The Early Barth—Lectures and Shorter Works

Volume 1, 1905–1909

Karl Barth

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WJK Westminster John Knox Press
Louisville • Kentucky

Contents

Editors' Preface vii

Translators' Preface xiii

Introduction to the English Edition xv

List of Translators and Assignments xxi

List of Abbreviated Works xxiii

The Character of the Religion of Ancient India (1905) 1

The Stigmata of Francis of Assisi (1905) 6

The Centurion at Capernaum (1905) 33

Zofingia and the Social Question (1906) 44

Zwingli's Sixty-Seven Articles of the First Disputation on Religion at Zurich, 1523 (1906) 72

The Tenth Christian Students' Conference in Aarau (1906) 84

The Original Form of the Lord's Prayer (1906) 88

Paul's Missionary Activity according to Its Portrayal in the Acts of the Apostles (1907) 105

The Concept of Christ's Descent to the Underworld in Church Literature until Origen (1908) 173

Introduction to the Reviews 227

- **Review of Gustav Mix, *Zur Reform des theologischen Studiums: Ein Alarmruf* (1909)** 230
- **Review of A. Von Broecker, *Protestantische Gemeinde-Flugblätter* (1909)** 233
- **Review of P. Mezger, *Eigenart und innere Lebensbedingungen einer protestantischen Volkskirche* (1909)** 234
- **Review of Fr. A. Voigt, *Was sollen wir tun?* (1909)** 236
- **Review of R. Jahnke, *Aus der Mappe eines Glücklichen* (1909)** 240

Review of O. Pfister, *Religionspädagogisches Neuland* (1909) **241**

The Belgian Mission Church (1909) **242**

Modern Theology and Work for the Kingdom of God (1909) **244**

Review of *Zeitschrift für Wissenschaftliche Theologie* 51, nos. 1–2 (1909) **268**

The Cosmological Proof for the Existence of God (1909) **272**

Brief Communique (1909) **299**

Index of Scripture and Other Ancient Sources **303**

Index of Names **310**

Index of Subjects **315**

Editors' Preface

For a long time, section III of Barth's Gesamtausgabe, under the title *Vorträge und kleinere Arbeiten*, has left a gap on the shelf, and likewise section IV (*Gespräche*) [*Barth in Conversation*], while numerous volumes from sections I, II, and V were released. In the planning of the Gesamtausgabe [Collected Works], the extensive and thematically diverse body of essays, lectures, articles, reviews, and drafts of papers was treated as a unified whole as soon as the collection had assumed its final contours. The first volume of the section—comprising the works of this genre that originated from 1922 to 1925, which finally appeared in 1990—is fourth in the chronological organization of the series. The writings span sixteen years from 1905—when Barth, as a first-year student, produced a small independent work (in the field of history of religions!)—until 1921, when he moved for the second time from parish ministry in Safenwil (Aargau) to the academic milieu, having been called to a newly established honorary professorship for Reformed theology in Göttingen. These writings will comprise a total of three volumes.

The beginning of the planning goes way back. It coincides with that memorable conference in the summer of 1970 in the Leuenberg Conference Center at Hölstein in the canton of Basel-Landschaft, where an ad hoc group of family members, friends, and students of Barth, as well as representatives of Theologischer Verlag Zurich, gathered to share thoughts on the possibilities for publishing Barth's unprinted literary estate [*Nachlass*], or parts of it, when after long consultation professor Ernst Wolf finally made the motion: not a selection, and not merely an edition of the literary estate either, but rather to go all out—a Gesamtausgabe (the complete works)!

In the euphoria of the response that this proposal evoked, under which it was immediately brought to a decision but with no clear vision of a sensible arrangement of the immense volume of material, initial editorial commissions were authorized at once. Two of them concerned groups of texts not yet closely inspected at that time, which two years later, as decided by the same circle of advisers that determined the definitive plan of the edition, found their place together with many others in section III. According to the 1970 comprehensive plan, quite vague at first, each group of texts was to have comprised one volume. Hence, the theological works, narrowly defined and beginning in 1909, were gathered into one volume, as long as they were not included in one of the collections arranged by Barth himself (each of these collections would be published again as a volume of the Gesamtausgabe, according to the tentative plan), and in the other volume the lectures and reports of a more political

content were gathered, including the numerous notes that Barth collected in an envelope he labeled with the title "Socialist Speeches." Each was assigned to one editor: the first to Herbert Helms, the second to Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt.

Professor Wolf presented a first draft for the ordering of the Gesamtausgabe at a second conference in the summer of 1971. He arranged an outline of the entire material in accordance with the canon of the theological disciplines. The Karl Barth Archive, established shortly thereafter, at first received the assignment for the detailed execution of this plan. With that, however, considerable difficulties immediately arose: on the one hand, the disciplinary boundaries for the material at hand were too fuzzy to enable a clear-cut assignment in each case; on the other hand, for considerable portions a place would have been found only in an additional section under the uninviting title "Varia." For this reason, the aforementioned third conference in the summer of 1972 unanimously decided on a new plan for the edition, in force since then, according to which the sections received content-neutral titles by literary genre. For what is now called section III, the new plan rendered obsolete the original parceling of the two groups of texts mentioned and brought about their recombining, along with all material from the years 1905–1921 not already assigned to an editor in 1970. The latter material, already exceeding the two other groups, grew considerably as the view soon prevailed that despite or precisely because of its somewhat great scope, the academic work of the student Karl Barth should not be disregarded. Hans-Anton Drewes was willing to be engaged as an editor for this entire remainder.

When the basic decision was made at the conference of 1970 to take on the Gesamtausgabe, the further question arose as to whether Barth's printed works and his unpublished literary estate were each to be treated separately within this series or collated without regard to publication status. The follow-up conference decided in favor of the second option. That is how it has been handled in all the volumes affected by this decision and published to date—those of section I (Sermons), III (Smaller Works), and V (Letters). Among the smaller works, the proportion of texts from the period 1905–1921 that exist only in handwritten form is greater than in later years; in the years 1905–1909 it outweighs the printed texts by far. The arrangement of the pieces follows the chronology of their writing,[1] which can be reconstructed in almost all cases.[2] The sometimes considerably later printing dates of the pieces already published will therefore not determine their order.

For everything unprinted, the editorial work had to begin with sometimes difficult deciphering. High demands were made, especially given the great thematic diversity, also by the tracing of supporting material for Barth's remarks, preferably to the sources he actually used; the verification of citations; and the elucidation of some historical settings. Herbert Helms did the helpful groundwork for

1. Pieces like this—in this first volume, the essay, "Modern Theology and the Work of the Kingdom of God," with rejoinders from Ernst Christian Achelis and Paul Drews, Barth's reply, and Martin Rade's editorial final word—belong together and form an exception to the rule of chronological arrangement. In all such cases, the placement shall be based on the writing date of the first piece in the series.

2. In every case in this volume.

the specifically theological pieces mentioned above. In this first volume, these are the essays "Modern Theology and the Work of the Kingdom of God" and "The Cosmological Proof for the Existence of God." The important contribution of Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt, which begins in the second volume, will be appreciated there. Both editors handed over their manuscripts years ago to Hinrich Stoevesandt to produce the final version. Except for the two works mentioned, all the pieces in this volume were overseen by Hans-Anton Drewes.

In its first three-quarters, this first volume contains works by Barth from his years of study in Bern (1904–6), Berlin (1906–7), and Tübingen (1907–8), mainly contributions to seminars he attended; a thesis written for his theological examination; two lectures given for different collegiate audiences; and the oldest of Barth's texts meant for publication, a newspaper report on the Aarau Student Conference of 1906. The pieces in the last quarter, with one exception written for print, are from Barth's time as an editorial assistant for the journal *Die Christliche Welt*, headed by Martin Rade in Marburg (November 1908 to August 1909). The publication or republishing of these texts in the Gesamtausgabe thus goes back to the beginning of Karl Barth's life as a theologian. Writings from his grammar school years, mainly dramatic poems, are reserved for later publication in section VI, *Aus Karl Barths Leben*.

The two undersigned editors share the responsibility for this and the next two volumes, the second of which is to follow very soon, and the third likewise in short order. In addition to years of continuous communication on the nature of the process, they have made a large number of decisions together in many days of long work sessions. Despite the effort toward standardization in the technicalities, which goes far beyond the conventions only set out broadly in writing, minor individual peculiarities in the application of editorial criteria have not been eliminated. As is likewise the case in the broader framework of the Gesamtausgabe as a whole, room for editorial individualities, albeit narrowly defined, has always been kept open.

Chief Working Principles Employed by the Editors

For reprinting Barth's published texts, as elsewhere in the Gesamtausgabe, *punctuation* and *spelling* were adjusted to the rules in effect today, or were even then, but not strictly observed by Barth.

Some texts were previously only handwritten manuscripts, so they were handled differently (especially with regard to those that were only sketches, as abundant in the next two volumes). The aim is to give readers as accurate an impression as possible of the original state of the manuscript. Thus the *layout*, with varying size of the indentations, reflects that of the original as closely as possible. *Abbreviations* used by Barth are not always spelled out. Word elements omitted by abbreviations are supplemented in *square brackets* when they appear within a text for the first time; when repeated, they remain unresolved, with only the period (usually missing with Barth) being supplied by the editors.

Parts of the text that Barth emphasized by straight or wavy or double *underlining* are rendered in italics. The editors disregarded subsequent (pencil-made) underlines: some of them may have been added by Barth himself when he read

them again, and some appear to be made by critical readers from the family or friends or from Barth's academic proofreaders.

In some of his works here, Barth uses *square brackets* in addition to the round ones. Since square brackets in this edition refer to additions made by the editors, however, the symbols { . . . } are used for those made by Barth.

Obvious *spelling errors* are corrected as a matter of course. In cases where there is doubt, or when the instance otherwise appears to be worth noting, a footnote will draw attention to it. Of these cases, the odd example of older orthography and certain of Barth's—even later—uniformly cultivated idiosyncrasies are distinguished in the writing of specific individual words. In both instances the manuscript's spelling remains preserved.

Where *punctuation marks* are missing with Barth (e.g., almost always at the end of a manuscript line) and would be helpful for the easier readability of sentences, and where an existing comma calls for a second one as a counterpart, they were supplied but sometimes (in the German ed.) distinguished by square brackets as additions of the editors.

Barth's own *corrections* are recorded without further comment. The text is thus offered in the final form redacted by Barth; preliminary versions are only mentioned in exceptional cases, since they are rather seldom found in the manuscripts. Remarks and corrections of external origin, such as those of Adolf von Harnack or Barth's father, are occasionally recorded in footnotes, simply in recognition of the prominence of the reviser.

When *quotations* show clear transcription errors (grammatical or orthographic), the text is normally aligned with the original that Barth cited; yet apart from that, where appropriate in spelling and punctuation and even with omission and inversion of words, the uncommon form may be left as is. Where, at most, an intentional change of the given wording might be suspected (i.e., in cases that are not quite obviously just a slip of the pen), or where circumstances otherwise seem somehow to be remarkable, the difference between citation and quoted original is given in a footnote.

The problem of *errors in content* also called for an editorial decision. It was an exaggeration when Karl Barth once anticipated the exclamation, "A couple of times you really missed the mark," as his father's expected reaction.[3] Still, he has, of course, occasionally run into mistakes. Tacit emendation was obviously ruled out. In some instances, a note appeared appropriate, especially if misunderstandings could thereby be avoided effortlessly. Elsewhere—especially where a succinct remark would not have been able to clarify the matter, and a detailed note would have given it disproportionate weight—the editors were generally not disposed to do so, and were as good as warned by the example of the otherwise meritorious Heinrich Düntzer ("Here Goethe is mistaken") against laying a finger on such altogether rare passages, on which Barth himself likely in a suitable place would have commented cheerfully ("How could I [write this]?")[4] and corrected them.

For both groups of texts, the ones printed earlier and the works published here from the manuscript for the first time, a particular convention used in the

3. See page 175 below.
4. *CD* IV/1: x [*KD* IV/1: viii, translation revised].

Gesamtausgabe also had to be applied in this volume (esp. the German ed.), even though it changed the typeface slightly. Barth would use Latin script, and less often quotation marks, to differentiate *Latin* or other foreign language *elements*, including entire citations, from the text written in German script.[5] In printed texts, he had put foreign-language words, phrases, and quotations in Antiqua, within Gothic type (later, in Antiqua type, he had put them into italics). Since the italic font in the Gesamtausgabe is used for *emphasis* (for the reproduction of underlines in Barth's manuscripts or the spacing out of letters in his printed texts), there is no corresponding typographic means for indicating foreign language text. Alternatively, the editors will use *quotation marks* or extract style for citations.

Just as in the *Vorträge und kleinere Arbeiten, 1922–1925* [*Barth's Lectures and Shorter Works, 1922–1925*], each individual piece is preceded by an editorial *introduction* identifying the background and implications of the document as well as immediate reactions to the oral presentations or to the publication of the texts in question. Where not otherwise indicated, the sources—mainly correspondence, on which these descriptions are based—are located in the Karl Barth Archive in Basel. The introductions are consistently put in italics; what would normally be in italics is in roman type there.

In the course of their work, the editors have received valuable help on various fronts. Some names are to be mentioned, such as Robert Develey, Doctor of Medicine, in Basel; and Ulrich Im Hof, Doctor of Philosophy, in Bern. Both are outstanding in their knowledge of the student association Zofingia and its history and have answered numerous specific questions. At various stages of the work, Jörg-Michael Bohnet has given his flair and keen eye to the service of the edition. Caren Algner, assistant at the Karl Barth Archive, and Eva Köpf in Tübingen helped with the reading of the proofs. Pastor Em. Hermann Schmidt in Oldenburg selflessly relieved the editors of the great task of preparing the indexes so that readers can orient themselves within the volume more easily. From the beginning, Dr. Eberhard Jüngel supported the work of the edition. The editors found the Theologischer Verlag Zurich and its director Werner Blum most accommodating. To them and to others who have provided information or assisted in individual phases of the work, the editors express their sincere thanks for support, without which the readers would have had to wait even longer for the appearance of the volume.

Tübingen and Basel, October 1991
Hans-Anton Drewes
Hinrich Stoevesandt

5. Barth also used abbreviations in Latin for biblical books and occasionally other text elements, such as the abbreviation "UV" for "Unser Vater" ["Our Father" as in the Lord's Prayer].

Translators' Preface

This translation of Karl Barth's *Lectures and Shorter Works* (*Vorträge und kleinere Arbeiten*), from section III of the German edition of the Gesamtausgabe (Collected Works), continues the Barth translation project of the Center for Barth Studies at Princeton Theological Seminary. The previous project resulted in the 2017–2019 publication, by Westminster John Knox Press, of three volumes of Barth's late conversations: *Barth in Conversation*, *1959–1962*; then *1963*; and *1964–1968*. The gratifying outcome led to a strong interest on the part of the eighteen translators who worked on the project to tackle the translation of another section of the Collected Works. That enthusiasm for continuing the project was shared by the editorial team, which guided the *Conversations* through to completion: David Chao (project editor), Matthias Gockel (German editor), and Darrell Guder (English editor). The editorial team at Westminster John Knox Press was also supportive of tackling this next level of the Barth legacy.

Under the shared leadership of Kaitlyn Dugan, now Director of the Center for Barth Studies, and David Chao, a grant was successfully sought from the National Endowment for the Humanities, which specifically focused on the translation of major works in the humanities from other languages into English. The grant is making it possible for the translators of *Lectures and Shorter Works* to meet more often; it is providing stipends for all those working on the project; and it is providing a subsidy for publication. This is the first of three volumes made possible by this grant; if further funding is approved, it is hoped that many more of Barth's *Lectures and Shorter Works* will be translated.

The Barth translation project began in the mid 1990s, when the Center for Barth Studies at Princeton Theological Seminary invited Barth scholars interested in the challenges of translating Barth to meet once a year for three to four days to work on actual texts. This informal working group gradually turned its attention to the three German volumes of *Conversations*. The group's work focused on the accuracy and readability of translations, with particular concern for consistency in the translations of Barth's terminology. An online glossary was initiated, to which all the participants have direct access. All the experience gained in translating the three volumes of *Conversations* is now being applied to the work on the *Lectures and Shorter Works*.

The reader of *Barth in Conversation* will recognize the importance of the editorial introductions to each volume supplied by the German-speaking editors (both German and Swiss). The italicized introductions provide a documentary history of the evolution of each piece and locate them within the emerging world of Barth's thought. There is a wealth of important insight in this editorial

material. The English translations prepared by this project are intended to be accurate and accessible in rendering all this content from the actual documents and footnotes.

The editors of the German original edition (Hans-Anton Drewes and Hinrich Stoevesandt) provide in their Preface (above) detailed information about their editorial policies, especially with regard to punctuation. As far as feasible, the English translators have followed the practices of the German edition.

Certain practices developed in the translation of the three *Conversations* volumes are continued in the *Lectures and Shorter Works*. With regard to bibliographical citations, our practice is to cite from English translations of cited works if they exist. If there is no English version, we provide a full bibliographical reference in German or Latin (normally in a footnote), and the translator may opt to insert an English translation of the title (in square brackets) if that information is deemed to be of interest to the English-speaking reader. The content and sequence of all footnotes is the same in the translated version so that the numbers mostly correspond, although some references were moved out of the text to footnotes to fit consistent style. Translators may decide to insert an additional footnote, in which case a numerical code (so footnotes stay in order) and an asterisk (e.g., [3]*) or a letter (e.g., [4a]) are used. Occasionally we use single square brackets for additions. The double brackets in the German text, changed to curly brackets { . . . } here, indicate additions by Barth that he himself put into single square brackets.

In the text and notes, Barth means Karl Barth (1886–1968) unless specified with a first name for someone else.

The reader of this volume will quickly and gratefully recognize the thorough and thoughtful work done by the two German-language editors, Hans-Anton Drewes and Hinrich Stoevesandt. They have set a high standard for all further work on Barth's theological legacy. It is our hope that the English translations will prove to be a reliable resource for the study of Barth in the years ahead.

We thank Kait Dugan for her untiring support of the project and the Center of Barth Studies for providing the necessary logistical and administrative framework. A special word of thanks goes to the entire group of translators, whose enthusiasm for the project continues to be invaluable.

David C. Chao, Project Editor, Princeton
Matthias Gockel, German Editor, Basel
Darrell Guder, English Editor, Seattle

Introduction to the English Edition

This work presents a translation of the first volume of *Lectures and Shorter Works* from the critical edition of the Collected Works of Karl Barth. The volumes within this division of the Collected Works contain lectures and shorter works in which Barth deals not only with theological issues but also with broader topics and problems; they are usually texts of a manageable length and generally directed to a larger and less specialized audience than his diverse academic works. They mainly take the form of public lectures or essays, but now and then they also include expert opinion pieces, reviews, and sundry other writings. Often the topics for these texts were chosen for him—sometimes with, sometimes without consultation—but almost always they are texts in which Barth seeks to express himself in a manner suitable to his audience and his time. The texts regularly make reference to early twentieth-century questions and conversations and correspondingly contain many allusions to contemporaneous culture and quotations from other writings.

In the publication of texts such as these, it is clear that a critical edition with detailed commentary is important and necessary, indeed perhaps even more important and necessary than in the case of the publication of lengthy monographs or lectures series, in which similar allusions and quotations also appear but do not play nearly such an important role in relation to the text as a whole and to the intention of what is written. This is all the more the case in relation to the *translations* of these texts, in which certain features of the text can simply become lost in translation. Moreover, today's readers, at a distance of more than one hundred years from the original version, let alone today's readers from a non-German-speaking context, do not generally possess the sufficient knowledge of German literary classics or contemporaneous German ecclesiastical and theological discussions needed to recognize such finer references on their own. For this reason, and especially with a view toward the ongoing and accurate reception of Karl Barth's theology in non-German-speaking contexts, this translation of the first volume of *Lectures and Shorter Works* is based on the original critical edition and includes both the latter's detailed introductions to the texts and its annotation apparatus. Beyond these, it also includes translators' remarks at various relevant points in order to illuminate further features of the cultural or literary context in which Barth was writing.

The present volume is the first volume chronologically in this division of Barth's Collected Works, and brings together Barth's earliest academic writings in theology, spanning the years 1905 through1909. The larger part of the volume

is occupied by texts written for the seminars he attended during his studies in Bern (1904–1906), Berlin (1906–07), and Tübingen (1907–08). From this period there also arises his "qualifying thesis [*Akzessarbeit*]," as well as two other lectures and his first text intended for publication—a report on the Aarau Students' Conference of 1906. The second, smaller part of the volume contains the texts—mainly reviews—that Barth wrote in Marburg in 1908 and 1909, in the course of his work as editorial assistant for the journal *Die Christliche Welt* (The Christian World), which was edited by Martin Rade.

The texts as a whole reflect the early formation and development of Barth's theological thinking. They shed light on his path over these years: from being a young student, trying out his craft on various subjects and beginning to make the discipline his own, through his time as an ardent follower of Adolf Harnack, all the way to becoming a dedicated pupil of Wilhelm Herrmann, by which point Barth, while certainly cutting his own profile, was still a long way off from the insights that would later become fundamental to him. Especially when seen from the perspective of Barth's later, mature theology, these early works are but "theological finger-exercises" (Eberhard Busch). It would consequently be impossible to expect from their publication and reception any fundamentally new insights with respect to the interpretation of Barth's later theology. Nonetheless, these texts open up interesting fresh perspectives in at least three important respects.

1

First, the volume leaves a strong impression of the *intellectual horizon* of the young Barth and the great *curiosity* with which he devotes himself to the most varied subjects. The panorama of the first four works alone spans essays on topics as diverse as the character of the religion of ancient India, the stigmata of Francis of Assisi, an exegetical work on the centurion at Capernaum, and an essay on the relationship between his student association and certain current issues, titled "Zofingia and the Social Question." Thoughts on the relationship between ecclesial practice and academic theology, as well as on questions of religious pedagogy, also appear in the volume. A few of these issues are no longer in the immediate foreground in Barth's later works, and some scholars have attributed this to—and at the same time criticized Barth for—the absence of highly topical perspectives of contemporary relevance from the horizon of his thinking. Yet this is not true of Barth's later career, and, as can be gleaned from this volume, it is particularly inaccurate as a statement concerning Barth's theological beginnings. Barth prepared meticulously for the wider subjects of topical interest on which he was asked to speak and write and, as the editorial introductions to the various texts evidence, he strove on each occasion to be up to date with contemporaneous discussion and relevant literature.

On the basis of the texts gathered here, and prior to the sharp break in his theology that occurred later, the way in which Barth in these early writings increasingly considered himself to be a "modern," liberal theologian can be easily understood. There is a certain pleasure in noting the vigor with which Barth adopts—and defends against critics—positions that he will reject years

later with at least the same vehemence. Clearly, then, and despite all the contestable sweeping judgments in subsequent years, Barth knew his later "adversary" very well; and if he can speak of it later, it is precisely because he too started out from the same point. Here is the proof that this is true: here one can authentically encounter the early Barth, who in his heart—and even more so in his mind—was authentically neo-Protestant.

2

Second, and this ought not be understood as a contradiction, the texts in this volume also show how much in general Barth himself is already at work *shaping* his own theology, how many of his *characteristic thoughts* can already be found in these early, "liberal" texts, apart from dependence on any existing school of thought, claimed by himself or ascribed to him by others. Of course, such thoughts are never at this stage formed into a theological edifice comparable to the structures of his later work. Yet Barth's nonconformism—his pronounced refusal quickly to categorize himself or to prescribe for himself certain thoughts and his refusal to forbid others on the basis of adherence to a particular theological direction or principle—is already clearly evident in his theologically liberal phase.

To be sure, throughout these years Barth is deeply influenced by the foundations of liberal theological thinking, by the historical relativism of all knowledge as well as by the subjectivity and individualism of faith and of religion, and not least by the importance and indispensability of historical criticism. Nevertheless, at the close of his essay for the Harnack seminar, he can still write a sentence concerning the New Testament tradition such as this: "the really valuable thing about such a piece of evangelical tradition can neither be given to us nor taken from us by historical criticism" (p. 104).

There is another way that the young Barth stands out, not so much from his contemporaneous liberal theologians, but from many who seek today to emulate the liberal theologians in the academy and who correspondingly have a rather problematic relationship with the ecclesial nature of the profession. Even for Barth as a student, the close connection between church and theology—beyond any criticism of a dusty or triumphant churchiness—is just as self-evident as for the author of *Church Dogmatics*. There is hardly any difference in this respect between the Barth who, at the beginning of *Church Dogmatics* I/1, explains and expounds the idea that "Theology is a function of the church" and the editorial assistant of the *Die Christliche Welt*. Thus in 1909, albeit a little less practiced than a good twenty years later, Barth wrote similarly,

> I think that a student who has attended the school of historical and systematic theology with enthusiasm and love and not merely for the sake of passing examinations—such a student will not go to work in the church without some guidelines to build upon. And vice versa: the historical and systematic work of a teacher who is in touch with the life of the church and knows the latter's needs not only from a distance—such a teacher will, without confusing scholarship with "edification," provide students with the liveliness and the skills required for their future tasks. (pp. 231–32)

The choice of topic for the lecture that Barth had to give in January 1906 to his student association, the Bern branch of Zofingia, also indicates a direction that would remain important for him all his life. The "social question" was for him a question of great importance, far more so than for many of his fellow students in Zofingia; but more than this, Barth considered the question of great importance for the group as a whole, even though it probably had no existential meaning for most. It was a question that could not be ignored simply by deeming it irrelevant to student life or too much bound up with a purely material problem:

> . . . [P]recisely because more than one generation has worked on the solution to this question, it has always been considered important and relevant, and thus it appears to me to be a problem intimately related to the whole broad question of the *work and significance of the Zofingia Association.* This is why every good member of Zofingia should and must have taken a position in one way or another. (p. 51, italics original)

Even in this earliest public treatment of this topic, Barth already shows himself to be well informed, using figures and election results to make clear how pervasive the problem already is in other countries, how socially explosive it can be, and how even Switzerland can by no means be certain of being spared from a lasting division of society and the associated dangers. He quotes the leading Swiss religious socialist, Leonhard Ragaz, and uses his words to portray a possible path of events that in fact almost became a reality just a few years later, at the time of the great National Strike of 1918:

> Our people threaten to separate themselves into two combative battle camps, exactly like in the worst times of our history, and once the military, furnished with live ammunition, pulls through the streets of our towns, the specter of a bloody civil war is already before us. On both sides, the struggle produces phenomena that do us harm and prophesy nothing good. (p. 52)

But then he argues in a different way, namely from the self-understanding of Zofingia, and not least from the special Christian perspective, from the commandment to love one's neighbor. Here, too, a point appears that arises again later in a comparable way: it is not the actuality of a particular problem that has to determine all action, and to which all other thinking and acting must be subordinated. No, this problem calls the Christian students to act because it cannot be tolerated from the Christian point of view, specifically, from Jesus' commandment to love one's neighbor. Social action is motivated and dominated by faith, by one's existence as a Christian:

> *The modern social question is more than a danger*. Anyone who goes a little deeper sees in it a link in the evolution of a problem—or, better, *the* problem—of humanity with which Jesus confronted the ancient world, and which found its religious solution in the *Reformation* and its political solution in the *Revolution*, the task which Jesus formulated as "You shall love your God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37,39). In other words, this shows the problem of the *dual responsibility of the individual person: on the one hand to the Godhead, and on the other hand to humanity*. Mark my

> words, the opinion is not that the solution to the social question would bring the end of that development, or putting it religiously, would bring about the "kingdom of God," as one so often hears it said today. I think of this solution, in common with those brought by Reformation and Revolution, only as *necessary premises* for achieving that goal, but exactly necessary ones. . . . (p. 53, italics original)

The attentive listener may hear in these lines a hint of the argument in which Barth, almost fifteen years later in his Tambach lecture, asserts his great reservation about religious socialism. It is likewise typical that, in the remainder of the text here, Barth opposes the view that such a large, comprehensive problem cannot adequately be addressed in one's own small environment. He simply points out what one might be able to do in the context of Zofingia in terms of small and perhaps—at first glance—not at all decisive things, in order to do and to implement whatever is possible, at least here, in one's own domain.

One cannot speak of more than an echo of the later course of Barth's work even in the last and perhaps most substantial text of the volume, "The Cosmological Proof for the Existence of God," a text that was critically annotated by his brother Heinrich, a student of philosophy. Nevertheless, here once again we see the extent to which a theme can accompany Barth throughout the various stages of his theological journey. The prospect of an ontological proof of God, with which Barth deals fundamentally and formatively more than twenty years later in his book on Anselm, already follows here the decisive rejection of a Thomistic construction of the proof, a construction that Barth would later label as "natural theology." The peculiar characteristic of the later work—namely, that Barth presupposes out of ontic and rational necessity the existence of God that he wants to prove—is, however, still regarded critically by the young Barth in 1909.

A final, perhaps not quite so surprising parallel to the later Barth, under which many a reader of Barth suffers, also emerges in these texts. His qualifying thesis—"The Concept of Christ's Descent to the Underworld in Church Literature until Origen"—and, above all, the seminar paper written for Harnack—"Paul's Missionary Activity according to Its Portrayal in the Acts of the Apostles"—easily reach the standard of many of the Licentiate (postgraduate) works of his time—if not in terms of the necessary depth and originality, then certainly in terms of the length of the expositions. Even these early works signal that someone is entering the theological arena who has a lot to say in more than one sense!

3

Finally, in addition to illuminating these important aspects of Barth's theological thinking and its development, there is a third area in which the texts brought together and translated in this volume offer interesting insights: *Barth's biography*, specifically, as they offer *a portrait of the path of his studies* from Bern via Berlin and Tübingen to Marburg. In this volume, as in the subsequent volumes of *Lectures and Shorter Works*, the numerous allusions to current topics and events or to literary style that can be discovered in the texts reveal some

of Barth's influences and preferences. Many impressions from his travels and elsewhere have left their traces, which are elucidated, as far as possible, by the editors in the explanatory footnotes. Above all, the most important source for Barth's biography are the introductions written for each of the texts, which describe and reproduce from the sources the occasions and the circumstances of preparation, possible consultations made in advance, the specific characteristics of a lecture, or important reactions to a text.

Whether one is interested in the accuracy of Barth in the implementation and use of exegetical methods and steps (which many liked to doubt in view of later printed publications; but Barth knew exegesis, and he applied it, not only in those early years!); or in the energy and meticulousness with which the young student throws himself into particular works and tries to avoid every conceivable distraction, especially in a city like Berlin; or in the way in which, beyond his actual studies and apart from the essays to be written, theological questions and discussions again and again pervaded and shaped his everyday life, all this can be retraced and consulted here. Often the letters from his only correspondence that are extensively preserved from this time—that with his father—serve as an important source. In particular, his semester in Berlin appears in a new light here. It is often rumored, even by Barth himself, that his time in Berlin was at best a tolerable compromise, because he had really wanted to study in "liberal" Marburg, whereas his father would have preferred to see him in "moderate-conservative" Greifswald. However, the enthusiasm with which Barth reports on his academic encounters with Adolf Harnack and the enthusiasm with which he also writes the extensive seminar paper for Harnack present a somewhat different, more nuanced picture of events from a contemporaneous source.

For all the distinctive characteristics that this first volume of *Lectures and Shorter Works* and the texts gathered within in it have in comparison with later volumes, one thing is clear: the translation of a critical edition of these works is both necessary and significant. It is by no means a superfluous undertaking to attend to these texts from the pen of the young student and the great theologian in the making.

Peter Zocher
Karl Barth Archive, Basel
January 2022

List of Translators and Assignments

[The translation team cooperated in translating various pieces.]

Clifford Anderson, Associate University Librarian for Research and Digital Strategy and Professor of Religious Studies, Vanderbilt University: "The Stigmata of Francis of Assisi," "The Cosmological Proof for the Existence of God."

Matthew J. Aragon Bruce, adjunct professor, Calvin University Prison Initiative and Western Theological Seminary: "Review of Gustav Mix, *Toward the Reform of Theological Studies*"; "Review of A. Von Broecker, *Protestantische Gemeinde-Flugblätter*"; "Review of P. Mezger, *Eigenart und innere Lebensbedingungen einer protestantischen Volkskirche*"; "Review of Fr. A. Voigt, *Was sollen wir tun?*"; "Review of R. Jahnke, *Aus der Mappe eines Glücklichen*"; "Review of O. Pfister, *Religionspädagogisches Neuland*"; "The Belgian Mission Church"; "Review of *Zeitschrift für Wissenschaftliche Theologie*, vol. 51, nos. 1–2."

David C. Chao, Director of the Center for Asian American Christianity, Princeton Theological Seminary: "Paul's Missionary Activity according to Its Portrayal in the Acts of the Apostles."

Terry L. Cross, Professor of Systematic Theology and Dean, School of Religion, Lee University: "Zwingli's Sixty-Seven Articles of the First Disputation on Religion at Zurich 1523."

Sven Ensminger, PhD (University of Bristol): "The Character of the Religion of Ancient India," "Zofingia and the Social Question," "Modern Theology and Work for the Kingdom of God."

David A. Gilland, "Paul's Missionary Activity according to Its Portrayal in the Acts of the Apostles," "The Concept of Christ's Descent to the Underworld in Church Literature until Origen."

Darrell L. Guder, Emeritus Professor of Missional and Ecumenical Theology, Princeton Theological Seminary: "The Stigmata of Francis of Assisi," "Brief Communique."

Judith J. Guder, Retired musician and translator, "Brief Communique."

Thomas Herwig, Assistant Professor, Honors College of the University of Alabama: "Paul's Missionary Activity according to Its Portrayal in the Acts of the Apostles."

Cambria Kaltwasser, Assistant Professor of Theology, Northwestern College: "Introduction to the English Edition" by Peter Zocher, "Paul's Missionary Activity according to Its Portrayal in the Acts of the Apostles."

Oliver Keenan, OP, Director of the Aquinas Institute and Fellow in Systematic Theology, Blackfriars Hall, Oxford University: "Zofingia and the Social Question," "The Concept of Christ's Descent to the Underworld in Church Literature until Origen."

David MacLachlan, Associate Professor of New Testament, Atlantic School of Theology: "The Original Form of the Lord's Prayer."

Amy Marga, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology, Luther Seminary: "The Stigmata of Francis of Assisi."

Arnold Neufeldt-Fast, Associate Professor of Theology, Tyndale Seminary: "Zofingia and the Social Question," "Paul's Missionary Activity according to Its Portrayal in the Acts of the Apostles."

Travis Niles, Postdoctoral Researcher and Assistant, Institute for New Testament Studies, University of Basel: "Zofingia and the Social Question."

Paul T. Nimmo, King's Chair of Systematic Theology, University of Aberdeen: "The Centurion at Capernaum."

Patricia L. Rich, Translator: "Preface."

Ross Wright, Rector, The Church of the Good Shepherd; adjunct professor, Randolph-Macon College: "The Tenth Christian Students' Conference in Aarau," "Paul's Missionary Activity according to Its Portrayal in the Acts of the Apostles," "The Concept of Christ's Descent to the Underworld in Church Literature until Origen."

List of Abbreviated Works

AFranc	Analecta Franciscana
BGl	*Beweis des Glaubens*
BSGR	*Bibliothek der Symbole und Glaubensregeln der alten Kirche*. Edited by A. Hahn. 3rd ed. Breslau, 1897
BSLK	*Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*. Edited by Deutschen evangelischen Kirchenausschluss. 10th ed. Göttingen, 1986
Bw. B.	K. Barth and R. Bultmann. *Briefwechsel, 1922–1966*. Edited by B. Jaspert. Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe, Part 5: Letters. Zurich, 1971
Bw. R.	K. Barth and M. Rade. *Ein Briefwechsel.* Edited by Chr. Schwöbel. Gütersloh, 1981
CD	K. Barth. *Church Dogmatics*. Translated by G. W. Bromiley et al. 4 vols. in 12 parts. London: T&T Clark, 1936–69. Translation of *KD*
CR	Corpus Reformatorum. Halle/Braunschweig/Berlin; Leipzig; Zurich, 1834–
CW	*Die Christliche Welt*. Marburg
DS	*Enchiridion symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei er morum.* Edited by H. Denzinger and A. Schönmetzer. 35th ed. Rome, et al., 1973
EA	Erlangen Ausgabe. M. Luther. Sämtliche Werke. Erlangen, 1826–
EKG	*Evangelisches Kirchengesangbuch*. Various editions. 1853–
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte. Berlin, 1897–
GERS	*Gesanguch für die evangelische-reformirte Kirche der deutschen Schweiz.* 1891–
GThW	Grundriss der theologischen Wissenschaft. Tübingen, 1893–
HBLS	*Historisch-biographisches Lexikon der Schweiz.* Neuenburg, 1921–34
HC	Hand-Commentar zum Neuen Testament. Freiburg, 1889–
JDTh	*Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie.* Stuttgart, 1856–
JPTh	*Jahrbücher für protestantische Theologie.* Braunschweig, 1875–
KD	K. Barth. *Kirkliche Dogmatik.* 4 vols in 12 parts. Zollikon: Verlag der Evangelischen Buchhandlung; et al., 1932–67
KK	Kurzgefasster Kommentar zu den heiligen Schriften Alten und Neuen Testamentes. Munich, 1886–

KNT	Kommentar zum Neuen Testament. Leipzig, 1903–
LThK	*Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*. 2nd ed. 1957–68
MPTh	*Monatsschrift für Pastoraltheologie zur Vertiefung des gesamten pfarramtlichen Wirkens.* Göttingen
PG	Patrologiae cursus completes. Series Graeca. Paris, 1857–
PhB	Philosophische Bibliothek. Leipzig, 1868–
RBMAS	Rerum Britanicarum medii aevi scriptores; or, Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages. London, 1858–
RE^{3}	*Realencyklopäedie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche.* 3rd ed. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1896–1913
RGG$^{1, 2, 3}$	*Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. 1st ed., 1909–13. 2nd ed., 1927–32. 3rd ed., 1957–62. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck
RV	Religionsgeschichtle Volksbücher für die deutsche christliche Gegenwart. Halle/Tübingen, 1904–
SgV	Sammlung gemeinverständlicher Vorträge und Schriften aus dem Gebiet der Theologie und Religionsgeschichte. Tübingen, 1896–
SNT	Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments neu übersetzt und für die Gegenwart erklärt. Göttingen, 1905–
SPAW	*Sitzungsberichte der preussischen Akademie der Wissenshaften.* Berlin, 1882–
SQS	Sammlung ausgewählter kirchen- und dogmengeschichtlicher Quellenschriften. Tübingen, 1901–
SThZ	*Schweizerische theologische Zeitschrift.* Zurich.
TaS	Texts and Studies. Cambridge, 1891–
ThB	Theologische Bücherei. Munich. 1953–
TLZ	*Theologische Literaturzeitung*
ThStKr	*Theologische Studien und Kritiken*
WA	Weimarer Ausgabe. M. Luther. Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Weimar, 1883–
WA DB	WA Deutsche Bibel. New Testament, 1522. Old Testament, 1534
ZKG	*Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*
ZKWL	*Zeitschrift für kirchliche Wissenschaft und kirchliches Leben*
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZTK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*
ZWT	*Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie*

The Character of the Religion of Ancient India
1905

Karl Barth began his studies of theology at the University of Bern in the winter semester of 1904–5. During his first semester he took a course on "General Religious History. Part I (Prof. D. Steck)," besides "Introduction to the Study of Theology" with his father, Fritz Barth, as well as lectures and courses in Old and New Testament (Karl Marti, Rudolf Steck, and Fritz Barth), Church History (Fritz Barth, Wilhelm Hadorn), and Philosophy (Hermann Lüdemann). During the summer semester of 1905, he took the second part of the course on General Religious History. Barth's minutes or notes are not preserved. This religious history-missiology piece, for which we have no direct supporting documents or background, seems to have emerged in that context. It was probably written during the winter holidays, soon after the end of the winter semester. It cannot be determined whether it was given as a presentation during the second part of the course in the summer semester, or whether we are dealing with—just as with the later investigation of the Lord's Prayer—a work for the Academic Evangelical-Theological Association [Akademischen evangelisch-theologischen Verein]. The remarks are mostly based on Paul Wurm's Handbuch der Religionsgeschichte *(Handbook of the History of Religion) (see n. 2).*

The manuscript is one of the pieces collected in "Excerpts I," a Halbkaliko volume [common book-binding cloth], in which we find also two texts by Barth himself, besides various excerpts such as "from the NT writings," from Luther's works or from the church books of Pratteln and Frenkendorf: his report on the religion of ancient India and his investigation of the stigmata of Francis of Assisi (see the next chapter). Just like his lecture notes, Barth had the various pieces, written in ink on double pages, later bound as a book.

The task in front of us today consists in getting clarity, in broad brushstrokes, regarding the *character of the religion of ancient India.*

One has already called the land of Indus and Ganges the "classical land of the history of religion,"[1] and rightly so: for we do not know any people in whose character, way of thinking, and history has religion engrained itself more deeply than in that of the inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent. Here, religion is not a mere area of public life next to other areas; much rather, the latter is founded in all of its relationships on the former.[2] But let us not get ahead

1. This characterization is found in Karl Barth's lecture notes: "History of Religion. Prof. D[octor Fritz] Barth. Prima–Ob. Prima. Freies Gymnasium Bern. October 1903–July 1904" (Karl Barth Archive, Basel), 123.

2. Cf. P. Wurm, *Handbuch der Religionsgeschichte* [Handbook of the history of religion] (Calwer/Stuttgart: Calwer Verlagsverein, 1904), 150–51.

of ourselves! During the period of which we will need to talk, the circumstances were still different, and only in the course of millennia, after a series of changes, did what we call the Hindu religion emerge.

Let us put ourselves mentally back into the time when the Aryans, or rather a group of Aryans, left their dwellings in the hill countries in Central Asia and took possession of the Indian subcontinent. By doing so, their historical role as "Indians"[3] (*Indier*) begins. Determinative for the unhistorical character of this people is the circumstance that the date of this very important event today can only be construed, while the Indian sources do not contain any temporal data.[4] These Aryan immigrants, with their hardly significant culture—they were mostly ranchers—also brought with them their own language and religion. The different dialects of the Dravida tribes were confronted by the language of the Aryan people; the demon worship of the natives was confronted by the polytheism of the foreigners. Here we observe the interesting process in which the language of the natives held its ground, while simultaneously their religion was almost completely absorbed into that of the immigrants.[5] Yet even the immigrants' religion was not preserved in purity: a change is assessed to have happened so that their religion would find its parallel in the transformation of the entire character of the Indian people at the time. If the conquerors had been a forceful nature-loving people of the mountains, their offspring would now, under the influence of the tropical climate and a favorable nature, be effortlessly satisfying all demands of life; but they become this frail, passive race that we know as today's Hindu [people]. And the same happened in the religious area: Under the impression of an outside world that presented itself to the individual in a thousand different ways in lavish complexity, the Aryans' polytheistic worship of nature became more and more adventurous and turned finally into that conspicuous firmament of gods without any order, from which Brahman pantheism would emerge by necessity.[6] As *Duhm* says: "The richness of the spirit generated that sultry abundance of religious figures, metaphysical speculations, and mystical aspirations, which caused admiration as well as pity among the more energetic Europeans."[7]

Today we need to speak about the period between Aryan immigration, on the one hand, and the explicit display of Brahmanism, on the other hand; yet a clear separation is actually impossible, given the blurriness of the whole development.

The sources for all examinations in this area are found in the literary collection of the four Vedas, which is the reason why the Indian religion of that time is also called the "Veda religion."

Veda (= knowledge) refers in India not only to the four collections of religious songs that are important to us here, but also to the ritual literature belonging to them, containing all sorts of "theological drivel," as Max Müller from

3. Cf. Wurm, *Handbuch*, 151, 153.
4. Wurm, *Handbuch*, 151.
5. Wurm, *Handbuch*, 155.
6. Wurm, *Handbuch*, 151–52, 153, 172, 178–79.
7. Barth quotes from (the dictations) of Bernhard Duhm's Basel lecture on "General History of Religion" (§23). With minor variation, the sentence can be found in the transcript, produced by Walther Huber in 1902, based on a handwritten duplicate of the lecture during the winter semester 1901–2 (Manuscript Collection of Basel University Library).

Oxford calls it.[8] Yet [pieces of] this ritual literature, just as the first beginnings of philosophical speculation to be found here, often originate in later times and are therefore not relevant to us.

The religious events of the oldest period are much rather found in the original Vedas, the Veda-Sanhita (in contrast to the Veda-Brahmana, etc.), which can be classified into four collections: three canonically valid ones that are said to be inspired: the Rig-Veda, Sama-Veda, and the Jadjur-Veda, and one additional one that is not canonical, the Atharva-Veda.[9]

Let us now briefly examine the most central religious traits of this Veda literature, in order to consider briefly the stance toward Christianity that they imply for their followers.

The Indians' oldest *teachings about the gods* are more complicated than that of any other people; one might say considerably more on this topic than is possible in the quarter of an hour here. The difficulty of this polytheism lies in the fact that it is actually not really polytheism, for every one of the gods is described in the songs of the Veda respectively as the highest and mightiest one, although the existence of the other ones, sharing in this same characteristic, is not denied, {a reality that can similarly be found, for example, in the view of God at the times of the book of Judges.}[10] The Vedas keep us completely in the dark about the competences and functions of the individual deities, as we know them, for example, from Greek mythology.[11] A further difficulty arises from the number of Indian gods. Usually, 33 of them are counted, yet one later source already counts 3,339, and modern Hinduism even knows 330,000,000 of them, next to an unlimited number of demons.[12] From there, the move to the Brahmanic universal deity [*All-Gottheit*] is hardly surprising![13] From the same consideration, we arrive at the conclusion that the Hindus' position regarding the gods of their religion cannot be a serious hindrance to the acceptance of Christianity: pantheism is closer to monotheism than polytheism.

More important than the teaching on the gods is the Indian *cult*, the religious order that forms a downright great power [*Grossmacht*] in public life. Surely the Vedas do not yet know anything of temples or images of gods: the worship service happens in any place, so that the importance of sacrifice increases even more, happening in manifold forms and requiring a whole army of priests.[14]

In the Vedas as well can be found a *cosmology* in a confusion similar to the doctrine of the gods. The most varied gods are called creators and rulers of the world. It is telling that the problems of the "How?" of the creation of the world are raised yet are left without an answer.[15]

However, the most interesting trait in the religion of the Vedas is undeniably to be found not in the religious but in the *social sphere*: I am referring to the caste

8. Cf. Wurm, *Handbuch*, 152; Friedrich Max Müller, *Das Aitareya Brâhmana*, in Müller's *Essays*, vol. 1, *Beiträge zur vergleichenden Religionswissenschaft* (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelman, 1869), 105.

9. Wurm, *Handbuch*, 152–53.

10. In the margin we find a later comment by Barth himself (see below, "Die Stigmata," n. 7): "prrr! airesia." The brackets seem to have been added to the text to clarify to what the exclaim of dislike refers. Cf. further Wurm, *Handbuch*, 151, 153, 155.

11. Wurm, *Handbuch*, 171–72.

12. Wurm, *Handbuch*, 158–59.

13. Wurm, *Handbuch*, 154, 169, 171–72, 178–79.

14. Wurm, *Handbuch*, 150–51, 152, 172–74.

15. Wurm, *Handbuch*, 174.

system, which certainly looked quite different at the time of the Vedas than it looks today. Here as well, we notice the move from the simple to the exorbitant, which is typically Indian. The Vedas only know four main castes: priests, warriors, farmers, and slaves; today there are hundreds of castes, whose members are not allowed to eat together or marry each other.[16]

Those differences between the castes do not necessarily coincide with differences in social rank; rather, the castes today consist of members of the same trade. They might be called "corporate associations with a religious foundation."[17] It can be easily perceived what sort of complication of public life is caused by this system! This is where an open conflict arises between the ancient Indian worldview and the Christian worldview. The actual religious aspect of the Vedas' religion, the service of Agni, Indra, or Waruna,[18] is of little importance compared to this practically almost irresolvable difference: the Christian religion says that we are all sinners and the same before God [cf. Rom. 3:22–23]; the Veda religion recognizes people of privilege and slaves. How can [people holding] these [different] positions get along with one another? It is well known that some missionary associations avoid the difficulty even today by keeping the differences in caste, for example, [by assigning different seats] in worship,[19] and in terms of quantity [of results], they supposedly run well with that, which is understandable: if this deeply engrained offense is removed, it becomes relatively easy for the Hindu to become a Christian. Yet may opportunism be the driving force in this case? Basically, this is the missionary method of the Jesuits, pursued by them in China in the sixteenth century, for example, in the famous system of accommodation![20] The way in which the Basel Mission positions itself against the caste system is more dignified by comparison, even if it is perhaps less opportunistic.[21] The fact that they have a hard time with that is plausible; even in Europe there would be annoyed faces, if not worse, if one were to touch the privileged church seats of the nobility and the dignitaries! A third approach—if one were allowed to make suggestions without knowledge of specific circumstances—would maybe consist in recognizing the castes but trying to transform them in a Christian sense into mere trade associations, thus

16. Cf. Wurm, *Handbuch*, 153, 158.

17. Wurm, *Handbuch*, 158.

18. Cf. Wurm, *Handbuch*, 160–69, 179.

19. The continuation of the subordinate clause (written by Barth at the bottom as a later insertion) was cut off when the "Excerpta" were bound. Going by the sparse remains at the top of the letters, the continuation likely was along the lines in the main body of the text (cf. J. Richter, *Die deutsche Mission in Südindien: Erzählungen und Schilderungen von einer Missions-Studienreise durch Ostindien* [Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1902], 11). Here Barth probably thinks mostly of the Leipzig Mission, whose work among the Tamils led to the "Leipzig Caste Argument," since it respected, by and large, the belonging to different castes (cf., e.g., Chr. E. Luthardt, "Graul, Karl," in *RE*3 9:72, lines 60–73, esp. line 47). A description of the conditions and the missionary praxis is given by Richter in *Mission in Südindien*, 11–13, 128–41; see also J. Richter, *Nordindische Missionsfahrten: Erzählungen und Schilderungen von einer Missions-Studienreise durch Ostindien* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1903), 279–94; and cf. C. Ihmels, "Kaste. II. Kastenfrage in der Mission," in *RGG*3 3: cols. 1163–64.

20. Cf. R. Grundemann, "Mission unter den Heiden: 1. Katholische," in *RE*^{3} 13:116, lines 20–48.

21. Cf. Richter, *Mission in Südindien*, 18–19: "People from Basel have realized from the beginning that the caste is simply irreconcilable with the Christian religion; thus, it must not be tolerated in the Christian community under any circumstances; . . . with them, the demonic force of the castes truly is broken. I have personally come to know and experience in detail so many surprising and pleasant traits in this respect that I do no longer doubt the reality and solidity of this success and take great joy in this success, albeit it is bought with great sacrifices."

eliminating the class restrictions. The good about it would then be preserved, and the sting of it would be removed. Yet these are considerations from the academic lectern.

Notwithstanding the last point, if we were to be asked for an overall assessment of the Veda religion, we might mark it with a big question mark. The eternal problem of humanity runs like a red thread through the many things that are unclear, confused, and fantastic in these ancient Indian poems: What is truth? The Veda religion offered one solution, and we have considered some aspects of it; but we also realize that such a profound, speculative people did not want to stop there. Brahmanism, starting already in the later parts of the Veda religion, was a further attempt in this direction, as was the religion of the Buddha, which came to surpass all its predecessors in regard to the earnestness of its views.

Bern, March 20, 1905

The Stigmata of Francis of Assisi
1905

In the summer semester of 1905 (as in the winter semester of 1905–6), Karl Barth attended his father Fritz Barth's "Lessons in Church History." The essay on the "Stigmata of Francis of Assisi" was probably composed for this class. Unfortunately, no materials remain that might provide information about Barth's approach to the work, its occasion and context, or the reception that it found.

As the commentary indicates in detail, Barth based his presentation above all on P. Sabatier (see n. 1) and K. von Hase (see n. 50). He likely used the first edition of Hases's monograph, not the reprint in the Collected Works, as a particular observation can confirm: the misunderstanding in footnote 52 and 103 probably arises from the fact that in the first edition the citations from Bonaventure and Thomas of Celano appear right next to each other on page 144, while in the Collected Works they follow each other on sequential pages (105 and 106). For that matter, it must remain open whether Barth's otherwise unsubstantiated change to the source text, which in fact contradicts what might be anticipated, was a mistake made on account of the haste detectable in the detail described (to which also the dating of this piece at the end of the essay testifies) or should be considered a conscious correction.

The manuscript is the first of the bound pieces in Excerpts I (see page 1 above), where it bears the subtitle "Essay for the Church History Seminar, Summer Semester 1905."

Praised be You, my Lord,
through those who give pardon for Your Love,
and bear infirmity and tribulation.
Blessed are those who endure in peace,
for *by You, Most High, shall they be crowned*![1]

Introduction

"In the year 1509 on the last day of May, four preaching monks were burned alive in great agony on the *Schwellimatten* in Bern due to the abominable, diabolic phenomena and other heresies that they *presumed to level* against other monks in order to assert their doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary." With these

1. Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short, eds., *The Saint*, Francis of Assisi: Early Documents 1 (New York: New City Press, 1999), 114; cf. Francis of Assisi, *Canticum Fratris Solis*, in *Analekten zur Geschichte des Franciscus von Assisi*, edited by H. Boehmer, 3rd ed., SQS, 2nd Series, vol. 6 (Tübingen/Leipzig, 1904), p. 66, lines 14–18 (= 1961, reviewed by Fr. Wiegand, with a postscript by C. Andresen, SQS, NF, 4:44, lines 37–45, line 2); see also P. Sabatier, *Leben des heiligen Franz von Assisi*, German trans. M. Lisco, New Edition (Berlin, 1897), 224–25, 242–43.

words, Meyer, the Chronicler of Zurich, relates the tragic conclusion to the "Jetzer Case."[2] Whether the deceit [may] redound in that instance to the Dominicans or, as newer research demonstrates, to the tailor journeyman [Hans] Jetzer, the story is at any rate typical for the declining [Roman Catholic] Church of the Middle Ages. The effect of this and similar incidents, the mistrust sown thereby against the church and monastics in the widest circles, cannot be estimated highly enough as a prefatory event for the ensuing Reformation. The church and its institutions had outlived themselves. And if today we page through a compendium of Catholic miracle stories like Görres's *Christian Mysticism*,[3] we find ourselves astonished at the hodgepodge of monstrosities and lapses of taste, but then come to understand why, in the eyes of the cultured world, the cloister's tales of "miraculous" events eo ipso had been regarded as shams or stupidities for centuries. It truly did the church no honor that it did not take measures against such "history" writing, but rather supported it and made it fruitful for its purposes, to the extent that modern historical critics find it necessary to strike out 90 percent of it. In view of these facts, who will wonder that people fell prey to the opposite extreme and basically up to the present day deny historical factuality to all "miracles," that is, to everything that lies beyond our ordinary world of appearances? It may be a sign of the times that people in our day, including those in the circle of modern historical theology, are slowly, but quite clearly, beginning to abandon this viewpoint. They do so not despite, but precisely in concert with, the findings of natural science. Today more than ever it dawns on us:

> There are more things in heaven and earth, . . .
> Than are dreamt of in our philosophy.[4]

Today we can no longer consider a "miracle" heavy-handedly as an absolute breach of the laws of nature, because we do not believe at all in *absolute* natural laws, as it was still regarded in the old worldview. This change in perspective may belong to the celebrated "transvaluation of all values" of the present age,[5] but the fact itself that we have overcome the earlier aversion to "miracles" of previous ages has not changed. We must thus consider and regard the historical material of bygone times from this perspective. It hardly needs to be said that we, especially when dealing with the Middle Ages, must, as previously, apply great caution to carve out the facts from the lavishly proliferating phantasies of the Cloister. Only the criterion of our criticism has changed from what it was fifty or a hundred years ago. None other than Adolf von Harnack attests to us: "The habit of condemning a narrative, or of ascribing it to a later age, only because it includes stories of miracles, is a piece of prejudice."[6]

2. See R. Steck, "Der Berner Jetzerprozess in neuer Beleuchtung nebst Mitteilungen aus den noch ungedruckten Akten," in *SThZ* 18 (1901): 13–29, 65–91, 129–51, 193–210, esp. 13.

3. J. Görres, *Die christliche Mystik*, vol. 1 (Regensburg/Landshut, 1836); vol. 2 (Regensburg, 1837); vol. 3 (Regensburg, 1840); vol. 4, parts 1 and 2 (Regensburg, 1842).

4. W. Shakespeare, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, 1.5.

5. See the title of F. Nietzsche's posthumous studies and fragments first published in 1901: *The Will to Power: Attempt at a Transvaluation of All Values*, Nietzsche's Works 15, ed. P. Gast and E. and A. H. Horneffer (Leipzig, 1901). This formulation goes back to Nietzsche himself; see F. Nietzsche, *Posthumous Fragments: Autumn 1885 to Autumn 1887*, Nietzsche's Works, Critical Edition, ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari, part 8, vol. 1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974), p. 107, lines 9–11.

6. See A. Harnack, *What Is Christianity?* (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1987), 26.

Our approach to our topic today, "The Stigmata of Francis of Assisi," shall also be impartial and unbiased by the foundations of "rationality" and "knowledge," which we, in the end, must always regard as fragmentary. Maybe it is possible here, too, despite the manifold difficulties, to find a satisfactory solution in line with the remarks above.[7]

To this end, we will need to describe "*The Events according to the Sources*" in Part One, to present our "*Histor[ical] Cri[tical] Results*" in Part Two, and to add a concluding "*General Evaluation*" in Part Three.

Quad felix, faustum fortunatumque sit![8]

I. The Events according to the Sources

1. The Sources

By way of introduction to the matter, we start off by giving an abbreviated overview of the source materials that come under consideration.

a. From the beginning it may be regarded as a suspicious circumstance and at any rate a bad omen for our research that the oldest report we possess about the stigmata of Francis of Assisi flows from the pen of the Judas of his circle of disciples, as he has already been named,[9] that is, *Elias of Cortona*, the man, who, in the company of the *fratres minores* already acted during the lifetime of the founder of the order against his intentions and in the interests of the Roman Curia, which leveled all distinctions in favor of uniformity.[10] At issue here is a letter that he sent immediately after the death of Francis in 1226 to *Gregorius*, minister of the [Franciscan] Order in France.[11] We shall arrive at the conclusion, when treating its content later, that the apparent suspicion actually is a reason for its credibility.

b. More directly, a fragment of parchment interests us that *Francis himself* already handed over in 1224,[12] shortly after the stigmatization, to *Brother Leo*, one of his most true and resolute followers, who figured among the Three Companions [*Tres Socii*].[13] It contains the *Laudes Dei*, a doxology to the triune God in his different attributes and potencies, composed under the immediate impression of that event. Then, on the backside of the page and also in Francis's hand, follows the well-known Mosaic benediction from Numbers 6:24–26 directed to *Leo*, along with a later *annotation in red ink* below by the latter, which contains a short report about the occasion for the *Laudes*.

7. Barth later marked the last two sentences with red pen in the margins, writing next to it in red pen as well: "Prrr!"

8. "Let this be blessed, favorable, and fortunate." On this frequently used formula, which appears in varying forms, see M. Tullius Cicero, *De divinatione* 1.45, 102.

9. Presumably, Barth is thinking about Karl von Hase's description of Elias as "Francis's most beloved and yet his false disciple," in *Kirchengeschichte auf der Grundlage akademischer Vorlesungen*, part 2, *Germanische Kirche*, Mittlere Kirchengeschichte (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1890), 391.

10. See von Hase, *Kirchengeschichte*; Sabatier, *Franz von Assisi*, 149.

11. *Frater Elias ad Gregorium ministrum Franciae a. 1226 Oct. 4*; in Boehmer, *Analekten*, p. 90, lines 3–5; p. 92, line 23 (= 3rd ed., 1961, p. 61, lines 20–63, line 17).

12. *Cartula fratri Leonis data a. 1224*; in Boehmer, *Analekten*, p. 69, lines 9–p. 70, line 6 (= 3rd ed., 1961, p. 47, lines 2–27).

13. That is, the three monastic brothers, Leo, Rufinus, and Angelus, from whom the *Legenda trium sociorum* originates.

c. We find the third report about the matter in the *Legenda prima de Thomas de Celano*, circa 1230.[14] Sabatier has the impression that it is a frequently told, canonical story and thus judges it to be of little historical value.[15] It does not seem absolutely necessary to me to draw that conclusion, and less so since it stems from a period four years after Francis's death, during which years the tradition in its essential characteristics could very well have been kept unadulterated.

d. We find the next preserved source in Gregory IX's bull *Confessor Domini* from March 31, 1237, directed against certain circles, probably the Dominicans in particular, who were skeptical about the quality of the miracle of the stigmata.[16]

e. In 1246, the *Legenda trium sociorum*[17] was completed[18] in the Greccio Cloister in the Valley of Rieti, a work that, as a report of eyewitnesses, should have been of primary significance if Paul Sabatier had not, on weighty grounds, contested the authenticity precisely of the section that deals with the stigmatization.[19] Our task here cannot be to grapple with this problem of specialists, but we vouchsafe our decision to give only secondary consideration to the so-called Three Companions and their report to the major biographer of Francis.

f. The next oldest witness for the stigmata is once more an official document: the *Bulle Benigna operatio Alexander IV* of October 29, 1255.[20] It follows the same trend as the document of Gregory IX mentioned above without, however, bringing new content to the fore.

g. In 1260, we find a mention of the stigmata in the *Historia major of Matthew of Paris*.[21] It stands out for its temporal shifting of the events as well as by multiple bizarre additions, yet without warranting deeper consideration.

h. Naturally, the story does not go unmentioned in the *Legend of Saint Bonaventure*,[22] the official ecclesiastical biography of Francis, which was completed in 1263.[23] It essentially repeats the account of Thomas of Celano, though with the addition of new details that admittedly do not seem credible.[24]

i. In the year 1264, a certain Simon, Count of Tuscia, founded a special *Church of the Stigmata* on Mount La Verna, the founding charter of which is worthy of notice due to its likewise shifted date.[25]

k. Moreover, we shall consider the English monastic chronicler *Thomas of Eccleston*, who claims a direct tradition from Brother Leo for his report.[26]

14. Reprinted in the *Acta Sanctorum Octobris: Collecta, Digesta, Commentatriisque & Observationibus illustrata a C. Suyskeno, C. Byeo, J. Bueo, J. Ghesquiero*, vol. 2, *Quo dies tertius, & quartus continetur* (Antwerp, 1768), 683–723.

15. See Sabatier, *Franz von Assisi*, 260.

16. *Magnum Bullarium Romanum, a beato Leone Magno usque ad S. D. N. Benedictum XIV* (Luxemburg, 1742), 1:79.

17. Reprinted in *Acta Sanctorum Octobris* (1768), 2:723–42.

18. See Sabatier, *Franz von Assisi*, xxxv.

19. See Sabatier, *Franz von Assisi*, xxxvi–xxxvii.

20. *Magnum Bullarium Romanum* (1742), 1:109–10.

21. Matthaeus Parisiensis, *Chronica majora*, ed. H. R. Luard, RBMAS 57.3 (London, 1876).

22. Reprinted in *Acta Sanctorum Octobris* (1768), 2:742–98.

23. See Sabatier, *Franz von Assisi*, lxvii, 260.

24. See Sabatier, *Franz von Assisi*, lxvii, 260.

25. Reported in the introduction to *Speculum perfectionis seu s. Francisci Assisiensis Legenda Antiquissima*, ed. P. Sabatier, Collection of Studies and Documents on the History of the Religions and Literature of the Middle Ages 1 (Paris, 1898), ccxiii.

26. Thomas de Eccleston, *Liber de Adventu Fratrum Minorum in Angliam*, in AFranc 1 (Quaracchi Friers, 1885), 215–56.

l. Finally, there is a rich selection of legends about the stigmata and its wondrous effects in *Actus B. Francisci et Sociorum* (*Fioretti*).[27]

Our next task will now be to put the material, as contained in the indicated sources, next to one another in order to take note of their developments.

2. Presentation of the Reports

Our reports may be divided into *two primary groups*: reports about the *act of stigmatization* and those about the *nature and quality of the stigmata* before and after the death of Francis. A third group might perhaps encompass those *legendary works* of Franciscan literature that bear on the stigmata of the founder of the [Franciscan] Order.

a. Reports about the Act of Stigmatization

We will present these in chronological order in the same manner as we previously presented the sources, primarily because, by doing so, we obtain the best view of the development that they underwent over the course of time.

We thus begin again with the letter of *Elias of Cortona* to Gregory, the leader of the French branch of the Order. As previously mentioned, it was composed immediately after the death of Francis and, in its *first* and *third* parts, contains the report of these facts to distant brothers, combined with well-formulated words of comfort and encouragement, continually interspersed with citations and allusions from the Old and New Testaments. The *second* part contains a report about the miracle of the stigmata, words of *good tidings* for the faithful Minorites, which apparently stand in conscious contradiction to the sorrowful news [of his death] preceding it. Triumphantly, it begins: "And now, after telling you these things, *I announce to you a great joy* and the news of a miracle. Such *a sign* that *has never been heard of from the dawn of time except in the Son of God, who is Christ the Lord*. Not long before his death, our brother and father appeared crucified, *bearing in his body* five wounds, which are truly *the marks of Christ*."[28] Then an extensive description of the marks of the wounds follows, which we will come to speak about again below. The simple phrase may be noted provisionally: "apparuit crucifixus quinque plagas portans" [He appeared crucified, bearing the five wounds].

Let us next hear the report in *The Autographs on the "Cartula" of St. Francis of Assisi* with the *Laudes Dei*:

> Two years before his death, the blessed Francis spent forty days on Mount La Verna from the Feast of the Assumption of the holy Virgin Mary until the September Feast of Saint Michael, in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, and the blessed Michael the Archangel. And the Lord's hand

27. P. Sabatier, ed., *Actus beati Francisci et Sociorum ejus*, Collection of Studies and Documents on the Religious History and Literature of the Middle Ages 4 (Paris: Fischbacher, 1902); see also P. Sabatier, ed., *Floretum S. Francisci Assisiensis: Liber aureus, qui italice dicitur I Fioretti di San Francesco* (1902; Paris: Kessinger Reprints, 2010).

28. Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short, eds., *The Founder*, Francis of Assisi: Early Documents 2 (New York: New City Press, 2000), 490; Boehmer, *Analekten*, p. 91, lines 9–13 (= 3rd ed., 1961, p. 62, lines 18–21).

> was upon him. After the vision and message of the seraph, and the impression of Christ's stigmata upon his body, he composed these praises written on the other side of this page and wrote them in his own hand, thanking God for the kindness bestowed on him.[29]

Here we already receive a determinate date for our event: Francis carries out a *fasting exercise* on *Mount La Verna* in the autumn *two years before his death*, thus in *1224*. A *seraph* appears to him, addressing him and impressing the *stigmata* on him. That becomes the occasion for the *Laudes Dei* found on the other side of the page.

We learn even more detailed information in the *Legenda Prima of Thomas of Celano* (1230):

> While he was staying in that hermitage called La Verna, after the place where it is located, two years prior to the time that he returned his soul to heaven, he saw *in the vision of God* a man, *having six wings like a seraph, standing over* him, *arms extended and feet joined*, affixed to a cross. *Two of his wings* were raised up, *two were stretched out over his head as if for flight*, and *two covered his whole body*. When the blessed servant of the most High saw these things, he was filled with the greatest awe, but could not decide what this vision meant for him. Moreover, he greatly rejoiced and was much delighted by the kind and gracious look that he saw the seraph gave him. The seraph's beauty was beyond comprehension, but the fact that the seraph was fixed to the cross and the bitter suffering of that passion thoroughly frightened him. Consequently, he got up both sad and happy as joy and sorrow took their turns in his heart; concerned over the matter, he kept thinking about what this vision could mean, and his *spirit was anxious* to discern a sensible meaning from the vision. While he was unable to perceive anything clearly understandable from the vision, its newness very much pressed upon his heart. Signs of the nails began to appear on his hands and feet, just as he had seen them a little while earlier on the crucified man hovering over him.[30]

Francis made a *stay* on *Mount La Verna two years before his death*, where a *crucified seraph*, with *six wings* that were extended in different ways, appeared to him. He remained *clueless* about the meaning of the vision until the *marks of the wounds* on the seraph were carried over to his own body. Here, too, a description of the same follows next.

The *Bull of Gregory IX* (*Confessor Domini*) *1237* reports the following: "This saint, while he was still following the course of this life and after he had blessedly consummated it, was divinely marked by the form of the stigmata on his hands, side, and feet."[31] Corresponding to the official character of the papal document, it merely makes a sheer *recital of the fact* without ornamental additions. In *1255*, the credibility of the stigmata is newly confirmed in the *Bull of*

29. Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short, *The Saint*, 108; Boehmer, *Analekten*, p. 69, lines 24–32 (= 3rd ed., 1961, p. 47, lines 15–21).

30. Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short, *The Saint*, 263–64; Thomas of Celano, *St. Francis of Assisi*, 2.1, 94; in *Acta Sanctorum Octobris* (1768), 2:709AB; Boehmer, *Analekten*, p. 92, line 26–p. 93, line 14 (= 3rd ed., 1961, p. 63, lines 19–35).

31. *Magnum Bullarium Romanum* (1742), 1:79, §1; translated by Christian Mouchel, *Les femmes de douleur: Maladie et sainteté dans l'Italie de la Contre-*Réforme (Besançon: Presses universitaire de Franche-Comté, 2007), 76.

Alexander IV (*Benigna operatio*), where we read about "those gratifying insignia of the Lord's passion, which should be frequently recalled and greatly admired, and which the hand of divine operation impressed on the body of this saint while he was still alive."[32] In somewhat other words, [these are] almost the same remarks as Gregory IX's.

From the *Historia Major of Matthew of Paris* (1260), for which I do not have the text before me, we may highlight that, according to Sabatier, it puts the act of the stigmatization fourteen days before Francis' death.[33]

Ever more entering into the half darkness of the tradition tinted by the church, we encounter the *Legend of Saint Bonaventure*. There we hear: "Christ looked upon him under the appearance of the seraph, . . . so that the friend of Christ might learn in advance that he was to be totally transformed into the likeness of Christ crucified, not by the martyrdom of his flesh, but by the enkindling of his soul."[34] And furthermore, the report is about the event itself: "One of those days, withdrawn in this way, while he was praying and all of his fervor was totally absorbed in God, Christ Jesus appeared to him as fastened to a cross. His *soul melted* at the sight, and the memory of Christ's passion was so impressed on the innermost recesses of his heart. From that hour, whenever Christ's crucifixion came to his mind, he could scarcely contain his tears and sighs, as he later revealed to his companions when he was approaching the end of his life."[35]

What is characteristic about his description is that in it *Christ himself*, under the form of a *seraph*, appears to Francis to bring the *stigmata* to him, which, by the way, is only *implied* and not told. We also gather something from this, apparently from Francis's own mouth, about the form of address during the appearance: "that the one who had appeared to him had told him some things that he would never disclose to any person as long as he lived. We should believe, then, that the utterances of that sacred seraph marvelously appearing to him on the cross were so *secret* that *people are not permitted to speak of them*."[36]

The inscription on the Church of the Stigmata on Mount La Verna, which dates from 1264, states: "After the Feast of the Assumption of the glorious Virgin Mary, Count Simone, son of the illustrious Guido, by the Grace of God, Count Palatine of Tuscany, founded this oratory in honor of the Blessed Francis, to whom in this same place the seraph appeared in the year of our Lord 1225, within the octave of the birth of the Virgin, and impressed upon his body and signed him with the stigmata of Jesus Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit."[37]

Thomas of Eccleston knows the following about the appearance: "that the apparition of the seraphim took place whilst St. Francis was in ecstasy, and that the evidence was greater even than that written in the Saint's life. Moreover, many things, said Brother Leo, had been revealed to St. Francis of which he had never

32. Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short, *The Founder*, 780; *Magnum Bullarium Romanum* (1742), 1:109, §3.
33. See Sabatier, *Franz von Assisi*, 260.
34. Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short, *The Founder*, 632; *Legend of Saint Bonaventura* 13.192; in *Acta Sanctorum Octobris* (1768), 2:777E.
35. Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short, *The Founder*, 534; *Bonaventura* 1.12; in *Acta Sanctorum Octobris* (1768), 2:745AB.
36. Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short, *The Founder*, 633; *Bonaventura* 13.194; in *Acta Sanctorum Octobris* (1768), 2:778A.
37. Sabatier, *Speculum perfectionis*, 213; ET by Ella Noyes in *The Casentino and Its Story* (London: E. P. Dutton, 1905), 168.

spoken to any living man; but this the Saint did tell Brother Ruffino, his companion, that when he saw the angel from afar, he was exceedingly terrified, and that the angel had treated him stiffly. And the angel said that the Order should endure until the end of the world. . . ."[38] He promises him still more of the same for the future of his Order, then the report closes with the indication of its source: "These things were written down by Brother Warin of Sedenfeld from the lips of Brother Leo."[39] Due to this remark, one might be inclined to number this piece among the sources of the first rank, and it is not out of the question that a genuine kernel goes back to Leo. Yet the entirely *reflective nature* of the piece and very particularly the *panegyric to the Order* at the conclusion indicates, at any rate, a *later composition*, and therefore we have mentioned it here.

It now may also be appropriate to let the *plagiarist* in the *Tres Socii* be heard, since he probably was not temporally distant from the sources just cited. In this piece, excluded by Sabatier, we read: "While he was still alive in the flesh, the Lord adorned him with a wonderful prerogative of a unique privilege, wishing to show the whole world the fervor of love and the incessant memory of the passion of Christ, which he carried in his heart." The *appearance* is described in the following way: "Within its six wings there was the form of a very beautiful, crucified man, whose hands and feet were extended after the manner of a cross, and whose features were clearly those of the Lord Jesus."[40] Thus a *crucified human*, arms and legs *spread out as on a cross*, who resembles Christ, for so we likely have to understand the "features of the Lord Jesus"! In chapter 99 of the *Speculum perfectionis*, we find this interesting note: "Likewise, at the time he received on his body the stigmata of the Lord on the holy mountain of La Verna, he suffered so many temptations and afflictions from the devil that he was unable to appear his former joyful self."[41]

If we now glance at the notes of the *Actus B. Francisci*, we must, of course, be aware that we are strolling on grounds where the question of reliability more than ever can only be answered according to its probability, for here possible and impossible, original or naive traits from life, and baroque legends stand closely together. The best example is precisely *Chapter IX*, which is important for us here. We hear how Francis and his [Franciscan] brothers *Leo*, *Masseo*, and *Angelus* set out for Mount La Verna, where "our sisters, the birds"[42] show him a place, where they set up camp, and where Francis now wants to make a *forty-day exercise of penance and fasting* in honor of Saint Michael. Just once during the week Leo is allowed to provision him with bread and water. Francis concentrates his entire soul on his resolution: "Sometimes he was in such an ecstasy of spirit and so absorbed in God that he was not able to speak throughout the day or night."[43] The curious disciple, however, cannot help but eavesdrop on the master in his

38. Thomas of Eccleston, *The Chronicle of Thomas of Eccleston: "De Adventu Fratrum Minorum in Angliam,"* trans. Father Cuthbert (London: Sands, 1909), 95; *Collatio* XIII (alias XII), in Thomas of Eccleston, *The Chronicle*, 245.

39. *Collatio* XIII (alias XII), in Thomas of Eccleston, *The Chronicle*, 245.

40. Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short, *The Founder*, 108; see Leo, Rufinus, and Angelus, *Legenda trium sociorum* 5.69; in *Acta Sanctorum Octobris* (1768), 2:741D; see Sabatier, *Franz von Assisi*, xxxvi–xxxvii, 259.

41. Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short, eds., *The Prophet*, Francis of Assisi: Early Documents 3 (New York: New City Press, 2001), 346; Sabatier, *Speculum perfectionis* 99; in Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short, *The Prophet*, p. 194, line 22–p. 195, line 1.

42. *Actus* 9.26; in Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short, *The Prophet*, 34.

43. Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short, *The Prophet*, 454; 34 for *Actus* 9.

devotion, encountering him several times in ardent prayer no longer standing, but *floating* up into the clouds. Another time, he hears him speaking with someone and intervenes with the naive shout that Francis is a great saint too. The latter reprimands Leo sharply, yet at his insistence telling him about his conversation with God, who appeared to him as flames of fire. Finally, he warns him against similar interventions, closing with the words: "For in a few days on this mountain, God will perform an astonishing miracle, which the whole world will admire. For he will do something new, which he has never done before to any creature in this world."[44] Then Leo leaves him and the report goes on: "During that very same forty days and on that same mountain around the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, Christ appeared under the form of a winged seraph as though crucified and impressed both the nails and the stigmata on the hands and feet and side of Saint Francis, just as it says in his *Legend*."[45] The appearance had produced such luminosity that mountain and valley reflected them, to which the shepherds tarrying nearby were witnesses. "Why these sacred stigmata had been impressed on Saint Francis has not become entirely clear. But as Francis himself said to his companions, this great mystery is being put off for the future."[46] Then follows a quasi-genealogy of the *transmission of the sources*, which does not exactly make the story, meaning its details, more credible in our eyes. The writer indeed ascribes his facts to *Hugolino*, who got them from *James of Massa*, who got them from Brother *Leo*. It cannot be made plausible to us that a report of around nine printed pages could be kept unadulterated under such circumstances, even if it did not appear in the *Fioretti*. Still, a few of the details remain valuable to us, above all the fact that Francis already found himself in a state of extraordinary *ecstasy* for some time before the stigmatization.

We thereby come to the end of the reports about the act of stigmatization on Mount La Verna. Later we will carry out a comparison and critique of them in a larger context. But next we need to turn our attention to the different *descriptions of the stigmata themselves*, which may perhaps claim our attention even more acutely than the preceding reports.

b. Reports about the Stigmata

The first depiction of the stigmata we find already in the frequently mentioned letter of *Elias of Cortona*. It gives us valuable information, not only about the stigmata, but also about Francis's general *bodily condition*:

> His hands and feet had, as it were, the openings of the nails and were pierced front and back, revealing the scars and showing the nails' blackness. His side, moreover, seemed opened by a lance and often *emitted* blood.
>
> As long as his spirit lived in the body, *there was no beauty in him for his appearance was that of a man despised.* No part of his body was without great suffering. By reason of the contraction of his sinews, his limbs were stiff, much like those of a dead man. But after his death, his appearance was *one of great beauty*, gleaming with a dazzling white brightness and giving joy to all who looked upon him. His limbs, which had been rigid, became marvelously

44. Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short, *The Prophet*, 457; 38 for *Actus* 9.67.
45. Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short, *The Prophet*, 457; 39 for *Actus* 9.68.
46. Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short, *The Prophet*, 458; 39 for *Actus* 9.70.

> soft and pliable, so that they would be turned this way and that, like those of a young child.[47]

The matter is fairly clear: his *hands* and *feet* showed the *stab wounds* on both sides, with the *black* left behind by the nails, and on his side a bleeding *lance wound* was also visible.

The description of Thomas of Celano is much more extensive:

> His hands and feet seemed to be pierced through the middle by nails, with the heads of the nails appearing on the inner part of his hands and on the upper part of his feet, and their points protruding on opposite sides. Those marks on the inside of his hands were round, but rather oblong on the outside; and small pieces of flesh were visible like the points of nails, bent over and flattened, extending beyond the flesh around them. On his feet, the marks of nails were stamped in the same way and raised above the surrounding flesh. His right side was marked with an oblong scar, as if pierced with a lance, and this often dripped blood, so that his tunic and undergarments were frequently stained with his holy blood.
>
> Sadly, only a few merited seeing the sacred wound in his side during the life of the crucified servant of the crucified Lord. Elias was fortunate and did merit somehow to see the wound in his side. For one time, when the same brother Rufino put his hand onto the holy man's chest to rub him, his hand slipped, as often happens, and it chanced that he touched the precious scar in his right side. As soon as he had touched it, the holy one of God felt great pain and pushed Rufino's hand away, crying out for the Lord to spare him. He hid those marks carefully from strangers, and concealed them cautiously from people close to him, so that even the brothers at his side and his most devoted followers for a long time did not know about them.[48]

In this report, our eyes fall immediately on (1) the strong emphasis on the peculiar form of the *wounds to hand and foot*. They really are not wounds at all, but a kind of *outgrowth* of the inner and outer hand and surface of the foot, respectively, in the form of *nails*, which are *twisted* at their tips. (2) The care with which the saint tried to *hide* the stigmata, even from his trusted companions.

The second papal *bull of confirmation* by *Alexander IV*, who, as Cardinal Hugolin, in his day had been an eyewitness in the retinue of Gregory IX, explains:

> Eyes looking closely saw, and touching fingers became most sure, that in his hands and feet a truly formed likeness of nails grew out of the substance of his own flesh or was added from some newly created material. While he was still living, the Saint zealously hid these from the eyes of men whose praise he shunned. After he had died, a wound in his side, which was not inflicted or made by man, was clearly seen in his body. . . . It could not be hidden from certain brothers who were his close companions, because it exuded fluid.[49]

47. Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short, *The Founder*, 490; Boehmer, *Analekten*, p. 91, lines 14–25 (= 3rd ed., 1961, p. 62, lines 22–30).

48. Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short, *The Saint*, 264–65; Thomas of Celano, *St. Francis of Assisi* 2.95; in *Acta Sanctorum Octobris* (1768), 2:709BC; Boehmer, *Analekten*, p. 93, lines 14–p. 94, line 6 (= 3rd ed., 1961, p. 63, line 35–p. 64, line 16).

49. Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short, *The Founder*, 780; *Magnum Bullarium Romanum* (1742), 1:109, §3; *Benigna operatio of Alexander IV* (1255).

Here as well we find an emphasis on both named points: nail-like *outgrowths* that Francis carefully *hides* and that are found after his *death*.

Matthew of Paris writes about the *side wound*: "His right side also was laid open and sprinkled with blood, so that the secret recesses of his heart were plainly visible";[50] and later, "After his death no marks of the wounds appeared either in his side, hands, or feet."[51] Both are highly fantastical details, which can hardly be taken seriously. Nevertheless, we will encounter the first of them again later.

In the *Legend of Saint Bonaventure*, we read: "People considered it a great gift to be allowed to kiss or even to see the sacred marks of Jesus Christ which Saint Francis bore in his own body."[52]

"He could not prevent at least some from seeing the stigmata in his hands and feet; . . . a number of the brothers . . . confirmed under oath . . . that this was so and that they had seen it."[53] "[He] covered with his left hand the wound in his right side, lest it be seen."[54] And as a specific confirmation of the truth of his statements, he goes on: "One of them, a knight who was educated and prudent, Jerome by name, a distinguished and famous man, had doubts about these sacred signs and was unbelieving like Thomas. Fervently and boldly, in the presence of the brothers and the citizens, he did not hesitate to move the nails and to touch with his hands the saint's hands, feet, and side. While he was examining with his hands these authentic signs of Christ's wounds, he completely healed the wound of doubt in his own heart and the hearts of others."[55]

The *nail form* of the stigmata is highlighted most expressly by the *plagiarist of the Three Companions*: "They saw in his hands and feet, not just the holes of the nails, but the nails themselves formed by his own flesh, taking shape from it, and showing the dark color of iron."[56] And in agreement with all the other reports, he says about the stigmata: "Until his death, the man of God, unwilling to divulge God's sacrament, concealed it to the best of his ability, although he was unable to cover it completely since it became known to at least his intimate companions."[57]

50. M. Parisiensis, *Chronica majora*, 134–35; *Roger of Wendover's Flowers of History: Comprising the History of England from the Descent of the Saxons to A.D. 1235 / Formerly Ascribed to Matthew Paris*, trans. J. A. Giles (London: Henry G. Bohn), 496; Barth is probably citing him, according to K. von Hase, *Franz von Assisi: Ein Heiligenbild* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1856), 168 n. 42; reprinted in K. von Hase, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 5, *Heilige und Propheten* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1892), 1–143, 121 n. 42.

51. *Roger of Wendover's Flowers of History*, 496; M. Parisiensis, *Chronica majora*, 135; K. von Hase, *Gesammelte Werke*, 5:185 n. 65; or 132 n. 65.

52. Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short, *The Saint*, 281; rather see Thomas von Celano, *St. Francis of Assisi* 2.4, p. 113; in *Acta Sanctorum Octobris* (1768), 2:715A (where it actually reads: "non solum ad osculandum [trans. note: *deosculandum*?], et [forte sed] ad videndum"; see. K. von Hase, *Gesammelte Werke*, 5:144 n. 3; or 105 n. 3).

53. Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short, *The Founder*, 636; *Bonaventura* 13.200; in *Acta Sanctorum Octobris* (1768), 2:778DE [trans. note: Barth seems to be citing a note in K. von Hase, *Gesammelte Werke*, 5:144, rather than the original edition].

54. Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short, *The Founder*, 715; see *Bonaventura* 14.208; in *Acta Sanctorum Octobris* (1768), 2:780E.

55. Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short, *The Founder*, 490, 646–47; *Bonaventura* 15.218; in *Acta Sanctorum Octobris* (1768), 2:782D.

56. Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short, *The Founder*, 108; Leo, Rufinus, and Angelus, *Legenda trium sociorum* 5.70; in *Acta Sanctorum Octobris* (1768), 2:741E.

57. Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short, *The Founder*, 108; Leo, Rufinus, and Angelus, *Legenda trium sociorum* 5.69; in *Acta Sanctorum Octobris* (1768), 2:741E.

The *Actus B. Francisci* speak at special length about this careful concealment of the stigmata. We read there in Chapter 34:

> Our blessed Father Francis so diligently concealed from the eyes of all those most holy wounds that Christ, the Son of God, had miraculously impressed in his hands and feet and side that, while the saint was living, hardly anyone was able to see them plainly. From that time onward, he went about with his feet covered, and only the tips of his fingers were visible to his companions, for he hid his hands in his sleeves, remembering what was said to the holy Tobias by the angel: *It is good to keep the secret of a king*. While he was still living, Saint Francis especially hid the wound in his side at all times so that, except for Brother Rufino, who managed to see it by a pious strategy, no one else was able to see it. By threefold evidence Brother Rufino assured himself and others about the most holy wound on the right side.[58]

Reports follow about how Rufinus happened to see the side wound on three occasions. The accounting of one of these episodes agrees internally with that of the already cited mention in *Th. v. Celano*. Chapter 39 of the *Actus* provides yet an additional supplement: "Saint Francis allowed only Brother Leo to touch his stigmata, while Leo was changing the bandages that he applied between those marvelous nails and the rest of the flesh in order to hold the blood and ease the pain."[59] On certain days, Francis admittedly rejected medical treatment, so that "on the day of the crucifixion, truly crucified by the pains of the cross, he might hang with Christ."[60]

The *actual documentary sources* for the stigmatization and the stigmata are thus *exhausted*. As already mentioned, some *legendary additions from later times* might be adduced, which are interesting to the extent that they shed light on the *assessment* and evaluation of the "miracle" by *contemporaries*. Yet *historically*, they remain entirely without merit and thus may conveniently be left *out of consideration* for our purposes.

We therefore now turn immediately to the task of subjecting the source material we have just gone through to a thorough appraisal.

3. Comparison and Critique

In the introduction we have already discussed the difficulty of being completely dependent, for a historical investigation, on monastic or ecclesial sources. This difficulty does sometimes occur, and it certainly must catch our attention in the case of the reports on the stigmata of Saint Francis. *Tholuck* says this about these reports: "To a large extent, we miss the character of sobriety in the biographies of Francis. Even in their tone every description is in many ways a poetic, hyperbolic panegyric."[61]

Source criticism is therefore an irrefutable *necessity* also in this case. Without criticism, there is no historical science. Yet if we now proceed along these lines,

58. Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short, *The Prophet*, 509; 116–17 for *Actus* 34.1–3.
59. Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short, *The Prophet*, 513; 129 for *Actus* 39.8.
60. Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short, *The Prophet*, 513; 129 for *Actus* 39.9.
61. See A. Tholuck, Über die Wunder der katholischen Kirche und insbesondere über das Verhältniss dieser und der biblischen Wunder zu *den Erscheinungen des Magnetismus und Somnambulismus*, in *Vermischte Schriften grösstentheils apologetischen Inhalts*, part 1 (Hamburg: Perthes, 1839), 28–148, 101.

we must be very clear that we are thereby treading on completely *subjective* and *relative* ground, which in and by itself can be as unscientific as remaining content with the earliest manuscript, for example. Indeed, it would be a different matter if there really were an absolute measure for science, for example, a[62] "twofold canon for thought and experience."[63] However, we do not have such a thing, and we will not have it—and it is perhaps better that way. Should someone claim to possess such an infallible measure—whether that be on the banks of the Tiber or the Rhine River[64]—it will turn into a *Procrustean bed*. The latter, however, should in no case become a symbol of source criticism, even if this occasionally seems to be the case.

By the same token, we ought not be held back, by the awareness that "our knowledge is only partial" (1 Cor. 13:9), from producing a *subjective perspective and measure*. An unhealthy *quietism* or *agnosticism* would be the result, which would have most fateful consequences not only for the field of science but also for our entire view of life.

Our critical examination of the stigmata of Saint Francis must therefore be understood in this light, as we now refer to the *relative* grounds of the sources and upon the *just-as-relative* field of historical investigation and hypothesis. According to the nature of things, this is split into two parts: (1) the *comparison and criticism of the sources*, with which we will first deal; and (2) the laying out of our *own perspectives*, which we will attempt to construe in the second main part of the paper.

For the sake of clarity, we will occupy ourselves with enumerating the major aspects of the report, as we did in the previous section.

a. Place, Time, and Occasion

Remarkable *differences* among the sources already become apparent here, not only in relation to *place* and *occasion*, which overall are in general agreement, but rather more in relation to the *time.*

Let us first compare the information about the *place* and the *occasion* and then approach the *primary issue* of the *time.*

Our oldest source, *Elias of Cortona*, is completely *silent* on these two aspects. This does not need to be interpreted as a suspicious sign. Rather, it is easy to explain based on the *character* and *style* of his letters. Elias does not want to share *dates* with the French monks but rather a *joyous fact* that he knows will evoke faith and resonance without needing further, more precise details. By contrast, *Brother Leo* writes on the paper with the *Laudes*: "*fecit quadragesimam in*

62. Here Barth added "Bolligers," then crossed out the name and substituted it with the indefinite article. See H. Mulert, "Bolliger, Adolf," in the *RGG*[1] 1: col. 1287. For information about the Swiss theologian Adolf Bolliger, see *RGG*[2] 1: cols. 1179–80.

63. In his book *Der Weg zu Gott für unser Geschlecht: Ein Stück Erfahrungstheologie*, 2nd ed. (Frauenfeld: Huber, 1900), and in a series of essays, Bolliger sought to "prove" that "experience and thought lead to theism"; see "Zu Schutz und Trutz," in *SThZ* 17 (1900): 1–11. He thought that in theology, as it is the case in general, "experience, specifically the logical working through of an experience," must be the "yardstick" of knowledge; see "Zur Bedeutung der Erkenntnis *für die Religion*," in *SThZ* 21 (1904): 201–27, esp. 201.

64. Bolliger was professor of systematic theology in Basel in 1891–1905.

loco Aluerne": he held a *forty-day practice of penance and fasting* [*quadragesima*] on *Mount La Verna*. This coincides with the details in *Thomas of Celano*, who only reports of a *mora*, a stay in a *hermitage* on *Mount La Verna*.[65] Both papal *bulls of confirmation* report nothing about the place or the occasion, while *Bonaventure* speaks of a lengthy prayer service without giving a definite place. The construction of the Church of the Stigmata on Mount La Verna must be particularly relevant for us, even though it happened forty years after the event. It is evidence that Mount La Verna, even back then, was generally seen as the location of this event, despite the silence of some sources. Finally, the *Speculum perfectionis* as well as the *Actus*, the former in close correspondence with *Celano*, mention Mount La Verna and the *quadragesima*.

Despite the silence in *Thomas of Celano*[66] and the *bulls of confirmation*, the motivation of which is easy to understand, we may take note of the *unanimity of the sources*.

More complicated is comparing the *dates*, in particular the setting of the *year*. Regarding the exact time frame, we may accept the uncontroverted details from the *Cartula* of Brother Leo, who claimed that Francis took up his *quadragesima* from the *Feast of the Assumption of Mary* until the *Feast of St. Michael*.[67] That would have been from the fifteenth of August until the twenty-ninth of September. This indeed makes *forty days*, excluding Sundays because they are not counted as days of fasting.

But what about the year itself?

Elias of Cortona says: "Not long before death."[68]

Brother Leo: "Two years before death."[69]

Thomas von Celano: "Two years before his soul returned to heaven."[70]

Gregory IX: "After that period of his life came to a happy end."[71]

Alexander IV: "While he was still alive."[72]

Matthew of Paris: "*Fourteen days before his death*."[73]

The inscription in the Church of the Stigmata: "In the year 1225."[74]

Meanwhile, the remaining sources do not give a definite date!

As we see, we have the choice between the years 1224, 1225, and 1226. Out of seven reports, two give the first year (1224), one gives the second year (1225), and four give the third year (1226) with more or less clarity. It is highly tempting to look for a *tendency* behind the fact that precisely all four curial or at least curially influenced sources place the stigmatization directly before Francis's death, just as *Karl von Hase* regards especially the position of Elias of Cortona as

65. Boehmer, *Analekten*, p. 69, lines 24–25 (= 1961, 3rd ed., p. 47, lines 15–16). See also Thomas von Celano, *St. Francis of Assisi*, 2.94; in *Acta Sanctorum Octobris* (1768), 2:709A; Boehmer, *Analekten*, p. 92, lines 26f–27 (= 1961, 3rd ed., p. 63, lines 19–20).

66. Perhaps a mixup here with Elias von Cortona.

67. Boehmer, *Analekten*, p. 69, line 25 (= 1961, 3rd ed., p. 47, line 15).

68. Boehmer, *Analekten*, p. 91, line 11f (= 1961, 3rd ed., p. 62, line 20).

69. Boehmer, *Analekten*, p. 69, line 24 (= 1961, 3rd ed., p. 47, line 15).

70. Thomas von Celano, *St. Francis of Assisi*, 2.94; in *Acta Sanctorum Octobris* (1768), 2:709A; Boehmer, *Analekten*, p. 92, lines 27–28 (= 1961, 3rd ed., p. 63, line 21).

71. *Magnum Bullarium Romanum* (1742), 1:79, §1.

72. *Magnum Bullarium Romanum* (1742), 1:109, §3.

73. Cf. Sabatier, *Franz von Assisi*, 260; M. Parisiensis, *Chronica majora*, 134.

74. Cf. Sabatier, *Speculum Perfectionis*, ccxiii.

a reason *against the veracity* of the stigmata.[75] From our perspective, both ways are *blind alleys*.

1. The statements of the papal bulls do not definitely indicate the year 1226. The "*postquam . . . consummavit . . .*" of Gregory IX[76] can also refer to the visitation of the body with the stigmata *after* Francis's death, a visit that he carried out during his time as Cardinal Hugolino in Assisi. (Then again, the other interpretation of the grammar does seem more probable to me.) Just as unreliable is the bull from Alexander IV. Earlier, when we took the bull as referring to 1226, the "*adhuc*" [yet] was pivotal: "while he was *very much alive*." The expression "*. . . vitali spiritu foveretur*" also appears to us to refer to a sickly, exhausted body. The latter could just as well be a *poetic expression* where the "*adhuc*" simply corresponds to a "yet."[77] Both reports are in any case *doubtful.*

2. The main reason for the year 1226 falls away if a *variant in the letter of Elias*, cited by Sabatier, were genuine (Abbot Amoni, 1880), according to which we would need to read "*nam diu*" [for long] instead of "*non diu*" [not long]!?[78]

3. Regarding the unique detail in *Matthew of Paris*, fourteen days before his death, I hold this to be a simple misunderstanding in which for some reason or another the "*quadragesima*" [forty] turned into "*quarto decimo*" [fourteen].[79] Likewise, the year 1225 stands in the inscription in the Church of the Stigmata, without there being any support for it in the sources known to us!

And so we come to the year *1224* that is jointly attested by *Brother Leo* and *Thomas of Celano*. It seems that Bonaventure and the *plagiarist* of the Three Companions follow suit, while it is accepted definitively in the *Actus.* The opposing statement by both of the popes, if it is indeed that, can possibly rest upon Elias's false reading of "not long."

Now, of course, a few *internal contradictions* about the year 1224 still need to be eliminated: It can be asked, How is it possible that the stigmata, however they came about, could last for a full two years?

How should Francis's success at keeping this a relative secret for so long be explained?

How is it that, from the time of the stigmatization until his death, so little is said about them, while one would expect it to be a sensation, at least within the circle of his disciples?

The answer to all these objections will reveal itself in the second section; here we are only giving an introduction so that no one might believe that, with the obtained *concordance between the sources*, we might have already concluded our investigation.

Result: According to the sources, the stigmata occurred during an event of a *fasting-and-penance exercise on Mount La Verna*, during the time frame of August fifteenth through September twenty-ninth in the year 1224 (1225, or 1226, respectively).

75. K. von Hase, *Gesammelte Werke*, 5:170–78, esp. 122–27.
76. *Magnum Bullarium Romanum* (1742), 1:79, §1.
77. *Magnum Bullarium Romanum* (1742), 1:109, §3.
78. Cf. Sabatier, *Franz von Assisi*, 266 n. 1.
79. Cf. Sabatier, *Franz von Assisi*, 260. In M. Parisiensis, *Chronica majora*, 134, however, we read about "quintadecima die ante exitum suum." K. von Hase translates it the same way, *Gesammelte Werke*, 5:168 and 121: "*on the fifteenth day before his passing away*."

b. The Vision

I have already laid out the details of what the *Actus* has recounted about the process of the stigmatization on Mount La Verna. A small difference could occur in that Thomas of Celano spoke of a small place *that already had* a hermitage on it, while the *Actus* speaks of an *improvised shelter* made of tree branches. The thing in and of itself is irrelevant, but the *first* account appears to have represented the general assumption, as the famous image of the artist *Giotto* shows.[80]

What is more valuable to us is the passage we already highlighted, "he was sometimes in so long an ecstasy of the soul that night and day he could not speak, so absorbed was he in God";[81] and likewise the one in Bonaventure, where the vision came to him "while he was praying in a place set apart and was wholly absorbed into God, with superexceeding excess of fervour";[82] and according to Thomas of Eccleston, "in a certain seizure of contemplation."[83] We see the saint sunk deep in prayer upon a lonely mountain, a bit apart from the three disciples, who, in awestruck reverence, were watching the master on high. The object of his prayer was the *passion of Christ*, which yet had never come so close to him. Francis was prepared for great things, which we heard from his own mouth in the *Actus.* Who would want to deny that such an event cast a shadow in advance? The supposed Three Companions are fully correct to place this event into a casual nexus of the entire previous life of Francis: "and so from that time," namely, his conversion, "his heart was wounded and melted at the memory of the Lord's passion, which he always as long as he lived carried the wounds of the Lord in his heart, just as latterly appeared splendidly [luculenter] from the new impression of those same wounds made miraculously in his own body."[84]

"Do not come near, take off your shoes, for the ground that you stand on is holy ground!" [Exod. 3:5]. Must not this feeling overcome everyone who has dug deeply into the event that we shall now describe, an event that appropriately can be compared to the events at Horeb and Gethsemane. It was one of the rare moments in the life of humanity that *God* and *humanity* step within touch of each other. A "description according to the sources" of such a moment is nonsense: The relative nature of all historiography becomes clear here more than ever.

If we therefore undertake to present a *comparison of the reports* here, we still cannot expect in any way a disclosure of the actual being of the event. In its innermost core, it will always remain an enigma to us. This is all the more so because the reports which we have about it, in their overwhelming majority, are to be seen as being a *later addition*, a fact that is clear as their *differences* become greater and greater. Today we can no longer recognize how much this is due to the (not very detailed) narration that Francis gave to his disciples. Such a judgment is impossible in regard to dreams and visions.

80. See H. Thode, *Franz von Assisi und die Anfänge der Kunst der Renaissance in Italien*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Grote, 1904), 144–51, esp. 148, plate 3, image 6; and plate 13, image 19.

81. *Actus* 9.31; in Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short, *The Prophet*, 34.

82. *Bonaventura* 1.12; in *Acta Sanctorum Octobris* (1768), 2:745A.

83. Thomas de Eccleston, *Collatio* XIII (XII), 245.

84. Leo, Rufinus, and Angelus, *Legenda trium sociorum* 1.14; in *Acta Sanctorum Octobris* (1768), 2:727 CD.

Elias of Cortona is silent about the particulars on this point as well, as he is about the earlier ones: "he appeared crucified, bearing five wounds."[85] That is all we hear.

Brother Leo says, the stigmatization happened "after the vision and address of the Seraph."[86]

By contrast, the description by *Thomas of Celano* is very detailed. The saint caught above him a glimpse of a "man of God" like a *seraph*.[87] The latter is only vaguely described: He is *crucified*, but has *six wings*, two raised up over his head, two to fly with, and two *covering his whole body*, so that no one could see anything of him, never mind his wounds.

Bonaventure already says about this: "he knew he saw Christ under the appearance of the Seraph"; this seems then to have become the primary interpretation of the seraph, again, as can be seen in the paintings of *Giotto*, which clearly show the head of Christ.[88] And further down, Bonaventure explicitly says, "Christ appeared to him as if nailed to the Cross."[89] Here we also hear that the apparition addresses Francis. Obviously, we are unable to make out anything of the content: "so eloquent had been the secrets!"[90]

The *inscription in the Church of the Stigmata* mentions only the seraph, as does *Thomas of Eccleston*, who explicitly speaks of an "angel."[91] Yet another variation is given by the so-called Three Companions, who describe the figure like this: between the wings there is the form of an absolutely *beautiful, crucified person*, arms and legs *spread out like a cross*, and whose face *looked like Christ*. According to the *Actus*, there appeared "Christ in the form of a winged Seraph, as if crucified,"[92] which corresponds to the description of Bonaventure almost word for word.

We have thus far *three versions* of the Vision:

1. A seraph (Leo, Thomas of Celano, Thomas of Eccleston, inscription in the Church of the Stigmata)
2. A *Christ figure* in the form of a seraph (*Bonaventure*, *Actus*)
3. A crucified *human* that looks like Christ (Three Companions)

It seems to us that the *first* one is most thoroughly attested to, because it is easy to explain how the others grew out of it, and not the other way around. By the way, it is also not out of the question that Francis himself had already given different versions, which is easily possible with highly emotive and imaginative personalities.

Result: During his exercise in penance and prayer, Francis receives an *apparition* who speaks to him, perhaps through a dream or a vision. It remains unclear

85. Boehmer, *Analekten*, p. 91, lines 12–13 (= 1961, 3rd ed., p. 62, lines 20–21).
86. Boehmer, *Analekten*, p. 69, line 29 (= 1961, 3rd ed., p. 47, lines 18–19).
87. Thomas von Celano, *St. Francis of Assisi* 2.94; in *Acta Sanctorum Octobris* (1768), 2:709A; Boehmer, *Analekten*, p. 92, line 28 (= 1961, 3rd ed., p. 63, line 21).
88. *Bonaventura* 13.192; in *Acta Sanctorum Octobris* (1768), 2:777E; see also H. Thode, plate 3, image 6; plate 13, image 19.
89. *Bonaventura* 1.12; in *Acta Sanctorum Octobris* (1768), 2:745AB.
90. *Bonaventura* 13.194; in *Acta Sanctorum Octobris* (1768), 2:778A.
91. See Sabatier, *Speculum Perfectionis*, ccxiii; Thomas de Eccleston, *Collatio* XIII (XII), 245.
92. *Actus* 9.68; in Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short, *The Prophet*, 39.

in the reports whether this was a *seraph, Christ*, or a *crucified person*. The first version seems to be the most acceptable.

c. The Stigmatization

Most of our sources agree that the imprinting of the stigmata stands *in connection* with the *vision* just described. This is not the case among the official and semiofficial file papers such as the letter of Elias and the two bulls of confirmation, which just report only the *fact*, not the how and where.

Brother Leo speaks of an "impression of the marks [*stigmatum*] on his body."[93] With this expression, we could think about a *direct transmission*, that is, an imprinting by the apparition, something like they claim[94] that Jetzer experienced in the Jetzer case in the monastery in Bern. But it also matches the description of *Thomas of Celano* and the later ones, just as it is also depicted in *Giotto's* painting. The apparition floats at a bit of a distance from the saint, and at the same time, magnetic lines stream from his hands, his feet, and his side onto the limbs of Francis. Thomas of Celano recounts that Francis went rigid from awe and terror and did not know what to make of the apparition. While he was still trying to make sense of it, the *marks of wounds* appeared on his limbs, as he saw them earlier on the limbs of the apparition.

Bonaventure's account of the stigmatization is interesting. If it were not Bonaventure himself who speaks here, one could come to the conclusion, because his report about it is so veiled and allusive, that someone is speaking here who does not believe in the stigmatization at all, or at most, only in a very *spiritualized* way. Here we read that at a glimpse of the apparition, "so impressed down to the marrow was the memory of Christ's passion on the inwards of his heart,"[95] so that from then on, whenever he remembered the passion, he had to weep.

This "down to the marrow," like another aforementioned line, "such that the friend of Christ knew beforehand that he would be transformed into the likeness of Christ crucified by the total immolation of his soul,"[96] shows that the author is thinking about the stigmata indeed. The *inscription in the Church of the Stigmata* and *Thomas of Eccleston* assume a more direct transference, likewise in the *Actus*.

Who wants to decide here? It is difficult to conduct historical investigations of visions. By contrast, it seems to us that, even on this point, the description of *Thomas of Celano* is older and more reliable, primarily because it has the visual arts on its side, as already mentioned.

Result: Looking at the apparition, Francis is initially shocked and speechless, and the stigmata appear on his limbs. Once again, it remains questionable in the sources whether this was thought of as a *direct transference* of them or a kind of magnetizing *effect from afar*.

93. Boehmer, *Analekten*, p. 69, lines 29–30 (=1961, 3rd ed., p. 47, line 19).
94. See R. Steck, "Der Berner Jetzerprozess," 68, 70.
95. *Bonaventura* 1.12; in *Acta Sanctorum Octobris* (1768), 2:745B.
96. *Bonaventura* 13.192; in *Acta Sanctorum Octobris* (1768), 2:777E.

d. The Stigmata

We have already spoken of the oldest and most straightforward description of the stigmata: it is that of *Elias of Cortona*. Here they are described as *symmetrical puncture wounds*, in which the *blackness of the nails* is still visible. The side appears like a *lance pierced through it*, and *it exudes blood*.

Already the account of *Thomas of Celano* is substantially different. According to him, Francis's limbs appear in the middle *as if nailed*, such that the *heads of the nails* protrude out of the inner and outer surfaces of the hands and feet, but on the other side are "*caruncula*," *pieces of flesh*;[97] Thomas compares them to unbent points of nails. The right side shows a *lance puncture*, with hematoma pressed onto the *clothes.*

The account of Alexander IV follows this account closely. It speaks as well of the "*expressa undique similitude clavorum*," except with the difference that he leaves the question open whether the *excrescences* are out of *flesh* or "*de materia novae creationis.*"[98] He emphasizes that the *side wound* is *not* somehow a *fraud*, as might seem especially likely.

According to *Matthew of Paris*, the *side wound* was so deep that one could see all the way to the heart, a remark that seems to me, in my understanding, to be unseemly already for anatomical reasons. A second remarkable characteristic is that all the wounds *disappear in his death*, which seems to be clearly an arbitrary *increase of the miraculous*. The series of witnesses concludes with the so-called Three Companions. With them, the later view was already so hardened that even a *clear polemic* against the account of Elias emerges:

Elias: "His hands and feet had *as it were the punctures of the nails* impressed on either side."[99]

Three Companions: "They could perceive in his hands and feet not just, as it were, the punctures of the nails but the nails themselves."[100]

Obviously, as time went on, the authors put forth effort to make the *later view* the only valid one and to *canonize* it at any price.

The evaluation of the entire question revolves substantially around the evaluation of this point. The natural thing to do here is that we primarily hold on to the *oldest account* by Elias of Cortona, because here we are dealing with supposed or actual *realities* that are accessible by a purely historical investigation. The other accounts are to be understood as based on this one.

One would have already noticed the nub of the matter in *Elias's* account, which the others follow suit. It is especially the observation "*clavorum nigredinem ostendentes*,"[101] "the wounds display the black of the nails," with which Elias obviously means the traces of the black iron in the bloody and then scabby wounds, or, that of which the stigmata were reminiscent, as we will see later. Yet the next historical account, by *Thomas of Celano*, abstracts in a different way: where the black of the nails is, there the nails are themselves—and then he depicts the latter in a rather fantastical manner, whereby, of course, it cannot be

97. Thomas of Celano, *St. Francis of Assisi* 2.95; in *Acta Sanctorum Octobris* (1768), 2:709B; Boehmer, *Analekten*, p. 93, line 19 (=1961, 3rd ed., 62, line 2).
98. *Magnum Bullarium Romanum* (1742), 1:109, §3.
99. Boehmer, *Analekten*, p. 91, lines 14–15 (= 1961, 3rd ed., p. 62, lines 22–23).
100. Leo, Rufinus, and Angelus, *Legenda trium sociorum* 5.70; in *Acta Sanctorum Octobris* (1768), 2:741E.
101. Boehmer, *Analekten*, p. 91, lines 15–16 (= 1961, 3rd ed., p. 62, line 23).

excluded that perhaps a few things about the appearance of the wounds fit with his description. This also seems to be pulled out of the writing of Alexander IV, who with Cardinal Hugolino was a former eyewitness, but whose papal bull apparently relies on the account of Celano. In this way, one misunderstanding is built upon another. By the time of the plagiarist of the Three Companions, the account already suggests that the author, who clearly understands his own social role, wants to argue against the details of Elias's account and for a *reduction in the glory of the master*.

Result: The stigmata are shown on the *hands* and *feet* and on the *side*; but what remains uncertain in the sources is whether they were only *scars* or *scars with the ends of nails sticking out on both sides*. This brings up the other question of whether these consist of the *flesh* or *foreign matter*. Here too, the sources show a remarkable *climactic movement* from the more straightforward, relatively *explainable* toward the more complicated and *supernatural*.

e. The Witnesses

A primary issue arises here. It shows up in most accounts, especially in the later ones, that Francis indeed tries to *conceal* the stigmata as well as he could. But he is *not successful* in doing so, especially because of the temporarily streaming blood from the *side wound* that wets his clothing. This occurrence is already highlighted by *Elias* and likewise by *Thomas of Celano*. Celano cites *Helias* and *Rufinus* as eyewitnesses during Francis's lifetime, while he apparently accepts that, after Francis's death, more of them came forward. *Rufinus* in particular appears to have made a great effort to gain knowledge of the wounds. A certain case shows him appearing to have caused Francis great pain by taking it upon himself, in rather juvenile fashion, to touch the wounds while making the contact appear unintentional. The *Actus* recounts this same story along with two other similar ones about him. *Alexander IV* apparently recounts, with Hugolino, that during the visitation of the body certain people would have seen the occurrence and would have touched the wounds: "handled,"[102] that is, evidently, the supposed nails of flesh. He also highlights how much the saint concealed his wounds during his lifetime; only the bloody effluence out of his side would have occasionally given it away. Here again *Bonaventure*'s witness appears to be suspect. After he recounts how seeing and kissing[103] the stigmata counted as great luck among the people, he continues: "he could not avoid people seeing the stigmata" and right after that: "very many people have affirmed on oath that they saw them."[104]

By the aforementioned example of the doubt of the knight *Hieronymus*, who otherwise does not appear in Francis's story, *we* will not be strengthened in our belief in the existence of the stigmata either. *Von Hase* is perhaps not wrong when he excludes this second Thomas as *unhistorical*.[105]

In the *Actus* we found that after the stigmatization, Francis even went around with *shoes* and *gloves*. This too, we can confidently refer to the field of invention,

102. *Magnum Bullarium Romanum* (1742), 1:109, §3.
103. See n. 52 above.
104. *Bonaventura* 13.200; in *Acta Sanctorum Octobris* (1768), 2:778DE.
105. See K. von Hase, *Gesammelte Werke*, 5:179–80, 128–29; see also 146, 107.

an invention that liked to adorn the master with a supernatural rich wreath of noble traits, in this instance with humility. *Francis did not need this*. And wearing any [extra] piece of clothing would have first and foremost contradicted the basic law of the Minor Friars: "*nihil tuleritis in via*."[106] Of course, the stigmata must have been obtained in some way other than we have seen in the majority of the sources. According to them, Francis would have been conspicuous in such a way that he would have needed such protective measure. What only remains in question is whether he still could have *walked* at all!!

Incidentally, the *Actus* gives us a few more eyewitnesses with names: Brother *Leo*, who apparently was entrusted with the—if only very rudimentary—medicinal treatment for the wounds.

Result: Despite Francis's efforts to keep the stigmata a secret even from his inner circle, the stigmata are noticed by them and soon by a wider circle, and they are widely revered.

We thus stand at the *end* of our first, *primarily historical, main section.* First, we quickly read through the sources that were to be considered; then we did a critical rereading of the individual sources. Now the *individual results* that were discovered will be collated into a historical-critical *final result*. To this end, we now leave the sources with which we have been dealing, in order to move toward a more *general perspective* on our problem.

II. Historical-Critical Results

It would not surprise me if someone who has been following our investigations thus far would interject the following *question*: "Of what use to me are your ten reports that assert the stigmatization and the stigmata themselves? They are all prejudiced or at least ecclesiastically colored, and you yourself have pointed out their many discrepancies. I regard the entire matter as superstition and monastic deception."

Such reservations would be understandable. But that alone does not dispose of the problem. We are dealing with a question to which, in their works, the most notable Francis of Assisi biographers K. Hase and P. Sabatier[107] have devoted a special appendix, which does merit "the sweat of the noble"[108] and a closer investigation.

Yes, if we were to find ourselves with our fact outside of any context of nature and the history of humanity, if it stood there in *isolation*, then that objection could appear to be justified although even then nothing would be proven! But that is not the case. Even though our event is certainly not of the daily sort, all that it will need is to be *located within that great context* in order to put it in another light historically. A comet that flies through the starry heavens

106. Sabatier, *Speculum Perfectionis* 2.3.8, line 20; cf. *Regula non bullata quae dicitur prima* 14, in Boehmer, *Analekten*, p. 13, lines 19–20 (= 1961, 3rd ed., p. 9, line 23).

107. See K. von Hase, *Gesammelte Werke*, 5:143–202, esp. 105–43; Sabatier, *Franz von Assisi*, 256–62, 266–67.

108. See Fr. G. Klopstock, "Der Zürcher See," lines 50–52, in *Friedrich Gottlob Klopstocks Oden*, ed. Fr. Muncker and J. Pawel (Stuttgart: G. J. Göschen, 1889), 1:85: "Immortality is a great thought, worthy of the sweat of the noble!"

that we know is certainly not a daily occurrence, but still we do not for that reason remove it from the realm of the possible—because its *existence* has been frequently *noted*. Historical science follows this very same principle. It knows of *nothing* that is *intrinsically impossible* but has the right to test all the appearances that it encounters against the world of appearance of both the *past* and the *present*, and to draw *provisional conclusions* from that testing. It must exercise care, as we emphasized in the introduction, not to move out of this provisional framework, for the *world of experience* is not a closed entirety, but rather experiences its daily *corrections* in every aspect. As soon as we have arrived at clarity about this, we will cease to speak of "impossibilities" and "miracles," that is, events that go *contra, praeter aut supra naturam*[109] [against, beyond, or above nature]. It is the modern progress of the natural sciences that justifies us in this: they have demonstrated results that would have rendered a person dizzy a hundred years ago. This *deepening of the knowledge of nature* must generate, as a necessary consequence, the insight that we cannot too quickly close the reports of stories that have "supernatural" content.

This is especially true in the relationships between *spirit* and *body*, a subtle area that only recently has received more in-depth scientific attention (*Forel*, *Dubois*,[110] and others). This is where the question of the stigmata belongs too.

By way of introduction to the problems that require consideration here, we will be best served by briefly surveying the views of the two great antipodes in this question, Hase and Sabatier, confronting the arguments that they advance to prove their views.

Hase, whom we encounter as the representative of a rationalizing view, believes that he has found the key to the riddle with Elias of Cortona, *who, during the night in which the saint died, branded the stigmata on him with a heated iron*. As a proof Hase refers to the following:

1. The *doctor with the glowing iron*, probably following a medieval medical practice, branded Francis, who was sick, on the forehead; Francis then followed this with the fire verse in his *Canticum solis* [Song of the Sun].
2. The blackness of the wounds as attested by several resources that were passed down.
3. The *zealous drive for relics*, a widespread aspect of that period of time, which reminds us of the raw mutilation of St. Elizabeth of Hungary.
4. The noticeably *rapid interment*.[111]

Sabatier, who assumes that *the origin of the stigmata was through neuropathic causes*,[112] also lists a series of negative factors:

109. Regarding this traditional definition of "miracle," see Chr. E. Luthardt, *Kompendium der Dogmatik* (Leipzig: Dörffling & Franke, 1873), 109; following A. Quenstedt, *Theologia didactico-polemica, sive Systema theologicum*, 4th ed. (Wittenberg, 1701), part. I, chap. XIII, sec. I, thesis XXVII, p. 535.

110. On the research and publications of the medical doctor and psychiatrist August Forel, see his *Rückblick auf mein Leben* (Zurich: Europa, 1935); on the neuropathologist Paul Dubois, see his work *The Psychic Treatment of Nervous Disorders* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1908).

111. See K. von Hase, *Gesammelte Werke*, 5:176–81, as well as 126–31; see also 131–32, 97.

112. See Sabatier, *Franz von Assisi*, 257–58.

1. The *rapid interment* (see above)
2. The fact that the body was placed in a coffin
3. The later lack of knowledge of the location of the grave
4. The lack of any mention [of the stigmata] in the canonization bull
5. The contradiction [of the stigmata] by some contemporaries

He then *refutes* each of these one after another:

Ad 1. The Middle Ages provide *more examples* of such rapid interments.
Ad 2. The coffin, otherwise rarely used, served here as *a cautionary move*, in order that Francis, who was already canonized in the eyes of the people, should not experience at his death what happened to Saint Elizabeth.
Ad 3. The concealed gravesite was also chosen *out of caution* because they feared an attempt at robbery of the holy corpse by the Perugian neighbors, which actually happened occasionally.
Ad 4. The silence of the canonization bull proves nothing, since the stigmata were already *confirmed officially* in a special papal bull.
Ad 5. The objection of some bishops was merely one aspect of the major *conflict between the clergy of the religious order and the secular clergy.*

The contradiction of the Dominicans was obviously an expression of their *competitive envy.*[113]

As far as *Hase's hypothesis* is concerned, it appears to me to be best refuted by the fact that the alleged counterfeiter *Elias* would have necessarily had to make his opponents in the order, Brothers *Leo* and *Rufinus,* into coconspirators in this instance. *The fact that the reports of both agree with each other appears to me to be the most important historical witness to the genuineness of the stigmata.*

In yet another way the Catholic historian *Hurter*, in his *History of Innocent III* (4:267), seeks to explain the stigmata: He relates them to Francis's *illness*, as a result of which wounds appeared in his hands and feet, which he *compares* with the wounds of Christ. "Thus ultimately we may not even call upon a vital faith and the power of imagination to explain that saga."[114] This explanation might at first appear to be somewhat illuminating, yet [we must ask]: (1) Is it conceivable that the honest disciples, not to speak of Francis himself, would have regarded *ulcers* as *stigmata*? (2) In view of the resource materials that we have cited, may one speak of a "*saga*"? With the same justification, Hurter could have degraded every Gospel account of a miracle to a "saga": There are none that are as well documented as the stigmata of S. Francis of Assisi!

On the whole, we rather may build upon our sources, *chiefly* for the reason of the aforementioned *agreement of the sources, which come from entirely different circles*. We may do so all the more since a critic who is otherwise as sharp as *Sabatier* sees the reports about the stigmata as *quite genuine* and corresponding with the truth. He goes so far as even to accept the emphasis upon the *nail-like shape of the stigmata* in the sources from Thomas of Celano onward,[115] where,

113. See Sabatier, *Franz von Assisi*, 261–62.
114. Fr. Hurter, *Geschichte Papst Innocenz des Dritten und seiner Zeitgenossen*, vol. 4 (= *Kirchliche Zustände zu Papst Innocenz des Dritten Zeiten*, vol. 2) (Hamburg: Perthes, 1834), 167.
115. See Sabatier, *Franz von Assisi*, 338 n. 482.

however, we cannot follow him for both historical as well as general reasons. In our treatment of the sources, we have shown how this version emerged from the original report. Would it be conceivable that Francis could have *concealed* the stigmata, shaped in such a way, *for two years*? This was possible with a simple wound, but not with fleshly nails, which would also have prevented the saint from walking, as we have already mentioned.

To this extent, we concur without hesitation with the Catholic *Görres*: "Without the core structure and without the formative law, there is no crystallization; and thus without truth in the deepest roots and without the formative law, there is no saga."[116]

What then remains for us as the core, the kernel form of the narrative of the stigmata? We find *Tholuck's* definition of the process of stigmatization to be the best: he explains the process as "*the embodying of affects*."[117] In the sources we have seen how Francis, in a forty-day spiritual exercise in honor of St. Michael, immersed himself with intensified fervor *in the sufferings of Christ*, and this not for the first time but, according to the *Tres Socii*, apparently often since the hour of conversion. In an hour of especially intimate *mystical immersion* in this object, he receives the vision of the *crucified seraphim*, which *Sabatier* insightfully describes as the combination of the ideational complexes of the *Archangel Michael* and the *passion*.[118] We call to remembrance once more the extremely significant comment of the *Actus*: "Sometimes he was in such an ecstasy of spirit and so absorbed in God that he was not able to speak throughout the day or night!"[119] "Should it be unthinkable," says *Tholuck*, "that through the constant fixation upon the cross of Christ by an ecstatic person of such a disposition, in a moment where this intensifies, that the vision of this imagined content could be physically engraved upon him?"[120]

Modern physiology has demonstrated that such a thing is possible; in much the same sense, Harnack states: "We see that a strong will and a firm faith exert an influence upon the life of the body, and produce phenomena that strike us as marvelous."[121] "It is the spirit that builds itself a body," says *Schiller* somewhere.[122] *The stigmatization of Saint Francis* does not stand alone as an event of this kind.

We want to stay entirely away from those hysterical women of the first half of the nineteenth century: *Margareta Ebner*, the Beguine *Gertrudis* in Delft, and the most notorious case, *Catharine Emmerich*, for whom the stigmatization was also claimed. In the case of the person mentioned last, for whom medical certifications were produced, deception appears finally to have been discovered.[123]

116. J. Görres, "Der heilige Franziskus von Assisi ein Troubadour," in *Der Katholik: Eine religiöse Zeitschrift zur Belehrung und Warnung* 20 (Year 6, IV–VI, Strasbourg, 1826): 14–53, 36, n. *. See Tholuck, *Wunder der katholischen Kirche*, 103–5.

117. See Tholuck, *Wunder der katholischen Kirche*, 106.

118. See Sabatier, *Franz von Assisi*, 258.

119. Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short, *The Prophet*, 454; 34 for *Actus* 9.31.

120. See Tholuck, *Wunder der katholischen Kirche*, 106–7.

121. A. Harnack, *What Is Christianity?*, 27.

122. See Fr. von Schiller, *Wallenstein's Death* 3.13 (V. 1813).

123. See K. von Hase, *Kirchengeschichte auf der Grundlage akademischer Vorlesungen*, sec. 3.2 (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1892), 926–29; K. von Hase, *Franz von Assisi*, 129–30, 95–96; Tholuck, *Wunder der katholischen Kirche*, 98, 111–33; Tholuck, *Vermischte Schriften* (Hamburg: Perthes, 1839), 2:477–78. Görres, *Die christliche Mystik*, 2:424–25, 437, 453–56.

The case of *St. Catherine of Siena* seems to merit somewhat more trust, although it defies more precise control because her stigmata were *not externally visible* and were *experienced* by her only as pain.[124] We certainly are better off by *forgoing analogous references to other stigmatized persons*, of which Görres enumerates many,[125] since the observations of such cases are at the least *uncertain*. On the other hand, there would be available many other examples of such a *tangibly formative effect* of the spirit upon the body, without our having to take recourse to a "history of Christian mysticism."

I would like to remind us of an Old Testament example, the story of *Jacob*, who *wrestles with God* at the Jabbok Brook and whose *thigh was put out of joint* (Gen. 32:25–26).

These connections of spirit and body seem to be very meaningful for *embryonic life.* A rather unusual case, known to me personally, can illustrate this. A mother, several weeks before the birth of her child, experienced a powerful shock when the arm of a valuable statue broke off. The child is born—but *without an arm*!

More recently, some have gone so far as to conduct *experiments* in which *wounds*, blisters, and the like were generated using the power of *suggestion*. The only thing that would need to be addressed would be whether such a thing is also possible using *auto-suggestion.* If such a case is not known till now, that does not prove anything over against the reality of our case, because for good reasons it is *unique*.

Of course, it must not be assumed that, with the stigmatization, Francis's *ecstatic predisposition* disappeared. Quite the opposite: from then on it really came to a major *breakthrough*; until his death he found himself "in the rapture of contemplation."[126] How otherwise would the stigmata have lasted for two more years? We have no choice but to assume a continuing *conservation of the stigmata* through the same powers that had generated them to begin with. The wound in his side, which continued to bleed, also points to this.

We can thus summarize our results:

1. By virtue of a very special physical and psychic sensitivity, Francis of Assisi, from his conversion onward, was predisposed toward extraordinary neuropathic incidents.
2. This sensitivity was intensified on Mount La Verna
   a. by a forty-day episode of prayer and spiritual exercises, and
   b. by an especially intensive mystical immersion in the fact of the passion of Christ.
3. At a moment when this contemplation had attained its climax, Francis received a vision, and the continuing spiritual concentration on the suffering of Christ expressed itself physically with the generation of stigmata on the body of the saint.
4. The composition of the stigmata remains unclear for us. The visible representation in the reports from Thomas of Celano onward appear to be out of the question.

124. See K. Hase, *Franz von Assisi*, 199, 141–42.
125. See Görres, *Die christliche Mystik*, 2:410–56.
126. See Thomas of Eccleston, *Collatio* XIII (XII), 245.

III. General Assessment

A person with whom I recently discussed our theme gave me his opinion about it, which was that even if the matter were true, we would be dealing with a purely *pathological* case, with a process from the lowest levels of life, which from a *moral-religious perspective* would be completely *irrelevant*.

In a similar way *Hase*, at the conclusion of his special study of the stigmata, returns to the real world and states: "God does not look at cassocks or stigmata but at the inward person."[127] This is undoubtedly correct; still, the matter is not resolved by making such authoritarian remarks.

Isn't it curious how much we like to engage within *extremes*?! Either it must be an instance of a *supranatural miracle* or merely a *banal event* "from the lowest levels of life"!

We don't want to deny that there are some supporting factors for the latter view. One might ask us how we would evaluate the significance of the stigmas if now the alleged stigmatization of an *Emmerich* and people like her should be shown to be *factual*, which can't be ruled out at all. And how do we respond when, according to the most recent assumption by Prof. Steck,[128] even a notorious swindler like *Jetzer* might in fact have had stigmata?! —Now, first, none of it has been proven; and second, if it were the case, then the old proverb applies here: *Duo, cum faciunt idem, non est idem* [when two are doing the same thing, it is not the same thing].[129]

In the previous section we have shown how we could conceive of a relatively "natural" explanation of the stigmata miracle. In doing so, we mentioned the concept of "suggestion." So, someone might call out, "That's it!" and then begin to enumerate a great mass of cases from the broad area of hypnosis and suggestion, which have absolutely nothing in common with saints and holiness.

The important thing here is to oppose the error as though a so-called "miracle," that is, an event in which we believe that *God's will* is active in a special way, loses its religious value for us in that we arrive at the knowledge of the particular means that God uses in this act of will, or we discover *analogie*s for the event in question, in which a special activity of God's will appears to us to be ruled out.

The narratives of the New Testament have not become less valuable for us because we understand the causes of some things, such as healings, better now than they did in earlier times.

For the fact is that God, up to this very day, *intervenes in and guides the history of humanity*; thus it is a matter of complete *indifference* whether or not we know *the means* that God uses for this. It is in essence just as irrelevant whether we want to call something a *"miracle"* or a *hypnotic appearance*, or whatever. Both are similarly inexplicable for normal thought.

127. K. von Hase, *Franz von Assisi*, 202, esp. 143.

128. R. Steck, "Kulturgeschichtliches aus den Akten des Jetzerprozesses" [Cultural-historical content from the files of the Jetzer trial], 21 [Barth appears to cite the essay, which starts off the third issue of the journal dated "August 1905," using the manuscript, or galley proofs, or some other separate document, in which the pagination differs]. See R. Steck, "Kulturgeschichtliches aus den Akten des Jetzerprozesses," in *Blätter für bernische Geschichte, Kunst, und Altertumskunde*, Year 1 (1905): 161–86, esp. 176–78.

129. See P. Terentius Afer, *Adelphoe* 5.3 (5.37–39).

And that is also the situation with our case.

However we may construe the so-called "natural" causes of the stigmata of Francis of Assisi, we recognize here a higher hand, which should indicate to the faithful servant of the Lord: You do not stand alone in your striving for the kingdom of God; the crucified Master is always near to you!

And in this sense we also undersign these words of St. Bonaventure: *"The seal of Christ crucified was impressed on his body not through any natural power or by human craft, but rather by the spirit of the living God in a marvelous power!"*[130]

Finis[131]
July 13, 1905
2 p.m.

130. *Bonaventura*, Prologus 2; in *Acta Sanctorum Octobris* (1768), 2:741.

131. Beneath the word the circle of the Zofingia is placed (see below, 69). Next to that it says, "ὦ πωποι (two years later)."