Jesus in Continuum

Edited by

TOM HOLMÉN

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Edited by
Tom Holmén

Mohr Siebeck
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Preface

This volume is largely based on papers presented at the seminars of the Study of the Historical Jesus Research Programme arranged during the 2006 Budapest/Piliscsaba and 2007 Vienna meetings of the European Association of Biblical Studies. These seminars, held under the general title ‘Jesus in Continuum’, carried on a project known by the same name and launched a year earlier at the 2005 Dresden meeting of the same organization. Papers read at the Dresden seminars have been gathered and published in T. Holmén (ed.), Jesus from Judaism to Christianity. Continuum Perspectives to the Historical Jesus (London: T&T Clark, 2007).

I am grateful to the contributors of the present volume for their excellent work and enduring interest in this project. Gratitude is also due to the series editor Prof. Jörg Frey as well as the publishing company Mohr Siebeck and their Editorial Director Dr. Henning Ziebritzki for accepting this volume for publication in Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 1. Reihe.

Tom Holmén
Turku (Åbo), 2012
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A New Introduction to the Continuum Approach

TOM HOLMÉN

1. What is the ‘Continuum Approach’

For some considerable time, the phrase ‘Jesus within Judaism’ has both epitomized and determined the basic starting and vantage point of all historical Jesus research: Jesus should be studied and understood as within Judaism, not in contrast with it.¹ Jesus was a Jew, and any valid scholarly portrait of him should manifest him plausibly as a Jewish inhabitant of first-century CE Palestine. Therefore, any serious historical account of Jesus should also properly account for the relationship between Jesus and Judaism.

The phrase ‘Jesus within Judaism’ has served well. In all its succinctness – forming a slogan, sometimes almost a mantra – it has proposed a constructive approach to Jesus as a historical phenomenon, worked flexibly enough, yet also had clear enough implications as to what belongs and what does not belong. For a number of reasons, however, I am now proposing that it be abandoned and replaced by another, namely by ‘Jesus in continuum’, standing for the continuum approach or perspective to the historical Jesus. What does ‘continuum’ mean in this connection?

First, ‘continuum’ encompasses a period in history stretching from the Judaism relevant to Jesus’ life and time to the Christianity that bears marks of Jesuanic influence and reception (Wirkungsgeschichte) – in short, a perspective from early Judaism to early Christianity.² As denoting the specific


² For an analysis and itemization of these generalizing concepts, see section 4.1. in my other essay in the present volume.
approach discussed here, ‘continuum’ always means viewing Jesus in the perspective of this whole period. It is of course possible to regard Jesus only in relation to, on the one hand, early Judaism or, on the other, early Christianity. The whole continuum can be split into two dimensions, early Judaism–Jesus and Jesus–early Christianity, which can be taken and studied one at the time. The study of one dimension must, however, always be coupled with that of the other so that the full continuum early Judaism–Jesus–early Christianity emerges. In this way, the continuum approach maintains that a phenomenon is seriously determinable only in the light of both its anterior and posterior history, antecedents and consequences, context and ‘post context’.

Secondly, ‘continuum’ should not be understood as dealing with continuity alone. On the contrary, both continuity and discontinuity are involved as modes of historical transition. On various issues Jesus may have adhered to or departed from early Judaism, and again, early Christianity may have adhered to or departed from the Jesuanic proclamation. In each case, however, scholarship is obliged to account for the elements of both continuity and discontinuity. The continuum approach thus challenges scholars to explain ‘why,’ and besides each dimension, whether the early Judaism–Jesus or the Jesus–early Christianity relationship, this also applies to both the continuity and discontinuity modes of transition. In this way, the continuum approach allows for the width and depth embedded in the interaction and interdependences of the various phenomena of history.

Thirdly, there are thus two dimensions of continuum that need to be taken into account and accounted for. These two dimensions, however, entail three different tasks: we need to unearth a Jesus plausible within his context in early Judaism (task a), and we need to unearth a Jesus plausible with respect to his ‘post context’ in early Christianity (task b). But most importantly, we finally need to unearth only one Jesus (task c). The one and the same Jesus which we deem understandable and plausible in relation to early Judaism should also be found understandable and plausible in relation to early Christianity. That is, we, in a way, need to be on our guard and make it so that those ‘Jesuses’ we obtain by observing the two dimensions also match with each other.3 Having accomplished this, we have achieved a continuum perspective to Jesus. In this way, the continuum approach should take its place as the basic starting and vantage point to studying Jesus as a historical phenomenon.

‘Jesus in continuum’ thus means more than ‘Jesus within Judaism’. We are moving from ‘within Judaism’ (alone) to ‘in continuum’ (from early Judaism to early Christianity) so adding to the scholarly purview something very essential: any serious historical account of Jesus should also

3 By calling ‘matching the Jesuses’ a third task I thus wish to emphasize its importance.
properly account for the relationship between Jesus and early Christianity. As a consequence, the continuum approach means that extra attention is paid to nascent Christianity. In a continuum perspective to the historical Jesus, early Christianity and its writings do much more than merely provide the material for ascertaining historically reliable information about Jesus. Like early Judaism, early Christianity, too, is now considered on its own terms. So even the relation between Jesus and Christianity is paid a conscious and systematic attention.

Early Christian views about Jesus or about anything at all cannot naturally have worked backwards and exercised an effect on Jesus during his lifetime (which is quite different from how we depict the effect of the Jewish context on Jesus). However, interpretations of Jesus put forward in scholarly discussion are endlessly adjustable; the linearity of events does not prevent scholars from acknowledging new data and insights gained from observing Jesus’ Wirkungsgeschichte. In other words, it is historical reconstruction we are dealing with here, and, for that reconstruction, the matching of the contextually plausible picture of Jesus to the Jesuanic reception history in early Christianity, the ‘post context’, is both feasible and very much requisite.

The continuum approach thus seeks an understanding of the historical Jesus by means of studying him in relation to both his antecedents and consequences, i.e., his early Jewish context and early Christian ‘post context’. Jesus is placed in that totality, conceived as one continuum, by depicting him so that those relations, involving both continuity and discontinuity, can be plausibly accounted for.

2. Relation to Common Historical Thinking

The continuum approach finds its most familiar background in E. Troeltsch’s third principle of historical method, namely correlation: all events and processes are interrelated. The concept ‘continuum’ comes close to ‘interrelation’. Just as interrelated phenomena should not be described in terms of continuity alone, but involve elements of both continu-

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4 That is, compared to what is usually done in scholarship today.
5 The contemporary world naturally formed an immediate and immanent frame of references for Jesus.
6 That is, task c. Cf. above.
7 The first and second principles are criticism and analogy. E. Troeltsch, Gesammelte Schriften 2 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1913), pp. 729–53. See even idem, ‘Historiography’, ERE 6, pp. 716–23. The context of Troeltsch’s thinking in Biblical scholarship and theology is most obvious in these two principles.
and discontinuity, so is it with ‘continuum’. Further, as stated by Troeltsch, a historical explanation of a phenomenon (/event/process) must be given in terms of its antecedents and consequences. ‘Correlation’ thus lays down a course for research much like the continuum approach.

Troeltsch’s views have, of course, been criticized. After all, they represent historical thinking a hundred years ago. Nevertheless, in Biblical scholarship they still basically stand their ground. In a thorough review of Troeltsch’s continuing relevance to historiography and theology, presenting many criticizing remarks, G. W. Dawes states in conclusion: ‘Troeltsch’s description of the work of the historian remains unrivaled. His principles of criticism and correlation are today utterly uncontroversial; only his principle of analogy remains subject to ongoing debate.’ Similar endorsement is also voiced by other prominent scholars of the field. Yet, the fact is that in the current historical Jesus research the correlation principle is applied quite one-sidedly. Interrelation is mainly sought in respect to the antecedents of the phenomenon Jesus – Jesus is studied within Judaism – while the consequences of the phenomenon do not come into view at all so much. This is something the continuum approach now seeks to amend by ushering in the tasks b and c (cf. above).12

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10 Dawes, *The Historical Jesus Question*, p. 196.


12 I have elsewhere called this finding the ‘missing perspective’. See, T. Holmén, ‘Jesus in Continuum from Early Judaism to Early Christianity: Practical-Methodological Reflections on a Missed Perspective’, in J. Charlesworth (ed.), *Perspectives on the Historical Jesus. New Methodologies and Perceptions. The Second Princeton-Prague Symposium on Jesus Research* (2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, forthcoming in 2012). As I point out there, in current scholarship, Jesus’ relation to early Christianity is seen much in the same way as Jesus’ relation to early Judaism used to be seen not so long ago. The fact that Jesus was a Jew and should be studied within Judaism has been known and acknowledged almost for ages (considering the life span of historical Jesus research). Until the 1970’s or 1980’s, however, this perspective was usually suppressed or toned down. Only of late has it become the basic starting and vantage point of all Jesus research. It is that kind of turning of tides that still awaits with respect to viewing Jesus in relation to early Christianity. Even this perspective is known and its importance acknowledged of old. Still, what is lacking is a clear realization and recog-
A New Introduction to the Continuum Approach

The familiarity of the continuum approach with Troeltsch’s historical thinking follows from the common context of Biblical scholarship and theology. More generally in historiography, there is the concept of contextualization or contextualism that should be referred to in the first place. In broad perspective, contextualism denotes the historians’ utilization of political, economic, social and other phenomena adjacent to the studied phenomenon for explanatory purposes of the phenomenon. As a mode of historical understanding, contextualism is so basic and universal an idea ‘that it rarely receives explicit formulation except from philosophers and theorists’. A case in point is H. White’s formulation in his classical postmodern criticism of historiography:

The informing presupposition of Contextualism is that events can be explained by being set within the ‘context’ of their occurrence. Why they occurred as they did is to be explained by the revelation of the specific relationships they bore to other events occurring in their circumambient historical space ... both backward in time, in order to determine the ‘origins’ of the event, and forward in time, in order to determine its ‘impact’ and ‘influence’ on subsequent events.

As for the relationships mentioned, White does not bring up the concepts of continuity and discontinuity, but otherwise, according to this definition, contextualism orders things just like the continuum approach does. White also observes that Contextualism (in addition to ‘Formism’) is what professional historians commonly acknowledge as the valid and legitimate form of historical explanation. For White himself, of course, even Contextualism lacks apodictic epistemological grounds.

As can be fathomed, contextualization has been one of the many bones of contention in the tug-of-war between postmodern history theorists and professional historians. While the latter have always underlined its im-

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18 Therefore Contextualism is, like any other mode of historical explanation in White’s view, mainly based on esthetical and ideological decisions; White, *Metahistory*, pp. 20–28.
19 The characterizations ‘postmodern history theorists’ and ‘professional historians’ stem from Berkhofer, *Beyond the Great Story*. Similarly White in *Metahistory*. 
portance, the former have often, but not always, seen problems in its theoretical basis.\textsuperscript{20} Indeed, more convenient to handle in this respect is the concept of \textit{nexus} (\textit{Zusammenhang}) or, in particular, \textit{historical nexus}.

The idea of a historical nexus as operative for real in history or at least useful in historical descriptions and explanations is known from many phases and branches of the historical discipline. It served as an important conceptual tool for W. Dilthey and H. Rickert,\textsuperscript{21} among others, and many more, equally, or less prominent figures’ thought is illuminative thereby.\textsuperscript{22} Troeltsch’s third principle can also be related to it.\textsuperscript{23} Recently E. Breisach has made very central use of it both in describing the essence of historical

\textsuperscript{20} A good collection of criticism of contextualism and its proponents is presented in Clark, \textit{History, Theory, Text}. More moderately critical towards contextualism is, for example, D. LaCapra, \textit{History and Its Limits. Human, Animal, Violence} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009). In favor of a contextualism of some sort are familiarly such figures as Q. Skinner and J. G. A. Pocock and, naturally, professional historians such as R. J. Evans (\textit{In Defense of History} [London: Granta Books, 1997]) as well as L. Appleby, L. Hunt and M. Jacob (\textit{Telling the Truth about History} [New York: Norton, 1994]). In my view, contextualism should be seen as a concept of its own, even though it is preferably closely connected with colligation, emplotment and the like. See, for example, A. Munslow, \textit{Deconstructing History} (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 6–7, 41; M. Bentley, \textit{Modern Historiography. An Introduction} (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 64; Breisach, \textit{On the Future of History}, pp. 77–78. Cf. also Berkofer, \textit{Beyond the Great Story}, p. 32: ‘colligatory contextualism’. Becoming aware of these and comparable connections breaks the limits of reconstructionism or at least widens them. See, for instance, Appleby, Hunt & Jacob, \textit{Telling the Truth}, p. 238. I can concur with F. R. Ankersmit (and others): ‘The context is historically no less complex and no less problematically given than the object we want to understand by contextualizing it’; see ‘The Origins of Postmodernist Historiography’, in J. Topolski (ed.), \textit{Historiography between Modernism and Postmodernism. Contributions to the Methodology of the Historical Research} (Atlanta: Rodopi, 1994), pp. 87–117, esp. 102. However, I cannot understand how this revelation, which never has been kept from professional historians, should lead to abandoning of contextualizing. In particular, I cannot see how decontextualizing, for which postmodernism (according to Ankersmit; p. 103) would rather like to trade off contextualizing, could be possible without contextualist reflections.


thinking\textsuperscript{24} and in bringing together different outlooks on history. Breisach characterizes historical nexus \textit{inter alia} thus:

Human life is never simply lived in the present alone but rather in three worlds: one that is, one that was, and one that will be. In theory we know these three worlds as separate concepts but we experience them as inextricably linked and as influencing each other in many ways. Every important new discovery about the past changes how we think about the present and what we expect of the future; on the other hand every change in the conditions of the present and in the expectations for the future revises our perception of the past. That linkage constitutes a nexus in life and hence in the historical study of life. One that is best called the historical nexus. Historians of historiography have discerned the historical nexuses people of the past have shaped in their lives as they have tried to make sense of the human condition – a condition marked by the full dimension of time, that is, change and continuity alike. ... Once we accept that human life is marked both by change as that which makes past, present, and future different from each other and continuity as that which links them together, we begin to understand why historians have played so central a role in Western civilization. They have designed the great reconciliations between past, present, and future, always cognizant of both change and continuity.\textsuperscript{25}

If we interpret Breisach’s nexus not so much as an assessment of human life experience but as applicable to phenomena of history,\textsuperscript{26} we arrive at a view of history that comes quite close to the continuum perspective. The scheme of three subsequent phenomena with an intimate and intricate interrelation between them is represented. Likewise, the dialectics between continuity and discontinuity (or change) and the aim of trying to explain them are there. As a bonus comes Breisach’s analysis of postmodernism and historiography, which now gives us the opportunity to explore briefly even the relation of the continuum approach to the postmodern.

Broadly, Breisach divides the history of postmodernism into two phases, structuralist postmodernism as the first phase and poststructuralist postmodernism as the second, as is usual. In Breisach’s view, structural postmodernism considers continuity as the necessary condition for a posthistoric postmodernity, poststructuralist postmodernism again champions change.\textsuperscript{27} According to the former, then, the historical nexus being dominated by continuity, future would become an extended present.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{24} Breisach calls it ‘the core of the historicity of human life and historical thought’; Breisach, \textit{On the Future of History}, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{26} Breisach would allow this application, for this is precisely how he sees history as importantly bearing relevance to human life. See even idem, \textit{On the Future of History}, pp. 18–19.
\textsuperscript{28} Breisach, \textit{On the Future of History}, p. 21
the posthistoric static order, history itself would end as present and future would cease to be two separate things. The latter phase with its emphasis on change, however, abandons all grand conceptualizations of history. ‘The proper course of action was not to construct yet another long-range historical nexus claiming universal validity and authoritative truth.’ Permanence or that historical nexuses would involve continuity is now seen as merely illusory. In a world of total flux, the only continuity being that of change, nexus-building would simply be impossible.

Hence, if this characterization of postmodernism and history is valid, according to the two main pathways thus delineated, we would have to choose between no history at all or a history with no interrelation whatsoever between its different phenomena. This is extremely elementary, but Breisach’s focusing on the dialectics between continuity and change makes his analysis most convenient with respect to a swift determination of the position of the continuum approach on the postmodern:

It is immediately clear that the continuum approach is not of any integrally postmodern design. The continuum approach vouches for both discontinuity and continuity as modes of historical transition so guaranteeing that a genuine concept of interrelation can be seen as operative: phenomena can be held apart from each other (i.e., they are not one and the same phenomenon; cf. ‘extended present’), yet they can also be placed in a continuum (i.e., they are not totally irrelevant to each other either; cf. no nexus-building). Indeed, the question can be posed whether the continuum approach actually presents a clearly a-postmodern enterprise. Crucial here is how continuum, involving elements of both continuity and discontinuity, is actualized, rendered material by the means of accounting for the elements. Integral postmodernism would perhaps question the whole pursuit of accounting for, but this does not leave resorting to a plainly modernist or positivistic stance as the only other option. The question ‘why’ (is there continuity/discontinuity) does not – by any necessity at least – entail a mechanistic understanding of history. No ‘scientific’ causality is presupposed of the hermeneutics here, trying to single out distinct individual

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32 Naturally, there are also phenomena which are irrelevant to each other, i.e., with no interrelation. The point here is that even genuinely interrelated phenomena do exist, because continuity between certain given phenomena is quite possible, both in theory and in practice. For reasons transcending the merely theoretical ones to preserve genuine concepts of interrelation, continuity and discontinuity as well as nexus, see the short but insightful discussion in J. Rüsen, History. Narration, Interpretation, Orientation (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), pp. 178–82.
events and their strict causal relations to what preceded and what came after. Instead, many different hermeneutical approaches and devices can – or maybe must – be regarded as relevant. This accommodates even a postmodern tack of some sort. In fact, this means a kind of postmodern tack, I believe. The more exact realization of the hermeneutics, however, depends largely on the specifics of the work at hand.

Thus much of that problemage must suffice at this stage. For I prefer a course of action where theory does not march ahead of practice too much.

3. The *raison d’etre* of this Volume

When publishing on the historical Jesus for first time, I made a personal observation. I found that all those good ideas I had entertained about Jesus research, having considered the task only from a theoretical perspective, that is, before I had done a half page of actual research on the subject, were one after another proven lacking when I finally engaged in the concrete study. Merely having read about historical Jesus research, not having participated in it, had given me all kinds of thoughts about the question itself, the method, what could or then again could not be done, etc. Brilliant as they often seemed to be, how often they were also unrealistic or altogether misplaced was not revealed to me until I had first put on paper some concrete claims about Jesus as a historical figure. Only by testing theory through practice, ‘in the field’, could I start learning to tell a good idea and a good idea in theory alone apart. After that, more informed and experienced, I could return to theorizing. This lesson deepened every time I endeavored to do so. It keeps growing deeper.

Encouraged by that practicum, I have aspired to develop the theory of the continuum approach simultaneously with concrete application of it. There is no use in merely theorizing about the continuum approach without actually trying to put it into effect. Theory must arise from the experiences gained in ‘fieldwork’, although naturally there is a feedback loop from theory to practice as well. Method building and actual research are best executed reciprocally – and if possible, in collaboration with other scholars of the field. So here is the tale.

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35 Such ‘practicum’ would probably do good whatever one pursues, whether historical Jesus research or historiography in general.
The collaborative volume *Jesus from Judaism to Christianity. Continuum Approaches to the Historical Jesus* started almost from scratch. The group gathered and worked without much else common to build on than a short note presenting some suggestions about how to study the historical Jesus from a continuum perspective. Insights ensuing from that work were my guidelines when writing ‘An Introduction to the Continuum Approach’ that appeared in the mentioned volume. These rather modest theoretical considerations then spurred gatherings under the theme ‘Jesus Meets Christianity’. For even though the notion that both the antecedents and consequences are important when seeking to study Jesus from a historical point of view is endorsed virtually universally, the fact is that still in today’s scholarship the scrutiny of the Jesuanic reception in early Christianity often features as a mere appendage to the more carefully performed study of Jesus within Judaism. Therefore, in order to gain a truly comprehensive continuum perspective to Jesus, we placed the demand that Jesus met in a proper way with Christianity, too. Hence, the second part of the present volume. Meanwhile, I continued to reflect upon the continuum approach theoretically. However, my study ‘Jesus in Continuum from Early Judaism to Early Christianity: Practical-Methodological Reflections on a

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36 T. Holmén (ed.), *Jesus from Judaism to Christianity. Continuum Perspectives to the Historical Jesus* (London: T&T Clark, 2007). Contributors to this volume include E. K. Broadhead, I. Broer, B. Chilton, S. Freyne, T. Kazen, W. Loader, and A. Merz. Essays of this volume are based on the papers read at the 2005 Dresden meeting of the European Association of Biblical Studies.


38 Arranged during the 2006 Budapest/Piliscsaba meeting of the European Association of Biblical Studies.

39 There has naturally always been research which has taken seriously both the antecedents and the consequences. In recent study of the historical Jesus we can, for example, refer to the major projects of N. T. Wright and J. D. G. Dunn. Both Wright’s *Christian Origins and the Question of God* and Dunn’s *Christianity in the Making*, comprising volume-length studies on the historical Jesus as well as on early Christianity, seek to adjust, or match, the picture of the historical Jesus with the early Christian picture of him. Naturally, finding Jesus a place within early Judaism also belongs to Wright’s and Dunn’s research programs. However, while Jesus’ position within Judaism is worked out by them within the confines of one distinct investigation, the scrutiny of Jesus’ relation to Christianity falls into separate studies written successively. This mode of procedure cannot properly allow the kind of interplay or movements within the hermeneutical circle that would be necessary to let the Jesus–early Christianity dimension affect the emerging picture of the historical Jesus in a way that corresponds to how the early Judaism–Jesus dimension has been applied. Instead, Jesus the Jew has already been portrayed when Wright and Dunn proceed to present their views of the subsequent early Christianity. Thus Jesus can be no more adjusted in relation to the unfolding picture of early Christianity. See further in Holmén, ‘Practical-Methodological Reflections’.
Missed Perspective’ produced an idea that was indeed practical as much as it was methodological: we should implement in our studies a course of research, an overall disposition, that would ensure that the reception history of Jesus is given a role equal to that given to his Jewish context. 40

I propose the course of research in studies of Jesus be augmented in a way that guarantees the Jesus–early Christianity dimension can and will be given a weight equal to that commonly given the early Judaism–Jesus dimension. Like the early Jewish context, the early Christian ‘post context’ should be dealt with (a) on its own and (b) before turning to a consideration of Jesus. ... I also contend that, in particular, the commonest course of research, the two-part ‘Judaism → Jesus,’ is quite discouraging with respect to allowing for swings of the hermeneutic circle to properly reach all the way to the relation between Jesus and early Christianity – and back. For this reason, given that the Jesus–early Christianity dimension really deserves more attention than what is usually paid to it, the presentation order and course of research that should be applied is Judaism → Christianity → Jesus. ... Most readily such a course of research could be applied when dealing with some particular aspects of Jesus’ teaching and/or life. Thus, if one seeks to find out, for example, Jesus’ views of the Sabbath, after the usual discussion of the Sabbath in early Judaism, one should review early Christian conceptions of the issue. Only then would a treatment of Jesus’ views follow. The treatment would in this way be necessarily subjected to the critical appraisal of the plausibility of the relation between Jesus and what came after him. 41

With that idea in mind, we gathered to study Jesus under the general theme ‘Jesus in Continuum’. 42 This work can now be found in the third section of the present volume.

Accordingly, essays in Part Two mainly deal with their topic following this general outline: discussion of early Christian views, discussion of Jesus’ proclamation, and finally an assessment of continuity vs. discontinuity between Jesus’ and early Christian views. 43 Essays in Part Three, again, follow a slightly different general outline in dealing with their topic: discussion of early Jewish views, discussion of early Christian views, and finally discussion of what on the basis of the preceding discussions can be said about Jesus’ views. 44 At some points, the topics at issue have called for modifications of these overall dispositions. In other words, in some cases the particularities of the topics dealt with have made it necessary to

40 See Holmén, ‘Practical-Methodological Reflections’ and there section ‘A Concrete Measure to be Taken: The Imperative Need to Facilitate Movements within the Hermeneutic Circle’.
41 Quotation from Holmén, ‘Practical-Methodological Reflections’, section ‘A Concrete Measure to be Taken: The Imperative Need to Facilitate Movements within the Hermeneutic Circle’. Cf. now, for example, the essay by C. Tuckett in the present volume.
42 Several seminars were arranged during the 2007 Vienna meeting of the European Association of Biblical Studies.
43 In focus here is, as explained earlier above, task b.
44 Aim here is to bring together all three tasks a, b and c. Cf. also the quotation just above.
try to find alternative ways to realize the given general outlines.\textsuperscript{45} Such search for designs that would ensure a proper role even for the reception history of Jesus, and thus enable a full continuum perspective, is of course most welcome.

All this has now made this new, albeit short, introduction to the continuum approach necessary. There are indeed some new ideas included here while some already previously suggested ones are expressed in more detail and, hopefully, with more clarity. Following this, again hopefully, more concrete research will be done along the lines of the continuum approach and, adjacently, further theoretical reflection, too. Looming on the horizon may also be a widening of the focus of the approach. It would be quite pertinent and, I believe, even novel to apply it in investigations into the whys and hows of the Jesus tradition.

Now, as before, I wish to point out the brilliant criteriology developed by G. Theissen and D. Winter in \textit{The Quest for the Plausible Jesus. The Question of Criteria}.	extsuperscript{46} Theissen and Winter emphasize the explicability of the contextually plausible Jesus (i.e., with respect to early Judaism) in relation to the subsequent Christianity and, with a view to that, crystallize some important authenticating criteria. The criterion of contextual plausibility dictates that a contextually plausible picture of Jesus contains features some of which are analogous others again distinctive to Jesus’ Jewish context. Correspondingly, the criterion of plausibility of effects consists of two subcriteria, namely the criterion of multiple attestation (and coherence) focusing on continuity between Jesus and early Christianity and the criterion of dissimilarity to Christianity which, obviously, pays attention to discontinuity manifest in the very relationship.\textsuperscript{47}

As I have said here and also previously – indeed, and sought to prove: many of the ingredients of the continuum perspective are already known from a wide range of research and historical thinking.\textsuperscript{48} The criteriology of Theissen and Winter can be singled out as exceptionally suited for implementation of the approach in what comes to the criteria of authenticity question. However, many kinds of elements leading up to the continuum approach have surfaced all along and widely across the spectrum of Biblical study and other disciplines. The question provoked by this recognition is of course why has the continuum approach or anything comparable not

\textsuperscript{45} Cf., for instance, D. L. Bock’s essay which treats multiple issues. Here each issue will be carried through the Part Three sequence of discussions. A comparable modification applies, for example, to R. Roukema’s essay in Part Two of the volume.

\textsuperscript{46} G. Theissen and D. Winter, \textit{The Quest for the Plausible Jesus. The Question of Criteria} (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).


\textsuperscript{48} See now especially section 2. above.
yet been made good use of more generally. An in principle endorsement of ideas it stands for is clearly discernible. Why then has it not, or something else like it, long since become the basic starting point employed consistently and systematically?

What has been lacking is, I believe, a ‘package’ that seeks to put everything relevant together – guidelines for use in practice and actual use in practice, theoretical and methodological reflection focusing clearly on this approach – while still leaving a gracious space even for discussion and development. All this is now embodied in the continuum approach with its comprehensive and overarching nature. On the one hand, there is an attempt to bring together all various viewpoints and aspects that could be relevant to placing Jesus on the continuum from early Judaism to early Christianity. On the other, there is an exceptional openness and flexibility in respect to different views and opinions about the historical Jesus and historical Jesus research. For example, even granted the aptness of the criteriology of Theissen and Winter, the continuum approach is applicable to Jesus research quite irrespectively of what kind of criteria of authenticity one wishes to use or how, on the whole, one thinks the question of authenticity/historicity should be solved. In fact, the continuum approach leaves open many such specific questions. There is no particular stance or set of stances that should be considered necessary for application of the approach but, instead, discussion about them is encouraged.

Indeed, discussion is encouraged about ‘Jesus in Continuum’. The grand aim of this project is to turn the continuum approach into the standard starting and vantage point of all historical Jesus research. For, as far as I can see, it still is not. And what I cannot see is why it should not.

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49 Add to that a good name.
Abbreviations

Abbreviations for the books of the Bible and other ancient Jewish and Christian writings follow the T&T Clark International Style Guide and Standard Abbreviations for Ancient Sources. In addition, see J. F. Oates, R. S. Bagnall and W. H. Willis, Checklist of Editions of Greek Papyri and Ostraca (Oakville: American Society of Papyrologists, 5th edition, 2001), online: http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/papyrus/texts/clist.html, and the Soncino Talmud 1952, online http://halakhah.com/tabbrev.html. Other abbreviations used in this volume are as follows:

1 Apol.        Justin, Apologia 1
2 Apol.        Justin, Apologia 2
ABD           Anchor Bible Dictionary
Acts John     Acts of John
Ag.           Aeschylus, Agamemnon
AHR           American Historical Review
AJS           American Journal of Sociology
AJSR          Association for Jewish Studies Review
Ann.          Tacitus, Annales
Anton         Antonianum
Ap. John      Apocryphon of John
Apoc. Per.    Apocalypse of Peter
Apol.         Aristides, Apologeticum
Apol. chr.    Tertullian, Apologeticus pro christianis
ASR           American Sociological Review
Aug.          Suetonius, Augustus (De vita caesarum)
b.            Talmud Babli
BBR           Bulletin for Biblical Research
Ben.          Seneca, De beneficiis
Bib           Biblica
Bib. hist.    Diodorus Siculus, Bibliotheca historica
BibInt        Biblical Interpretation
BTB           Biblical Theology Bulletin
BZ            Biblische Zeitschrift
CBQ           Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CBR           Currents in Biblical Research
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCSA</td>
<td>Corpus Christianorum: Series Apocryphorum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCSL</td>
<td>Corpus Christianorum: Series latina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cels.</td>
<td>Origen, <em>Contra Celsum</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIJ</td>
<td><em>Corpus inscriptionum judaicarum</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civ.</td>
<td>Augustine, <em>De civitate Dei</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Colloq</td>
<td><em>Colloquium</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSSH</td>
<td><em>Comparative Studies in Society and History</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTR</td>
<td><em>Criswell Theological Review</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dem. Chr.</td>
<td>Hippolytus, <em>Demonstratio de Christo et antichristo</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dial.</td>
<td>Justin, <em>Dialogus cum Tryphone</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dig.</td>
<td><em>Digesta seu pandactae</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Diss.</td>
<td>Epictetus, <em>Dissertationes</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSD</td>
<td><em>Dead Sea Discoveries</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td><em>Early Christianity</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>El.</td>
<td>Sophocles, <em>Electra</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ep.</td>
<td>Pliny the Younger, <em>Epistulae</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ep. mor.</td>
<td>Seneca, <em>Epistulae Morales</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>EvQ</td>
<td><em>Evangelical Quarterly</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>EvT</td>
<td><em>Evangelische Theologie</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Exc.</td>
<td>Clement of Alexandria, <em>Excerpta ex Theodoto</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>ExpTim</td>
<td><em>Expository Times</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>frag.</td>
<td>Hesiod, <em>fragments</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCS</td>
<td>Die griechische christliche Schriftsteller der ersten [drei] Jahrhunderte</td>
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<td>Gorg.</td>
<td>Plato, <em>Gorgias</em></td>
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<td>Gos. Jud.</td>
<td><em>Gospel of Judas</em></td>
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<td>Gos. Mary</td>
<td><em>Gospel of Mary</em></td>
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<td>Gos. Phil.</td>
<td><em>Gospel of Philip</em></td>
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<td>Haer.</td>
<td>Irenaeus, <em>Adversus haereses</em></td>
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<td>Hel.</td>
<td>Euripides, <em>Helena</em></td>
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<td>Hist.</td>
<td>Tacitus, <em>Historiae</em></td>
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<td>Hist. eccl.</td>
<td>Eusebius, <em>Historia ecclesiastica</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Historia</td>
<td><em>Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>HT</td>
<td><em>History and Theory</em></td>
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<td>HTR</td>
<td><em>Harvard Theological Review</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Il.</td>
<td>Homer, <em>Ilias</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>JAAR</td>
<td><em>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>JBL</td>
<td><em>Journal of Biblical Literature</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>JBR</td>
<td><em>Journal of Bible and Religion</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>JBT</td>
<td><em>Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>JCopS</td>
<td><em>Journal of Coptic Studies</em></td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>JJS</td>
<td>Journal of Jewish Studies</td>
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<td>JNES</td>
<td>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>JP</td>
<td>Journal of Philosophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>JSHJ</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus</td>
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<tr>
<td>JSJ</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</td>
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<td>JSNT</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</td>
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<td>JSOT</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</td>
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<td>JSP</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</td>
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<tr>
<td>JTS</td>
<td>Journal of Theological Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>LCL</td>
<td>Loeb Classical Library</td>
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<td>Leg.</td>
<td>Athenagoras, <em>Legatio pro christianis</em></td>
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<td>LXX</td>
<td>Septuagint</td>
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<td>m.</td>
<td>Mishnah</td>
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<td>m. Yad.</td>
<td>Mishnah, Yadaim</td>
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<td>Mart. ascen. Isa.</td>
<td>Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah</td>
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<td>Med.</td>
<td>Marcus Aurelius, <em>Meditations</em></td>
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<td>Mor.</td>
<td>Plutarch, <em>Moralia</em></td>
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<td>MT</td>
<td>Masoretic Text of the Old Testament</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mus</td>
<td><em>Muséon: Revue d’études orientales</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>NASB</td>
<td>New American Standard Bible</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nat.</td>
<td>Pliny the Elder, <em>Naturalis historia</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>NBL</td>
<td><em>Neues Bibel-Lexikon</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nero</td>
<td><em>Nero (De vita caesarum)</em></td>
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<td>NHMS</td>
<td>Nag Hammadi Codices</td>
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<td>NHMS</td>
<td>Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>NovT</td>
<td><em>Novum Testamentum</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>NRSV</td>
<td>New Revised Standard Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTS</td>
<td><em>New Testament Studies</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Od.</td>
<td>Homer, <em>Odyssea</em></td>
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<td>Op.</td>
<td>Hesiod, <em>Opera et dies</em></td>
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<td>Or.</td>
<td>Origen, <em>De oratione</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>OT</td>
<td>Old Testament</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAM</td>
<td>Palestine Archaeological Museum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pan</td>
<td>Epiphanius, <em>Panarion</em></td>
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<td>Praed.</td>
<td>Irenaeus, <em>Praedicatio apostolica</em></td>
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<td>Praep. ev.</td>
<td>Eusebius, <em>Praeparatio evangelica</em></td>
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<td>Praesocr.</td>
<td>Tertullian, <em>De praescriptione haereticorum</em></td>
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<td>Princ.</td>
<td>Origen, <em>De principiis</em></td>
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<td>PRSt</td>
<td><em>Perspectives in Religious Studies</em></td>
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<td>Q</td>
<td>Sayings Source Q</td>
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<td>RB</td>
<td><em>Revue biblique</em></td>
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Abbreviations

RCT    Revista catalana de teologia
Ref.   Hippolytus, Refutatio omnium haeresium
RefS   Református Szemle
Resp.  Plato, Respublica
ResQ   Restoration Quarterly
RevQ   Revue de Qumran
RevScRel   Revue des sciences religieuses
RGG   Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart
RRJ   Review of Rabbinic Judaism
RTR   Reformed Theological Review
Sat.   Juvenal, Satirae
SB    Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Aegypten
SC    Sources chrétiennes
SCI   Scripta Classica Israelica
Sent.  Publilius Syrus, Sententiae
SJT   Scottish Journal of Theology
SNTU  Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt
SR    Studies in Religion/Sciences religieuses
ST    Studia Theologica
STK   Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift
SJT   Scottish Journal of Theology
Tg.    Targum
Tg. Isa.  Targum Isaiah
Tg. Job  Targum Job
Tg. Ps.-J.  Targum Pseudo-Jonathan
TheorSoc  Theory and Society
Thom. Cont.  Thomas the Contender
ThWAT  Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament
TP    Theologie und Philosophie
TRE   Theologische Realenzyklopädie
TWNT  Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament
TynBul  Tyndale Bulletin
TZ    Theologische Zeitschrift
y.    Talmud Yerushalmi
Vg.    Vulgate
Vit. Apoll.  Philostratus, Vita Apollonii Tyanensis
ZAW   Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
ZNT   Zeitschrift für Neues Testament
ZNW   Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
ZPT   Zeitschrift für Pädagogik und Theologie
ZTK   Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche
Part One:
Theoretical Aspects of the Continuum
1. Introduction

This essay inquires into the hermeneutics function of the concept of dissimilarity in its application to the historical Jesus. As of yet, the question thus framed has largely remained unasked in scholarship. Reasons for this are mainly two.

One is that the greatest interest in the concept has been due overwhelmingly to another function it can be seen to have: it works as the basis of a criterion of authenticity.¹ According to the criterion in question, the so-called criterion of dissimilarity, certain dissimilar aspect or aspects found in the Jesus tradition can be regarded as features suggesting authenticity, historicity.² Compared with this, it makes all the difference if we instead

¹ The standard criteria of authenticity are the criterion of dissimilarity, the criterion of multiple attestation, and the criterion of coherence. These are also the most traditional criteria and are still today employed by scholars, although several variations of them appear. As for the role of the criteria in Jesus research, I prefer this kind of description: Whichever scholar portrays whatever picture of the historical Jesus, he or she will be making a claim regarding the material that picture of Jesus consists of, namely that that material can be deemed useable in portraying the historical Jesus. The arguments that he or she, then, offers in support of the claim, I call ‘authenticity criteria’. Naturally, scholars can offer arguments other than those the standard criteria build on. There are, as is known, even other criteria, and new suggestions are always welcome. See further T. Holmén, ‘Seven Theses on the So-Called Criteria of Authenticity of Historical Jesus Research’, RCT 33 (2008), pp. 343–76, esp. 343–48; see even idem, ‘A Metalanguage for the Historical Jesus Methods: An Experiment’, in T. Holmén and S. E. Porter (eds.), Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus. Volume One. How to Study the Historical Jesus (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 589–616, esp. 594.

² The so-called criterion of dissimilarity is still one of the most frequently applied methodological devices of the current historical Jesus research. Though often put forward with a supply of critical remarks, the criterion has, in one form or another, been accepted for the use of research by scholars across the spectrum. For instance, G. Theissen and D. Winter in their influential methodology (The Quest for the Plausible Jesus. The Question of Criteria [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002]) characterize this criterion (labeled by them interchangeably as ‘the CDC’ [criterion of dissimilarity to Christianity], ‘resistance to tendencies of tradition’ or ‘objection to traditional bias’) as important (p.
pursue a hermeneutical question, i.e., how we should interpret the dissimilarities of the tradition and how we thereby understand Jesus as a historical figure. Nonetheless, discussions and debates that have surrounded the concept in service of authentication have considerably blocked out the role it could have hermeneutically.

On the other hand, another reason why the hermeneutics of the dissimilarity concept has not attracted any more thorough and determined analyses may be that in the past decades its foremost yield has been the dubious ‘different Jesus’. For long Jesus’ difference vis-à-vis the Judaism of his time served as the central interpretative element of historical Jesus portraits.³ Jesus’ being ‘a different Jew’, deemed evident, was then also often translated into claims of his superiority.⁴ Although some time ago tides radically turned in scholarship, gazing back at this legacy there simply seems to be no case for the hermeneutics of dissimilarity apart from dubious value judgments. Indeed, now characterizations of Jesus as different are met with suspicion, regarded as invalid or even considered inappropriate.⁵

Now, neither of these troubles actually means that there would not be a hermeneutics of the dissimilarity concept with something constructive to give to scholarship. We can put aside the authenticity pursuit and concentrate on hermeneutics. Further, we can try to eschew previous value judgments and see whether anything pertinent remains. Proceeding this way properly and carefully, there is no reason to leave the question unasked any more. After all, dissimilarity is an important relational concept, and relations are all-important in hermeneutics.


⁴ Jesus research bears the legacy of intentionally differentiating Jesus in order to make him look better than whatever he was confronted with, usually the so-called ‘late Judaism’ (Spätjudentum). So Jesus was often pictured as a different Jew, superior to his peers. See the detailed analysis in E. P. Sanders, Jesus and Judaism (London: SCM Press, 1985), pp. 27–47.

Hermeneutics of Dissimilarity

My way to tackle the issue is to apply the continuum approach. This lends the analysis comprehensiveness and preciseness required with respect to the mentioned troubles as well as the different aspects that go into the dissimilarity concept. At the same time, the continuum approach itself will be further illuminated. As I have explained in the Introduction, the continuum approach can be split in half, forming two dimensions: early Judaism–Jesus, and Jesus–early Christianity. In the following I shall work in an orderly fashion, beginning with the first dimension and then expanding that view with the second one, thus constituting a full continuum perspective to the dissimilarities of Jesus. I shall thus first enter the once trodden area of Jesus’ dissimilarity to Judaism and encounter its hermeneutical challenges (see section 3). Then I shall turn to a much more novel enterprise which is hermeneutics, not authenticity, of Jesus’ dissimilarity to Christianity (see section 4).

However, before engaging these questions a few initial distinctions that allow a more careful control over the concept of dissimilarity need to be explicated. I will also briefly discuss some words, terms and other concepts that feature in a central way in the present essay and therefore require some more clarification.

2. Distinctions and Functions of Dissimilarity

At first, it is necessary to single out the hermeneutics of dissimilarity among other possible functions of the concept within Jesus research, for the dissimilarity concept works differently and has different effects depending on which of its functions or roles one applies. For the present purpose, I will make the following three distinctions as to the differences between the functions:

- **Perceiving** an instance of dissimilarity
  We merely observe that there is dissimilarity between something that is said about Jesus and something that we know of some other phenomenon.

- **Authentication** of a perceived instance of dissimilarity
  Using any possible means designed for assessing the historicity of the Jesus tradition (for example, the various authenticity criteria), we argue for the authenticity of the instance of dissimilarity we have perceived.⁶

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⁶ I have explained my understanding of what authentication is in Holmén, ‘Seven Theses’, pp. 343–48. Basically, I focus on the question of the justification and signifi-
One special case of this is

- **Authentication** on the basis of a certain kind of perceived instance of dissimilarity\(^7\)

The instance of dissimilarity we have perceived suggests itself, because of the particular kind of dissimilarity in question (namely, one amounting to the dissimilarity criterion of authenticity), as an authentic piece of information about Jesus.

- **Hermeneutics** that ensues from an instance of dissimilarity that can on some grounds be deemed as authentic

We interpret (that is, ask what this means with respect to our understanding of Jesus) an instance of dissimilarity that has been argued to be authentic – argued by means of whatever criteria, i.e., it does not have to be the special case of authentication mentioned above, namely the dissimilarity criterion, that has been employed when arguing for authenticity.

Naturally, these basic functions work and have effect in many ways reciprocally.\(^8\) Nevertheless, there are also significant differences between them. ‘Perceiving’ an instance of dissimilarity does not automatically lead to ‘authentication’. For instance, if we perceive dissimilarity between Jesus tradition and early Judaism, no argument for authenticity is thereby generated.\(^9\) On the other hand, an instance of dissimilarity perceived between Je-


\(^8\) For instance, interpreting dissimilarities can affect judgment about their authenticity. And, naturally, some kind of assessment is included even in perceiving dissimilarity, that is, in the decision that there is an instance of dissimilarity at hand.

\(^9\) A tradition’s dissimilarity to Judaism is in scholarship almost never seen to favor authenticity. Sometimes, admittedly, particularly in second quest studies, dissimilarity to Judaism was in practice regarded as suggesting authenticity, although no theoretical, methodological basis for this had been given (usually the methodological presupposition...
sus tradition and early Christianity is usually in today’s scholarship regarded as favoring authenticity. If this kind of dissimilarity lies at hand, movement from ‘perceiving’ to ‘authentication’ is warranted or at least facilitated or suggested. Nonetheless, in principle, when ‘perceiving’ dissimilarities, we do not intend to make anything of them yet. We do not draw conclusions about their authenticity. Also, ‘perceiving’ does not yet mean engaging in interpreting Jesus on the basis of them.

‘Hermeneutics’ naturally presupposes that an instance of dissimilarity has been perceived. Also, in order that the instance of dissimilarity can be discussed as part of the historical figure of Jesus, it needs to have been authenticated. However – and this is very important to observe – hermeneutics is not dependent on authentication of the perceived instance of dissimilarity on the basis of dissimilarity alone (cf. the special case mentioned above)! For there are of course other reasons, too, why we can assume that a piece of information where Jesus displays dissimilarity is authentic. I refer to the other criteria of authenticity (or whatever anyone thinks may suggest that something tells about the historical Jesus; cf. n. 6 above).

As stated, the present essay will concentrate upon hermeneutics. The above distinctions are important to knowing what we are not going to talk about here as well as to knowing in what way many issues are closely related to what we are going to talk about. May the distinctions especially make it easier to hear loudly and clearly that we will not here deal with dissimilarity as a basis of authentication (cf. the special case). In other words, this essay does not aim to discuss the criterion of authenticity that builds on the dissimilarity concept, namely the criterion of dissimilarity.

Secondly, there are some relationships of words, terms and concepts that should be clarified. In this essay, I have chosen to set out from the term and concept ‘dissimilarity’. Linked to this, however, another word I will be using – and which is likewise used in the scholarly discussion – is ‘discon-

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10 The demand of double dissimilarity, that is, a tradition’s simultaneous dissimilarity to Judaism and Christianity, as a form of the criterion of dissimilarity is receding in scholarship. According to Theissen and Winter, in ‘the Third Quest, the CDJ [sc. dissimilarity to Judaism] is fundamentally rejected ... and the CDC [sc. dissimilarity to Christianity] is applied in a controlled manner’ (Theissen & Winter, *Quest for the Plausible Jesus*, p. 169).

11 This cautious formulation just seeks to reckon with the complexity involved in every estimation of authenticity.

12 As a matter of fact, I will wholly refrain from discussing authenticity in the present context. So I try to favor focusing on the hermeneutics of dissimilarity. This solution is relevant mainly in section 4 below.
continuity'. A few lines are needed to make clear the relation between these two in the present context.

‘Dissimilarity’ and ‘discontinuity’ commonly belong to the historical Jesus methodology and the discussion about the criteria of authenticity where they work virtually synonymously designating one and the same criterion, the criterion of dissimilarity/discontinuity. Although there are several applications of the criterion, varying ways to construe it, this does not pertain to the choice between these two words. I will follow the common practice to alternate rather freely between the words, yet I also wish to be a bit more specific with respect to how they are interchangeable. In principle, ‘dissimilarity’ does not equal ‘discontinuity’ but two things can be similar but discontinuous and they can be continuous although they are dissimilar. It is possible, however, to let the words absorb each other’s import without quite merging them together. For instance, A and B can be discontinuous by being dissimilar or dissimilar by being discontinuous. Discontinuity then counts as a form of dissimilarity and vice versa. Seen this way, the words do not quite empty each other’s meaning but are still widely interchangeable.

‘Difference’ will be employed freely of both something discontinuous and something dissimilar.

How do, then, ‘dissimilarity’ and ‘continuum’ go together? As I explain in the Introduction,13 ‘continuum’ should not be understood as focusing on continuous traits alone. Although continuity between two different phenomena is a necessary quality for regarding the phenomena as lying on a continuum, discontinuity is necessary simply for keeping the phenomena apart from each other. ‘Continuum’ thus comprises both continuity and discontinuity; how much of one or of the other and what are the individual traits, that depends on the phenomena at issue. In the present essay, discussing the dissimilarity concept, it is the discontinuous traits that come under the spotlight. We are thus purposely, for the current use, brushing aside the traits of continuity (or similarity). This may prove seminal for learning about the widths and depths of discontinuity that can be embedded in continuum. Still, let it also be clearly remarked that with a focus like this we are indeed not looking at the whole picture. Nor do we pretend that we are.

Thus, striving after hermeneutics of dissimilarity in the continuum of early Judaism–Jesus–early Christianity, we turn to the first dimension of the continuum: to the relation between Jesus and Judaism.

3. Rehearsing ‘the Different Jesus’

3.1. The baggage

Talk about Jesus as a different Jew comes with baggage. Previously in research, passages of tradition where Jesus appears to diverge from his fellow Jews often gave occasion to value judgments. Jesus was seen as very different and, by extension, promoted as superior, which was then made relevant to Christianity and in turn made Christianity relevant. Still in the investigations of the new quest for the historical Jesus, Jesus was often pictured as a special case, as a spokesman of better and more enlightened views and values, particularly conspicuous because of his message of love and mercy which contrasted with the alleged harsh legalism of the Judaism of the time.

14 E. Käsemann, in particular, argued, against his former teacher R. Bultmann, that knowledge about the historical Jesus is essential and requisite for the Christian faith. If the faith is isolated from its historical roots, it may turn into mere docetism. According to Käsemann, if Jesus was in kerygma understood in the light of Easter, the Easter faith could only be understood in relation to Jesus. See Käsemann, *Exegetische Versuche*, p. 213. Cf., for example, R. Bultmann, *Glauben und Verstehen. Gesammelte Aufsätze. Bd. I* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1933), p. 101; idem, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1953), p. 234.


16 This year 1898 estimate by C. W. Votaw is illuminating: ‘Jesus, however, so changed the wording of this principle [the double commandment of love], as to give it a new force and sphere, for He stated it – not negatively, as it everywhere appears – but positively, insisting upon that loving service to others which is peculiar to the Gospel.
Put tersely, this is the way the dissimilarity concept, dissimilarity being perceived between Jesus and Judaism, has previously ‘served’ hermeneutically. However, this is, of course, not where the present essay seeks to find the hermeneutics of dissimilarity. I am indeed pleading a renewed attention to Jesus’ dissimilarity to Judaism, but I am not thereby reclaiming that first to new quest encumbrance. How is that so?

Simply, rejecting the previous conclusion about ‘the different Jesus’ (i.e., Jesus’ superiority) as misconceived does not mean that we should or even could brand the dissimilarity concept in itself as misplaced when interpreting Jesus. We cannot just postulate his thoroughgoing similarity to Judaism, indeed, not even his similarity on some given point, without first examining the issue. In fact, value judgments attached to dissimilarity can lead in two directions:

- When we notice a difference between two phenomena, we conclude that one of them is somehow better that the other.
- Since we think none of the phenomena should be tagged as better than the other, we conclude that there can be no difference between them.

In both cases, actually, difference or dissimilarity is seen as indicating betterness, and the question is: Why ever should dissimilarity be invested with such a value? Therefore, we must not shy away from searching for and observing dissimilarities between Jesus and Judaism lest we make the old mistake again in a new way. We only need to cease treating dissimilarity as a dispenser of value judgments.

Putting such judgments completely aside, then, what is the value of observing Jesus’ dissimilarity to Judaism? Why is it important? What can the dissimilarity or the dissimilarities tell us?

Legalism says, “Thou shalt not” do this and that – a system of repression; the Gospel of Life says, “Thou shalt” do countless good and helpful things – a system of development.’ Quoted from J. Hastings (ed.), A Dictionary of the Bible, Volume V. Supplement Articles (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2004 [repr.]), p. 42. As for representative new quest voices to this effect, cf. for instance the following statements of Käsemann and Bornkamm: ‘Aus dieser Gewißheit [i.e., of Jesus] heraus ... wird die Forderungen der sehenden Liebe erhoben, welche derjenigen des blinden Gehorsams im Rabbinat entgegengestellt ist’ (Käsemann, Exegetische Versuche, pp. 209–10). ‘Im Gegensatz zu jüdischem Denken ... löst ihn [sc. man] Jesus völlig auf dieser Verflechtung [reward as motivation for moral behavior]’ (Bornkamm, Jesus von Nazareth, p. 130). Expressions such as petty legalism, cheap grace, or something degenerating into work righteousness – so either accusing or defending Judaism (!) – can even today betray a lapse into value judgments.
3.2. Why is it important (and how important is it)?

In order to grasp the importance of observing Jesus’ dissimilarity to Judaism, one should first consider the changes in the scholarly picture of Judaism that came about during the 1970’s (also partly in the 60’s and 80’s) and the resultant need to locate Jesus within Judaism. In only one or two decades the picture of a homogeneous, almost monolithic, normative late Judaism transmuted into a wholly new concept. At the time of Jesus, scholars began to realize, Judaism did not live its later (or last) phases but earlier ones. It was not fading away (from the way of Christianity) but was in the making. So ‘normative’ ‘late Judaism’ became ‘formative’ ‘early Judaism’. Judaism at the turn of the eras was heterogeneous, teeming with competing religious groups and their varying views about the Israelite heritage. Accordingly, it is nowadays usual to state that this ‘early Judaism appears to encompass almost unlimited diversity and variety’, that ‘there were only the infinite and diverse Judaic systems’, and that radical

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pluralism was ‘the order of the day’\(^{23}\). Further, in this ‘swirling dynamo, full of life’\(^{24}\) one should realize ‘the total impossibility of any type of closed, systematic, normative Judaism’\(^{25}\), and that ‘all these movements were in some way unique, controversial, contentious, and convinced of their “orthodoxy”’\(^{26}\).

In the face of these deep and radical changes in the scholarly picture of Judaism, effects on picturing Jesus were inevitable. Having earlier been apt to alienate Jesus from his Jewish context, scholars now launched an attempt to decisively and properly integrate him into Judaism.\(^{27}\) In consequence, we hear statements like ‘it is now widely recognized that Jesus stood foursquare within the Judaism of his day’\(^{28}\), or that ‘Jesus is now recognized to have been a devout Jew’\(^{29}\), or, again, that he was ‘a vigorous participant’ of Judaism\(^{30}\). In other words, Jesus is no longer placed on the outskirts of Judaism, on the verge of breaking out, but he is clearly regarded as an integral internal phenomenon of Judaism.

Thus, as it would appear, the current research situation rather seems to presuppose statements underlining Jesus’ thorough Jewishness and how he was of like mind with his contemporaries, not explications of his differences or dissimilarity. However, the critical findings of the past decades have altered the setting wherein we view Judaism and Jesus and assess their relationship, in ways whose implications are not always so obvious. This can be illuminated by looking closer into some stock statements used to emphasize the now all-important Jewishness of Jesus.

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\(^{30}\) Chilton, *Temple of Jesus*, p. 190.
Jesus was a Jew. Viewed against the background of a heterogeneous and diverse Judaism, this statement does not state much. With the old picture of Judaism it would have carried a message but with the new one it turns into a platitude. In fact, Jesus being a Jew forms now the starting point of research, not its outcome: only when having determined in a more exact fashion what kind of Jew Jesus was, has the scholar said more than trivial things about him.

Jesus was very Jewish. This statement presupposes that there was a determinable gist or core in early Judaism. Placement of Jesus very near this core, then, would make him very Jewish. But what if there was no such core or gist, as seems to be suggested by many present day characterizations? Namely, if ‘there were only the infinite and diverse Judaic systems’ (etc.)? One cannot advance the demand that Jesus should be placed near the center of Judaism and at the same time maintain that in Judaism no such center existed. In other words, the endeavor of the current research to emphasize, on the one hand, the thorough heterogeneousness of the Judaism of Jesus’ time and, on the other, the thorough Jewishness of Jesus runs into trouble in that the former emphasis tends to exclude a key presupposition of the latter one. This problem does not apply to Jesus research alone. If there was in the Judaism of the time no distinguishable normative, mainstream or the like form of religiosity, thus no yardstick for measuring what is central and what, again, marginal in Judaism, we cannot in fact say whether anything is very Jewish or, on the contrary, not very Jewish. (Nay, that we cannot do, but this we maybe can: we distinguish between core and periphery in early Judaism and also uphold it as thoroughly heterogeneous.)

The following stock statement will guide us to appreciation of the need to rehearse ‘the different Jesus’.

Jesus was not a different Jew. What does it mean that early Judaism was characterized by heterogeneity and diversity if not the fact that deviation and difference were its central ingredients? Most people differed from each other to some degree and some differed greatly. We arrive at a peculiar configuration: everybody else was ‘controversial, contentious, and convinced of their “orthodoxy”’ but not Jesus. In fact, in this statement Judaism is perceived according to the old conception, namely as a solid and tight entity outside of which Jesus becomes un-Jewish and inside of which he must not be seen as distinct from others. However, considering the new picture of Judaism one not only could but even should claim that Jesus was different and deviant – not being outside of Judaism, as if opposed to it,

31 I put this statement in parentheses because from this, a thread opens that could lead us too far from the main issues of the essay.
but inside, participating in it: like Judaism (differences as a central hallmark), like Jesus the Jew (in his own way different).

As a matter of fact then – and here is the single most important point that necessitates studying Jesus’ dissimilarities to Judaism: even Jesus’ being different must in today’s scholarship be regarded as the starting point, not the upshot, of research. How was Jesus different? How did he differ from other Jews, from other Judaism(s)? These are questions that research recognizing the heterogeneous nature of Judaism simply cannot go without and hope to make progress.

That we perhaps implicitly prefer the claim that Jesus was not a different Jew to asking how he was different, results from setting the new picture of Jesus against the old picture of Judaism. In a way, thus, it is a relic from a past research situation. The new picture of Jesus, however, came about just because a new picture of Judaism was engendered. In other words, the new Jesus cannot truly exist without the new Judaism. In this new situation, ‘different Jesus’ loses the dubious character it has had in the past and emerges as the question that holds all or at least most of the promises. There is thus indeed a case for revisiting the hermeneutics of Jesus’ dissimilarity to Judaism.

3.3. What then can the dissimilarities tell us?

The central concept dissimilarity here leads us to – precisely by way of evoking the questions of how Jesus was different, how he differed from other Jews – is identity. Understanding this properly in the present context requires examination of a somewhat wider field of concepts, including those of individuality and originality.

Identity was clearly important in the Judaism of Jesus’ time, and applying the concept in studies of early Judaism meets no extraordinary difficulties. For instance, studying how the Jews understood themselves as a people is a perspective quite commonly and readily utilized in scholarship.32 Individuality, however, was perhaps not so important in the Jewish world of Jesus, and it was also conceived differently from how we nowadays would usually perceive it.33 Problems therefore emerge when identity pre-

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33 See R. Sorabji, Self. Ancient and Modern Insights about Individuality, Life, and Death (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006) and for example chapter 7, ‘Bundles and differentiation of individuals’, where he discusses, among others, Socrates, Plato,
supposes the concept of individuality. Research that wishes to inquire into the identity of one particular person must struggle to find a pertinent approach. Here the concept of dissimilarity can come to our aid in that it offers a means to highlight the individual. Yet, some further qualifications need to be taken into account.

In general, a person’s identity is determined by both association and dissociation. In archaic communities in particular, individuals importantly defined themselves by identification with a group. The notion of what constitutes one’s ‘own’ identity must therefore be considered carefully. In theory, the individual identifying himself or herself firmly with a group of people, even his or her identity being 100% identical with theirs, could still experience and call it his or her ‘own’ identity. From a scholarly perspective, the closer we get to such a case, the more the discrepancy between the individual and the group vanishes.

Importantly, then, individuality can be brought into the range of scholarly vision by employing the concept of dissimilarity. Considering dissimilarity, we could speak about ‘one’s own identity’ in distinction to others, to a group. That is, dissimilarity marks off an identity where it is not shared, clearly at least, with others. Dissimilarity envelops a kind of ‘contrasting

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Dissociative elements as well were naturally embedded here as the individuals at the same time could dissociate themselves from other groups. This, however, they accomplished together with the group of their identification. Such group dissociation enhanced identification with and within the group. This applies particularly well to the formation of Jewish identity. See M. L. Satlow, Creating Judaism. History, Tradition, Practice (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), pp. 79, 100. The unique possessions of the Jews – the Torah, the Temple and the Land – not to speak of beliefs structuring the way of life, for instance the purity rules, can be characterized as critical pieces of the Jewish identity; see E. S. Gruen, ‘Diaspora and Homeland’, in H. Wettstein (ed.), Diasporas and Exiles. Varieties of Jewish Identity (Ewing: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 18–46, esp. 32.

identity’ or, perhaps better, a ‘distinctive identity’. This we also can call – since we can perceive it – an individual identity.

To return to the individual called Jesus, studying Jesus’ dissimilarity to Judaism can thus highlight and bring within scholarly reach something of his identity as an individual. And as I have tried to formulate it clearly, that something highlighted by dissimilarity is his distinctive identity. He certainly, like anybody, also experienced an identity of his own with others, not only distinct from them (although the view of the Judaism of Jesus’ time as very heterogeneous means we should be cautious not to overemphasize this). Thus, a question leading us forward could be how much do dissimilarities determine Jesus’ identity. Here we are dealing with the proportion of one to the other, in other words, distinctive identity compared with shared identity. This is what in my view appropriately defines the concept of originality in its application to Jesus.

Jesus’ originality is also an old scholarly bone of contention. Much like Jesus’ dissimilarity it has in the history of research been used to support the claim of Jesus’ superiority. Together with the crucial importance that now, in a new situation and in a new way, pertains to the question of how Jesus was different, even originality should be rehabilitated as a hermeneutical concept. Compared to the concept of identity, originality implies more clearly and more inclusively the quality of individuality; there are no obvious applications for it with regard to groups of people. However, originality is a much more trickier concept to handle. As seen, it must not be associated too closely with dissimilarity, identity or individuality, not even with the distinctive identity where dissimilarity is consulted to highlight the identity of an individual. In fact, it presupposes some knowledge of all these concepts, yet dissimilarity alone can already give some important clues about it.

36 Naturally, the concept ‘distinctive identity’ applies to groups as well. The Jews, for instance (or in particular), developed a distinct identity as a people. See Satlow, Creating Judaism, pp. 78–79.

37 See, for example, W. P. Weaver’s history of Jesus research in the first half of the twentieth century which discloses the continuing interest in the topic. Weaver states: ‘That was a question whose luster never seemed to dull.’ W. P. Weaver, The Historical Jesus in the Twentieth Century. 1900–1950 (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999), p. 214.

38 The following quotation summarizes well some earlier, nineteenth-century thoughts around the topic: ‘Jesus’ originality – and the term is not misapplied – consisted in His Divine ability to separate the true from false, the permanent from the transient, the perfect from the imperfect; and then to carry forward the whole circle of ideas and practices to their ideal expression. ... Jesus’ mission was to clarify and to perfect religious truth.’ Votaw, A Dictionary of the Bible, p. 34.
As for all these concepts, then, dissimilarity is the most practical and useable one and can be regarded as a key to all others. It does not presuppose any knowledge about the others while the others presuppose knowledge about it and something else. My suggestion is therefore that effort first be put into researching anew Jesus’ dissimilarities to Judaism and, following on from that, into unraveling his ‘distinctive identity’. Jesus’ originality, however, should not be abandoned either but set as a goal to be achieved in due course.

3.4. A short summary

I have tried to show that pursuing hermeneutics of Jesus’ dissimilarity to Judaism can be something more and something other than baggage for scholarship. In fact, I believe that the very shape of the current research renders that pursuit no less than indispensable. Jesus the different Jew was banned for a good while and for a good reason. Similarly, Jesus’ originality has been long out of fashion. Still, all the time the whole quest for the historical Jesus has been a quest for an individual; naturally, it could not be otherwise. Pursuing such a quest needs the concept of dissimilarity, and even more so now that Jesus’ background is seen as heterogeneous and multifaceted.

Next, I will move on to a new issue, the second dimension of Jesus–early Christianity. It is new at least because of how and from which angle it is observed here, namely from the viewpoint of hermeneutics. I will try to show that dissimilarity perceived here can be something more and something other than a basis for the criterion of dissimilarity. As far as the dimension of early Judaism–Jesus is concerned, it will not be ‘shelved’ but will, instead, remain in the background or, rather, will form the starting point or the point onto which the second dimension is grafted. Thereby, the perspective achieved of Jesus grows to span the whole continuum from early Judaism to early Christianity.

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39 Originality also requires knowledge about Jesus’ shared identity, i.e., an identity of his own that was shared with others.

4. A New Dimension: Jesus and Dissimilarity in Continuum

I will now turn to the second dimension of the continuum thus discussing hermeneutics of the dissimilarity that is found between Jesus and early Christianity. Along with this task, things become more complicated. In response, I shall look somewhat deeper into what happens in assessing the dissimilarities and describe that more explicitly. In particular, I shall consider comparison as a presupposition of perceiving dissimilarity and so also of dealing with its hermeneutics. There are different comparisons, different levels of comparison as well as differences as to how comparison is actualized. On the other hand, the more complex situation also requires that the analysis is taken to the concrete stage of traditions about Jesus. I shall therefore go through a number of sample cases seeking to demonstrate the workings of the hermeneutics of dissimilarity within the two dimensions, especially within the second dimension. Finally, I will try to capture some general observations. My emphasis will lie on the demonstrational sample analyses.

4.1. Comparison and continuum

Perceiving continuity or discontinuity, which thus both go into ‘continuum’, presupposes comparison of the phenomena involved.\(^{41}\) Comparing

\(^{41}\) What we are dealing with here does not actually call for historical comparison or the comparative method proper. For comparative history, see for example R. Grew, ‘The Case for Comparing Histories’, *AHR* 85 (1980), pp. 763–78; H.-G. Haupt and Kocka (eds.), *Geschichte und Vergleich. Ansätze und Ergebnisse international vergleichende Geschichtsschreibung* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1996); H. Kaelble, *Der historische Vergleich. Eine Einführung zum 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1999); A. Tucker, *Our Knowledge of the Past. A Philosophy of Historiography* (West Nyack: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 151–60. Also, the stronghold of the comparative approach has usually resided in disciplines adjacent to historiography, such as sociology; see P. Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), pp. 21–26. Still, many elementary guidelines of comparative history can be regarded applicable even to our purpose; cf. a rudimentary list in H.-G. Haupt and J. Kocka, ‘Comparative History: Methods, Aims, Problems’, in D. Cohen and M. O’Connor (eds.), *Comparison and History. Europe in Cross-National Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 23–40, esp. 26–27. It is also of interest to note that well over a century ago J. S. Mill identified two distinct comparative approaches, a method of difference and a method of agreement, one seeking dissimilarities, the other similarities, and that even today’s discussion hinges on the question whether it is discerning dissimilarities or discerning similarities that should be named as the method’s main aim; see N. L. Green, ‘Forms of Comparison’, in D. Cohen and M. O’Connor (eds.), *Comparison and History. Europe in Cross-National Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 41–56, esp. 43. Of the enduring importance of Mill’s distinctions testify, for example, the studies of T. Skocpol
phenomena with each other, again, can be an intricate procedure. Along with the continuum perspective the act of comparing results in encompassing even more turns than is usual.

First, there is the number of comparisons. The continuum perspective forces us to see that there is not only one comparison to be pursued but two. For unlike viewing Jesus within Judaism, studying him in continuum inevitably ushers in three different phenomena that should be dealt with: early Judaism, Jesus, and early Christianity. Consequently, in addition to comparing Jesus and Judaism we need to compare Jesus and early Christianity as well. According to the continuum perspective, seeking to find the continuities and discontinuities of the continuum or as in our particular case now, only discontinuities – Jesus as dissimilar – requires two differently focused inquiries into the source material: (1) How did Jesus depart from early Judaism? and (2) How did early Christianity depart from Jesus? Both questions have come up in Jesus research. Nonetheless, the second as good as exclusively only when considering dissimilarity for the sake of authenticity. Bringing it to bear even on hermeneutics, i.e., interpreting Jesus, is a novelty in historical Jesus research, so also integrating it firmly with the first question.

Secondly, there are the levels of comparison, namely the scholarly level and that of real life. In real life, comparison is made possible by concrete confrontations, actual exchange between different human agents, individuals or groups, and/or their ideas. For example, Jesus confronted people. Rather seldom did he confront whole groups of people in a way that would have enabled comparison of ideas. However, the individuals Jesus confronted are in the sources often seen as representatives of a larger group, and their thoughts are seen as representing commonalities of the group. The most relevant individual Jesus confronted was his fellow Jew. The fellow Jew or some fellow Jews Jesus met at a given occasion could then represent ideas of a Jewish group. A Pharisee or two, for example, might have stood for their own distinctly individual thoughts but equally or perhaps even more probably their ideas were representative of Pharisaism. On such
occasions and the like Jesus can be said to have confronted and also been compared with shared ideas, such as those of Pharisaism. That is, Pharisaism features as Jesus’ point of comparison. In many cases the ideas were also shared on some level by Judaism as a whole, by all who called themselves Jews.

Scholarly comparison is then carried out by distancing, objectifying and even generalizing. The comparing of Jesus with others is distanced from the actual confrontations and exchange and made into an object of scrutiny. Such procedures are simply indispensable in order for a parallel study of two phenomena to become feasible, specifically when it comes to a figure so distant in time like Jesus. This also usually leads to seeking the point of comparison on a more general level. In fact, scholarly comparison most often manifests a high level of generalization. Scholars frequently compare Jesus with early Judaism taken as a whole (or with early Christianity taken as a whole). Sometimes ‘Jesus’ also denotes a general picture, a kind of totality of knowledge about him, albeit particular aspects of Jesus’ teachings and doings also feature a great deal in comparisons. A fair judgment could be that even when exhibiting such detachment and generalization, scholarly comparisons can mainly be regarded as justified and even relevant to a degree. After all, as just remarked, even the actual confrontations can be seen to involve generalizing, namely through the representative character of the individuals (or even groups) that Jesus confronted.

Thirdly and finally, resulting from these two remarks, there are also different ways of carrying out comparison. The scholarly act of comparison that we pursue stands in a certain relation to the real-life level, to actual people actually confronting (and comparing) each other. Here it is important to note that because there are two different comparisons to be conducted due to the continuum perspective, there are also two different real-

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43 Haupt & Kocka, ‘Comparative History’, p. 25.

life levels that we must reckon with. There is, on the one hand, Jesus’ life and time, namely when Jesus is compared with Judaism. On the other, when Jesus is compared with early Christianity, we are dealing with the reality and lifetime of Jesus’ followers. The two scholarly comparisons, then, each stand in a different relation to the real-life level, since the real-life level they each interact with is different depending on the comparison at hand. Actually – and this is in my view a convenient way to take account of the varying relations to reality – we can speak about two ‘Jesuses’ with whom the comparisons take place: Jesus himself as a real, living person (question (1)), and Jesus as a phenomenon of history and belief (question (2)).

During Jesus’ lifetime, thus, Jesus’ and others’ ideas were in actual fact being compared – by Jesus himself and by others. Scholars then objectify these actual confrontations and comparisons. However, they also objectify the sides which partook in the confrontations. This allows them to pursue comparisons that never actually occurred.45

At the time of Jesus’ followers, however, Jesus was confronted as a phenomenon of history and belief, namely by those who after his death kept his memory alive. We may principally think of group situations, collective gatherings where ideas of Jesus were performed and shared. The confrontation thus took place within a group, when and where stories of and about Jesus were told. A. Kirk’s following description of collective memory theory works well in my view, even as a characterization of the confrontation of Jesus as a figure of history and belief in such contexts:

[I]t is by constantly bringing its commemorated past into alignment with its open-ended series of ‘presents’ that a community maintains continuity of identity across time, a sense of always being vitally connected to its past. ... The past, constellated by the work of commemoration and immanent in the narrative patterns in which it has become engrained in the social memory, provides for a community and its members the framework for cognition and interpretation of the experiences of the present.46

Considering this one of the real-life levels, it is almost exclusively a distanced and objectifying scholarly enterprise to try to compare Jesus as he actually lived, on the one hand, with distinctly early Christian ideas, on the

45 Needless to say perhaps, I do not think pursuing comparison is appropriate only when there is actual historical exchange. It is also certain that under inspection here are very much phenomena of the same system, and the analysis moves clearly on the micro level. We are, for example, not comparing Jesus and Buddha or Jesus and interpretations of him in the mid-twentieth-century liberation theology. Cf. the demands of histoire croisée; M. Werner and B. Zimmermann, ‘Beyond Comparison: Histoire croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity’, HT 45 (2006), pp. 30–50.

other. Consequently, we are here very much dealing with comparisons that never took place in actual fact. Still, perhaps surprisingly, even some traces of early Christians actually comparing themselves with Jesus’ earthly life are distinguishable.\textsuperscript{47}

In both cases scholarly distancing and objectifying understandably also lead to seeking the point of comparison on a more general level. The individual, in particular, tends to vanish.\textsuperscript{48} For example, as for question (1), it would be easier to objectify and compare Jesus with Hillel’s school than with Hillel himself. The single Jews mentioned in the gospels, whom Jesus may in reality have confronted, are usually too vague as figures to pursue any kind of scholarly comparison between Jesus and them as individuals. Smaller group perspectives are also in jeopardy of remaining beyond reach, although Jesus and the Pharisees have been a common object of study in scholarly works. On the other hand, as regards question (2), we do have better options with Paul, even with some other early Christian figures.

All in all, I consider this discussion and the three points worthwhile as such with respect to unraveling the hermeneutics of dissimilarity in continuum. Their purpose is not, specifically or at least solely, to lay the foundation for the sample analyses that will now follow. Still, the discussion above does lend the discussion below some analytical tools not at all uncalled for, with an eye to a better understanding of the concrete cases of dissimilarities.

\textbf{4.2. Jesus’ dissimilarities in continuum}

I will now comb through some sample texts making inquiries along the lines of the two questions (1) and (2) that reflect the respective comparisons entailed by the continuum perspective.\textsuperscript{49} I will also, (3), comment on some immediate observations about the continuum perspective with particular regard to its second dimension, Jesus–early Christianity. Besides analyzing the dissimilarities, central here will be trying to account for them.\textsuperscript{50} I have purposefully chosen the material to be studied so that same traditions about Jesus serve in both inquiries (1) and (2). In other words, we first ask about a tradition’s dissimilarity to Judaism, then about its dissimilarity to early Christianity. This will highlight the fact that the two dissimilarities indeed have a hermeneutics of their own. In particular, this will

\textsuperscript{47} See 4.2. below.
\textsuperscript{48} A related phenomenon was pointed out in section 3.3. above.
\textsuperscript{49} The questions are thus: (1) How did Jesus depart from early Judaism? and (2) How did early Christianity depart from Jesus?
\textsuperscript{50} This is one of the elementary duties of scholarship with the continuum perspective. See Introduction.
highlight the novelty of incorporating even the second dimension into the question of hermeneutics thus forming a full continuum perspective. Therefore the most interesting question is perhaps whether we will be able to discern anything that could be called a continuum hermeneutics – the hermeneutics of the two dimensions in interplay – and how it will look.

Formally and normally, thus, perceiving dissimilarities should be followed by an assessment of their authenticity. 51 In the present essay, however, I will completely abstain from that procedure. In fact, I will try to be as silent as possible about the criteria of authenticity or historicity altogether (in particular about the criterion of dissimilarity). The reason for this is simply the wish to promote focusing on interpreting Jesus, i.e., on the question of hermeneutics, and to avoid as much as possible mixing it up with the particular reasoning that pertains to the authenticity question. 52 Therefore, as regards determining Jesus’ authentic views that display dissimilarity, I will rely on scholars’ previous estimations. 53 This is an ad hoc methodological solution that applies to this particular subject matter and the way it is discussed in this particular study where the recourse to the source material serves as a demonstration of how dissimilarity manifests itself, not as a proper investigation into the teachings and doings of Jesus per se.

We now ask: How did Jesus depart from early Judaism? Then: How did early Christianity depart from Jesus? And thirdly: What can we conclude about the continuum perspective, especially regarding its second dimension? The issues I have chosen to scrutinize are Jesus’ command to love one’s enemies, Jesus’ relationship to sinners, the fasting of Jesus’ disciples, and Jesus’ stance on divorce and remarriage. 54

(a) Love of enemies.

(1) Jesus’ command to love one’s enemies in Mt. 5.38–48 and Lk. 6.27–36 (Q) has usually been deemed authentic. 55 In it Jesus rewords the Torah

51 Cf. the distinctions made in section 2.
52 Even though the questions of interpretation and authenticity are interlaced, they do have other than connecting threads, too. Sometimes the best way to try to discern what specifically applies to interpretation is to try to keep the question of authenticity completely out of the picture.
53 Obviously, no unanimity exists in scholarship in this respect. Therefore, what is brought forward below is simply based on decisions to follow some certain scholarly arguments. I will also refrain from giving further details about them.
54 The first and the last case here can be called ‘atomistic’. The other two cases pertain to Jesus’ typical behavior and are overarching, comprehensive and holistic questions.
commandment to love one’s neighbor that is found in Lev. 19.18. Putting the issue like this already indicates where I think its point lies. Jesus’ being a different Jew here does not so much rely on the uniqueness of the command to love one’s enemies within Judaism\(^{56}\) but on how it deals with the Leviticus passage.\(^{57}\) For the Jesuanic command utterly confuses keeping the Torah commandment:\(^{58}\) love, strengthening the bond of the people, is to be pursued vis-à-vis the enemy, the one against whom the people is strengthened. The command to love one’s enemies does not directly oppose the commandment to love one’s neighbor but seizes its inherent idea and turns it inside out. While probably many things go into this kind of exposition of the Torah – the command has been characterized as utopian, impractical and unrealistic – it clearly also displays Jesus’ dissimilarity to Judaism.\(^{59}\)

(2) If we take the utopian, impractical, unrealistic and idealistic (exclusively) command to be Jesuanic, the more realistic, practical, concrete and utilitarian (exclusively) echoes of it form part of the early Christian parenesis. For example Romans 12 contains all the hallmarks familiar from contemporary thought pertaining to retaliation and related issues. It presupposes continuation of the world as it is and therefore seeks to come to terms with people (vv. 17–18), it has the utilitarian motive of the repentance of the enemy (vv. 20–21),\(^{60}\) and it is characterized by realism. Other echoes of the synoptic command focus even more tightly on retaliation.\(^{61}\)

\(^{56}\) The uniqueness of the command within Judaism is especially highlighted by Jewish scholars; see references in A. Nissen, *Gott und der Nächste im antiken Judentum. Untersuchungen zum Doppelgebot der Liebe* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1974), pp. 316–17; Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, p. 261. The close parallel to Jesus’ command to love one’s enemies in Epictetus, *Diss.* 3.22.54–55 (and others that remain farther away, e.g., Seneca, *Ben.* 4.26.1–3) may be relevant when pursuing classification of Jesus as a religious figure among the religions and cultures of the world, for example in juxtaposition to ancient Greek and Roman thought.


\(^{59}\) The dissimilarity becomes even more conspicuous if we juxtapose texts like Lk. 14.26. Jesus could then be seen to have instructed people to love their enemies and hate their neighbor. Such a juxtaposition would, however, be misplaced; see T. Holmén, ‘Love’, in C. A. Evans (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 380–82, esp. 382.

\(^{60}\) Vaage, *Galilean Upstarts*, p. 46, calls this a ‘put-up-with’ attitude.

\(^{61}\) See 1 Thess. 5.15; 1 Cor. 4.12; 1 Pet. 3.9.
Likewise, the subsequent early Christian literature attests how the utopian command to love one’s enemies actually turned into a more realistic piece of common wisdom. Texts advancing such an interpretation of the command are available till the middle of the second century.\(^62\) They disclose the difficulties faced by the early Christians in dealing with the demanding words. Only after that does the synoptic strictness of the command resurface, now in apologetic connections: the Christians love even their enemies!\(^63\)

(3) I will start with reflections on the second dimension of the continuum and also largely stay with it. What can we make hermeneutically of the dissimilarity perceived between Jesus and early Christianity? We can explain and understand why the utopian command to love one’s enemies gave place to the more feasible exhortation to do good for those that one still needs to win to one’s side: Jesus’ command was utopian but the congregations had to meet the harsh everyday reality. However, can we explain how the early Christians understood the difference between Jesus’ utopian ideas and their own more realistic formulation? Did they seek to deal with this difference somehow?

At least they could, as they also did, back up the realistic parenesis in the Old Testament tradition where, for instance, one is ordered to help one’s enemy.\(^64\) But it was precisely that tradition Jesus differed from by his utopian command. Even the reasons for the command related by Matthew and Luke, Jesuanic or not, come from elsewhere.\(^65\) The early Christians thus differed from Jesus by not promoting the utopian command to love one’s enemies which Jesus did put forward (while, for instance, the command to love the neighbor is multiply attested)\(^66\) and instead promoting argumentation which Jesus did not utilize. That is, they departed from Jesus’ teaching and his being dissimilar to Judaism both negatively (by not


\(^65\) The command’s motivation (you will become sons of God) as well as its explanation (for he is good to all kinds of people) in Mt. 5.45 and Lk. 6.35 are as such known in the Jewish tradition but do not appear in exhortations to do good to enemies, unrighteous or the like people. For instance, Ecclesiastes resembles in many places the explanation (see, e.g., Eccl. 9.2–3), but instead of encouraging love for all this leads the wise to regard everything as futile. Vaage, *Galilean Upstarts*, pp. 52–54, incorrectly alleges that this is the point of the Gospels’ teaching too.

\(^66\) Mk 12.31 par.; Mt. 19.19; Rom. 13.9; Gal. 5.14; Jas 2.8.