten und Neuen Testament
KD	<i>Kerygma und Dogma</i>
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
KJV	King James Version
KNT	Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
LEC	Library of Early Christianity
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
LR	<i>Lutherische Rundschau</i>
LTK	<i>Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche</i> , 2nd edition, Josef Höfer/Karl Rahner, eds., 10 vols., Freiburg i.Br.: Herder 1957–1965; 3rd edition, Walter Kasper, ed., 10 vols., Freiburg i.Br.: Herder 1993–2001
LukeS	Lucan ‘Sondergut’
Luther, WA	Martin Luther, <i>Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe</i> (‘Weimarer Ausgabe’), Weimar: Böhlau 1883ff.
MattS	Matthean ‘Sondergut’
MEKGR	<i>Monatshefte für evangelische Kirchengeschichte des Rheinlandes</i>

MGWJ	<i>Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums</i>
MTZ	<i>Münchener theologische Zeitschrift</i>
NAC	New American Commentary
NEB	Die neue Echter-Bibel
Neot.	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
NET	New English Translation
NIBCNT	New International Biblical Commentary on the New Testament
NICNT	The New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	The New International Version
NKZ	<i>Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift</i>
NovT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum. Supplements
NPNF ¹	<i>A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church</i> , Philipp Schaff, ed., Series 1, 14 vols., Oxford: Christian Literature Publishing 1887–1892 (repr. Peabody: Hendrickson 1999)
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NTD	Das Neue Testament Deutsch
NTG ²⁷	<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> . 27th edition, Kurt Aland et al., eds., Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft 1994
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis antiquus
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
NTS	New Testament Tools and Studies
ÖTK	Ökumenischer Taschenbuch-Kommentar
PG	Jacques-Paul Migne (ed.), <i>Patrologiae cursus completus: Series graeca</i> , 167 vols., Paris: Migne 1857–1866
PHAW	Anzeiger der phil.-hist. Klasse der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien
PL	Jacques-Paul Migne (ed.), <i>Patrologiae cursus completus: Series latina</i> , 217 vols., Paris: Migne 1841–1855
RAC	<i>Reallexikon for Antike und Christentum</i> . Theodor Klauser et al., eds., Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 1950ff.
RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
RCT	<i>Revista Catalana de Teología</i>
RE ³	<i>Realencyclopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche</i> , 3rd edition, Albert Hauck, ed., 24 vols., Leipzig: Hinrich 1896–1913
RevExp	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
RevPhil	<i>Revue de philologie, de littérature et d'histoire anciennes</i>
RGG ¹⁻⁴	<i>(Die) Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Handwörterbuch in gemeinverständlicher Darstellung</i> , Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck (RGG ¹ : <i>Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart</i> , Friedrich Michael Schiele/Hermann Gunkel/Otto Scheel, eds., 5 vols., 1909–1912; RGG ² : Hermann Gunkel/Ludwig Zscharnack, eds., 5 vols., 1922–1929; RGG ³ : Kurt Galling, ed., 6 vols., 1957–1962; RGG ⁴ : Hans Dieter Betz/Don S. Browning/Bernd Janowski/Eberhard Jüngel, eds., 8 vols., 1998–2007; ET: <i>Religion in Past & Present: Encyclopedia of Theology and Religion</i> , 13 vols. + Index, Leiden: Brill 2007–2013)

<i>RHR</i>	<i>Revue de l'histoire des religions</i>
RNT	Regensburger Neues Testament
<i>RTP</i>	<i>Revue de théologie et de philosophie</i>
SAC	Studies in Antiquity and Christianity
SANT	Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
SBB	Stuttgarter biblische Beiträge
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBL SBS	Society of Biblical Literature Sources for Biblical Study
<i>SBLSP</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers</i>
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
<i>SBU</i>	<i>Svenskt bibliskt uppslagsverk</i>
SCHNT	Studia ad corpus hellenicum Novi Testamenti
<i>SE</i>	<i>Studia evangelica</i>
<i>SEÅ</i>	<i>Svensk exegetisk årsbok</i>
SemeiaST	Semeia Studies
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SM	Sermon on the Mount
SNTA	Studiorum Novi Testamenti Auxilia
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
<i>SNTU</i>	<i>Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt</i>
SP	Sermon on the Plain
SPAW.PH	Sitzungsberichte der preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften: Philosophisch-Historische Klasse
<i>ST</i>	<i>Studia theologica</i>
STAR	Studies in Theology and Religion
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
<i>STh</i>	<i>Summa theologica</i>
StZ	Stimmen der Zeit
SUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
SWV	Schütz Werkeverzeichnis
TB	Theologische Bücherei
<i>TBei</i>	<i>Theologische Beiträge</i>
<i>TBl</i>	<i>Theologische Blätter</i>
TBT	Theologische Bibliothek Töpelmann
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , Gerhard Kittel/Gerhard Friedrich, eds., trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 10 vols., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1964–1976
TEH	Theologische Existenz heute
THKNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>ThQ</i>	<i>Theologische Quartalschrift</i>
<i>ThTo</i>	<i>Theology Today</i>
TKNT	Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>TLZ</i>	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
<i>TP</i>	<i>Theologie und Philosophie</i>
<i>TPQ</i>	<i>Theologisch-praktische Quartalschrift</i>
<i>TQ</i>	<i>Theologische Quartalschrift</i>

<i>TRE</i>	<i>Theologische Realenzyklopädie</i> , Gerhard Krause/Gerhard Müller, eds., 36 vols. + Index, Berlin/New York: De Gruyter 1977–2004
<i>TRu</i>	<i>Theologische Rundschau</i>
<i>TS</i>	<i>Theological Studies</i>
<i>TSAJ</i>	Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum/Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism
<i>TSK</i>	<i>Theologische Studien und Kritiken</i>
<i>TTKi</i>	<i>Tidsskrift for Teologi og Kirke</i>
<i>TTZ</i>	<i>Trierer theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>TWAT</i>	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> , G. Johannes Botterweck/Helmer Ringgren, eds., 10 vols., Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 1973–2016
<i>TWNT</i>	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i> , Gerhard Kittel/Gerhard Friedrich, eds., 10 vols., Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 1933–1979
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>UNT</i>	Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>UTB</i>	Uni-Taschenbücher
<i>VCSup</i>	Supplements to <i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
<i>VF</i>	<i>Verkündigung und Forschung</i>
<i>VTSup</i>	Vetus Testamentum: Supplements
<i>WBC</i>	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WD</i>	<i>Wort und Dienst</i>
<i>WEB</i>	World English Bible
<i>WMANT</i>	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
<i>WUNT</i>	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZBK</i>	Zürcher Bibelkommentare
<i>ZdZ</i>	<i>Zwischen den Zeiten</i>
<i>ZEE</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Evangelische Ethik</i>
<i>ZKT</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie</i>
<i>ZNT</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Neues Testament</i>
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZPE</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>
<i>ZST</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie</i>
<i>ZTK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

§ 1 Remarks on the History of Research

The Sermon on the Mount (SM) is like a high enigmatic mountain. Enigmatic mountains fascinate. They invite us to exploration and discoveries. In some parts they are difficult to climb.

Classical texts like the SM are never undiscovered and uncharted territory. Few texts have been interpreted more intensively than the SM. It has been studied in every generation for about 2,000 years, in most countries of the world, by nearly all groups of people. Its enigmatic character is still there, and there are still undiscovered places. Discovery of these places can yield a new picture. The purpose of this book is to explore some of the darker spots and provide a better guide through the enigmatic mountain.

In spite of – or because of – the importance of the SM through the centuries, a comprehensive history of research about the famous text has not been written so far. A comprehensive history of research would fill at least five volumes, and these five volumes are indeed a desideratum in scholarship. The relatively extensive introductory paragraph in this book cannot fill this gap. It is more a *prolegomenon* to the fascinating story about the SM. *This story is as such important for the understanding of the SM today.*

Warren S. Kissinger, Friedrich Wilhelm Kantzenbach and Clarence Bauman et al. have covered many aspects of this exciting history.¹ This introductory paragraph offers – in short form – a more comprehensive approach, in which the complexity of the problems is illustrated.

1.1 Preliminary Remarks

The object we explore is only seemingly clear. Is the SM the map more than the territory? It is to some extent confusing that ‘Sermon on the Mount’ can mean at least six different things:

1) *A speech Jesus delivered in his earliest ministry.* Jesus apparently gave many speeches in Galilee in his earliest ministry, but one of these was like an

¹ Kissinger, *Sermon* (1975); Kantzenbach, *Bergpredigt* (1982); Bauman, *Sermon* (1985) – and Greenman et al. (eds.), *Sermon* (2007). In addition Berner, *Bergpredigt* (21983), and a number of profound studies on theologians and exegetes who have contributed substantially to the research of the SM (Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, etc.).

inaugural speech. The differences between them make it clear that one of them or more than one of them conveys an authentic historical account of Jesus' inaugural speech.

2) The *reconstructed speech*, more or less the common sayings in Matt 5–7 and Luke 6,20–49.

3) The focus on Matt 5–7 can mean that everything must be seen *from the standpoint of Matthew and his community about 80 CE*.² The SM means what Matthew targeted with this relatively comprehensive inaugural speech.

4) The very name *sermo in monte* points to the first of five speeches in Matthew (Matt 5–7), different from the *Sermon on the Plain* (SP) in Luke 6,20–49. Only Matthew has a sermon on the *Mount(ain)*. Since Augustine the SM means primarily Matt 5–7, and because of its '*Wirkungsgeschichte*' most people (and scholars) have the SM and not the SP in mind.³

5) *The SM as text*, its topics and its central meaning, more or less independent from the historical questions. The SM as text has had, and continues to have, impact on people in societies and religions.

6) Theologians sometimes use the SM as a *cipher for the specific, radical ethics in Jesus' teaching or for the ethical teaching of Jesus* in general.⁴ Some would add: it is the genuine teaching of Jesus, and even the genuine Christian teaching, *the essence of Christianity*. It is a striking fact that people outside the Church more than theologians, and theologians more than exegetes, see the SM as the essence of Christianity. Many theologians tend to underline the problematic demands, and exegetes tend to underline the obscure historical circumstances.

It is confusing if scholars do not have clear definitions and a clear understanding of the object they investigate. Ambiguity is difficult to avoid,⁵ but it is necessary to strive for clarity.

1.1.1 The History of Research – the Challenges of Overviews

In general, we see two main approaches to the history of research, and here a third will be added. The diachronic approach is after all the most objective and can at its best be somewhat comprehensive. E.g. Kissinger and Kantzenbach offered entirely diachronic views.

² Marxsen, "Streit um die Bergpredigt" (1986), cf. idem, "Streit am falschen Ort" (1982), 508: "Wer nicht den ganzen Text meint, mißbraucht das Wort 'Bergpredigt'", and he adds: "Die Bergpredigt ist eine literarische Größe, aber kein Qualitätsbegriff".

³ Augustine's *De sermone in monte* framed the notion of one, early decisive speech. This speech, independent of Augustine and regardless of all kinds of historical criticism, tends to be read as Jesus' historical speech.

⁴ According to Goppelt, "Problem der Bergpredigt" (1968), 27: "Das Problem der Bergpredigt treibt gegenwärtig Menschen am Rande der Kirche mehr um als die Theologen."

⁵ Syreeni, "Separation and Identity" (1994), differentiates between "textual, concrete, symbolic world" in the SM.

In the systematic approaches three to eight ‘solutions’ are listed.⁶ The ‘solutions’ offer mostly a mixture of names, positions, methods and intentions, etc. Many lists have particular interests; they want to prepare for the scholar’s own position.

1) *The diachronic view.* Such reviews should start with the New Testament and the Church Fathers, and move forward strictly chronologically, with the first major contributions by Augustine and John Chrysostom, then make a major stop with the Reformation and finally end with the many modern positions.⁷

Modern scholars tend to start with the Reformation or at most with the monastic/scholastic interpretation, which was the starting-point for the Reformation.

*Georg Strecker*⁸ found the following types of interpretation: 1. Pauline-Lutheran (Law and Gospel), 2. Realistic demands (left wing of Reformation), 3. Ethics of intention, 4. Religious-history school, 5. Dialectical Theology, 6. Peace movement.

Leonhard Goppelt operated with seven positions: 1. Left wing of Reformation (“Schwärmerische”), 2. Catholic, 3. Luther, 4. *Gesinnungsethik*, 5. ‘Consequent Eschatology’, 6. ‘Actual Eschatology’, 7. Goppelt’s own approach.⁹

*William D. Davies/Dale Allison*¹⁰ also offer a comprehensive view here: 1. The Monastic Approach. The ideal of Matt 5,48 should be lived out. 2. The Absolutist Approach (Leo Tolstoy, Francis of Assisi, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, et al.). 3. The Doctrine of the Two Kingdom Approach, distinguishing between spiritual and civil order; private and public realm. 4. The Impossible Ideal, teaching the necessity of grace for those who have actually decided to obey the commandments, 5. The Ethic of Intention, speaking to individuals about attitudes and internal dispositions (Heinrich Julius Holtzmann and Wilhelm Herrmann). 6. The Christological Approach: the Sermon on the Mount is a self-portrait of Christ (Karl Barth, Eduard Thurneysen). 7. The Historical-Critical Approach, considering the pre-Gospel tradition, its relation to Paul, Jewish parallels – both the eschatological and wisdom-teaching. They end up with eight theses that describe their own position.

Hans Dieter Betz in his stimulating diachronic overview focused mostly on the historical problems and the questions of composition and genre.¹¹

*Marcel Dumais*¹² provided extensive coverage for the period 1880 to 1980.

⁶ Traub, “Problem der Bergpredigt” (1936), lists eight positions (Catholic ethics, Tolstoy, Naumann, eschatological interpretations, rabbinic interpretations, M. Dibelius, Windisch, W. Herrmann).

⁷ Cf. Kantzenbach, *Bergpredigt* (1982), 21–76. L. Allen, “The Sermon on the Mount in the History of the Church” (1992).

⁸ Strecker, *Bergpredigt* (1985), 13–23.

⁹ Goppelt, *Die Bergpredigt und die Wirklichkeit dieser Welt* (1968), 27.

¹⁰ Davies/Allison, “Reflections” (1991), the theses, pp. 294ff.

¹¹ H.D. Betz, *Sermon* (1995), 5–44.

¹² M. Dumais, *Le Sermon sur la Montagne: État de la recherche, interprétation, bibliographie*, Paris: Letouzey et Ané 1995.

Diachronic approaches are not very efficient if one tries to come to the heart of the matter. The alternative, systematic approaches do, however, focus mainly on the core of the matter.

2) *Systematic approaches*. These approaches or overviews mostly investigate the ‘meaning’ (German: *Sinn*) of the SM. Scholars formulate what the SM is all about, focusing on one aspect, what they call *the* problem of the SM, and this is the problem of radicalism: Can the radical demands be lived out, can they be fulfilled (German: *Erfüllbarkeit*)?¹³ The Antitheses in Matt 5,21–48 are therefore the key to the solution of the problem.¹⁴ Some scholars focus on the eschatology, but mostly also as the solution to the problem of radicalism. Most contributions to the history of research put this question in the forefront.¹⁵

Harvey King McArthur offered a more comprehensive list, and found twelve positions: 1. The *Absolutist View*. 2. Others have dealt with the issue by *Modifying the Text* of the sermon. 3. The *Hyperbole View*, but there is disagreement over exactly which sections should not be taken literally. 4. The *General Principles View* argues that Jesus was not giving specific instructions, but general guidelines of how one should behave. 5. The *Double Standard View* divides the teachings of the sermon into general precepts and specific counsels. 6. The *Two Realms View*, proposed by Martin Luther divided the world into the religious and secular realms and argued that the sermon only applied to the spiritual realm. 7. The *Analogy of Scripture View* holds that the more rigid precepts in the sermon were moderated by other parts of the New Testament. 8. The notion of *Attitudes, not Acts*. 9. The *Interim Ethics View* sees Jesus as being convinced that the world was going to end in the very near future. 10. Martin Dibelius’ *Unconditional Divine Will View*, which holds that although the ethics behind the sermon is absolute, the fallen state of the world makes it impossible to live up to them. 11. The *Repentance View* holds that Jesus knew that the precepts in his sermon were unattainable, and that it was meant to stimulate repentance and faith in the gospel. 12. Another *Eschatological View* is that of modern dispensationalism: Although we are currently living in an age where the teachings of the sermon are impossible to fulfil, in the future millennium they will be fulfilled and their fulfilment is a prerequisite to salvation.

¹³ Schulz, *Neutestamentliche Ethik* (1987), 462, and Schnackenburg, “Die Bergpredigt Jesu und der heutige Mensch” (1967), 117 (“... wie schwierig und schwerwiegend die Frage der Erfüllbarkeit ist”). Roloff, *Neues Testament* (³1982), 107–122: He takes into account “die systematische Frage nach *Geltungsbereich und Realisierbarkeit* der ethischen Forderungen Jesu” (108). Most history of the research deals with this question. Bauman, *Sermon* (1985), and Lapede, *Bergpredigt* (1982/⁶1986)/*Sermon* (1986), ask for the meaning.

¹⁴ Jeremias, *Bergpredigt* ([1959/]1966), 171, sees ‘radicalism’ (“die Erfüllbarkeitsfrage”) as ‘*the* problem’. He adds: “Das ist eine Frage, die sehr tief greift und nicht nur Unterricht und Verkündigung betrifft, sondern die, wenn wir uns ihr wirklich stellen, an die Wurzeln unserer Existenz fällt”.

¹⁵ Besides Jeremias, Roloff, Bauman and Lapede, also Davies/Allison, “Reflections” (1991), 284–293.

Joachim Jeremias found four solutions of the problem: the perfectionist conception – the theory of the impossible ideal (“Lutheran”) – the theory of interim ethics (A. Schweitzer) – and the SM as an ‘Early Christian Catechism’ (J. Jeremias).¹⁶

Jürgen Roloff¹⁷ reduced the history of research to four types: 1. Relativising the precepts (some persons, some periods of time, or only a principle). 2. Radicalising (Tolstoy: criticism of culture and society, or Ernst Bloch: a revolutionary program). 3. Privatising. 4. Christological interpretation.

Pinchas Lapide¹⁸ found similarly eight positions, ten are misinterpretations, that prepare for his own approach: 1. The perfectionist view (*Mosissimus Mose/work of righteousness*). 2. An ethics that is impossible to keep (Gerhard Kittel, et al.). 3. An interim ethics (‘*Ethik der Zwischenzeit*’). 4. Utopian ethics. 5. Disciple-ethics. 6. A romantic view, a radical handbook. 7. An ethics of attitude. 8. Pinchas Lapide’s realistic view of eliminating wrongdoing and improving the world.

Clarence Bauman (1928–1995) published the most comprehensive book on the history of research from this point of view. He concentrated entirely on the question of ‘radicalism’, and his systematic history lists 36 different views.¹⁹

To give right answers to false questions makes no sense. Questions must be raised in a precise way or they will in reality turn out to be false questions. Exegetes often ask: What is *the* problem, or *the* meaning?²⁰ To start with the question of the meaning (German: *Sinn*) of the SM is not false, but too general and it focuses on one aspect (radicalism/the fulfilment of the radical demands) and on the Antitheses in particular.²¹

The question of radicalism is only *one* problem. It is indeed an important one, and we will deal extensively with the problem of radicalism in one paragraph (§ 5) and return to the general problem of ‘meaning’ (or ‘meanings’) of the SM in the concluding paragraph, but not *the* crucial question in the exegesis of the SM. There is indeed more than one problem and this book deals with the seven to ten crucial questions.

These theses of only one meaning leads often to formulations of the type ‘the SM is not ...’, ‘the SM is not ...’. We see the minimalistic outcome expressed as an ‘only’ or ‘not’: The SM is *only* for monks, *only* for the disciples, *only* for an interim period, *only* an ‘attitude’, etc. Or: the SM is *not*

¹⁶ Jeremias, *Sermon* (1961), 7–16.

¹⁷ Roloff, *Neues Testament* (1977), 115–117.

¹⁸ Lapide, *Bergpredigt* (1982)/*Sermon* (1986).

¹⁹ Bauman, *Sermon* (1985), cf. Davies/Allison, “Reflections” (1991), 284–293; Aukrust, “Bergpredigt II”, *TRE* 5 (1980), here 624–626.

²⁰ Cf. Windisch, *Sinn der Bergpredigt* (1928/1937); Fiebig, “Sinn der Bergpredigt” (1929/30); J. Schneider, *Sinn der Bergpredigt* (1936).

²¹ Cf. Traub, “Problem der Bergpredigt” (1936); Goppelt, “Problem der Bergpredigt” (1968). Cf. already Rafael Gyllenberg, “Religion und Ethik in der Bergpredigt”, *ZST* 13 (1936), 682–705, here 683: the problem in the SM is the extreme radical demands (“das Problem der Unerfüllbarkeit der Forderungen Jesu”).

law, *not* regulation for the state, *not* general ethical devices, etc. This is in the end a too simplistic solution.

3) *History of the key problems, and distinction between influence and interpretation.* In order to broaden the perspective, we will use three tools:

(a) In this first paragraph we will take *basically a diachronic approach*, but we will concentrate on the *dominating interpretation* of the SM, and emphasise new interpretations. *The influence of ‘new’ and ‘characteristic’ interpretations of the SM* and contributions with great influence and contributions that are still under debate will be in focus. In our history of research, we will look for the following aspects:

- the premises for the influence and interpretations (aspects of sociology of knowledge)
- the correlation between interpretation and influence
- the literal meaning versus historical and theological interpretation
- the significance of the historical analysis of the sources and historical setting of the SM
- the impact of certain methods on the interpretation and influence
- the role of philosophical/theological/existential/political reflections

We have, however, to start with the distinction between influence and interpretation, in order to see how influence and interpretations are intertwined. In churches and theology influence and interpretation go more often hand in hand.

(b) We will distinguish between influence and interpretation (‘*Wirkungsgeschichte*’ and ‘Reception-history’): ‘*Wirkungsgeschichte*’ deals mostly with ‘influence’ and ‘Reception-history’ mostly with ‘interpretation’.²² The history of influence and the history of the interpretation of the SM do not always converge. Scholarly interpretations of the SM have often limited influence. One-sided interpretations often have more impact on persons and societies than profound scholarly interpretations.

It is impossible to measure influence: how broad, how deep, among how many? The impact of certain interpretations on the influence must be our focus here.

Preaching and teaching in churches: Exegetical expositions of non-professionals – what scholars use to call ‘wild exegesis’ – are relevant alongside sermons of professional preachers, theologians, exegetes or lay persons.

²² The German notion of ‘*Wirkungsgeschichte*’ implies many matters and it is therefore difficult to translate the term into English. The notion ‘history of reception’ can be used in a strict sense, meaning reception of a text as authority. Ecumenical documents that are ‘received’ = accepted as authorities, are used in this sense. ‘*Wirkungsgeschichte*’ means also ‘influence’ in a broader sense. The influence of e.g. Luther is much broader than the reception of his writings (e.g. his catechisms) in Lutheran churches.

New eras, new situations always imply new perspectives; the perspective on the SM will change depending on: living in poverty or prosperity, in war or in peace, in a pietistic or non-pietistic environment, in a Christian or multi-religious environment, within or outside academia, etc.

This influences the criticism of the SM. Few, but some strong voices – from ancient times until today – have criticised this famous speech. The critical voices must be heard also, as part of the ‘*Wirkungsgeschichte*’.

Interpreters constantly come up with new approaches and types of interpretation of this classical text. The following texts have been extremely influential:

- the Beatitudes, Matt 5,3–12
- the salt and light of the world, 5,13–16
- on the Torah and the new righteousness, 5,17–20
- the Antitheses, 5,21–48, in particular the commandment to resist retaliation and to love your enemy, 5,38–47, and the saying on perfection, 5,48
- the Lord’s Prayer, 6,9–13
- the admonition against earthly treasures, 6,19–21
- the admonition against having two masters, 6,24
- the admonitions against worrying, 6,25–34
- the Golden Rule, 7,12

(c) The concentration on only *one* problem leads astray; we will rather focus on about ten crucial problems of the SM, and how scholars treat them.

The historical and literary problems:

- the source-critical questions (sources behind the SM; Inaugural speech from Q? Anything from Mark?)
- Is Matthew the first step in reception-history or the author?
- the historical Jesus (how much of the SM is authentic?)
- composition, genre and rhetoric
- Jewishness or Hellenistic framework of the SM

Literary, theological and philosophical problems:

- the question of audience
- the question of radicalism
- the question of identity; philosophical and theological approaches
- ethical problems
- the questions of meaning in a present situation

The individual problems in the SM have to be solved in different ways, and most overviews of the history of research deal largely with the question of radicalism.

The ten problems are intertwined, and must at the same time be dealt with separately. Most scholars focus on the radical demands and the possible fulfilment of these demands, or on the ethical and theological problems. This book addresses all these questions. Nearly all of them are dealt with in

separate paragraphs. The question of Matthew's role is analysed in a separate publication,²³ the questions of Jewishness and actual meaning are included in nearly all paragraphs.

1.2 The Extraordinary Influence of the SM

Cultural influence is dependent on two factors: the authority of Jesus, and the cultural, political, economic, religious and philosophical setting. It can be compared to the constitution of a country; in some countries, such as the US, the Constitution has a huge impact. In other countries, people refer to it without taking the paragraphs and their interpretation seriously. The influence of the SM is dependent on the role of the Church in a society and on how the Church emphasises the SM.

1.2.1 Its Influence as Sermon Compared to Other Speeches

Is the SM really the most influential speech ever? Simon S. Montefiore, the famous British-Lithuanian-Jewish historian, has written ground-breaking books e.g. on Russian emperors (on the Romanovs and on Stalin) and on Jerusalem. The last one was "the book of the year" in 2011.²⁴ Five years earlier he published *Speeches that Changed the World*.²⁵ Here he labelled 50 famous and important speeches, with – as the climax – Mandela's speech in 1994 that gave Apartheid its mortal blow. Montefiore mentions as the first Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Of the many speeches that have changed history, Montefiore sees the SM as the most important.²⁶

The SM is unique, and it is unique in that a specific religious text is so widely used outside its own religion. We see this already in short comparisons with Buddha's and Muhammad's speeches.

Buddha's Benares-speech has little influence outside Buddhism, and similarly Muhammad's Farewell-speech has had little impact outside Islam, largely because they are speeches to their close disciples. Both speeches are much shorter than the SM, more similar to the SP, the shorter version in Luke 6,20–49.

²³ Baasland, "Matthew's Elaborations of the 'Inaugural Speech'" (2020).

²⁴ S.S. Montefiore, *Jerusalem: The Biography*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson 2011. According to Bill Clinton it was the most important book he has read – ever.

²⁵ S.S. Montefiore, *Speeches that changed the World*, revised edn., London: Quercus 2010.

²⁶ Cf. Martin Kaufhold (ed.), *Die großen Reden der Weltgeschichte*, Wiesbaden: Marix-verlag 2015. Cf. similarly, Jacob Neusner in *Jerusalem Post*, 11 June 2007: "it is hard to think of words more deeply etched into our civilisation and its deepest affirmation than the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount".

1) *Buddha's Benares-speech*. Buddha's sermon was delivered to his monks in 528 BCE. Buddha was slightly older than Jesus when he gave his sermon.

"... There are two extremes, O *bhikkhus* [= monks], which the man who has given up the world ought not to follow – the habitual practice, on the one hand, of self-indulgence which is unworthy, vain and fit only for the worldly-minded, and the habitual practice, on the other hand, of self-mortification, which is painful, useless and unprofitable.

Neither abstinence from fish and flesh, nor going naked, nor shaving the head, nor wearing matted hair, nor dressing in a rough garment, nor covering oneself with dirt, nor sacrificing to Agni, will cleanse a man who is not free from delusions. Reading the Vedas, making offerings to priests, or sacrifices to the gods, self-mortification by heat or cold and many such penances performed for the sake of immortality, these do not cleanse the man who is not free from delusions. Anger, drunkenness, obstinacy, bigotry, deception, envy, self-praise, disparaging others, superciliousness and evil intentions constitute uncleanness; not verily the eating of flesh.

A middle path, O *bhikkhus*, avoiding the two extremes, has been discovered by the Tathagata – a path which opens the eyes, and bestows understanding, which leads to peace of mind, to the higher wisdom, to full enlightenment, to Nirvana! What is that middle path, O *bhikkhus*, avoiding these two extremes, discovered by the Tathagata – that path which opens the eyes, and bestows understanding, which leads to peace of mind, to the higher wisdom, to full enlightenment, to Nirvana? Let me teach you, O *bhikkhus*, the middle path, which keeps aloof from both extremes. By suffering, the emaciated devotee produces confusion and sickly thoughts in his mind. Mortification is not conducive even to worldly knowledge; how much less to a triumph over the senses! ...

Now this, O *bhikkhus*, is the noble truth concerning the origin of suffering: Verily, it is that craving which causes the renewal of existence, accompanied by sensual delight, seeking satisfaction now here, now there, the craving for the gratification of the passions, the craving for a future life, and the craving for happiness in this life. This, then, O *bhikkhus*, is the noble truth concerning the origin of suffering.

Now this, O *bhikkhus*, is the noble truth concerning the destruction of suffering: Verily, it is the destruction, in which no passion remains, of this very thirst; it is the laying aside of, the being free from, the dwelling no longer upon this thirst. This, then, O *bhikkhus*, is the noble truth concerning the destruction of suffering.

Now, this, O *bhikkhus*, is the noble truth concerning the way which leads to the destruction of sorrow. Verily, it is this noble eightfold path; that is to say: Right views; right aspirations; right speech; right behaviour; right livelihood; right effort; right thoughts; and right contemplation. This, then, O *bhikkhus*, is the noble truth concerning the destruction of sorrow.

By the practice of loving-kindness I have attained liberation of heart, and thus I am assured that I shall never return in renewed births. I have even now attained Nirvana.²⁷

The speech comes close to an Inaugural speech, and to a deliberative speech also. The addressees are a more limited group than Jesus' audience. They are addressed directly as disciples (*bhikkhus*, "monks") and it is about their way

²⁷ Translation from Paul Carus (ed.), *The Gospel of Buddha*, Chicago: Open Court 1894, 49. Suzanne McIntire, *Speeches in World-History*, New York: Facts on File 2009, 13–15, quotes a bit more from the same source.

to attain Nirvana. Buddha's Benares-speech is in fact a summary of his message to his followers.

2) *Muhammad's Farewell-speech.* Muhammad delivered his Farewell-speech in 632 CE. He was 62 years old, commander-in-chief of successful warriors and a religious leader.

After praising, and thanking Allah he said:

"O People, lend me an attentive ear, for I know not whether after this year, I shall ever be amongst you again. Therefore, listen to what I am saying to you very carefully and take these words to those who could not be present here today.

O People, just as you regard this month, this day, this city as sacred, so regard the life and property of every Muslim as a sacred trust. Return the goods entrusted to you to their rightful owners. Hurt no one so that no one may hurt you. Remember that you will indeed meet your LORD, and that HE will indeed reckon your deeds. ALLAH has forbidden you to take usury [interest], therefore all interest obligation shall henceforth be waived. Your capital, however, is yours to keep. You will neither inflict nor suffer any inequity.

Beware of Satan, for the safety of your religion. He has lost all hope that he will ever be able to lead you astray in big things, so beware of following him in small things.

O People, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women, but they also have rights over you. Remember that you have taken them as your wives only under Allah's trust and with His permission. If they abide by your right then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness. Do treat your women well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed helpers. And it is your right that they do not make friends with any one of whom you do not approve, as well as never to be unchaste.

O People, listen to me in earnest, worship ALLAH, say your five daily prayers [= Salah], fast during the month of Ramadan, and give your wealth in Zakat. Perform Hajj if you can afford to.

All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over black nor a black has any superiority over white except by piety and good action. Learn that every Muslim is a brother to every Muslim and that the Muslims constitute one brotherhood. Nothing shall be legitimate to a Muslim which belongs to a fellow Muslim unless it was given freely and willingly. Do not, therefore, do injustice to yourselves.

Remember, one day you will appear before ALLAH and answer your deeds. So beware, do not stray from the path of righteousness after I am gone.

O People, no prophet or apostle will come after me and no new faith will be born. Reason well, therefore, O People, and understand words which I convey to you. I leave behind me two things, the *Quran* and my example, the *Sunnah*, and if you follow these you will never go astray."²⁸

Muhammad's sermon is a farewell speech and not an inaugural speech. It resembles John 14–17 when it comes to context. The content is totally different. The differences are more striking than the similarities.

He addresses repeatedly his audience ("O People") and the group is *his* followers, and it is concrete instruction to them who will fight for Allah.

²⁸ This translation is taken from McIntire, *ibid.*, 79f, who quotes a bit more from this short speech.

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