Dossiê: Análise do Discurso Religioso

Resetting the academic discourse on New Testament miracle traditions

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RESUMO

O discurso exegético sobre os milagres do Novo Testament no século passado foi dominado pelos estudiosos ocidentais que não criam em milagres e denunciavam esta crença como expressão de uma compreensão primitiva de mundo. Este discurso continua nas propostas exegéticas e hermenêuticas estabelecidas pelos estudiosos desde Rudolf Bultmann a Gerd Theißen. O conceito que subjaz à publicação recente do *Kompendium der frühchristlichen Wundererzählungen* é um exemplo dessa abordagem, na qual uma compreensão moderna da realidade é sobreposta às narrativas do Novo Testamento. Entretanto, o que é preciso é uma avaliação das tradições de milagres do Novo Testamento "a partir" de seus conceitos de realidade. Nesse sentido, este artigo é dedicado ao desenvolvimento de uma abordagem êmica às tradições de milagre do Novo Testamento. Ele privilegia os fundamentos dos conceitos de realidade do Mediterrâneo Antigo ao investigar os milagres que pertencem à restauração da saúde ou da vida. As categorias há muito consideradas como definitivas como "miracle story" e "miracle worker" são desconstruídas em seu desenvolvimento.

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PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Novo Testamento. Tradição de Milagres. Perspectiva Êmica.

ABSTRACT

The exegetical discourse on New Testament miracles in the past century has largely been dominated by scholars of the West who do not believe in miracles and who have been quick in denouncing such a belief as an expression of a primitive understanding of the world. The exegetical discourse of the West on miracles in the New Testament is still widely continuing on the exegetical and hermeneutical pathways set out by scholars from Rudolf Bultmann to Gerd Theißen. The concept underlying the recent publication of the *Kompendium der frühchristlichen Wundererzählungen* is a case in point. Here a modern understanding of reality is superimposed onto the New Testament narratives. What is needed instead, however, is an assessment of New Testament miracle traditions strictly "within *their* concepts of reality". This present contribution is dedicated to developing an *emic* approach to New Testament *miracle traditions*, taking seriously essentials of ancient Mediterranean concepts of reality. It focuses the investigation on miracles pertaining to a restoration of health or life. Categories long taken for granted such as "miracle story" and "miracle worker" are deconstructed in the course of this presentation.

KEWWORDS

New Testament. Miracle traditions. Emic Approach.

1. Introduction

The exegetical discourse on New Testament miracles in the past century has largely been dominated by scholars of the West who do not believe in miracles and who have been quick in denouncing such a belief as an expression of a primitive understanding of the world. In this perspective, Jesus could be presented predominantly as ethical teacher or revolutionary leader. If the term "miracle worker" was still applied to Jesus, then with the understanding that *in reality* of course he did not perform miracles, because miracles in the strict sense of the word do

not happen, have never happened and will never happen. They are an *absolute* impossibility since they would contradict the rules of the laws of nature as well as everyday experience. Therefore, people of antiquity only misunderstood and portrayed Jesus as miracle worker[2].

During the past generation, a shift of the center of gravity in worldwide Christianity has occurred, from the North to the South. In this process, a different kind of Christianity has emerged which is no more dependent on Western interpretations of reality, the Bible, and the Christian faith. Today a vast majority of Christians worldwide believe in miracles, in works of the Holy Spirit, and in the existence of demonic forces. And theologians and exegetes in the Global South tend to share this belief, rejecting, e.g. the program of demythologizing as implausible within their frames of reference and as irrelevant for their living contexts. Due to processes of global migration, African and Asian versions of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity have become dormant also in the Western world. In these churches, members read the Bible as a direct portrayal of their own world. Healing miracles and deliverance from demonic forces hindering a successful life feature predominantly as themes in their church services. And the believers are convinced, as the saying goes: "God is the same – yesterday, today, and tomorrow." Therefore, miracles can happen today as they happened in Biblical times[3].

But also in Western academia the subject "myth" has been revisited and narrations of miracles have been rehabilitated[4]. Slowly these insights are beginning to be reflected also in the exegetical discourse[5].

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[2] Cf. the discussion by Stefan Alkier and David Moffitt, "Miracles Revisited. A Short Theological and Historical Survey", in Stefan Alkier and Annette Weissenrieder (eds.), *Miracles Revisited. New Testament Miracle Stories and their Concepts of Reality*. Studies of the Bible and Its Reception. Vol. 2. Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter, 2013, 315-335, esp. 321-324.

[3] Cf. Werner Kahl, "Geisterfahrung als Empowerment angesichts der Zerbrechlichkeit menschlicher Existenz. Zur pneumatischen Hermeneutik der Pfingstbewegung am Beispiel des charismatischen Christentums afrikanischer Herkunft". In: *ZNT* 25 (2010), 21-29; Moritz Fischer, *Pfingstbewegung zwischen Fragilität und Empowerment. Beobachtungen zur Pfingstkirche 'Nzambe Malamu' mit ihren transnationalen Vepflechtungen.* Kirche-Konfession-Religion. Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2011.

[4] Cf. especially the contribution of the Philosopher KurtHübner, *Die Wahrheit des Mythos*. München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1985.

[5] Cf. for the German exegetical discourse, esp. Paul-Gerhard Klumbies, *Der Mythos bei Markus*. Berlin und New York: de Gruyter, 2001; Klumbies, "Die Grenze form

The exegetical discourse of the West on miracles in the New Testament is still, however, widely continuing on the exegetical and hermeneutical pathways set out by scholars from Rudolf Bultmann to GerdTheißen. The concept underlying the recent publication of the *Kompendium der frühchristlichen Wundererzählungen* is a case in point[6]. Here a modern understanding of reality is superimposed onto the New Testament narratives. What is needed instead, however, is an assessment of New Testament miracle traditions strictly "within *their* concepts of reality"[7].

This present contribution is dedicated to developing an *emic* approach to New Testament *miracle traditions*[8], taking seriously essentials of ancient Mediterranean concepts of reality[9]. I will focus this investigation on miracles pertaining to a restoration of health or life. Categories long taken for granted such as "miracle story" and "miracle worker" will be deconstructed in the course of this presentation[10].

– und redaktionsgeschichtlicher Wunderexegese". In: *BZ* 58,1 (2014): 21-45; Stefan Alkier, *Wunder und Wirklichkeit in den Briefen des Apostels Paulus*. WUNT 134. Tübingen 2000; Alkier, "Wen wundert was? Einblicke in die Wunderauslegung von der Aufklärung bis zur Gegenwart". In: *ZNT* 7 (2001), 2-15.

[6] Ruben Zimmermann (ed.), *Kompendium der frühchristlichen Wundererzählungen, Bd. 1, Die Wunder Jesu*. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2013. For a critical discussion of the concept laid out by Zimmermann, cf. footnote 45 below.

[7] Cf. for this alternative approach taking different conceptions of reality into serious account, the contributions in Alkier and Weissenrieder, *Miracles Revisited*.

[8] /Miracle traditions/ refers here generally to *all* episodes in which a *miracle motif* occurs, regardless of its function. Throughout this paper I put between quotation marks "miracle story" and "miracle worker" to indicate the problematic of this designation, cf. the discussion and proposal below under 5.

[9] Some parts of this paper are an elaboration of my contribution "New Testament Healing Narratives and the Category of Numinous Power", in Alkier and Weissenrieder, *Miracles Revisited*, 337-348.

[10] This article to a certain degree summarizes and actualizes my research into the New Testament miracle traditions, over the past twenty years. In the course of this time, the recognition of the importance of taking different world – knowledge systems into account, including the one shared by the researcher, has become a central concern of my work. This was stimulated by experiences and reflections during fieldwork and life in West-Africa. Remarkably, I re-encountered the etic/emic debate which I had introduced into the analysis of "miracle healing stories" on the level of literature, in my ethnologically informed studies regarding West-African cultural interpretations of the New Testament. The terminology was coined in the 1950s by the American linguist and anthropologist Kenneth L. Pike in his ground-breaking work *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory*

2. The Numinous – an unpredictable career of a category

Rudolf Otto introduced the category 'das Numinose' – the numinous – into the fields of theology and religious studies. According to Otto, the numinous is the *essence* of all religion. The term denotes "holiness minus moralistic and rationalistic aspects"[11]. Not only did Otto identify and write about this new category, the expressionistic writing style of his influential work *Das Heilige*, 1917, seems shaped by the author's own encounter with numinous realities. After a few decades of thriving amongst some phenomenologists of religion (including van Leuw, Heiler, Mensching, and Eliade), the term was categorically rejected in Germany. Around the middle of the 20th century, the term lost appeal amongst international scholars of theology and of *Religionswissenschaft*, the critical study of religion[12]. According to critics from the field of the

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of the Structure of Human Behavior (The Hague and Paris: Mouton & Co, ²1967) and applied to the study of folklore and texts by his student Alan Dundes, "From Etic to Emic Units in the Structural Study of Folktales", in *JAF* 75 (1962), 95-105, and *The Morphology of North American Indian Folktales* (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1964). Dundes connected the etic/emic distinction with the motif/function distinction which was developed and introduced into the field of the study of folktales in 1928 by the Russian folklorist Vladimir Propp in his *Morphology of the Folktale* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1958), cf. the introduction to the second edition of 1968 by Dundes (xi-xvii) and especially his "The Study of Folklore in Literature and Culture: Identification and Interpretation". In: *Journal of American Folktales* 78 (1965), 136-142: "The basic methodology of studying folklore in literature and studying folklore in culture is almost exactly the same; in other words, the discipline of folklore has its own methodology applying equally to literary and cultural problems" (136). Interestingly, the analysis of Propp with respect to the morphology of folktales (published in the Russian original in 1928) coincided with similar observations described by Pike's teacher, the American linguist and anthropologist Edward Sapir with respect to the study of native American culture, published in 1927: "The Unconscious Patterning of Behavior in Society": In: R. Darnell a.o. (eds.), *The Collected Works of Edward* Sapir, Vol. III. Culture. Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1999, 156-172. For the significance of the etic/emic distinction for the study of miracles in antiquity, cf. below under 4.

[11] Rudolf Otto, *Das Heilige*. Über *das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen*. München: C.H. Beck, 1963, 6: "(…) das Heilige *minus* seines sittlichen Momentes und (…) minus seines rationalen Momentes überhaupt".

[12] For an overview on the history of the category on which I rely here, cf. Dirk Johannsen, *Das Numinose als kulturwissenschaftliche Kategorie*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2008, 11-96.

study of religion, Otto's work demonstrated "the radical decontextualis-ation and deprocessualization of religious data"[13]; it came to be regarded as an expression of 'anti-historicism'. On the one hand, the numinous appeared devoid of any concern for questions of religious identity and the role of social contexts favouring an irrational emotional dimension of religious experience; on the other hand, it was indicted for its on-tologized transcendence[14]. For these reasons, and others, the category became increasingly stigmatised as un-scientific in the study of religion field. Most scholars abandoned the category numinous. Also theologians likewise disregarded the category as being problematic.

The logic behind this rejection is quite telling. I quote from Frie-drich Feigel's critique of Otto's work: "Otto's Numinosum erweist sich für die Begründung der *Wahrheit* der Religion als ungeeignet, weil es noch nicht einmal eine Möglichkeit an die Hand gibt, Gott vom Teufel zu unterscheiden"[15].

Ironically, it is this very ambivalence of the term *Das Numinose* which might account for its value as a means to compare religious narra-tives in rather "neutral" terms[16]. This appealed to researchers like Robert Levy, Jeanette Mageo, and Alan Howard who shied away from referring to the 'spiritual', 'supernatural' or 'to a non-empirical reality' because such vocabulary tended to reinforce ethno-centricism. It is therefore no coincidence that Otto's category survived in the fields of ethnology, folk-lore studies, and comparative literature. In their methodological introduc-tion, the editors of the volume *Spirits in Culture, History, and Mind* – a collection of ethnological papers from 1996[17] – defended their preference

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[13] Christiano Grotanelli and Bruce Lincoln, "A brief note on (future) research in the history of religions". In: *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 10 (1998): 311-325, 317.

[14] Hans G. Kippenberg / Kocku von Stuckrad, *Einführung in die Religionswissenschaft – Gegenstände und Begriffe*. München: C.H. Beck, 2003, 142-143.

[15] Friedrich K. Feigel, *"Das Heilige", Kritische Abhandlung* über *Rudolf Ottos glei-chnamiges Buch*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, ²1948, 133. Engl. Translation by W. Kahl: "Otto's Numinosum is useless for establishing the *truth* of religion, since it does not even allow to distinguish God from the devil."

[16] Cf. Johannsen, *Das Numinose*, 90.

[17] Robert Levy, Jeannette M. Mageo and Alan Howard, "Gods, Spirits, and History. A Theoretical Perspective." In a*Spirits in Culture, History, and Mind*, ed. Jeannette M.Mageo and Alan Howard. New York: Routledge, 1996, 11-28, 13.

for the term 'numinous'. 'Numinous' from this perspective denotes a realm different from everyday experiences within the visible world, without superimposing the interpretation of reality dominant in a particular culture; instead of using the term 'spiritual beings' cross-culturally, they prefer the term *numinals* as more neutral category.

3. 'Numinous power' as useful category

In the past generation, the problematic of terminology and categorization has been critically reflected upon in New Testament studies. This pertains especially to terms such as 'Spätjudentum' (late Judaism), 'Jewish legalism', and the like. With respect to understanding New Testament references to miracles in the Gospel narratives, Rudolf Bultmann, e.g., disregards these traditions as inacceptable expressions of a premature faith. Accordingly he refers to them as 'mirakulös'. In this perspective, the belief in miracles is due to a magical understanding of the world. A faith that is dependent on the word of God in Christ alone represents the proper Christian attitude. This faith constitutes, for Bultmann, the real Christian miracle[18].

Especially with regard to understanding the miracles narrated in the Gospels, the question is: Given the fact that Western exegetes generally do not share a belief in miracles and demonic activity, how can we represent in *emically*[19] sensitive and methodologically controlled ways ancient belief systems such as come to expression in New Testament "miracle stories"? The very category "miracle story" might be a problematic designation of particular episodes in the narrative sections of the New Testament. This category might be an expression of an *etic* approach to the material with the potential to cloud, rather than to illumine the meaning dimensions of New Testament texts[20].

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[18] Rudolf Bultmann, *Neues Testament und Mythologie. Das Problem der Entmythologisierung der neutestamentlichen Verkündigung*. München: Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1985 [Orig.: 1941]).

[19] As for the emic/etic terminology, cf. the discussion below in section 4.

[20] Cf. the discussion below in section 5.

3.1. Definition of miracle

"Miracle" in the context of the academic study of ancient religion is a term referring to the *interpretation and characterization of an event as the manifestation of an activity of a numinous power*, i.e. of a personalized spiritual being with an ability – miracle power – that exceeds human abilities[21].

The English word miracle – the same applies to the German word *Wunder* – is an imprecise "umbrella term" compared to a whole variety of words available in ancient Greek which highlight distinct features of such an event: *thaûma* (the wonder aspect), *dynámeis* (the power aspect), érga (the performative aspect), *parádoxa* (the unexpected and strange aspect), *semeîa* (the signifying aspect), *térata* (the dreadful aspect), to name only the most significant of terms. This variety in terminology reflects a differentiated knowledge of miracles in antiquity[22].

3.2. The Narrative Schema and the description of "miracle healing stories"

In my book *New Testament Miracle Stories* I tried to compare *neutrally* New Testament *episodes narrating a miraculous healing* with narratives actualizing the same motif in the *Tanakh*, Qumran literature, writings of Hellenistic and Rabbinic Judaism, as well as with narratives from Greco-Roman traditions. The challenge was how to avoid *methodologically* the ever luring temptation of elevating the New Testament narratives over against those of other traditions, as had been common in some of New Testament scholarship[23]. Searching for a solution I turned to the study of method with respect to the analysis and comparison of

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[21] For the definition, cf. Werner Kahl, "Überlegungen zu einer interkulturellen Verständigung über neutestamentliche Wunder". In: *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 82,2 (1998), 98-106, 99.

[22] Cf. Werner Kahl, "Wunder". In: Lothar Coenen and Klaus Haacker (eds.), *Theologisches Begriffslexikon zum Neuen Testament*. Vol. 2. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2000, 1966-1977; Stefan Alkier, "Wunder – Neues Testament". In: ⁴*RGG* (2005), Vol. 8, 1719-1722, here: 1719-1720.

[23] Cf. the overview in Kahl, *Miracle Stories*, 19ff.

narratives from different cultures: methods that had been developed and tested in the fields of folklore studies, ethnology, and semiotics, esp. structuralism. I adopted the *Narrative Schema* derived from Algirdas J. Greimas' reorganization[24] of Vladimir Propp's thirty one narrative functions[25] which had been introduced into the field of New Testament studies by Hendrikus Boers[26] and I applied it to the analysis and comparison of approximately 150 narratives of "miracle healing stories" from Mediterranean antiquity[27].

The Narrative Schema

A. NEED	B. PREPAREDNESS	C. PERFORMANCE	D. SANCTION
A subject of a circumstance disjoined from a desirable objector conjoined with an undesirable object.	An active subject, willing or obliged, and able (having the power) to overcome the need, specified in A, by a performance.	The active subject performing the action to transform the circumstance specified in A into the opposite.	Recognition of the success or failure of the performance, or of the achievement of a desired value.

This model proved useful in reducing the risk of favouring one tradition over the other. I simply analysed the sequence of narrative moves, strictly confined to the syntagmatic unfolding of events, in order to distinguish structural features from the level of motif. In so doing, I arrived at the following structuralistically informed *description* of "miracle healing stories" as narratives with a particular thematic actualisation. This is, however, *not* to be mistaken as an attempt at constituting a "genre" – on the contrary[28].

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[24] Cf. Algirdas J. Greimas and Joesph Courtés, *Sémiotique. Dictionnaire raisonné de la théorie du langage.* Paris: Hachette, 1993, 244-247.

[25] Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale.* Austin: University of Texas Press, ²1968.

[26] Hendrikus Boers, "Introduction." In: Wilhelm Egger, *How to Read the New Testament. An Introduction to Linguistic and Historical-Critical Methodology.* Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996, xxxvii-lxix, lxv; H. Boers, *Neither on This Mountain Nor in Jerusalem. A Study of John 4.* Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1988), 9-14.

[27] Werner Kahl, *New Testament Miracle Stories in their Religious-Historical Setting: a Religionsgeschichtliche Comparison from a Structural Perspective.* Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des AT und NT. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994, 44-62.

[28] It should be noted that in my *New Testament Miracle Stories* I presupposed, and made use of the category "miracle stories" which was also retained in the title of the book.

A so-called "miracle healing story" shares the same morphology with other narratives. It describes the move from a need to the fulfilment of that need by means of a performance of an active subject specially prepared for the task. The difference of *miracle healing* stories from other narratives is constituted by the way structural features ('motifemic slots') are realised, i.e. the difference is located on the level of *motif*: The initial need belongs to the topic of *health*. This need can only be fulfilled by the involvement of a *bearer of numinous power* in the phase of the preparedness and/or performance, either directly or through a mediator. The reversal of the initial circumstance depends on the involvement of some numinous power, since – from the perspective of normal human ability – the initial lack is irreversible: "Consequently, the involvement of a *bearer of numinous power* (BNP) in the narrative process, its activation for and its engagement in a NP (narrative program, W.K.) aimed at the reversal of the initial circumstance, plays a crucial role in miracle stories"[29]. In consequence, "miracle healing stories" could be described as narratives in which "the initial lack belongs to the category of *health* and a bearer of *numinous power* is involved in the narrative development at the phase of the preparedness and/or performance, either directly or through a mediator"[30].

My structuralistic analyses of these stories however, lead to the realization that this category is problematic and should *not* be regarded as a „genre", and that the same applies to sub-categories. Here the critique of K. Berger has been fully supported by my research. I proposed a *re-classification* of these stories according to *inner-narrative function* together with a similar analysis of the whole narrative, and eventually of non-narrative material of the New Testament, cf. Kahl, *Miracle Stories*, 173-215. 237: "Further studies call for a reassessment of all the narrative material of the NT from a structural perspective". In a recent critique of the form-critical approach to the narrative material in question, Paul-Gerhard Klumbies interprets my analysis in line with former form-critical attempts at circumscribing a "Gattungsschema" for these stories, only „in lediglich modifizierter Nomenklatur", cf. Klumbies, "Grenze", 27. He completely misses the point that by structuralistic analysis, I arrived at the conclusion clearly communicated even in the German summary at the end of the book, "dass die Kategorie 'Wundererzählung' eine zweifelhafte Klassifikationist" (Kahl, *Miracle Stories,* 239). This was a significant *result* of my analyses.

[29] Kahl, *Miracle Stories*, 63-64.
[30] Kahl, *Miracle Stories*, 233.

3.3. Differentiating the term "miracle worker"

Comparing about 150 "miracle healing stories" and analysing the functions of active subjects, I realized that the widely used term *miracle worker* was misleading when it was applied to figures like Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Tobit, Hanina ben Dosa, Jesus of Nazareth, Peter, Paul, Asclepios, the God of Israel, Vespasian, Apollonius of Tyana, and others, alike. Those figures function in *different roles* within "miracle healing narratives". Therefore I introduced three types of figures which are actively involved in the miracle healing performance: *bearer of numinous power* (BNP: like the God of Israel, Jesus, Asclepios, and Apollonius), *petitioner of numinous power* (PNP: like Moses, Hanina ben Dosa, Peter, and Paul), and *mediator of numinous power* (MNP: like Tobit and Vespasian). Figures of the latter two types do *not incorporate constantly* numinous healing power. Often PNPs can also function as MNPs in one and the same narrative, as is the case with Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Peter, and Paul. This distinction has proved useful. It helps to understand more precisely than possible before, the distinct functions of various figures featuring in these narratives[31].

Analysing narratives from Mediterranean antiquity is an exercise in cross-cultural understanding. Compared to modes of conceiving of reality and of manipulating "world" in the modern West are markedly different from those presupposed as conventional knowledge in the New Testament writings. Given this difference, the modern interpretation of these writings originating in cultures distant in location and time, is a complex endeavour. This problematic is all too often not reflected in depth in New

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[31] *Religionsgeschichtliche* and *formgeschichtliche* exegesis has made plausible that New Testament stories narrating a miraculous healing have to be understood in comparison with similar stories which abound in Mediterranean antiquity. While *not* presupposing a general „genre" of „miracle healing stories", it can nevertheless be of heuristic value to compare stories with a common theme or with common motifs. This however can constitute only the *first step* in an attempt at understanding the New Testament narratives. *On the basis* of *religionsgeschichtliche* comparison and structuralistic and narrative analysis, the stories have then to be interpreted within the given micro- and marco-contexts of a gospel in order to come close to an *emically* appropriate understanding of their particular functions and meaning dimensions; here I am in agreement with Klumbies, "Grenze".

Testament studies. In this respect, much could be learned from insights gained in the field of ethnology, pertaining especially to the problematic of cross-cultural representation and translation as discussed with reference to the etic/emic terminology in the insider/outsider debate[32].

Comparing narratives from *various* distinct traditions of antiquity, as is necessary in a *religionsgeschichtliche* comparison of "miracle healing stories", how could justice be done to each and everyone of them? Terms like magical, miraculous, supernatural, occult, or mythical have problematic and derogatory undertones. "Numinous" as an attribute of "power", however, might be a neutral and broad enough term to denote the competence and activity of such diverse figures as gods, angels, unclean spirits, demons, ancestors, Satan, and so on. In Latin, "numen" at times denotes a deity, and at times the effects of its activity. I propose the use of "numinous" in a more general sense, and give the following *definition of numinous power*: It denotes a power effecting changes beyond human ability which is attributed to the competence and activity of spiritual or divine beings.

The involvement of such figures clearly comes to expression in "miracle healing narratives". It should be noted that "numinous power" in the above definition is considered neutral – simply signifying the activities of figures connected to a numinous sphere. Only in actual healing narratives are the involved powers qualified as good or evil, life enhancing or destructive – depending on the value system of the narrator. It should also be noted that in the New Testament, God and Christ's power can also cause death and destruction, miracles can be attributed to Satan (Apc 13:11-15; 2 Thess 2:3-10; Mt 24:24), and critics ascribed Jesus' healing activity to demonic forces (cf. Mk 3:22).

As for the presentation of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels, the records describe the Holy Spirit descending into (Mark 1:10: εἰς) or onto him (Mt 3:16 and Lk 3:22: ἐπ' αὐτόν). For example, this happens at the occasion of his baptism when the Spirit bestows Jesus with *constant* divine power (cf. Mk 1:22: ὡς ἐξουσίαν ἔχων; 1:27: διδαχὴ καινὴ κατ' ἐξουσίαν;

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[32] W. Kahl, *Jesus als Lebensretter. Westafrikanische Bibelinterpretationen und ihre Relevanz für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*. New Testament Studies in Contextual Exegesis 2. Frankfurt: Peter Lang Verlag, 2007, 153-183.

Lk 4:36: ἐν ἐξουσίᾳ καὶ δυνάμει; cf. 4:14: ἐν τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ πνεύματος). Due to this divine preparedness he is enabled to overcome Satan resp. the Devil and to drive out "unclean spirits" from people, healing them, and restoring their personal and communal integrity[33]. Like God in the Jewish tradition, angels or other, "unclean spirits" or demons belong to the numinous sphere. As such, however, their activities might have effects within the visible world.

Due to their numinous power, the unclean spirits can overpower human beings, causing illness and social ostracism among other circumstances that are not desired from a regular human perspective. These spirits recognize that the numinous power of Jesus surpasses theirs. Within the Markan narrative they, and only they, know who Jesus is immediately upon encountering him: Jesus as the Holy one of God: οἶδά σε τίς εἶ, ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ (Mk 1:24; cf. 5:7: Τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, Ἰησοῦ υἱὲ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου;). As such, Jesus was declared by a heavenly voice after the spirit had descended onto him as: "You are my beloved son" (1:11: Σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα). By implication, the narrative informs its readers that Jesus is the "son of God". Whatever the precise meaning of the designation "son of God" might have been in the matrix of ancient Judaism within which the term has to be located[34], it signifies from an Early Christian perspective that Jesus is different from OT prophets, certain rabbinic figures, Early Christian apostles, or shamans past and present: He *constantly incorporates divine power* by means of which he is able, *inter alia*, to restore health and life. This is brought to expression in the numerous miracle healing stories of all the Gospels: God's healing power extends to Jesus. He, as an *innerworldy* figure, is presented as a constant *bearer of numinous power*. This is— apart from the historically later figure of Apollonios of Tyana – a unique attribution in ancient miracle healing stories. Other figures indiscriminately designated as "miracle workers" in New Testament scholarship, are either transcendent gods that might appear on earth for a particular

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[33] Cf. Werner Kahl, "Neutestamentliche Verfahren des In-Ordnung-Bringens". In *Interkulturelle Theologie* 37 (2011), 19-29.

[34] Cf. the study by Daniel Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels. The Story of the Jewish Christ.* New York: The New Press, 2012.

performance, or they are human beings who are being used by a god or who might be bestowed temporarily with numinous ability for a particular performance. The latter might function as *mediators of numinous power* or they appear as figures that are able to motivate, persuade, or force a transcendent being to engage in a miracle healing. As such they function as *petitioners of numinous power* like Hanina ben Dosa who in Rabbinic literature is portrayed as a rabbi with the special ability to successfully reach God with prayer requests. But he is *not* a miracle worker in the strict sense of the word. The same applies to Paul according to Acts[35] and according to his epistles[36]. With respect to Rabbinic literature, the miracle worker is *God* as transcendent *bearer of numinous power*.

4. Numinous power and concepts of reality

We try to make sense of the ambiguities of life as members of communities within distinct cultures. We cannot escape being bound to traditions of conventionalized knowledge within which we experience and conceptualize, communicate, manipulate, and forecast reality. This also holds true for discourses on concepts of reality. The very terms 'reality' and 'existence' open up whole universes of meaning, and at the same time, they also limit our understanding.

Around the turn of the century, I spent three years in West-Africa doing field research on the interpretation of the Bible in Ghana. I tried to understand the cultural frame of reference – the encyclopaedia in and through which people make sense of the world and of the Bible in West-Africa. My experiences and reflections in Ghana allowed for a

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[35] The story in Acts 14:8-18 is striking since this is the only miracle healing story in Acts where an apostle *seems* to cause miracle healing himself, i.e. without any reference to prayer, to laying on of hands or a reference to the "name of Jesus". The people in Lystra witnessing the healing cannot but interpret it in the following way: The gods Zeus and Hermes have appeared in the human forms of Barnabas and Paul respectively. This is also clear evidence that *human miracle workers* in the sense of humans possessing miracle power *constantly*, i.e. functioning as bearers of numinous power, were not believed to be a realistic possibility.

[36] With respect to the Pauline epistles, this has been convincingly pointed out by Alkier, *Wunder*.

fresh view on the "miracle healing stories" of the New Testament, and I became aware of meaning dimensions in these narratives previously hidden from me[37].

Classicists working in West-Africa in the fifties and sixties of the last century had already observed that a West-African cultural perspective might be helpful in gaining insides with respect to life in antiquity, as e.g. John Ferguson claimed 1967 while teaching in Nigeria:

> "Our Classics department is set in one of the few parts of the world where you can still consult oracles, where there are tonal languages (as Classical Greek was tonal), where there is a living tradition of religious dance-drama (what is Greek tragedy in origin but that?), where sacrifice is understood, where contemporary society offers many fascinating parallels to ancient Greek and Roman society. Nigerian scholars, if they will look at the classics with Nigerian and not European eyes, can interpret the classics to us in ways no European scholar can do"[38].

A note of caution is in order here: It would be problematic to *identify* concepts of reality or cultural features of contemporary West-Africa with corresponding concepts of societies in Mediterranean antiquity, but certainly the former often exhibit certain degrees of closeness to the latter, esp. when compared with perspectives of the modern West[39]. With respect to the subject of the miraculous and the numinous in New Testament "healing narratives", it is obvious that certain affinities do exist between West-African and ancient Mediterranean experiences of life and the construction of reality. This applies first and foremost to the ever present reality of untimely death and the unpredictable occurrence of disease, and secondly to sickness aetiologies which reckon with the possibility of the involvement of evil spirits as root-cause for the

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[37] The results of this research have been published in Kahl, *Jesus als Lebensretter*.

[38] Quoted in KwameBediako, *Christianity in Africa. The renewal of a Non-Western Religion*. Edinburgh:Orbis Books, 1995, 252.

[39] Cf. the references to African examples in Meyer Fortes, *Oedipus and Job in West African Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959; Walter Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred. Tracks of Biology in Early Religions*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996.

predicament of an individual. At the same time, quite a number of people interpret and communicate an experienced healing in terms of miracle. The realities of ever threatening incurable diseases, of disease causing spirits and of miracle healings are to be presupposed as self-evident in antiquity in general and in Early Christianity in particular. Against this background, Martin Dibelius' rationalistic and romanticized verdict that New Testament "miracle healing stories" were an expression of a "Lust am Mirakel" – a delight taken in miraculous events – seems to miss the point:[40] New Testament "healing stories" make transparent, *inter alia*, the struggle of survival or the struggle to (re)gain health in life-threatening circumstances that were common in antiquity. These stories contain a narrative expression of the Early Christian belief that God might assist them in overcoming sickness and help ward off potentially fatal attacks of evil spirits. The Lord's Prayer, e.g., asks to deliver us from evil, which most likely refers to saving and protecting from evil forces. What is at stake in the "miracle healing traditions" is a matter of life and death. According to the general concept of reality in antiquity, an individual is *not* the master of his or her life and death; he or she is rather *sub-iectus* to both the family or the community and to the powers of the numinous sphere. According to the latter, the visible world is experienced and thought of as *embedded* in a wider net of activities of various spiritual beings including gods, angels, demons, ancestors, etc. belonging to the invisible, numinous sphere[41]. The seen world is always intermingled with the unseen world of spiritual forces[42].

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[40] Martin Dibelius, Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums. Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, [6]1971), 171. Dibelius seems to apply an observation made by Aristotle in his Poetics to the New Testament: "The miraculous is pleasant" (Poetics 1460a). Aristotle's observation, drawn from everyday experience, refers to tragedies for stage performance and to epic writing, not to quasi historical writings like the Gospels.

[41] Cf. Kahl, *Lebensretter*, 181-201.

[42] Cf. the apt statement by Paul-Gerhard Klumbies in his recent article "Wunderexegese" (31) who draws here on philosophical insights of the philosophers Kurt Hübner and Ernst Cassirer: "Seither hat die Einsicht in die Rationalität des Mythos an Bodengewonnen. Als Konsequenz wird die wechselseitige Durchdringung von Diesseitigem und Jenseitigem, von Menschlichem und Göttlichem, von natürlichen Vorgängen und numinosen Ereignissen, von Materialität und Immaterialität neu wahrgenommen. Spirituelles und Körperliches bilden nach mythischer Weltanschauung eine Einheit. Die auslösenden Ursachen für körperliche Defekte liegen auf spir-

Ancient Mediterranean World Knowledge Systems
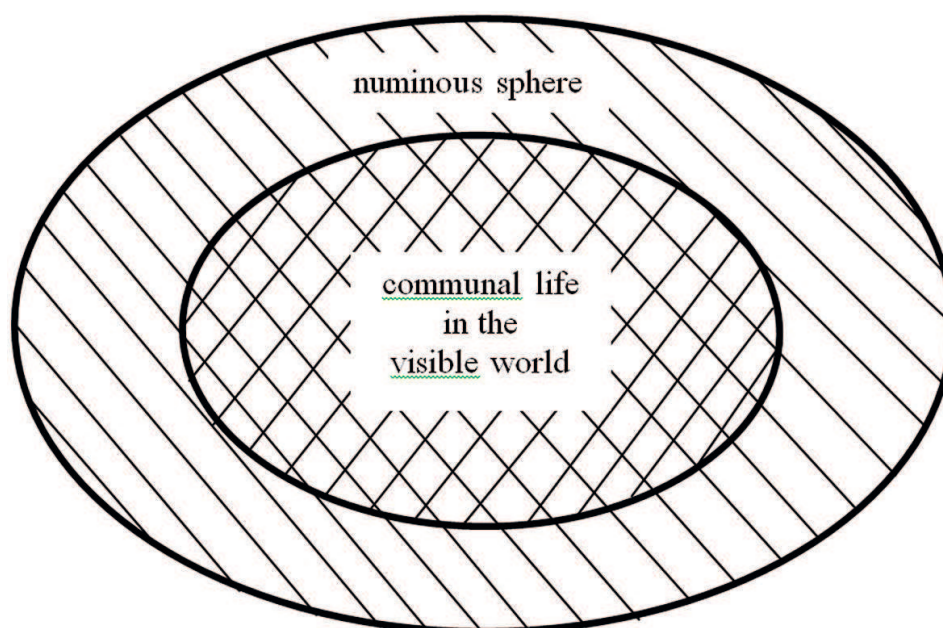
With this knowledge of the world, it was of utmost importance to avoid the wrath of gods or fall prey to the spell of an evil spirit in order to avoid disasters such as grave illness[43]. Getting infected or possessed by such a spirit, is a problem that is not to be limited to the affairs of the subject involved. In communal societies which were the norm in Mediterranean antiquity, such a condition would have repercussions for the

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itueller Ebene. Numinose Mächte nehmen Einfluss auf die empirisch vorfindlichen Welt. Durchweg führt der Erkenntnisweg von den Ursachen im spirituell-numinosen Bereich zu den Wirkungen in materiell-körperlicher Hinsicht."This is supported by the investigation of ancient Greco-Roman medical traditions of, a.o., Annette Weissenrieder („Stories Just Under the Skin: *lepra* in the Gospel of Luke," in Alkier and Weissenrieder, *Miracles Revisited*, 73-100) and TeunTieleman, "Miracle and Natural Cause in Galen," in Alkier and Weissenrieder, *Miracles Revisited*, 101-113, 112: For Galen, "god(s) and nature belong to one and the same continuous reality, in which universal rules obtain."

[43] Cf. the following works of classicists and historians: Fritz Graf, *Gottesnähe und Schadenzauber. Die Magie in der griechisch-römischen Antike*. München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1996; Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred*; Jörg Rüpke, *Die Religion der Römer*. München:Verlag C.H. Beck, 2001; Hans-Joachim Gehrke, *Geschichte des Hellenismus*. Oldenbourg Grundriss der Geschichte 1B. München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, ⁴2008), 78-85; Werner Dahlheim, *Geschichte der römischen Kaiserzeit*. Oldenbourg Grundriss der Geschichte 3. München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, ³2003, 273-279.

whole community, transgressing even the bounds of the extended family. Warding off attacks of life threatening spirits could only be achieved by securing the help of a friendly numinous power[44]. Taking this conception into account, I propose a more radical understanding of the significance of the numinous sphere in antiquity compared with positions long taken for granted in New Testament scholarship, according to which numinous powers or evil spirits in antiquity including the New Testament writings played a less dramatic role. Susan Garrett, e.g., in a recent publication speaks of a mere "influence of invisible powers in affairs of the visible world"[45]. I propose the notion that this 'influence' was perceived in antiquity as *all-pervasive* and ever threatening should be taken seriously. In this scenario, it is human beings who hope to counter and "influence" the invisible powers. Thus, humans tried to exercise power through their behaviour, by performing sacrifices or magic, or through intermediaries like priests, healers, or shamans.

It should be noted that this ancient concept of reality is *not* irrational[46] and it was also *not* an expression of simple minded and

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[44] As in Mediterranean antiquity, similar strategies to explain and to address misfortune have been described for traditional societies, e.g. in West-Africa. With regard to the Dagomba people in Northern Ghana, cf. the ethnological observation by Jon Kirby, *The Power and the Glory. Popular Christianity in Northern Ghana.* Akropon-Akuapem: Regnum Africa, 2012, 237: "Although people believe in the natural causation of various difficulties and problems like illness, victims normally also seek out the root cause and the personal cause – not just how the problem came about but also what was the unseen force behind the visible causes and 'why the thing came to me and not to you'. Thus, in seeking a solution, recourse will usually be made to the unseen world through various shrines and sacrifices, offerings and libations, exorcisms, incantations and invocations, as well as through prayers and supplications to the ancestors, the divinities and finally, after all else fails, to God".

[45] Susan R. Garrett, "Jesus als Befreier vom Satan und den Mächten". In: *ZNT* 28 (2011): 14-23, 19.

[46] Cf. Ruben Zimmermann, "Grundfragen zu den frühchristlichen Wundererzählungen". In: Zimmermann, *Kompendium,* 7-67 with respect to early Christian "miracle stories" (31): "Die erzählte Veränderung am *realistischen* Inventar (Menschen, Sachen, Natur) überschreitet dabei die Grenze zwischen gewohnter Weltordnung und dem *Irrealen.* Die Erzählung erzeugt hierbei bewusst eine Spannung, inszeniert gerade das *Gegenrationale* und *Unmögliche*" (italics W. K.). Early Christian "miracle stories" are here understood within the reference system of modernity according to which belief in miracle is irrational since, from the perspective of this conventionalized knowledge of the world, neither miracles in the true sense of the word nor

numinous beings were real. The contrary, however, holds true for Mediterranean antiquity in general and for Early Christianity in particular. Here, miracles are *not* absolutely "impossible". They are impossible only for human beings who have not been endowed with numinous power. They *are* possible, however, for numinous beings, cf. Lk 1:37: "Nothing will be impossible with God" (cf. for the Biblical tradition: Gen 18:14; Hiob 42:2; Mk 10:27 par.; cf. also Stefan Alkier, "'For nothing will be impossible with God'[Luke 1:37]: The Reality of 'The Feeding the Five Thousand' [Luke 9:10-17] in the Universe of Discource of Luke's Gospel," in Alkier and Weissenrieder, *Miracles Revisited*, 5-22). This is common knowledge in antiquity as it is in much of the contemporary world in the Global South. Zimmermann's assessment of New Testament "miracle stories" is therefore an example of an *etic* perspective which fails to sense and communicate essential meaning dimensions of these narratives. This unsatisfactory approach generates a number of cross-cultural misunderstandings and problematic decisions. A fundamental flaw of this encyclopedia is, e.g., constituted by the decision to consider only "miracle stories" attached to "human miracle workers" (50-51). In consequence, the essential miracle presupposed in Early Christianity, i.e. God's resurrection of Jesus is excluded from consideration.

But in how far is Jesus a "*human* miracle worker"? – a question that Zimmermann himself raises (50-51). He brushes it aside, however, by claiming an avoidance of the application of a "anachronistische(n) Vorstellung der späteren Trinitätslehre" (51) to the New Testament presentations of Jesus. While it would indeed by problematic exegetically to read back into the New Testament later Trinitarian concepts, this is not a sufficient reason to treat Jesus as "human miracle worker" within the context of the Gospel narratives who in fact vary in their presentation of Jesus with respect to the relationship of human and divine aspects. The bottom line in the Gospels is that Jesus is *not* just like any other human being, and this comes to expression especially in the narratives that portray him as a miracle worker in the strict sense of the word, i.e. as a *bearer of numinous power*!

Zimmermann himself reads into the New Testament narratives anachronistically a modern concept of reality. By so doing, those Early Christian witnesses are not taken serious with their frames of reference. In their perspective, the human being Jesus *did incorporate divine healing power* (*dynamis* and *exousia*) *permanently*. In antiquity, this had inevitably to lead to the question of the relationship between God and Jesus, and this problematic is already reflected in the Gospels and in other New Testament writings (cf. also the same problematic with respect to Paul in Acts 14:8-18). In the strict sense of the word, a "human miracle worker" is, *from an ancient perspective*, an oxymoron. As I have shown in my *New Testament Miracle Stories*, in order to do justice to the interpretation and communication of reality in antiquity, "miracle worker" in the strict sense of the word should be reserved to figures that incorporate healing power permanently, and this holds true to gods especially—with Jesus and Apollonios of Tyana as remarkable exceptions with both of them being later divinized. The apostles Peter and Paul were clearly not regarded as "miracle workers" on the same level with Jesus. They functioned as *mediators of numinous power* in both directions, but they did not possess miracle power. Rather, God as *transcendent*

uneducated populations, even though such judgment has been passed by exegetes[47] – a typical attitude that frequently occurs in cross-cultural studies:

> "People of one nation (or class or society, etc.) may sometimes appear to another to be 'illogical' or 'stupid' or 'incomprehensible' simply because the observer is over a long period of time taking an alien standpoint from which to view their activity, instead to learn their emic patterns of overt and covert behaviour"[48].

This system of world-knowledge was shared by the educated strata of ancient societies. As we learn from Plutarch, there were varying degrees or intensities in reckoning with numinous powers, and only the *extremes* seemed problematic to Plutarch[49]. The reality of the potential involvement of numinous powers in everyday life affairs was self-evident to philosophers from Socrates via Aristotle to Plutarch. Reality was

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miracle worker worked through them the same way as God – according to Luke only! – wrought miracles *through* Jesus (cf. Acts 2:22; 5:12; 19:12).It is in the presentation of Jesus as miracle worker in the *Qur'an* that Jesus is portrayed strictly as a human being. Therefore it is repeatedly made clear in the Qur'an that Jesus performed miracles "by the permission of God" (cf. Sura 3:49). In the Qur'an, a tendency that can be found in Luke-Acts (cf. Kahl, *Miracle Stories*, 226-227) appears radicalized. Due to the afore-mentioned problematic pre-decisions in the *Kompendium*, several narratives with evident miracle motifs (cf. only Lk 1:5-25) are left out of consideration, even though, from an emic perspective, they make transparent the presence of the numinous power of God like any other "miracle story". The concept of the *Kompendiumder frühchristlichen Wundererzählungen* is severely impaired by the superimposition of a modern understanding of the world in general and of miracles in particular, onto the New Testament narratives. Insights from the academic study of religion – Religionswissenschaft–help to come closer to an emically appropriate understanding of miracles in texts from antiquity, cf., e.g., Gustav Mensching, *Das Wunderim Glauben und Aberglauben der Völker*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1957, 39: "Jesus ist in den Evangeliens owohl Objektwie Subjekt von 'Wundern' (...)."

47 With respect to exegetes like Rudolf Bultmann or Gerd Theißen declaring people who believe in miracles as naïve, primitive, or psychologically instable, cf. Alkier, *Wunder und Wirklichkeit*, 4 and 28; Kahl, *Jesus als Lebensretter*, 167-168, esp. footnote 450.

48 Pike, *Language,* 51.

49 Plutarch, *Moralia*, 171E-F; cf. Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, 1:1:6-9. Cf. W. Kahl, "Gott und göttliche Wesen". In: Kurt Erlemann a.o. (eds.), *Neues Testament und Antike Kultur, Volume 3: Weltauffassung, Kult, Ethos*. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2005, 88-109, esp. 88-91.

perceived to be more than its reduction to the visible and measurable world. Ancient concepts of the world *extended* reality into the invisible sphere of potent numinous powers or spiritual beings. Their activities could be regarded as spiritual root causes of experiences in the visible world interpreted as direct effects of these activities.

In order to come to a more appropriate, i.e. *emic* understanding of New Testament "miracle healing stories", it is necessary to constantly keep in mind the implications of ancient knowledge systems when interpreting these narratives. Since an understanding of the world in terms of the numinous was regarded as self-evident, its implications are at times only presupposed or alluded to in "miracle stories", so that the modern reader might have difficulty in grasping what is actually at stake in a particular story. The American anthropologist and linguist Edward Sapir described this dilemma in cross-cultural communication back in 1927 when he maintained that untrained observers in a foreign culture are constantly tempted to attribute weight to cultural items which might be of rather secondary importance to the cultural insiders while he or she might totally fail to notice or ignore the essential significance of, let us say, a ritual:

> "Let anyone who doubts this try the experiment of making a painstaking report [i.e. an etic one] of the actions of a group of natives engaged in some activity, say religious, to which he has not the cultural key [i.e. a knowledge of the emic system]. If he is a skilful writer, he may succeed in giving a picturesque account of what he sees and hears, or thinks he sees and hears, but the chances of his being able to give a relation of what happens, in terms that would be intelligible and acceptable to the natives themselves, are practically nil. He will be guilty of all manner of distortion; his emphasis will be constantly askew. *He will find interesting what the natives take for granted as a casual kind of behaviour worthy of no particular comment, and he will utterly fail to observe the crucial turning points* in the course of action that give formal significance to the whole in the minds of those who do possess the key to its understanding"[50].

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[50] Pike, *Language*, 39 (italics: W.K.).

Sapir's research prepared the etic-emic or insider-outsider debate in ethnology and folklore studies in the USA which was developed by his student Kenneth Pike in the fifties, and from the sixties onward, by Pike's student Alan Dundes[51]. The same dynamics described here are at play in the cross-cultural encounter of exegetes and classicists with ancient texts.

One example is the interpretation of Mark 1:29-31(The mother-in-law of Simon is lying down feverish): "After Jesus approached her he raised her up after he took her hand. And the fever left her, and she served them" (v. 31). A modern reader might overlook the implication of the following phrase: καὶ ἀφῆκεν αὐτὴν ὁ πυρετός. The fever functions grammatically as active subject of the narrative move that immediately brings about healing, or to put it in terms of the Narrative Schema: The activity of the fever *effectuates* the disjunction from the undesirable object that the woman was previously conjoined with—undesirable from the perspective of the woman and her relatives as well as from the perspective of the Gospel writer. It seems to be implied that the fever is actually forced out of the woman by the physical connection brought about by Jesus: he takes her by the hand. In short, what is being described involves an *exorcism*. Luke's rendering of the story in 4:38-39 strongly reinforces the presupposition of a numinous power struggle in this case. Here we have Jesus ἐπετίμησεν τῷ πυρετῷ (v. 39) resulting in the fever's withdrawal from the woman. ἐπιτιμάω is a *terminus technicus* in ancient "exorcism stories", and we also find the expression in other New Testament "exorcism stories" such as in Mk 1:25 where Jesus commands an unclean spirit to leave a person, or in Mk 4:39 where Jesus commands

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[51] Edward Sapir, "The Meaning of Religion." In: *The Collected Works of Edward Sapir*, vol. 3, ed. Regna Darnell. Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1999, 134-145; Edward Sapir, "The Unconscious Patterning of Behavior in Society". In: *Collected Works* 3, 156-172; Pike, *Language*; Pike, "On the emics and etics of Pike and Harris". In: *Emics and Etics. The Insider/Outsider Debate*, ed. Thomas Headland, Kenneth L. Pike and Marvin Harris. Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1990, 28-47; Pike and Carol V. McKinney, "Understanding Misunderstanding as cross-cultural emic clash". In: *The mystery of culture contacts, historical reconstruction, and text analysis: An emic approach*, ed. Kurt R. Jankowsky. Washington:Georgetown University Press, 1996, 39-64; Thomas Headland, "Introduction. A Dialogue Between Kenneth Pike and Marvin Harris on Emics and Etics". In: *Emics and Etics*, 13-27; Alan Dundes, "From Etic to Emic Units"; Dundes, *Morphology*.

the storm to be calm down. It might not be obvious to a modern reader that an *exorcism* is being narrated in the storm stilling episode, with the storm as a numinous spirit being.

Concerning Mk 1:29-31 it should be noted that Simon's mother-in-law, after being liberated from the fever, engages in the activity of "serving them", i.e. the visitors. What is the significance of this activity? From a form-critical perspective, this performance would solely signal, i.e. demonstrate the *success* of the miracle performance of Jesus[52].This is certainly one function of this motif, but there is more to it: If "serving them" implies here—in line with general gender expectations in the Mediterranean world of antiquity—that the woman prepares food, then numinous as well as social-communal dimensions are involved, as would be self-evident to the average West-African reader of the story: In traditional society nobody would take food from a person regarded as polluted by an evil, i.e. sickness causing spirit. Note that in Mark's Gospel the common attribute of these spirits is *unclean.* This indicates, *inter alia*[53], the contagious potential of these spirits resulting in communal stigmatization and separation of an infected or possessed person. People would be afraid to get contaminated, not only with the sickness but – even more dangerous – with the sickness-spirit[54]. Against this background it is remarkable that Jesus establishes *physical* contact with the feverish woman. By means of this touch causing the withdrawal of the fever, the narrator brings out the conviction that *Jesus' purity or divinely bestowed holiness is more contagious and stronger than the impurity of adverse spirits*[55]. Jesus engages here, and at other occasions, in a *spiritual power struggle*[56]. At the same

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[52] Cf. Markus Lau, "Fieberfrei auf dem Weg Jesu (Die Heilung der Schwiegermutter des Petrus) Mk 1,29-31 (Mt 8,14f)". In: Zimmermann, *Wunderkompendium*, 214-220, here 215.

[53] Cf. Christian Strecker, "Mächtig in Wort und Tat (Exorzismus in Kafernaum) Mk 1,21-28". In Zimmermann, *Wunderkompendium*, 205-213.

[54] This meaning dimension is completely lost in the Western exegetical discourse, cf. as most recent example, Lau, "Fieberfrei auf dem Weg Jesu".

[55] Cf. Robert R. Beck, *Nonviolent Story. Narrative Conflict Resolution in the Gospel of Mark* . Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996.

[56] Karl Barth, *Die Lehre von der Versöhnung* (Die Kirchliche Dogmatik IV,2) (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1950), 257: "Die Wundertaten Jesu sind (...) in den Totenerweckungen und in den Dämonenaustreibungen – ausgesprochene *Kampfhandlungen* (...)". Italics W. K.

time, his very touching and raising the woman up signify the *reintegra-tion* of the woman into her regular communal and family affairs, so we can come to a deeper understanding of what is being communicated in this short passage: *Jesus' integrative purity overrules the disintegrative impurity of adverse spirits.* From here, we can confirm the results of an anthropological study on James 5:13-16 by M.C. Albl who concludes that in Early Christian healing rituals, the levels of the individual, the communal, and the spiritual intermingle[57].

5. From "miracle stories" to "episodes narrating miracle events"

The structuralistic analysis of "miracle healing stories" led to the insight that these stories share one and the same fundamental structure with other narratives. The difference is located solely on the level of *mo-tif with a particular theme*: these narratives refer – in one way or another and in a variety of functions – to a restoration of *health* by means of the involvement of a subject possessing *numinous power*.

The diversity of these *episodes*[58] that narrate a numinous move from a need of health or life to the fulfilment of that need, and the fact of the functional variability of the miracle *motif*[59] within episodes, how-ever, strongly suggest that "miracle healing story" neither constitutes a genre nor even a particular "form". The same applies to the more general category "miracle story". All these episodes belong to the genre *narrative*

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[57] M.C. Albl, "'Are any among you sick?' The health care system in the Letter of James". In: *JBL* 121/1 (2002), 123-143. Cf. also Annette Weissenrieder, "Stories Just Under the Skin," who points out the interrelatedness of the–in modern terms–„natural" and the „supernatural" in ancient medical texts in general and in the New Testament episodes which narrate a healing in particular, as she is able to show in an analysis of Lk 17:11-19. It also becomes clear that these New Testament narratives „are often sprinkled with insights of ancient society and politics" (74). Here, the "good news" becomes concrete at the interface between the physical and the spiritual, the indi-vidual and the communal including politics and economics.

[58] "Episode" signifies the narration of an action. It is demarcated as an enclosed unit of a larg-er narrative and it is more complex than a single event, cf. cf. Matias Martinez and Michael Scheffel, *Einführung in die Erzähltheorie*. München: Verlag C.H. Beck, [8]2009, 110.

[59] "Motif" or "event" signifies the "smallest elementary unit of an action", cf. Martinez and Scheffel, *Einführung in die Erzähltheorie*, 108.

in general and to "short prose" in particular: They could be labelled "short-short stories", "flash stories", "Kürzestgeschichten" or "micronouvelles". Even though these short narratives bear clear markers that justify their demarcation and treatment as episodes or pericopes[60], their interpretation should never be isolated from their immediate and wider literary contexts. The functions of a particular episode can only be recognized by taking into account their connections with their literary context[61].

In so-called "miracle stories", the miracle itself might not be located at the center of an episode, cf. e.g. Mk 3:1-6 par.; 7:24-30 par.; Mt 8:5-13 par. In these narratives, the miracle of healing features only at the periphery of the narrative unfolding of the story. In Mk 3:1-6 par. the miracle healing functions as an *argument* in a debate[62]. The theme of the debate is: Is it allowed to heal on a Sabbath day? In Mk 7:24-30 par. and Mt 8:5-13 par. the miracle healing is mentioned only in passing at the very end of the episode. The theme here and there is the faith and confidence of those approaching Jesus for a healing, in both cases non-Jews. Labelling these episodes "miracle stories" is arbitrary and rather hinders than promotes an appropriate understanding of these episodes which are not primarily concerned with the miracle event as such.

Again it becomes obvious: The narratives in question are too diverse as to constitute a distinct genre or form of literature. Also, their functions vary significantly, be it with respect to their inner-narrative functions[63] or with respect to the functions these stories assume in their respective literary contexts[64]. Nevertheless, in the common exegetical

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[60] For criteria of demarcating episodes in the Gospel accounts, cf. Daniel Patte, *Structural Exegesis for New Testament Critics*. Minneapolis, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1990, 9-23.

[61] Cf. for example the significance of Mk 8:22-26 in its context, Friedrich Gustav Lang, "Maßarbeit im Markus-Aufbau. Stichometrische Analyse und theologische Interpretation". Teil 1. In: *Biblische Notizen* 140 (2009), 101-134, here: 115f.; Klumbies, "Wunderexegese", 38-44.

[62] Cf. W. Kahl, "Ist es erlaubt, am Sabbat Gutes zu tun? – Jesu Sabbatheilungen im Kontext der Schriften vom Toten Meer und der Mischna". In: *Novum Testamentum* 40/4 (1998), 313-335.

[63] Cf. Kahl, *Miracle Stories*, 173-215.

[64] Klumbies, "Wunderexegese", is correct in requesting a move away from an isolated and decontextualized analysis of these episodes, favoring an interpretation of these episodes within their respective literary contexts, both on the mirco- and macro-levels. This, however, should not lead to the other extreme of a dismissal of a comparison

literature *all* episodes that narrate *somehow* a miraculous move which is – at the same time – *not* attributed to a direct act of God or of numinous beings like angels, are allocated to a genre "miracle story"[65]. In the tradition of Gerd Theißen's influential and work on miracles, often the following sub-genres would be delineated: therapies, exorcisms, epiphanies, salvific miracles, provisions and normative miracles[66]. This whole procedure, however, at all its levels is 1. untenable from the perspective of the academic study of literature, and 2. unproductive (at best) from an emic New Testament perspective.

ad 1: It should be noted that in the field of contemporary literary studies a genre "miracle story" is not known[67]. Genre is constituted by structural phenomena, not by content. But even if one were to consider "content", the so-called "miracle stories" – even if we were to limit these stories to the so-called "therapies" – are functionally too divers as to constitute a particular "form", not to speak of genre. The same applies to the other sub-genres as suggested by Theißen[68]. Therefore the verdict of Klaus Berger holds: 'Miracle story' "ist eine moderne Sammelbezeichnung rein inhaltlicher Art"[69]. Not surprisingly, in Greek antiquity there was no terminological equivalent to "miracle story"[70].

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of these episodes with similar ones in Greco-Roman antiquity. Only a careful comparison with comparable *religionsgeschichtliche* material – also in its respective context!–will help to understand both the commonalities and differences between those traditions. Only by means of such comparison, the particular significance attached to Jesus by the Gospel writers at great variance, will become recognizable.

[65] Cf. Zimmermann, "Grundfragen", 50-51 where he excludes miracles brought about by non-human "miracle workers" from consideration (cf. my critique of this decision in footnote 45).

[66] Gerd Theißen, *Urchristliche Wundergeschichten. Ein Beitrag zur formgeschichtlichen Erforschung der synoptischen Evangelien*. Studien zum Neuen Testament 8. Gütersloh: Verlagshaus G. Mohn, [5]1987, 94-120.

[67] Cf. Heinz Ludwig Arnold and Heinrich Detering (eds.), *Grundzüge der Literaturwissenschaft*. München: dtv, 1996; Thomas Anz (ed.), *Handbuch der Literaturwissenschaft*, 3 Vol. Stuttgart and Weimar: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2007.

[68] Cf. my critical analysis of several of this typology, in Kahl, *Miracle Stories*, 173-176 and in Kahl, *Jesus als Lebensretter*, 196-197.

[69] Klaus Berger, "Hellenistische Gattungen im Neuen Testament". In: *ANRW* II.25.2 (1984), 1031-1432, here: 1218.

[70] Also Zimmermann, "Grundfragen", is aware "dass die frühchristlichen Autoren kein *begriffliches* Gattungs signal im Sinne einer Lektüreanweisung geben, mit der man

ad 2: The heuristic value of identifying episodes as "miracle stories" regardless of the specific functions of the miracle motif in particular episodes seems minimal, at best. It is unclear what could be gained by such a procedure with respect to a more appropriate understanding of the meaning dimensions and functions of such diverse episodes, especially when taking into consideration that certain sections of the Gospel narratives most likely were not perceived by readers of antiquity as isolated "miracle stories" as opposed to other episodes as any less miraculous. This would certainly apply to Mk 16:1-8 which refers–besides narrating other miracle events–to the basic miracle event in the New Testament, i.e. the resurrection of Jesus by God, by means of *one* verb: ἠγέρθη (16:6)[71]. The reaction of the witnessing women corresponds to the experience of a divine miracle: καὶ ἐξελθοῦσαι ἔφυγον ἀπὸ τοῦ μνημείου, εἶχεν γὰρ αὐτὰς τρόμος καὶ ἔκστασις· καὶ οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν εἶπαν, ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ (16:8). Such a fearful reaction has been described as typical feature of "miracle stories" in form-critical exegetical literature. Yet, this episode is usually not counted among the "miracle stories."

Miracles would have been perceived in the Gospels by the ancients also in episodes in which exegetes would not sense any miracle, i.e. with respect to Jesus' *teaching* with authority (ἐξουσία, cf. Mk 1:21-28) including the so-called Sermon on the Mount (cf. Mt 7:28-29: Καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τοὺς λόγους τούτους ἐξεπλήσσοντο οἱ ὄχλοι ἐπὶ τῇ διδαχῇ αὐτοῦ· ἦν γὰρ διδάσκων αὐτοὺς ὡς ἐξουσίαν ἔχων καὶ οὐχ ὡς οἱ γραμματεῖς αὐτῶν).

By means of the exegetically claimed genre "miracle story" an emphasis is laid in particular episodes on motifs which are strange and

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eine Gruppe von Texten unter eine Überschrift 'Wundererzählung' subsummieren könnte" (25). He nevertheless attributes a "Gattungsbewußtsein" to the Gospel writers, with questionable reasons: In the Gospel accounts, we find 1. summaries of Jesus' miracle activities, and 2. we find collections of particular episodes. These arguments, however, only indicate that the Gospel writers recognized various instances of Jesus' activities as miracles; they fall short of indicating a "Gattungsbewußtsein" in this respect.

[71] This would be a "shortest narrative" communicated by one verb which describes– here in the passive voice as *passivum divinum*, cf. also 1Cor 15:5: ὤφθη–a singly move from a lack to its liquidation by means of a performance of God, cf. for these minimal forms of narrative Gerald Genette, Die *Erzählung*. München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1994, 14.

disturbing to the modern mind, i.e. motifs that reflect a miraculous event–but only if the described event stands in *opposition* to what is regarded as possible in reality, from a modern perspective: a healing beyond human ability, an exorcism, an epiphany, etc. In New Testament exegesis, events like Jesus' teaching are generally *not* regarded as miraculous, even though the reaction of those witnessing his teaching is *identical* with reactions to his exorcisms, indicating that from an emic perspective also the *teaching* of Jesus–and in fact, most if not all of the narrated and remembered expressions of Jesus[72] – could be perceived as miraculous (cf. again Mk 1:21-28 in comparison with Mt 7:28-29, and also Mk 6:2: καὶ γενομένου σαββάτου ἤρξατο διδάσκειν ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ καὶ πολλοὶ ἀκούοντες ἐξεπλήσσοντο λέγοντες, Πόθεν τού τω ταῦτα, καὶ τίς ἡ σοφία ἡδοθεῖσα τούτῳ ἵνα καὶ δυνάμεις τοιαῦται διὰ τῶν χειρῶν αὐτοῦ γίνωνται;). The reason for the all-pervasive presence of the miraculous in the Gospel account lies in the fact that – as Stefan Alkier has recently demonstrated for the Gospel of Luke in a meticulous analysis of Luke's discourse universe – "every sign of the Gospel has to be read from (the) perspective" that God has been and still is at work in and through Jesus[73], who "is the fleshly presence of God"[74].

The exegetical invention and application of the "genre" "miracle story" signifies an undue preoccupation with *some* New Testament miracle motifs. This focus clouds meaning dimensions in New Testament episodes that were essential for readers in antiquity, e.g. the miraculous dimension of Jesus' teaching which in an emic perspective "was not from this world". In an emic perspective, the *complete range* of Jesus' activities, both in word and in deed, is understood in the four Gospel accounts as an expression of his particular connection with the numinous sphere[75]. Therefore, miracles abound in great variety during his "ministry",

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[72] For more evidence, cf. Kahl, "Wunder," 1969-1970, with respect to the Synoptic Gospels; Kahl, *Jesus als Lebensretter*, 197-198, with respect to the Gospel of Mark. Cf. Klaus Berger, *Formen und Gattungen im Neuen Testament*. Tübingen and Basel: A. Francke Verlag, 2005, 364: "Die Fähigkeit Jesu, Wunder zu wirken, ist allemal vorausgesetzt".

[73] Stefan Alkier, "For nothing will be impossible," 17.

[74] Stefan Alkier, "For nothing will be impossible," 19.

[75] Cf. Berger, *Formen und Gattungen*, 363: "Die ältere Formgeschichte hat – unter Betonung des Wortes – Wort und Tat zu stark geschieden".

including his teaching, according to the Gospel accounts. This is not surprising, once the numinous dimension in ancient world-knowledge systems is recognised as an *essential* feature that was shared by Early Christians.

The simple category "miracle story" falls short in doing justice with respect to an appropriate representation of what is at stake in the Gospel narratives. In addition, by the identification, isolation and de-contextualization of so-called "miracle stories", references to miracles – *defined from a modern perspective as absolutely impossible* – tend to be eliminated from a serious consideration for informing Christian formation, past and present[76]. A case in point is the form-critical attribution of a certain "Sitz im Leben" to these stories which marked them as later inventions of faith communities for questionable functions like "propaganda" among "simple minded people"[77].

It needs to be emphasized that miracle is an *essential constituent* of Early Christian faith that is grounded in the foundational miracle according to New Testament witnesses – the resurrection of Jesus from the dead by God[78]. The undifferentiated use of the category is not helpful as

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[76] It should be noted that in the 19th century it was the embarrassment caused by the New Testament miracles, which were perceived as contradicting the laws of nature, that gave rise to, and that explains the attraction of the Two-Source-Theory – with the *Logienquelle* as a possibility to regain the essentials of Jesus, located in his teachings, cf. W. Kahl, "Vom Ende der Zwei quellen theorie oder Zur Klärung des synoptischen Problems". In: Ch. Strecker (ed.), *Kontexte der Schrift. Vol II: Kultur. Politik. Religion. Sprache – Text (FS Wolfgang Stegemann).* Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 2005, 404-442, esp. 408-409.

[77] Besides the classic contribution by Martin Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums.* Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [P. Siebeck], 1919. Cf. Bernd Kollmann, *Jesus und die Christen als Wundertäter. Studien zu Magie, Medizin und Schamanismus in Antike und Christentum.* FRLANT 170. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1996, 42-44, 355-362, and Wolfgang Reinbold, *Propaganda und Mission im* ältesten *Christentum. Eine Untersuchung zu den Modalitäten der Ausbreitung der frühen Kirche.* FRLANT 188. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000. Cf. also Werner Kahl, "Wunder und Mission in ethnologischer Perspektive". In: *ZNT* 15 (2005), 35-43; Christoph Stenschke a.o., "Apologetik, Polemik und Mission: Der Umgang mit der Religiosität der 'anderen'". In: K. Erlemann a.o. (eds.), *Neues Testament und Antike Kultur.* Vol. 3. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag 2005, 244ff.

[78] Cf. only Paul in 1Cor 15; Stefan Alkier, *Die Realität der Auferweckung in, nach und mit den Schriften des Neuen Testaments.* Neutestamentliche Entwürfe zur Theologie 12.

a tool to enhance our understanding of New Testament references to the miraculous within the numinous knowledge of the world in antiquity in general. In consequence, the usefulness of the category "miracle story" needs to be critically reflected.

In the Gospel accounts, a whole range of various genres and forms contains references to *miracle motifs*. If one were to analyse the Gospels with an interest in these motifs, one could speak of *episodes narrating miracle events*[79].

It could be instructive to classify *episodes narrating miracle events* according to the main function of the episode[80]. The following needed to be observed: Miracle is a motif, and in the New Testament a variety of *allomotifs*[81] can bring this motif to expression – *allomotifs* pertaining to healing, teaching, saving, feeding, arguing, behaving etc. In order to come close to understanding the intended significance of a particular episode it would be essential to distinguish motifs and functions of motifs. It should be kept in mind that a particular motif might serve in different contexts to bring different functions to expression or that one function could be realized by a variety of motifs[82].

Episodes narrating miracle events could be differentiated into the following types, depending on the *function* of a narrated miracle event in relation to the function of other narrative moves within that episode, in order to come to a closer understanding of the function and meaning of a particular episode:[83]

Tübingen: A. Francke Verlag, 2009. It is puzzling, and telling, that this miracle is usually not discussed in the exegetical contributions concerning "miracle stories" of the New Testament. My *New Testament Miracle Stories* is no exception. Mk 16:1-8 par. even shows a number of miracle motifs, and the reaction of the witnesses attests to that.

[79] Berger, *Formen und Gattungen*, 362, speaks of "wunderhaltige Erzählabschnitte" with respect to narrative sections containing miracle motifs.

[80] In my *Miracle Stories,* 173-215, I analyzed and typified "miracle healing stories" according to inner-narrative function. This, of course, should be balanced by a consideration of the function of an episode *within its context*.

[81] Cf. Kahl, *Miracle Stories*, 38-41.

[82] The disregard of this structuralist insight accounts for a serious weakness in Theißen's proposed list of a inventory of 33 motifs, cf. his *Urchristliche Wundergeschichten*, 57-83.

[83] Klumbies, "Wunderexegese", 45, has recently proposed to replace" Wundererzählung" with "mythische Sequenz". Since in the Gospel narratives, the spiritual-numinous

a) Proper miracle stories: The miracle event constitutes the *main* narrative move (narrative program) – the move that is requested for the fulfilment of a need – at *center* stage of the episode. Other narrative moves are subordinated to that narrative program (e.g. Mk 1:29-31; 7:31-37; 8:22-26)[84].

b) Improper miracle stories of a first order: The main narrative move is located at the *periphery* of the episode. Other events take place at center stage (e.g. Mk 7:24-30; Mt 8:5-13)

c) Improper miracle stories of a second order: The miracle event is subordinated functionally to another main narrative move (e.g. Mk 3:1-6).

d) Episodes reflecting the presence of the numinous sphere in an unspecified manner: This can be achieved either explicitly (e.g. Mt 7:28f. with respect to 5:3-7:27) or by implication (Mk 1:16-20; 12:13-17).

The intensity of the manifestation of the numinous sphere in an episode reduces from a) to d).

6. Conclusion: Reorienting New Testament miracle research

This paper is an attempt at resetting investigations into New Testament miracle traditions. I suggest approaches to New Testament references to miracles that take serious the conventionalized knowledge of the world in Mediterranean antiquity as it was shared in Early Christianity.

In order to come close to an *appropriate* interpretation of New Testament miracle references – aiming at a reliable representation of the meaning dimensions of these texts *and* at understanding their possible significance for the formation of faith in pesent times – I propose, as summary of the most significant results of my research for a *reorientation* of miracle research, an observation of the following suggestions and notions:

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and the material-physical dimensions are potentially *always* intermingled, it does not make sense to demarcate particular episodes as "mythical sequence" in an undifferentiated manner.

[84] For the term *narrative program* cf. Kahl, *Miracle stories*, 41-44.

1. World-knowledge systems and contexts
- The miracle references in the New Testament are to be studied within their literary micro- and macro-contexts (*universe of discourse*) on the one hand, and within the systems of conventionalized knowledge (*encyclopedia*) in Mediterranean antiquity, on the other hand.
- The encyclopedia of the researcher – in its relationship to encyclopedias presupposed in studied text – is to be reflected upon, in order to prevent unnoticed anachronistic readings into the texts. This requires especially a critical reflection of the terms and categories used traditionally to represent and classify texts from another culture and time, into the language of a modern culture. Here, the ethnological emic/etic debate becomes important for New Testament studies.
- World-knowledge in Mediterranean antiquity: the visible world is embedded in a net of activities of numinous powers of the invisible world to the effect that the causes for conditions in the visible world might be attributed to those powers.

2. Categories and definitions
   Miracle, miracle-worker, and miracle story are terms that fall short of representing appropriately Early Christian understandings of the miraculous dimension of Jesus' existence. All three exegetically used terms are imprecise umbrella terms that need to be redefined and differenciated.
   - *Miracle*
     Miracle is an *interpretive category* ("Deutekategorie"). In English – cf. "Wunder" in German – "miracle" is an umbrella term that covers a whole range of meanings communicated in antiquity by a number of terms by means of which different aspects of a miraculous event could be accentuated.
     Miracle in the context of the academic study of ancient religion is a term referring to the *interpretation and characterization of an event as the manifestation of an activity of a numinous power*, i.e. of a personalized spiritual being with an ability – miracle power – that exceeds human abilities.

- *Miracle Worker*

  The category *miracle worker* has to be differentiated into three categories:

  – *bearer of numinous power* (BNP: miracle worker proper)[85]

  – *petitioner of numinous power* (PNP)[86]

  – *mediator of numinous power* (MNP)[87]

- *Miracle Story*

  The category *miracle story* is not the designation of a genre. The category should not be used in a undifferentiated manner. One could speak instead of *episodes narrating miracle events*. This category is to be differentiated into the following types – depending on the *function* of a narrated miracle event:

  a) *Proper miracle stories*:

  b) *Improper miracle stories of a first order*:

  c) *Improper miracle stories of a second order*

  d) *Episodes reflecting the presence of the numinous sphere in an unspecified manner.*

The belief in miracles – as witnessed to in the New Testament writings – is not just a cultural feature to be eliminated exegetically. It is an *essential constituent* of Early Christian belief. As such, the Early Christian belief in the miracles of Jesus remains a challenge to the understanding of the world and of the Gospel in present times. It is a welcome challenge in as much as it invites Christians to reflect critically upon the cultural conventions that have shaped their particular understanding of the world and of the Gospel. Remembering the miracles of Jesus and the cross-cultural and cross-confessional exchange about their possible significance[88], might open up new ways of perceiving of

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[85] In German: Träger numinoser Macht.

[86] In German: Bittsteller numinoser Macht.

[87] In German: Mittler numinoser Macht.

[88] For the benefits intercultural hermeneutics, cf. W. Kahl, "Jesus Power, Super Power. Productive Frictions in Intercultural Hermeneutics – a German Perspective," forthcoming in *Journal of mothertongue-theology* 1,1 (2015), 78-109.

reality and of shaping life[89] – in light of these *merciful acts of divine liberation*[90].

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[89] Stefan Alkier, "Wunder III. Neues Testament". In: *RGG* 8 ([4]2005), 1719-1722, 1722: "Die Wunderfrage als notwendig offene Frage hält das Nachdenken über Gott und die Welt, d.h. über die Wirkweisen des trinitarischen Gottes, die Beschaffenheit der Realität und den Grund christl. Hoffnung wach".

[90] This is how Karl Barth, correctly from a New Testament perspective and in a theologically productive manner, conceptualized the miracles of Jesus in light of the overall miracle of God in Christ, cf. § 64,3 in Barth's *Church Dogmatics IV,2: The Doctrine of Reconciliation,* Zürich 1955, 209-247.

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