

Bartosz Adamczewski, Stefan Szymik

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The time came for “the fourth quest for historical Jesus” as B. Adamczewski believes (p. 186). In addition, it is no more the time for ‘fleshly’ Jesus, but ultimately for the ‘spiritual’ Christ. It should be so, according to the author, since there is indeed a new scholarly method, which guarantees this new quest.

The last book of B. Adamczewski consists of the short introduction (pp. 11-12), three chapters (pp. 13-63, 65-145, 147-184), general conclusions (pp. 185-186), bibliography (pp. 187-220) and the index of ancient sources (pp. 221-241). The main objective of his new study on the Gospels is to reconstruct the life of the historical Jesus on the basis of Pauline letters and on his specific solution of the synoptic problem, as he writes: “the hypertextual features of the Gospels should be properly investigated” (pp. 12-13, 185). As an end result the author gives “a plausible reconstruction” of such historical “fleshly” Jesus on pp. 139-146 (again pp. 185-186). To write an evaluation of this book one needs to consult other recent books of the author (also published by Peter Lang)¹ and a good library to verify the given data.

In the introduction (p. 12) and later regularly in the book, B. Adamczewski speaks enigmatically about “the most recent research” on the hypertextual features of the Gospels. In reality, it is his own research on origins and literary features of the Gospels offered in his earlier books. According to the author it can be argued that the four Gospels were not written to give us

¹ Cf. B. Adamczewski, *Heirs of the Reunited Church. The History of the Pauline Mission in Paul's Letters, in the So-Called Pastoral Letters, and in the Pseudo-Titus Narrative of Acts* (Frankfurt am Main [u.a.] 2010); idem, *Q or not Q? The So-Called Triple, Double, and Single Traditions in the Synoptic Gospels* (Frankfurt am Main [u.a.] 2010); idem, *The Gospel of the Narrative “we”. The Hypertextual Relationship of the Fourth Gospel to the Acts of the Apostles* (Frankfurt am Main [u.a.] 2010); idem, *Constructing Relationships, Constructing Faces. Hypertextuality and Ethopoeia in the New Testament Writings* (Frankfurt am Main [u.a.] 2011).

a record of the life, deeds and words of the historical “fleshly” Jesus based on the apostolic tradition. On the contrary, the Gospels are supposed to be a “result of hypertextual reworking of the letters of Paul the Apostle and of other early Christian writings, which were regarded by the evangelists as the sources for the knowledge of the real, “spiritual” Jesus Christ” (p. 12). This “spiritual” Christ came to be known to the world, as is the central idea of the author, in the course of life, in the person, and in the writings of his particularly chosen Apostle Paul. At the same time B. Adamczewski rejects a fundamental traditional Christian assumption that the four canonical Gospels reflect “the features of the life and person of the historical Jesus”.

In order to deal with the issue of reconstructing the life of the historical Jesus in “a truly scholarly way”, as he writes, the hypertextual features of the Gospels should be properly investigated. Therefore in the first chapter (pp. 13-64) Adamczewski gives some examples of such “hypertextual reworking” of earlier Pauline texts in various fragments of the canonical Gospels (Mark 5:1-20; Luke 11:2-4; Matthew 2:1-12; John 21:1-14). These examples were chosen by him “paradigmatically” from all four Gospels to illustrate and support his idea concerning the origins and the order of the composition of the four Gospels discussed by him in the earlier books. Adamczewski’s proposal of the direct, sequential hypo- and hypertextual dependence of the New Testament’s writings is presented in the following chronological order: (Paul) – Mark – Luke – (Acts) – Matthew – John and others. As he wrote formerly on the synoptic problem: “All three Synoptic Gospels should be therefore regarded as results of creative hypertextual reworking of earlier gospel works (including Paul’s letters) and not as effects of slavish literary dependence of postulated gospel ‘redactors’ on some hardly identifiable, oral or written, ‘traditions’” (*Q or not Q*, 444)².

It has no sense to assess critically the main paragraphs and passages of the first chapter, one after another, in order to see and discuss the technique of “sequential hypertextual reworking” of Pauline letters by the evangelists, as used by B. Adamczewski. Unfortunately neither in the book nor in his earlier works, at least the ones consulted by me, the author offered a systematic introduction to his “hypertextual hermeneutic” and particularly an explanation of his adoption of Genette’s hypertextuality (and narrativization)³. Only a short

2 For more on B. Adamczewski’s assumptions see, e.g., *Q or not Q*, 441-446. Adamczewski claims that Mark was written circa AD 100-110, Luke (literarily dependent on Mark) AD 110-120 and successively Acts. Matthew was composed approximately AD 130-140 (*Q or not Q*, 396-397, 438).

3 See some unsatisfactory notes and short statements in *Hypertextuality*, 13, note 1; *Q or not Q*, 230, notes 7 and 8. On the contrary compare some fine examples: E. van Wolde, „Text in Dialogue with Texts: Intertextuality in the Ruth and Tamar Narratives”, *Biblical Interpretation*

introduction to the hypertextuality is given at the beginning (pp. 13-15) and defended at the end of the first chapter (in part pp. 61-63). Adamczewski's method, however, does not correspond to Genette's hypertextuality. There is the question, for example, of how many diverse hypotexts should produce one hypertext or in harmony with Adamczewski's usage, how many hypo-components (taken from different writings) create one hypercomponent and subsequently how all these together bring into being a final "well written hypertext"? It is noteworthy to compare, for example, the Lord's prayer in Adamczewski's hypertextual reworking (Luke 11:2-4; Matt 6:9-13). Is it still Genette's notion of hypertextuality?⁴

Adamczewski's method is not an intertextual analysis as well, since I am obliged to ask which "common literary themes, ideas, and motifs" (author's assertion) are linking, for example, the texts Gal 1:18 and Mark 2:1-3:6; cf. Luke 10:23-37. This statement is valid for most of Adamczewski's unconvincing analyses (hyper- or intertextual?) presented in the first chapter and in his earlier works. One can see a complementary critical opinion on this topic by P. Foster: "There are scores of examples like this, where there are no textual affinities"⁵. E. van Wolde wrote one time on intertextuality⁶:

This gathering of all types of repetition as evidence or this inventory of possible intertextual signs is an important stage of research. If sufficient repetition does not exist, then there is no basis for arguing for intertextuality. In the case of considerable repetitions and similarities, a basis for intertextual linking is given and a reflection on these iconic features is possible. This proves that intertextuality is not just something in the reader's mind, but that the markers in the text make this connection possible.

So it should be the task and duty of the author to fully explain the rules of "creative hypertextuality" – this new biblical method, which the author declares to be a "truly scholarly way". One would also like to know what

5 (1997), 1-28; A. Merz, *Die fiktive Selbstausslegung des Paulus*. Pseudepigraphie in den Pastoralbriefen und ihrer frühesten Rezeption (NTOA 52; Göttingen – Fribourg 2004), 1-71; T.J. Hibbard, *Intertextuality in Isaiah 24–27*. The Reuse and Evocation of Earlier Texts and Traditions (Tübingen 2006), 1-20; M.R. Staed, *The Intertextuality of Zechariah 1–8* (LHB OTS 506; New York 2009), 16-39.

4 On G. Genette's model of hypertextuality see T.A. Schmitz, *Moderne Literaturtheorie und antike Texte*. Eine Einführung (Darmstadt 2002), 94-97; p. 95: „Genettes Buch ist ausschließlich der zuletzt genannten Spielart gewidmet, also der Hypertextualität (womit seine Überlegungen nach seiner eigenen Terminologie streng genommen gar nicht mehr in den Bereich der Intertextualität fallen)“.

5 *The Expository Times* 122 (2011), 179.

6 Van Wolde, "Text in Dialogue with Texts", 8. T.J. Hibbard (*Intertextuality in Isaiah*, 5) adopts the following procedure for identifying an intertext: *shared vocabulary* (more is better), some degree of *thematic coherence*, the textual relationship is *meaningful in some way*, the intertextuality should be *chronologically possible*.

is this “highly sophisticated literary procedure of sequential hypertextual reworking” (p. 185)? At this moment Adamczewski’s axiomatic assumption that the synoptic material was dependent on the traditions and ideas contained in the Pauline letters is only enigmatic and has no methodological basis.

On the other hand it may be true, as Adamczewski claims, that “from the methodological point of view, the research on sequential hypertextuality in the Gospels is not less verifiable” than many other modern scholarly ways of the biblical analyses (based on structuralism) (p. 61). Nevertheless the last ones are strictly literary, reader and meaning directed approaches, and do not discuss origins or historical value of biblical texts. In addition, Adamczewski believes that his analyses of the procedure of sequential hypertextual reworking of earlier texts in the Gospels provide solutions to a number of exegetical problems concerning the synoptic writings and for this reason should be regarded as highly credible (pp. 61-62).

In the second chapter (pp. 65-145) B. Adamczewski consequently refers to the problem of the historicity of the Gospel textual data and tries to reconstruct “the historical Jesus”. Therefore he discusses numerous factors that “contribute to the complexity of the problem of the historicity of the Gospel material” (p. 65). In fact there is a variety of such factors: the Old Testament background, early Christian oral traditions, Paul the Apostle, the “Q source”, Flavius Josephus and classical writers, the canonical Gospels – Mark, Luke, Matthew and John, the apocryphal Gospels and opinions of numerous Church Fathers⁷. At the end of the chapter Adamczewski presents the results of modern research on this question and negatively evaluates the so called “criteria” for reconstructing the historical Jesus. The final effect of his study is – as he maintains – “a plausible reconstruction of the historical Jesus” (pp. 145-146).

Again, it is impossible to discuss seriously all items presented by the author, although it ought to be done. There is no place in Adamczewski’s model for historical Jesus of Nazareth and his disciples. On the other hand Jewish-Christian pre-Gospel oral traditions, not neglected by the author, could have very limited influence on Pauline and post-Pauline believers. This reduction, however, and diminution of the vitality of Jewish-Christian apostolic traditions has little support in Paul’s own letters; there were more various missionary groups in early Christianity than only “people from James” (Gal 2:11-14; 1 Cor 9:5,14; 15:5-9; 2 Cor 11:5; 12:11; cf. Heb 2:3; 13:7). Quite different also is the opinion of modern scholars on the subject: “The view

⁷ Cf. Ignatius of Antioch, Papias, Irenaeus, Origen, John Chrysostom, Augustine; but we find no comment on *Didache* (cf. separate traditions of Lord’s prayer and Eucharistic prayer in the late first or early second century AD).

that Paul alludes to Jesus traditions almost unconsciously is one of the major solutions to the problem of the apparent neglect of Jesus traditions in Paul”⁸.

Obviously those pre-Gospel oral traditions could have no influence on the evangelists, who wrote the Gospels only in the first half of the second century AD (“and were not in a position to consult eyewitnesses of Jesus’ life”)⁹. Consequently, according to the author, the oral traditions concerning the historical Jesus, which were used by the evangelists, should be equated with the biographic data concerning Jesus recorded in the letters of Paul (pp. 74-76). Thus, in the opinion of the author, the canonical Gospels are in fact hypertextual reworking of the contents of the Pauline letters as “the most recent research” (a magic keyword) has revealed and for this reason the Gospels should not be regarded as independent sources (p. 96). I can only repeat that this axiomatic assumption has no methodological (intertextual) basis. Are the Gospels only fictitious writings simply accepted by Christians and the Church in the middle of the second century AD? Additionally it is evident, that the author misinterprets the “gospel” as a literary genre (cf. historical-theological writings of Luke in Adamczewski’s reworking).

One illustration of Adamczewski’s analyses must be presented at this point. The author believes that the prologue of the Lucan Gospel (Luke 1:1-4) is a literary reworking (“conscious emulation”) of the prologues to the works of Flavius Josephus. On this doubtful supposition he tries to redefine the meaning of Lucan reference to “the events which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word handed on to us” (Luke 1:1-2) (pp. 103-106, cf. 162). As a result, the Lucan record of “the events which have been fulfilled among us” does not refer, according to Adamczewski, to the words and deeds of the historical Jesus of Nazareth, but those events should be understood as the incidents, which took place during the mission of Paul and his followers (p. 104). I must ask what in this case is the meaning of Acts 1:1-2 (“In the first book I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven”) and Acts 1:21-22 (“men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us”)? And again, as supposed by Adamczewski, the context of Acts 26:4.16 (cf. 1 Cor 4:1; 9:1; Josephus, *C.Ap.* 1.55) implies that the Lucan

⁸ D.E. Aune, “Jesus Tradition and the Pauline Letters”, *Jesus, Gospel tradition and Paul in the context of Jewish and Greco-Roman Antiquity*. Collected Essays II (WUNT 303; Tübingen 2013), 317; cf. D. Häußler, *Christusbekentnis und Jesusüberlieferung bei Paulus* (WUNT 210; Tübingen 2006), 1-38.

⁹ Cf. B. Adamczewski: “the evangelists’ access to the relatively well-known works of the Jewish-Greek-Roman historian Flavius Josephus could be easier than that to the oral traditions of the Jewish followers of Jesus Christ” (p. 75; cf. also pp. 102, 144 etc.).

statement concerning those, who “from the beginning became eyewitnesses and servants of the word” (Luke 1:1-2) refers primarily to Paul the Apostle (pp. 105, 162). Is this indeed a proper explanation of Luke 1:2 in its wider context? Who are in fact the eyewitnesses (Acts 1:3; 1 Cor 15:5-8; cf. John 19:35; 1 J 1:1; 2 Pet 1:16) and servants of the word (cf. Acts 4:29; 6:4: *διακονία τοῦ λόγου*; 8:4.25; 14:12; 26:16) from the beginning (cf. Acts 11:15)? Who are the numerous “witnesses” of these events – only Paul and cooperators (cf. Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8.22; 2:32; 3:15 etc.)?¹⁰

In order to quickly refute Adamczewski’s dogmatic statement “There is no *euaggelion* without the *apostolos*” (*Q or not Q*, 446) I can only give biblically founded answer “There is no *euaggelion* without the *apostoloi*” (cf. hypotexts Num 35:30; Deut 17:6; 19:15; Matt 18:16; 2 Cor 13:1; 1 Tim 5:19; Heb 10:28).

In the last chapter (pp. 147-184) the author tries to reconcile his proposed idea with the principles of faith of the Catholic Church (p. 147). The aim given at the beginning of this chapter is subsequently not exactly accomplished, since the author defends only limited “historicity” of the gospels proposed by him (pp. 145, 185-186) and in no way reconciles his own exegetical proposals with the principles of faith of the Catholic Church (cf. apostolic tradition or *Credo*). The chapter is somewhat strange and misleading. B. Adamczewski offers large analyses of several Catholic Church documents, but his comments and interpretations of these documents are sometimes disputable. For example, according to his opinion the Instruction of the Pontifical Biblical Commission (=PBC) *Sancta Mater Ecclesia* (1964) “implicitly pointed to the important, Pauline link between the proclamation of the Twelve and the composition of the Gospels”. Is it so indeed? To support his declaration the author points to the fact that “PBC referred not only to the proclamation of Peter and the Twelve (cf. Acts 2:22.32; 3:15; 5:30-32; 6:4; 10:36-41 etc.) but also to that of Paul the Apostle (cf. Acts 13:16-41; 17:22-31; Rom 1:14; 1 Cor 9:19-23 etc.)” (p. 152). This simply misinforms the readers. The position of PBC expressed in the Instruction is clear on this point and applies not only to R. Bultmann and his school, but also to the standpoint of B. Adamczewski: “Finally, others make light of the authority of the apostles as witnesses to Christ, and of their task and influence in the primitive community, extol-

¹⁰ On Luke 1:1-4 see the study by M. Hengel, “Der Lukasprolog und seine Augenzeugen: Die Apostel, Petrus und die Frauen”, *Studien zum Urchristentum*. Kleine Schriften VI (ed. C.J. Thornton) (Tübingen 2008), 242-297; cf. also D.E. Aune, “Luke 1:1-4: Historical or Scientific Prooimion?”, *Jesus, Gospel Tradition and Paul in the Context of Jewish and Greco-Roman Antiquity*. Collected Essays II (WUNT 303; Tübingen 2013), 107-115.

ling rather the creative power of that community”¹¹. The other type of such confusing interpretation of the official Church documents is given to *Dei Verbum*. After a comprehensive comment on the document, although more than doubtful at times (pp. 152-162), and a brief tendentious comment on Luke 1:2-4 (p. 162) the author claims that according to *Dei Verbum* “the evangelists based their narratives not directly on the tradition of the Twelve, but rather on the contents of the Pauline letters” (p. 162). Once again, is it really the position of *Dei Verbum*? Why does the author comment DV 4, 11-12, 17, 19 and does not refer to DV 20?

The comment on the exegetical position of Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI) on the Gospels and Jesus Christ can be the most enlightening example of Adamczewski’s one-sided explanations (see pp. 172-178).

In conclusion, the author’s statements in this chapter cannot be seen as adequate. Does the Catholic Church insist indeed in the modern official teaching “on the historicity of only those Gospel events which are crucial for our salvation”? Why “only the most important elements of the descriptions of Jesus’ life in the Gospels” can be considered historical (see p. 182)? There is no exhaustive Catholic Church document (and no arbitrary decision) on the matter “what is” and “what is not” historical in the canonical Gospels. Such inclusive list does not exist. However, on the contrary to Adamczewski’s minimalistic, limited and closed position (*reductio ad Paulum*), the Catholic Church’s standpoint on the historicity of the Gospels is affirmative, encouraging and open to any possible scholarly research. The Gospels are historical and kerygmatical (theological) scriptures as a whole and they are still a faithful “testimony” of Jesus’ disciples.

It must be said at the end that Adamczewski’s attempt to construct new alternatives for old questions fills one with admiration. I hold him in high esteem, because he performed an enormous task. He created indeed a complete and coherent vision of origins of the New Testament writings. However, I cannot share his opinions on many grounds: methodological concept of “hypertextual reworking”, one-sided argumentation, exegetical simplifications and oversimplifications, as well as many unspoken suppositions and assumptions. On page 62 the author of the evaluated book has written: “Consequently, if the value of a theory is measured by the amount of data which is explained by it, the theory of the use of the procedure of sequential hypertextual reworking of earlier texts in the Gospels should be regarded as highly credible”. I think that B. Adamczewski’s proposition creates many

¹¹ Translation by J. Fitzmyer. Cf. the Latin text: *Alii denique auctoritatem Apostolorum, quatenus testes Christi sunt, eorumque munus et influxum in primaevam communitatem parvi pendentes, creatricem potentiam huius communitatis extollunt.*

more historical, exegetical and theological (systematical) problems than it can explain. Hence the price for the solution of the synoptic problem proposed by the young Polish scholar is extremely high. The fourth quest for historical Jesus implies that there is indeed very limited acquaintance with “fleshly” Jesus, but merely with “spiritual” Christ. Is this not a known thesis from the radically liberal school revived in an hypertextual garb?