

RICHARD H. BELL

No one seeks
for God

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament
106*

Mohr Siebeck

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament

Herausgegeben von
Martin Hengel und Otfried Hofius

106



Richard H. Bell

No one seeks for God

An Exegetical and Theological
Study of Romans 1.18–3.20

Mohr Siebeck

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To my mother

Preface

Why write a book on Romans 1.18-3.20? And why write a book with such a negative title as “No one seeks for God”? The first reason for doing so is that the section Rom. 1.18-3.20 is a preparation for what Paul says about justification by faith. If the bad news of Rom. 1.18-3.20 is not understood, there is little chance that the good news of Rom. 1.16-17; 3.21-26 will be understood. A second and related reason for this investigation is that many Christians, including protestants, have questioned the idea of salvation *sola fide, sola gratia*. They support a salvation by faith and works or even a view of salvation by works, independent of faith in Jesus Christ. I have often found ministers and theologians appealing to Romans 2 to justify such views. So, for example, it is argued that Rom. 2.6, 12-13 and 14-16 point to a possible way of salvation by works. This is a serious issue and needs addressing. My third reason for this investigation is that Roman 2 is often seen as a stumbling block for a “Lutheran” understanding of Romans. I have no desire to argue for an infallible Martin Luther, but if Romans 2 is indeed a problem for such an interpretation, there is again a serious issue to address. The fourth reason for this study is that Rom. 1.18-32 has had a particular fascination for me in regard to the issues of natural theology and natural revelation. This has partly come about because of my previous research in theoretical atomic physics. There is no shortage of books written by theologians and scientists regarding the knowledge of God possible through observing the created universe. In the present work I pay particular attention to what Paul in Romans has to say about this issue.

My present work is not simply a commentary. This can be seen in two respects. First, the verses in Rom. 1.18-3.20 are not treated equally. Rather I have tried to follow the argument through focusing on certain questions issues related to the theme “No one seeks for God”. For example natural revelation and natural theology are treated in some detail as is

the fall and the question of a possible justification according to works. Secondly, part of my task has been to try to relate Rom. 1.18-3.20 to some of the great themes of dogmatics such as natural revelation, natural theology, the fall and judgement according to works. One problem in today's theological scholarship (and a particularly acute problem among anglo-saxon scholars) is the scarcity of work done on the relationship of the New Testament to systematic theology. Systematicians often have a limited grasp of the New Testament and New Testament scholars seem to be increasingly uninterested in systematics. I therefore present something which I hope may be of use to both groups.

Although I have developed a number of new insights, what I offer may to some seem rather old fashioned. There are no great paradigm shifts, there is nothing about social scientific approaches to Paul and much of the work stands firmly in the protestant tradition. Further I have made extensive use of older works. In response to such possible criticisms I should say that Pauline studies, like many other areas, seem to be under the tyranny of novelty. New Testament scholars are under enormous pressure to show that they have made some great new discovery and that, for example, "Romans will never be the same again". My experience is that in many cases of recent alleged "breakthrough" in biblical studies, the element of novelty has been grossly exaggerated (and it is of course in the interests of scholars to do so). Also precisely those who claim to have made the greatest breakthroughs often do the greatest violence to the texts. Conversely, those who are perhaps not so radical in their approach often turn out to be the best exegetes. Whether my exegesis is good, the reader will have to judge. But I believe that we ignore the past richness of the Christian tradition at our peril. This, unfortunately, is what many modern works on Paul do. Looking through bibliographies one can sometimes get the impression that Pauline scholarship began in 1900 (or even later). I have therefore attempted to attain a balance in the secondary literature, not necessarily giving the greatest attention to the latest literature and trying to give attention to the older works.

In my book *Provoked to Jealousy*, Tübingen 1994 I spent some time putting Paul and his letter to the Romans in historical perspective. In the present investigation I will not repeat what I wrote there and the reader should refer back to my earlier work in regard to the historical context of

Romans. In this work I have tried to address what I consider the fundamentally important issues and the ultimate aim of my work is unashamedly to know God. I make no apology for this. Historical approaches to the New Testament are vital; but if, at the end of it all, one is unable to say anything about God himself, I believe one has failed as a theologian. My work is therefore both scientific and confessional.

Much of the research for this book was carried out at the Faculty of Theology, University of Uppsala. I wish to thank especially Dr Tord Fornberg and Mr Kay Svensson for organising my visit to that fine University. My thanks go also to the University of Uppsala, the British Academy and the University of Nottingham for financing my travel and my accommodation.

Various colleagues have been very kind in reading my work in whole or in part. I am grateful to Edward van 't Slot of Utrecht whose comments helped make my argument more coherent. The advice of Dr Friedrich Avemarie of Tübingen has been invaluable, especially regarding Paul's relationship to Judaism. Dr Olle Christofferson formerly of Uppsala but now at the teologiska högskolan Stockholm made a number of penetrating criticisms of my work and the Very Revd Dr N.T. Wright, Dean of Lichfield was extremely helpful in alerting me to a number of weaknesses in the argument. Dr Clive Garrett of St. John's College Nottingham and Prof. Brendan Byrne S.J. of the Jesuit Theological College, Parkville, Victoria made a number of helpful comments especially regarding natural theology and have helped to sharpen my arguments. Prof. John Heywood Thomas, Emeritus Professor in Christian Theology at Nottingham, Canon Vernon White, Chancellor of Lincoln Cathedral and my student Mr Matthew Howey made various helpful suggestions regarding some of the sections regarding systematic theology and Prof. J.H.W.G. Liebeschütz, Emeritus Professor of Classics at Nottingham advised on images in Graeco-Roman religion. Dr Stephen Travis of St John's College, Nottingham read the whole work and made a number of helpful suggestions. In addition I would like to thank colleagues at the University of Nottingham who have given me advice on various issues which have arisen in the work: Dr Carl Trueman, Dr Seth Kunin, Mr Ed Ball, Frau Wiebke Sievers and especially my New Testament colleague, Dr Maurice Casey. I also wish to thank Prof. Anthony Thiselton, head of

the Department of Theology at the University of Nottingham, for providing a congenial atmosphere in which to work. Looking further back I want to acknowledge my debt to Professors Peter Stuhlmacher, Martin Hengel and Otfried Hofius who have taught me more than anyone else how to study the New Testament.

I wish to express my gratitude to those who have given practical help and prayer support during some difficult months when the project was nearing completion. I particularly wish to mention Dr Paul Stafford, Dr David and Mrs Anne Curnock, Mrs Carol Scothern, Mr Ed and Mrs Daphne Ball, Dr Günther and Frau Susanne Richter and my sister Mrs Susan Loftus. A special mention must be made of my two sons, Jack and Cameron, with whom I have shared great joy and laughter. They have been a welcome distraction in my study. Finally I thank my mother for the help and support she has so generously given over the years. I dedicate this study to her.

I thank Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht for permission to use material from my article "Extra ecclesiam nulla salus? Is there a salvation other than through faith in Christ according to Romans 2.14-16?", in J. Ådna, S. Hafeman and O. Hofius (ed.), *Evangelium - Schriftauslegung - Kirche: Festschrift für Peter Stuhlmacher zum 65. Geburtstag*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1997, 31-43, and Sheffield Academic Press for permission to use material from my articles "Sin Offerings and Sinning with a High Hand", *JPJ* 4 (1995) 25-59, and "Teshubah: The Idea of Repentance in Ancient Judaism", *JPJ* 5 (1995) 22-52.

Unless indicated otherwise, bible quotations are from the RSV and Babylonian Talmud quotations are from the Soncino version. For some works which exist both in German and in English translation, I have used sometimes the English translation and sometimes the German original. There are a number of reasons for this, one of them being that sometimes the German original has an elegance which the translation lacks and another being that in some cases the translation is somewhat misleading.

March, 1998
Nottingham

Richard H. Bell

Table of Contents

Preface	VII
Abbreviations	XV
<i>Chapter 1: Introduction</i>	1
1. The Context of Romans 1.18-3.20	1
2. The Theme of Romans 1.18-3.20	10
3. Relation of Romans 1.18 to 1.16-17	12
4. Relation of Romans 1.18 to 1.19-32 and 1.19-3.20	17
5. Analysis of Romans 1.18-3.20	18
<i>Chapter 2: Romans 1.18-32: Introduction and Exegesis</i>	21
1. Introduction	21
2. Exegesis of Romans 1.18-32	27
2.1. Romans 1.18	27
2.2. Romans 1.19-20	35
2.2.1. Romans 1.19	35
2.2.2. Romans 1.20	41
2.3. Romans 1.21-32	47
2.3.1. Romans 1.21	47
2.3.2. Romans 1.22-31	50
2.3.2.1. Romans 1.22-24	54
2.3.2.2. Romans 1.25-27	56
2.3.2.3. Romans 1.28-31	58
2.3.3. Romans 1.32	61

<i>Chapter 3: Romans 1.18-32: Issues arising</i>	62
1. The Relation of Romans 1.18-32 to Greek Philosophy and Hellenistic Judaism	62
2. The Relation of Romans 1.18-32 to Apocalyptic	82
3. The Relation of Romans 1.18-32 to Wisdom Literature	85
4. The Question of Natural Revelation and Natural Theology in Paul	90
5. Natural Revelation and Natural Theology: Systematic Discussion	102
6. Jewish Views of the Fall	118
7. Paul's View of the Fall	125
<i>Chapter 4: Romans 2.1-16: Judgement According to Works</i>	132
1. The Problem of Romans 2	132
2. Introduction to Romans 2.1-16	137
3. Romans 2.1-4: The Self-Righteous Judge	138
4. Romans 2.5-6: The Coming Wrath	140
5. Romans 2.7-11: Two Possible Outcomes	141
6. Romans 2.12-13: Justification by Doing the Law	144
7. Romans 2.14-16: Gentiles Judged according to their Law	145
8. Excursus on Testament of Judah 20 as a Background for Romans 2.14-16	162
9. Excursus on Rabbinic Views of the Law Revealed to the Gentiles	164
10. Excursus on the Dating of the Tradition in Targ. Yer. I Gen. 1.27	169
11. Excursus on "Natural Law" in Greek Philosophy	173
12. Excursus on "Natural Law" in Judaism	176
13. Excursus on the Tradition of Righteous Gentiles in Judaism	181
14. Conclusions	182
<i>Chapter 5: Romans 2.17-3.8: The Self-Righteous Jew</i>	184
1. Introduction	184
2. Romans 2.17-24: The Jew is just as guilty as the Gentile	184
3. Romans 2.25-29: Circumcision by itself will not save	193
4. Romans 3.1-8: Objections	201
4.1. Romans 3.1-2	202
4.2. Romans 3.3-4	203
4.3. Romans 3.5-8	206

<i>Chapter 6: Romans 3.9-20: Jew and Gentile under the Power of Sin</i> .	210
1. Introduction	210
2. Romans 3.9-20	210
2.1. Romans 3.9	210
2.2. Romans 3.10-18	215
2.3. Romans 3.19	222
2.4. Romans 3.20	224
<i>Chapter 7: Concluding Discussion</i>	238
1. Introduction	238
2. Coherence of Romans 1.18-3.20	238
3. Judgement according to Works	239
4. Romans 2 and the Question of Christian Obedience	257
5. Paul and the Law	262
6. Justification sola fide, sola gratia	273
<i>Bibliography</i>	276
1. Primary sources	276
1.1. Bible	276
1.2. Apocrypha, Pseudepigraphy and Hellenistic Jewish literature	277
1.3. Qumran literature	278
1.4. Rabbinic literature	278
1.5. Early Christian literature	280
1.6. Greek and Roman literature	282
2. Reference works and exegetical aids	284
3. Secondary literature	289
<i>Index of Authors</i>	318
<i>Index of References</i>	326
<i>Index of Subjects and Names</i>	354

Abbreviations

1. Biblical books

The abbreviations used for books of the OT, NT and Apocrypha will be readily understood.

2. Pseudepigrapha and Early Christian Writings

2 Bar.	Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch
3 Bar.	Greek Apocalypse of Baruch
1 En.	1 Enoch
2 En.	2 Enoch
3 En.	3 Enoch
Jub.	Jubilees
Apoc. Abraham	Apocalypse of Abraham
Apoc. Moses	Apocalypse of Moses
Ps. Sol.	Psalms of Solomon
Test. Ash.	Testament of Asher
Test. Is.	Testament of Issachar
Test. Jud.	Testament of Judah
Test. Lev.	Testament of Levi
Test. Naph.	Testament of Naphtali
Test. Reub.	Testament of Reuben
Test. Zeb.	Testament of Zebulun
Test. Ben.	Testament of Benjamin
Test. Job	Testament of Job
Test. Moses	Testament of Moses
1 Clem.	1 Clement
Sib.	Sibylline Oracles

3. Dead Sea Scrolls

1QH	Hymns of Thanksgiving
1QpHab	Pesher Habakkuk
1QS	Community Rule
4QFlor	Florilegium
4QMKT	Miqṣat Ma‘aše Ha-Torah

4. Targumim

Targ. Is.	Targum of Isaiah
Targ. Onk.	Targum Onkelos
Targ. Neof.	Targum Neofiti I
Targ. Yer. I	Targum Yerushalmi I (otherwise known as the Targum of Palestine or Pseudo-Jonathan)
Targ. Yer. II	Targum Yerushalmi II (otherwise known as the Jerusalem Targum or Fragment Targum)

5. Tractates of the Mishnah, Tosephta, Babylonian and Palestinian Talmudim

For the Tosephta, Babylonian and Palestinian Talmudim the letters t., b. and y. are placed before the tractate respectively.

Aboth	Aboth
Abod. Zar.	Abodah Zarah
Bab. Bat.	Baba Bathra
Bab. Kam.	Baba Kamma
Bab. Met.	Baba Metzia
Bek.	Bekhoroth
Ber.	Berakoth
Erub.	Erubin
Hag.	Hagigah
Hul.	Hullin
Kel.	Kelim
Ker.	Kerithoth
Ket.	Ketuboth
Kid.	Kiddushin
Mak.	Makkoth
M. Kat.	Moed Katan
Nid.	Niddah
Ohol.	Oholoth
Sanh.	Sanhedrin
Shab.	Shabbath
Sot.	Sotah
Suk.	Sukkah
Yeb.	Yebamoth
Yoma	Yoma

6. Midrashim

Gen. R.	Midrash Genesis Rabbah
Ex. R.	Midrash Exodus Rabbah

Lev. R.	Midrash Leviticus Rabbah
Num. R.	Midrash Numbers Rabbah
Dt. R.	Midrash Deuteronomy Rabbah
Ruth R.	Midrash Ruth Rabbah
Eccl. R.	Midrash Ecclesiastes Rabbah
Sg of Sgs R.	Midrash Songs of Songs Rabbah
Lam. R.	Midrash Lamentations Rabbah
Mek. Ex.	Mekhilta Exodus
Midr. Tann.	Midrash Tannaim
Midr. Ps.	Midrash on the Psalms
Pes. R.	Pesikta Rabboti
Sifre Dt.	Sifre Deuteronomy
Sifre Num.	Sifre Numbers

7. Reference works

- ABD D.N. Freedman (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols, New York: Doubleday 1992
- ANEP J.B. Pritchard (ed.), *The Ancient Near East in Pictures*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1969, (1954)
- BA W. Bauer, *Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter 1988 (bearbeitet von K. und B. Aland)
- BAG W. Bauer, W.F. Arndt, and F.W. Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 1961
- BDB F. Brown, S.R. Driver, and C.A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament based on the Lexicon of W. Gesenius*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1978 (repr.)
- BDF F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, translated and revised by R.W. Funk, Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press 1961
- BGU Ägyptische Urkunden aus den staatlichen Museen zu Berlin. Griechische Urkunde I-IX 1895-1937
- Denzinger H. Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum* (ed. P. Hünermann), Freiburg: Herder 1991
- EB(C) T.K. Cheyne - J. Sutherland Black (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, 4 vols, London: A. & C. Black 1899-1903
- EDNT H. Balz - G. Schneider (ed), *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3 vols, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans 1990-93
- EJud *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 16 vols, Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House 1978 (repr.), (1971-72)

HDB	J. Hastings (ed.), <i>A Dictionary of the Bible</i> , 5 vols, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark 1898-1904
HGR	J. Hastings (ed.), <i>Dictionary of the Bible</i> revised by F.C. Grant and H.H. Rowley, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark 1963
HWP	J. Ritter and K. Gründer (ed.), <i>Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie</i> , Basel: Schwabe & Co. 1971ff
IB	G.A. Buttrick (ed.), <i>The Interpreter's Bible</i> , 12 vols, New York/Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press 1952-57
IDB	G.A. Buttrick (ed.), <i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> , 4 vols, New York/Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press 1962
IDBSup	Supplementary volume to IDB, 1976
Jastrow	Marcus Jastrow, <i>A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature</i> , 2 vols, New York: Pardes Publishing House 1950
JE	I. Singer (ed.), <i>Jewish Encyclopedia</i> , 12 vols, London/New York: Funk and Wagnalls 1901-6.
KP	K. Ziegler and W. Sontheimer (ed.), <i>Der Kleine Pauly: Lexikon der Antike</i> , 5 vols, München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag 1979
LPGL	G.W.H. Lampe (ed.), <i>Patristic Greek Lexicon</i> , Oxford: Clarendon Press 1961-68
LSJ	H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, <i>Greek-English Lexicon</i> , Oxford: Clarendon Press 1985 (revised by H.S. Jones and R. McKenzie with a Supplement 1968)
LEHC	J. Lust, E. Eynikel, K. Hauspie and G. Chamberlain, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint: Part I, A-I</i> , Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft 1992
LThK ¹	M. Buchberger (ed.), <i>Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche</i> , 10 vols, Freiburg: Herder 1930-38
LThK ²	J. Höfer and K. Rahner (ed.), <i>Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche</i> , 11 vols, Freiburg: Herder 1957-67
MTH	J.H. Moulton, N. Turner and W.F. Howard, <i>A Grammar of New Testament Greek</i> , 4 vols, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark 1978-80 (repr.), (1908-76)
NIDNTT	Colin Brown (ed.), <i>The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i> , 3 vols, Exeter: Paternoster Press 1975-78
PW	<i>Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> , Neue Bearbeitung von Georg Wissowa, Wilhelm Kroll, Karl Mittelhaus et al., Stuttgart: Alfred Druckenmüller Verlag 1894ff., 2. Reihe 1914ff.
PWSup	Supplement to PW, 1903ff.

RE ³	A. Hauck (ed.), <i>Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche</i> , 22 vols, Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung ³ 1896-1909.
RGG ³	Kurt Galling (ed.), <i>Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft</i> (UTB), 7 vols, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) 1986 (repr.), (³ 1959)
SVF	Ioannes ab Arnim (ed.), <i>Stoicorum veterum fragmenta</i> , 4 vols, Stuttgart: In aedibus B.G. Teubner ² 1964 (¹ 1903-24).
TDNT	G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (ed.), <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> ET, 10 vols, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans 1964-76
ThWAT	G.J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren (ed.), <i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> , 6 vols, Stuttgart/Berlin/Köln/Mainz: W. Kohlhammer 1973-89
ThWNT	G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (ed.), <i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i> , 10 vols, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer 1933-78
TRE	G. Krause and G. Müller (ed.), <i>Theologische Realencyklopädie</i> , 17 vols, Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter 1977-88

8. Sources

ANF	A. Roberts, J. Donaldson and A.C. Coxe (ed.). <i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i> , 10 vols, Peabody: Hendrickson 1994 (repr.), (¹ 1885-1896)
AV	Authorised Version
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
BSELK	<i>Die Bekennnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche</i> , Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht ¹⁰ 1986
CC	Calvin's Commentaries
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte
GNT ³	K. Aland, et al. (ed.), <i>The Greek New Testament</i> , New York: United Bible Societies ³ 1975
GNT ⁴	K. Aland et al. (ed.), <i>The Greek New Testament</i> , Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft ⁴ 1993.
JB	Jerusalem Bible
LCC	Library of Christian Classics
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
MPG	J.-P. Migne, <i>Patrologia Graeca</i>
MPL	J.-P. Migne, <i>Patrologia Latina</i>
NA ²⁶	K. Aland et al., (ed.), <i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung ²⁶ 1979
NEB	New English Bible

NPNF1	P. Schaff (ed.), <i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series</i> , 14 vols, Peabody: Hendrickson 1994 (repr.), (1886-1889).
NPNF2	P. Schaff and H. Wace (ed.), <i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series</i> , 14 vols, Peabody: Hendrickson 1994 (repr.), (1890-1900).
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OCT	Oxford Classical Texts
OECT	Oxford Early Christian Texts
PS	Patrologia Syriaca
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien
RSV	Revised Standard Version
RT	Rabbinische Texte
RV	Revised Version
SC	Sources chrétiennes
VTS	Vetus Testamentum Syriace
WA	D. Martin Luthers Werke, kritische Gesamtausgabe, Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger

9. Periodicals

AJT	American Journal of Theology
BA	Biblical Archaeologist
Bib	Biblica
BJRL	Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, University of Manchester
BZ	Biblische Zeitschrift
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
EvTh	Evangelische Theologie
ExpT	Expository Times
ETL	Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses
GPM	Göttinger Predigtmeditationen
GTJ	Grace Theological Journal
HeyJ	Heythrop Journal
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual
IMJ	The Israel Museum Journal
JAAR	Journal of the American Academy of Religion
JAC	Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JJS	Journal of Jewish Studies
JPJ	Journal of Progressive Judaism
JR	Journal of Religion
JRE	Journal of Religious Ethics
JSNT	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
JSS	Journal of Semitic Studies
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies

Jud	Judaica
KuD	Kerygma und Dogma
NovT	Novum Testamentum
NTS	New Testament Studies
OCP	Orientalia Christiana Periodica
OTS	Oudtestamentische Studien
RB	Revue biblique
RBén	Revue bénédictine
RechSR	Recherches de science religieuse
RQ	Revue de Qumran
RSO	Rivista degli studi orientali
RTR	Reformed Theological Review
SBET	Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology
SEA	Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok
SHAW.PH	Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch- historische Klasse
SJT	Scottish Journal of Theology
SR	Studies in Religion
StTh	Studia Theologica
ThBl	Theologische Blätter
ThLZ	Theologische Literaturzeitung
ThPh	Theologie und Philosophie
ThR	Theologische Rundschau
ThStKr	Theologische Studien und Kritiken
ThZ	Theologische Zeitschrift
USQR	Union Seminary Quarterly Review
VF	Verkündigung und Forschung
VT	Vetus Testamentum
WTJ	Westminster Theological Journal
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
ZNW	Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
ZThK	Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche
ZWTh	Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie

10. Series

AB	Anchor Bible
AGAJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AMT	Abhandlungen zur Moraltheologie
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ANTJ	Arbeiten zum Neuen Testament und Judentum
ASNU	Acta seminarii neotestamentici Upsaliensis
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
ATHANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
AUS.TR	American University Studies, Series 7: Theology and Religion

AUU	Acta universitatis Upsaliensis
AUU.HR	Acta universitatis Upsaliensis: historia religionum
BEThL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium
BEvTh	Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie
BFCTh	Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie
BHTh	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament
BLG	Biblical Languages: Greek
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BVSAW.PH	Berichte über die Verhandlungen des Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig, Philologisch-historische Klasse
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BzBETH	Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie
CB	Century Bible
CCWJCW	Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200BC to AD200
CGTC	Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary
CRINT	Compendia rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
CThM	Calwer Theologische Monographien
EKGB	Einzelarbeiten aus der Kirchengeschichte Bayerns
EKK	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
Étbib	Études bibliques
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
FzB	Forschung zur Bibel
GThA	Göttinger theologische Arbeiten
GThW	Grundriß der theologischen Wissenschaft
HzAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HzNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HThKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
HThKNTSup	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, Supplementbände
HUTH	Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie
ICC	International Critical Commentary
JC	Judaica et Christiana
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series
KzAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
KEK	Meyers kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
KzNT	Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
LD	Lectio Divina
LDSS	Literature of the Dead Sea Scrolls
LJC	Library of Jewish Classics
LL	Lutterworth Library
MF	Missionswissenschaftliche Forschungen

MNTC	Moffatt New Testament Commentary
MRvB.BÖA	Monographische Reihe von ‘Benedictina’: Biblisch-ökumenische Abteilung
MThS	Marburger theologische Studien
MTL	Marshall’s Theological Library
NCB	New Century Bible
NCIB	New Clarendon Bible
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum Supplements
NTA	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen
NTD	Das Neue Testament Deutsch
NTF	Neutestamentliche Forschungen
NTL	New Testament Library
OTL	Old Testament Library
PLO	Porta Linguarum Orientalium
PVTG	Pseudepigrapha Veteris Testamenti Graece
RVV	Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SJLA	Studies in Judaism and Late Antiquity
SLJC	The Schiff Library of Jewish Classics
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SNTU	Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt
SPIB	Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici
SPS	Sacra Pagina Series
SSEJC	Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity
SSS	Semitic Study Series
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
StNT	Studien zum Neuen Testament
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha
ThBü	Theologische Bücherei
ThHK	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
ThSt	Theologische Studien
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TPINTC	Trinity Press International New Testament Commentaries
TaS	Texts and Studies. Contributions to Biblical and Patristic Literature
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
UNT	Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
UTB	Uni-Taschenbücher
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WC	Westminster Commentaries
WdF	Wege der Forschung

WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
YJS	Yale Judaic Series
ZBK	Zürcher Bibelkommentare

Chapter 1

Introduction

1. The Context of Romans 1.18-3.20

The passage under consideration, Rom. 1.18-3.20, is sandwiched between two crucial sections of Romans: 1.16-17 and 3.21-26. Both these sections deal with the revelation of the righteousness of God.

Rom. 1.16-17 may be said to set forward the theme of the letter:

Οὐ γὰρ ἐπαισχύνομαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, δύναμις γὰρ θεοῦ ἔστιν εἰς σωτηρίαν παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι, Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρώτον καὶ Ἑλλήνι· 17 δικαιοσύνη γὰρ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ ἀποκαλύπτεται ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν, καθὼς γέγραπται, Ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ἔσται.

Rom. 1.16a gives a clue to the purpose of the whole letter. Paul is not ashamed of the gospel, implying that some thought he ought to be ashamed of it (or at least he ought to be ashamed of *his* gospel, i.e. the gospel entrusted to Paul). In the letter Paul therefore defends his gospel of justification against charges brought against him by Jewish Christians.¹

In Rom. 1.17 Paul writes that in the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed. The righteousness of God I take to be a subjective genitive which can be translated as “salvation of God”.² The word δικαιοσύνη is

¹ On these charges brought against Paul and the whole issue of the occasion of Romans, see R.H. Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy: The Origin and Purpose of the Jealousy Motif in Romans 9-11*, Tübingen 1994, pp. 63-79. See also the discussion below on Rom. 1.16b.

² I defend this translation on the basis of the LXX. In a number of texts the Greek δικαιοσύνη (Hebrew **תְּקִבָּה צְדִקָּה**) means God’s righteous acts in the sense of his saving acts. God’s δικαιοσύνη then takes on the meaning “the saving activity of God” or “God’s salvation”. This is to be found in the oldest text where **תְּקִבָּה צְדִיקָה** occurs, Judg. 5.11. See also 1 Sam. 12.7; Mic. 6.5; Ps. 103.6; Dan. 9.16; 1QS 10.23. Of special importance are a number of texts in Isaiah and the Psalms where δικαιοσύνη takes on the meaning “salvation” (Is. 45.8, 22-24; 51.6, 8; Ps. 71.19 (70.18); 89.17 (88.17); 96.13 (95.13); 98.9 (97.9); 111.3 (110.3). See, for example, Is. 51.6c: **וַיְשׁוּעֵת לְעוֹלָם תְּהִיה**

used rather than *σωτηρία* (or *σωτήριον*) to emphasise the forensic aspect of salvation (just as *δικαιόω* is used rather than *σώζω* to speak of salvation in terms of acquittal). I have argued elsewhere that this righteousness of God is the major theme of the whole letter.³ This righteousness then is revealed in the gospel, which v. 16 says is the power of God for salvation. The gospel has this power precisely because it is God's word.⁴ So faith does not place a condition on the power of God for salvation. The words *παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι* of Rom. 1.16b do not place any limit on the power of the gospel. Faith is not the condition of salvation; rather it is the mode of salvation.⁵ So the person who hears the gospel is made a believer through the gospel and as this believer is saved.⁶

תְּזִקָּנִיתִי לֹא תַּקְרִבֵּנִי (τὸ δὲ σωτήριόν μου εἰς τὸν αἰώνα ἔσται, ή δὲ δικαιοσύνη μου οὐ μὴ ἐκλίπῃ): “but my salvation will be for ever, and my righteousness will never be ended”. Although *δικαιοσύνη* can parallel words other than *σωτήριον* or *σωτηρία*, I believe the idea Paul has picked up in Rom. 1.17 and 3.21 is *δικαιοσύνη* in the sense of “salvation”. For the parallelism of righteousness and salvation in Paul see Rom. 10.10: *καρδίᾳ γὰρ πιστεύεται εἰς δικαιοσύνην, στόματι δὲ ὄμολογεῖται εἰς σωτηρίαν.*

³ See my *Provoked to Jealousy*, pp. 44-55. My analysis of the whole letter is as follows:

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|--------------|---|
| 1.1-17: | Introduction and theme (16b-17) |
| 1.18-5.21: | Righteousness of God for Jews and Gentiles through Jesus Christ |
| 6.1-8.39: | The Righteousness of God as a reality of eschatological freedom |
| 9.1-11.36: | The Righteousness of God “to the Jew first and also to the Greek” |
| 12.1-15.13: | The Righteousness of God in the life of the Church |
| 15.14-16.25: | Conclusion |

⁴ I follow O. Hofius in rejecting Bultmann's view that the gospel is to be equated with the apostolic preaching (see O. Hofius, “Wort Gottes und Glaube bei Paulus”, in *Paulusstudien*, Tübingen 1989, 150-51 (148-74)). For Bultmann's view see *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, Tübingen 1984 (durchgesehen und ergänzt von O. Merk), (1948), p. 89: “Als technische Bezeichnung für die christliche Verkündigung erscheint im hellenistischen Christentum alsbald das Subst. *τὸ εὐαγγέλιον . . .*”

⁵ I would therefore agree with Hofius, “Wort Gottes”, 158, in rejecting the view of B. Weiß, *Der Brief an die Römer*, Göttingen 1899, (1881), p. 70, which would seem to paralyse the power of the gospel for salvation: “Der Glaube ist auf Seiten des Menschen die Bedingung, ohne welche ihm das Evangelium jene Kraft nicht sein kann”.

⁶ See A. Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit: Ein Kommentar zum Römerbrief*, Stuttgart 1975, (1935), p. 33: “Es ist aber nicht möglich, Paulus eine synergistische Theologie zuzuschreiben, nach der der Mensch Gott wirksam macht. Bei Paulus wirkt

This power for salvation is for the Jew first and also for the Greek (i.e. the Gentile). Two important points are to be noted here. First, by writing Ἰουδαίω τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἑλληνι Paul hints that Israel's special role in salvation history has not been abolished.⁷ It is essential to keep this to the fore in the discussion of Rom. 1.18-3.20; too often commentators of Rom. 1.18-3.20 have been insufficiently aware that Paul does *not* relativise Israel's election. Secondly, Paul points to the universal nature of the gospel. The gospel is not only for Jews but also for Gentiles.

Clearly, the place of the Gentiles was a fundamental problem for the early Church and Paul was one of the key Christians to fight for the full acceptance of Gentiles. However, I believe the text of Rom. 1-3 is distorted if the key theme is seen as "God's impartiality". This is an important point and I want to spend some time dealing with it.

Bassler has argued that divine impartiality is the fundamental theological principle in Rom. 1-3,⁸ justification by faith being a "continuation of the basic theological principle of no distinction".⁹ No doubt divine impartiality is a theme in Rom. 1-3 (and in Rom. 4 and certain parts of Rom. 9-11, 14-15) and occurs explicitly in Rom. 2.11; 3.22; 3.29-30 (see also 10.12). But I do not believe it is the major theme. Even if the discussion is restricted to Rom. 1.16-2.29, divine impartiality fails to be the dominant theme.¹⁰ Much more fundamental in Rom. 1-3 is the theme that both Jews and Gentiles need the righteousness of God which they can only gain through faith.¹¹ After all, divine impartiality would only estab-

Gott und der Mensch wird gewirkt. Er wird durch die Botschaft zu einem Glaubenden gemacht und deshalb, weil er dies geworden ist, gerettet".

⁷ I believe one of the objections of Jewish Christians to Paul's gospel was that Paul smoothed over the distinction between Jews and Gentiles in salvation history. He answers this charge in passages such as Rom. 1.16-17; 3.1-2; 9.1-5. See Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy*, p. 75.

⁸ J.M. Bassler, "Divine Impartiality in Paul's Letter to the Romans", *NovT* 26 (1984) 55 (43-58). See also J.M. Bassler, *Divine Impartiality*, Chico 1982. Bassler also argues for the dominating principle of "divine impartiality" in Rom. 9-11 (*Divine Impartiality*, pp. 160-62) and in 14-15 (*Divine Impartiality*, pp. 162-64).

⁹ Bassler, "Divine Impartiality", 58.

¹⁰ See my discussion of Rom. 2.11 in chapter 4, section 5. Bassler, "Divine Impartiality", 45, argues that 2.11 is the pivotal point in the section 1.16-2.29.

¹¹ Cf. D. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Grand Rapids 1996, p. 93 n. 6.

lish that Jews and Gentiles are treated on the same basis.¹² Paul is arguing for much more profound truths in Rom. 1.16-3.31.¹³ First, there is the devastating argument in Rom. 1.18-3.20 that no one does good, therefore no one will be justified by works.¹⁴ Secondly, Paul therefore establishes the necessity of the revelation of the righteousness of God to be received through faith in Jesus Christ. This is dealt with in Rom. 1.16-17 and 3.21-31.

I add four further points which put in question the centrality of divine impartiality. First, the principle of divine impartiality will not necessarily issue in a theology of justification by faith. Divine impartiality works just as well for justification by works as Rom. 2.11 makes abundantly clear. In Rom. 2.1-16 Paul considers justification by works, which, at this point in the argument,¹⁵ could give a way of salvation for Jew and Gentile alike. Justification by faith is not a “continuation of the basic theological principle of no distinction”; rather, it is something which arises out of the view that no one will be justified by works.¹⁶

Secondly, justification by faith gives further reason for divine impartiality. Therefore to some extent divine impartiality is logically dependent on Paul’s gospel of the justification of the ungodly through faith. This is suggested by my view that the righteousness of God is the dominating theme in Romans itself.¹⁷ It may be objected that Rom. 3.28-30 actually proves precisely the opposite. Bassler argues that to establish what Paul says in Rom. 3.28, in Rom. 3.29-30a he “appeals to the common affirmation of monotheism” and then in 3.30b “draws . . . his own

¹² This is a point with which Bassler, “Divine Impartiality”, 54, seems to agree.

¹³ I take this unit for it is this which Bassler considers in her article (see, for example, “Divine Impartiality”, 55).

¹⁴ See the discussion on the theme of Rom. 1.18-3.20 below (section 2).

¹⁵ See the exegesis of this passage in chapter 4 below.

¹⁶ See the discussion below on the relationship of Rom. 1.16-17 to Rom. 1.18-3.20. Note also that the basis for what Paul writes in Rom. 3.22a ($\delta\imath\kappa\alpha\iota\sigma\iota\sigma\eta\eta\eta\ \delta\hat{\epsilon}\ \theta\epsilon\omega\eta$ $\delta\hat{\iota}\hat{\alpha}\ \pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\omega\hat{\omega}\ \iota\eta\sigma\omega\hat{\nu}\ \chi\ri\iota\sigma\tau\omega\hat{\nu}$ $\epsilon\iota\zeta\ \pi\alpha\eta\tau\alpha\zeta\ \tau\ou\zeta\ \pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\eta\eta\eta\tau\alpha\zeta$) is not simply Rom. 3.22b ($\ou\ \gamma\hat{\alpha}\rho\ \hat{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\iota\ \delta\iota\alpha\sigma\tau\omega\hat{\nu}$) but 3.23 also ($\pi\alpha\eta\tau\epsilon\zeta\ \gamma\hat{\alpha}\rho\ \eta\mu\alpha\tau\omega\ \kai\ \hat{\iota}\sigma\tau\epsilon\eta\eta\eta\tau\omega\ \tau\eta\zeta\ \delta\hat{\alpha}\xi\eta\zeta\ \tau\ou\ \theta\epsilon\omega\hat{\nu}$).

¹⁷ See my analysis in n. 3 above and the discussion in Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy*, pp. 54-55.

innovative conclusion”.¹⁸ “Both Jew and Gentile must fare alike, for God is one and thus the God of both. Therefore faith, not works, is the basis of salvation”.¹⁹ However, I do not think this does justice to Paul’s argument in Rom. 1-3. He did not simply argue that God justifies by faith apart from works of law because God is one, so treating Jew and Gentile on the same basis. Indeed, earlier he argued for the possibility of a justification by works for Jew *and Gentile* (Rom. 2.12-16; 2.25-29).²⁰ Justification by works is not impossible because of any idea of divine impartiality; justification by works is impossible because no one does good (Rom. 3.9-20). Paul’s line of thinking in Rom. 3.27-30 is that justification by works, if that were possible, would give rise to boasting in one’s achievement (Rom. 3.27-4.2).²¹ But such boasting is excluded by the law of faith. For justification is by faith apart from works of law (Rom. 3.28). From this point he establishes the universality of justification by alluding to Dt. 6.4 LXX.²² But Dt. 6.4 acts more as a *confirmation* of justification by faith and not as the fundamental basis of justification by faith. If it were the essential basis, why did Paul not make use of it earlier in his argument? Likewise Rom. 4 shows that justification by faith is in harmony with scripture, developing the idea of Rom. 3.31b *νόμον ιστάνομεν*.²³

¹⁸ “Divine Impartiality”, 55.

¹⁹ “Divine Impartiality”, 55.

²⁰ See the exegesis in chapters 4 and 5 below.

²¹ See my discussion of this passage in chapter 7, section 5.

²² There has been some discussion as to whether Paul alludes to the shema here (see E. Peterson, *Eis theos*, Göttingen 1926; A.J. Guerra, *Romans and the Apologetic Tradition*, Cambridge 1995, pp. 84-101). I believe Paul is probably alluding to Dt. 6.4, despite the fact that Dt. 6.4 LXX has κύριος εἰς and not εἰς θεός as in Rom. 3.30. I suggest Paul here uses εἰς ὁ θεός rather than εἰς ὁ κύριος because he wanted to refer to God and not Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 8.6).

²³ Paul does this by taking the examples of Abraham (and David). On the relationship of Rom. 3.31 to Rom. 4 see J. Jeremias, “Zur Gedankenführung in den paulinischen Briefen”, in *Abba: Studien zur neutestamentlichen Theologie und Zeitschichte*, Göttingen 1966, 272 (269-76); “Die Gedankenführung in Röm 4: Zum paulinischen Glaubensverständnis”, in M. Barth and C.K. Barrett (ed.), *Foi et Salut selon S. Paul (Épitre aux Romains 1,16)*, Rome 1970, 51-58; O. Hofius, “‘Rechtfertigung des Gottlosen’ als Thema biblischer Theologie”, in *Paulusstudien*, Tübingen 1989, 128 (121-47).

The logical dependence of divine impartiality (in the sense that the gospel is open to both Jews and Gentiles) on justification by faith can also be detected in Paul's theological development. I believe the justification of the ungodly by faith alone was developed at an early period in Paul's Christian life, and from this he inferred divine impartiality in the sense that the gospel was for Gentiles as well as Jews.²⁴ The idea of the justification of the ungodly developed out of Paul's Damascus Road experience.²⁵ It is easy to underestimate the trauma of this life-changing experience before Damascus.²⁶ Paul was overwhelmed by Jesus Christ in his glory. But this was the same Jesus who had suffered the ignoble death of crucifixion. Right from the start Christ's person and work were therefore of fundamental importance²⁷ and they became inextricably intertwined with his theology of justification.²⁸ Paul had to rethink all his assumptions about Jesus and about the law. When he realised that salvation was to be

²⁴ Contrast K. Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays*, London 1976, p. 40: "Paul's thoughts about justification were triggered by the issues of divisions and identities in a pluralistic and torn world . . ." For Stendahl justification is simply a means of bringing Jew and Gentile together. However, Paul's view of justification cannot be reduced to a doctrine of the Church. See E. Käsemann, "Rechtfertigung und Heilsgeschichte im Römerbrief", in *Paulinische Perspektiven*, Tübingen 1972, (1969), 108-139. K. Stendahl's view of justification as simply a means for bringing Jews and Gentiles together has been addressed in my earlier work (see *Provoked to Jealousy*, pp. 48, 203-3, 286).

²⁵ See S. Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel*, Tübingen 1981, pp. 269-311.

²⁶ Cf. Chr. Dietzfelbinger, *Die Berufung des Paulus als Ursprung seiner Theologie*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1985, 115, who is critical of Wrede, Schweitzer and Strecker, for not taking full account of the Damascus Road experience in their consideration of Paul's theology.

²⁷ Cf. M. Hengel and A.M. Schwemer, *Paul between Damascus and Antioch*, London 1997, p. 98: "The starting point could only be the person of the exalted Christ who had encountered Paul before Damascus and his saving work. At the beginning stands a personal encounter, a being overwhelmed by the crucified and exalted Christ".

²⁸ See G. Bornkamm, *Paulus*, Stuttgart 1987, (1969), pp. 128-29: "Die Zusammengehörigkeit der christologischen und soteriologischen Aussagen, genauer gesagt: die Entfaltung der Christusbotschaft als Rechtfertigungsbotschaft und umgekehrt, ist vielmehr ein entscheidendes Anliegen seiner ganzen Theologie" (Bornkamm's emphasis). See also G. Bornkamm, *Paulus*, pp. 249-51; "Paulus", *RGG* 5:177 (166-90).

found through Jesus and not through the law,²⁹ he first applied this to himself. This would be natural in view of the extreme personal and intellectual upheaval he experienced. So following the ideas in Phil. 3.2-11, he realised that all his privileges and efforts (Phil. 3.5-6) were worthless in view of the incomparable value of coming to know Jesus Christ (Phil. 3.7-8). Paul was taken out of himself and was found in Jesus Christ, not having a righteousness which comes from the law but a righteousness from Christ. Having experienced this existential displacement, Paul *then* came to conclusions about salvation (and justification) being for both Jew and Gentile. So first came a realisation of justification by faith;³⁰ then came the idea that salvation and justification were open to both Jews and Gentiles.³¹ The precise nature of the universality of the

²⁹ These were central issues for Paul (cf. P. Stuhlmacher, "Das paulinische Evangelium", in *Das Evangelium und die Evangelien*, Tübingen 1983, 160-75 (157-82)). I therefore reject the following view of G. Strecker, "Befreiung und Rechtfertigung: Zur Stellung der Rechtfertigungslehre in der Theologie des Paulus", in J. Friedrich, W. Höhlmann, and P. Stuhlmacher (ed.), *Rechtfertigung: Festschrift für Ernst Käsemann zum 70. Geburtstag*, Tübingen/Göttingen 1976, 480 (479-508): "In der Frühphase scheint — wie in der Anfangszeit der Urgemeinde überhaupt — die jüdische Tora mehr im Sinn eines 'Adiaphorons' von Paul gehandhabt worden zu sein".

³⁰ Cf. P. Stuhlmacher, "'Das Ende des Gesetzes': Über Ursprung und Ansatz der paulinischen Theologie", in *Versöhnung, Gesetz und Gerechtigkeit*, Göttingen 1981, 182 (166-91): "Mit der Damaskusepiphanie gewann Paulus also die Erkenntnis Jesu Christi als des Endes des Gesetzes und vollzog sich, zugleich und ineins mit dieser Christuserkenntnis, die Rechtfertigung des Gottlosen ohne Werke des Gesetzes allein aus Gnaden am Apostel selbst". See also R. Riesner, *Die Frühzeit des Apostels Paulus: Studien zur Chronologie, Missionsstrategie und Theologie*, Tübingen 1994, who argues that although Paul may have made his view on the law more precise through the Galatian conflict, his thinking was a development of the revelation of Christ on the Damascus Road. I reject Wrede's view that justification for Paul was a "Kampfeslehre" (see "Paulus", in K.H. Rengstorff (ed.), *Das Paulusbild in der neueren deutschen Forschung*, Darmstadt 1982, 67 (1-97)).

³¹ See also J. Dupont, "The Conversion of Paul, and its Influence on his Understanding of Salvation by Faith", in W.W. Gasque and R.P. Martin (ed.), *Apostolic History and the Gospel: Biblical and Historical Essays presented to F.F. Bruce on his 60th Birthday*, Exeter 1970, 192-93 (176-94), who suggests that it was salvation through the Christ and not through the law which was the primary idea for the converted Paul; the mission to the Gentiles was derived from this. (Note, however, my criticism of another part of Dupont's article in *Provoked to Jealousy*, p. 304 n. 61.) On Gal. 1.16a (ἀποκαλύψαι τὸν νιὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐμοὶ ἵνα εὐαγγελίζωμαι

gospel clearly developed over a period of time.³² So justification by faith, far from being a development of the principle of divine impartiality, is actually the source of an important aspect of that principle.³³

The third reason for questioning the centrality of divine impartiality is that even in Rom. 1-4 and Rom. 9-11, there are sections which actually *contradict* the idea. Israel's priority is, as we have seen, expressed already in Rom. 1.16 ('Ιονδαίω τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἑλληνι') and then again in Rom. 3.1-2³⁴ and 9.1-5.³⁵ This partiality to Israel is further seen in Paul's claim that "all Israel" (πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ) will be saved (Rom. 11.26) but only "the fulness of the Gentiles" (τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἑθνῶν) will be saved

αὐτὸν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν), Dupont, "Conversion", 193, writes: "He did not claim that Christ had given him the command to evangelize the Gentiles and there is nothing to allow us to imagine that this injunction was given him explicitly at this time". For an alternative view, see J.D.G. Dunn, "'A Light to the Gentiles': the Significance of the Damascus Road Christophany for Paul", in L.D. Hurst and N.T. Wright (ed.), *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: Studies in Christology*, Oxford 1987, 251-66.

³² One of the important texts in this regard was Is. 49.1-6, alluded to in Gal. 1.15-16 (see Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy*, p. 317). Note that Paul clearly did not have the idea of a world-wide mission from the beginning. M. Hengel, "The Origins of the Christian Mission", in *Between Jesus and Paul: Studies in the Earliest History of Christianity*, London 1983, 50 (48-64), points out that for 14 years Paul's activity "was limited to the Roman province of Syria and Cilicia, to which according to Acts 13 and 14 we must add nearby Cyprus and the immediately adjacent areas of Asia Minor". Note also that Paul's earliest missionary activity was in the territory of the Nabataeans (I take Gal. 1.17 to refer to missionary activity among the Nabataean Arabs) and the theological reason for going there was because Arabs were considered by Jews to be descendants of Ishmael and were therefore at that time the closest kins-folk of the Jews who were still Gentile (Hengel and Schwemer, *Paul between Damascus and Antioch*, pp. 110-111). Although the Idumaeans, descendants of Esau, were more closely related, they had already been converted to Judaism by John Hyrcanus I.

³³ It is true that the Damascus Road experience also influenced Paul's view of the mission to the Gentiles. He may well have seen a parallel between his call and that of Jeremiah (appointed a "prophet to the nations", Jer. 1.5) and that of the servant of Is. 49.1-6 (see n. 32 above). But I suspect that the overwhelming thought coming to his mind was not so much the parallel between his call and that of the servant of Is. 49.1-6, but rather the personal encounter with Jesus, who was crucified but now was reigning in glory.

³⁴ See the discussion of these verses in chapter 5 below.

³⁵ See Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy*, pp. 172-79.

(Rom. 11.25).³⁶ Further, Paul's theology of predestination suggests that God does in fact show partiality and always has done.³⁷

The fourth argument to consider is that going outside Rom. 1-4 and Rom. 9-11, the idea of divine impartiality receives no particular prominence in Rom. 5-8³⁸ or Rom. 12-13, although it does emerge again in Rom. 14-15.³⁹ On the other hand, the theme of the righteousness of God is one running through the whole letter.⁴⁰ God declares those who believe in Christ to be not guilty, and in giving this verdict makes them not guilty.⁴¹

So in Rom. 1.16-17, Paul sets forward the theme of his letter, the revelation of the righteousness of God. This theme is taken up again in Rom. 3.21-26. In fact it is striking that in 3.21 Paul points again to this righteousness being witnessed to by the law (i.e. the Pentateuch) and the Prophets. But whereas in 1.16-17, where Paul speaks of ἀποκάλυψις, in Rom. 3.21-26 the emphasis is on φανέρωσις.⁴² Another way of putting it is that whereas in Rom. 1.16-17 Paul emphasises the reconciling *word* (i.e. the gospel), in 3.21-26 he emphasises the reconciling *act* (i.e. the atoning death of Christ). Christ is publicly set forward as a ιλαστήριον

³⁶ On Rom. 11.25-32, see Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy*, pp. 126-53.

³⁷ So he chose Isaac rather than Ishmael (Rom. 9.7-9) and Jacob rather than Esau (Rom. 9.10-13). See Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy*, pp. 179-80.

³⁸ This is acknowledged by Bassler, *Divine Impartiality*, p. 160. However, R.D. Kaylor, *Paul's Covenant Community: Jew & Gentile in Romans*, Atlanta 1988, extends Bassler's approach, applying divine impartiality to Rom. 5-8 as well (see, for example, *Covenant Community*, pp. 103-5).

³⁹ I identify the weak largely with Jews and the strong largely with Gentiles. See Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy*, pp. 72-73, 77-78.

⁴⁰ Again, see my analysis in n. 3 above and the discussion in Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy*, pp. 54-55.

⁴¹ God's verdict is therefore a creative verdict, not an analytical verdict. See Hofius, "Rechtfertigung des Gottlosen", 130, who makes use of a formulation of H. Stoevesandt, "Meditation zu Joh 1,35-42", *GPM* 35 (1981) 344 (336-45): "Dieses Urteil 'stellt nicht fest, was ist, sondern stellt her, was zuvor nicht war' und was ohne es 'nimmermehr wäre'". If this creative verdict is taken seriously, there is no problem of a "legal fiction" when it comes to the matter of justification.

⁴² Cf. M.N.A. Bockmuehl, "Das Verb φανερώ im Neuen Testament", *BZ* 32 (1988) 95-96 (87-99). Note, however, my critical comments on Bockmuehl's article in my exegesis of Rom. 1.19 (see chapter 2 below).

(Rom. 3.25).⁴³ The emphasis in 3.21-26 is on salvation-historical events.⁴⁴

Therefore Rom. 1.18-3.20 is bracketed by Rom. 1.16-17 and Rom. 3.21-26, both of which concern the revelation of the righteousness of God. Between these two passages, Rom. 1.18-3.20 forms a unit and it is to the theme of this unit that I now turn.

2. The Theme of Romans 1.18-3.20

In recent years there has been much disagreement on the precise theme of Rom. 1.18-3.20. In an article questioning much of the protestant exegesis of Romans 2, Snodgrass suggests that the theme of 1.18-3.20 is the vindication of God.⁴⁵ He says that the usual explanation given, that Paul is attempting to prove the sinfulness of both Jews and Gentiles, is a “distortion of 1.18-3.8”.⁴⁶ He argues that if Paul were trying to prove that all humans are sinners “it is strange that *ἀμαρτία* and its cognates hardly appear before 3.9”. This is a strange argument. Although these words may not be frequent in 1.18-3.8 (*ἀμαρτωλός*, 3.7; *ἀμαρτάνω*, 2.12 (twice)) it is clear from other words and phrases that Paul is concerned with sin. The word *ἀμαρτία* and its cognates do not occur in the catalogue of vices in Rom. 1.28-31, but these vices of course refer to the

⁴³ In a future work I wish to focus on the issue of the sacrificial death of Christ. For the time being I refer to P. Stuhlmacher, “Zur neueren Exegese von Röm 3,24-26”, in *Versöhnung, Gesetz und Gerechtigkeit*, Göttingen 1981, 117-35; “Sühne oder Versöhnung?”, in U. Luz und H. Weder (ed.), *Die Mitte des Neuen Testaments. E. Schweizer FS*, Göttingen 1983, 291-316; O. Hofius, “Erwägungen zur Gestalt und Herkunft des paulinischen Versöhnungsgedankens”, *ZThK* 77 (1980) 186-99; “Sühne und Versöhnung. Zum paulinischen Verständnis des Kreuzestodes Jesu”, in W. Maas (ed.), *Versuche, das Leiden und Sterben Jesu zu verstehen*, München/Zürich 1983, 25-46. See also R.H. Bell, “Sin Offerings and Sinning with a High Hand”, *JPJ* 4 (1995) 56-58 (25-59).

⁴⁴ Note that *νυνὶ δέ* in v. 21 has a temporal aspect.

⁴⁵ K.R. Snodgrass, “Justification by Grace — to the Doers: The Place of Romans 2 in the Theology of Paul”, *NTS* 32 (1986) 76 (72-93).

⁴⁶ “Romans 2”, 76.

Index of Authors

- Aland, K. 148
Alexander, P.S. 171
Allegro, J.M. 230
Allison, D.C. 200
Althaus, P. 26, 79, 101, 105, 106,
 107, 108, 109, 112, 113, 146,
 147, 150, 151, 193, 198, 238
Amir, Y. 51
Anderson, A.A. 24, 29, 230
Anderson, B.W. 68
Anderson, C. 265
Avemarie, F. 120, 167, 172, 242
Auerbach, M. 249
- Baillie, J. 115
Barr, J. 30, 104, 113, 114, 117, 176
Barrett, C.K. 5, 39, 93, 127, 190,
 194, 198, 206, 207
Barrow, J.D. 178
Barth, K. 13, 14, 37, 90, 91, 93, 103,
 104, 105, 108, 109, 113, 114,
 116, 117, 152, 188, 189, 191
Barth, M. 5, 16, 24, 45, 90, 109, 152
Bassler, J.M. 3, 4, 9, 143
Bauer, W. 133, 148
Bavinck, J.H. 34
Beattie, D.R.G. 170
Becker, J. 162
Beet, J.A. 211
Behm, J. 64, 189
Beker, J.C. 223
Bell, R.H. 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12,
 22, 23, 25, 55, 82, 84, 95, 99,
 105, 106, 108, 130, 166, 185,
 203, 213, 246, 248, 264, 266
- Bengel, J.A. 152
Berger, K. 24, 139, 184
Berkouwer, G.C. 112, 259
Bertram, G. 226, 239, 243
Betz, H.D. 260
Betz, O. 249
Beyer, H.W. 238
Beyschlag, K. 105
Bietenhard, H. 99, 100, 101
Billerbeck, P. 30, 31, 122, 124, 131,
 159, 179, 191, 224, 225, 226,
 227, 235, 243
Black, M. 201
Blanke, H. 16
Blass, F. 209
Bockmuehl, M.N.A. 9, 38, 39, 40,
 41
Bonhoeffer, A. 59, 175
Bornkamm, G. 6, 65, 66, 74, 75, 76,
 77, 78, 79, 80, 95, 138, 146, 151,
 152, 157, 173, 174, 176, 265
Bousset, W. 51, 154
Boylan, P. 24, 92, 137
Brandenburg, H. 256
Brandenburger, E. 254
Braude, W.G. 131
Braun, H. 135
Briggs, C.A. 218, 261
Briggs, E.G. 218
Brooke, G.J. 231
Brown, C. 261
Bruce, F.F. 97, 99
Brunner, E. 105

- de Bruyne, D. 76
Bultmann, R. 2, 33, 36, 38, 39, 64,
65, 135, 138, 146, 158, 159, 186,
187, 224, 264, 265, 266, 267,
268, 270
Bunte, W. 249
Büscher, F. 142
Byrne, B.J. 77, 131
- Caird, G.B. 92
Calvin, J. 234, 256, 257, 259, 264
Cambier, J.-M. 188
Carras, G.P. 194
Carson, D.A. 39, 125, 240, 242
Chadwick, H. 110
Chambers, T.W. 256
Charles, R.H. 162, 164
Charlesworth, J.H. 23, 30, 83, 84,
89, 125, 155, 163, 187, 188, 198,
212, 224, 225, 233, 235, 240, 241
Clarke, A.D. 111
Clarke, E.G. 171
Cohen, S.J.D. 243
Cohn, J. 249
Collins, J.J. 23, 24, 30, 63
Conzelmann, H. 96, 236, 238, 254,
265
Cosgrove, C.H. 201, 202, 204, 208,
253, 259, 260, 261, 262
Cranfield, C.E.B. 13, 14, 36, 41, 42,
43, 46, 48, 49, 56, 58, 61, 97,
127, 135, 139, 142, 152, 159,
160, 185, 188, 194, 195, 205,
206, 207, 208, 209, 211, 212,
213, 223, 224, 264
Cremers, H. 150
- Dahl, N.A. 210, 211, 212, 213
Danby, H. 51, 241, 242, 243, 247
- Davies, G.N. 215, 222
Davies, W.D. 62, 63, 80, 156, 200
Day, J. 75, 85
Debrunner, A. 16, 209
Deißmann, A. 35
Deines, R. 225, 249
Delius, H.-U. 273
Delling, G. 205
Dembowski, H. 100
Denis, A.-M. 64
Denny, J. 194
Derrett, J.D. 190
Diels, H. 66, 129
Dietrich, E.K. 244
Dietzfelbinger, Chr. 6
Di Lella, A.A. 123
Dinkler, E. 265
von Dobschütz, E. 141
Dodd, C.H. 13, 24, 32, 55, 137, 139,
144, 156, 159, 186, 192, 201, 202
Doeve, J.W. 203
Donfried, K.P. 252, 253, 266
Driver, S.R. 261
Duncan, G.S. 238
Dunn, J.D.G. 8, 200, 221, 228, 229
Dupont, J. 7, 8
- Eberle, A. 181
Eckstein, H.-J. 14, 15, 16, 17, 18,
47, 50, 146, 150, 153, 158, 164,
175, 260
Edgar, S.L. 192, 220, 221
Ego, B. 179
Eichholz, G. 98, 147, 150, 157
Elert, W. 91, 256
Elliott, E. 253
Eltester, W. 69, 78, 83
Erasmus, D. 151
Evans, C.A. 246

- Fascher, E. 78, 158
 Fee, G. 96
 Feine, P. 76, 133
 Fenlon, D. 256
 Festugière, J.-A. 43, 80, 110
 Fichtner, J. 14, 29, 177
 Fitzmyer, J.A. 24, 39, 41, 129, 153,
 186, 191
 Fleckeisen, A. 67
 Flückiger, F. 145, 152, 160
 Fox, M.V. 86
 Fridrichsen, A. 44, 138, 186, 194,
 200
 Friedlander, G. 247
 Friedrich, G. 238
 Friedrich, J. 7
 Funk, R.W. 209
 Furley, D.J. 79
 Gammie, J.G. 85
 Garland, D. 18
 Gärtner, B. 42, 45, 65
 Gasque, W.W. 7
 Gaston, L. 230, 231
 Gemser, B. 86
 Gerleman, G. 87
 Gerson, L.P. 68
 Gese, H. 30, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 190,
 191
 Gibson, E.C.S. 261
 Gilbert, M. 75, 76
 Ginsburger, M. 155
 Ginzberg, L. 179
 Gleßmer, U. 171
 Gnilka, J. 16, 199, 238, 239
 Godet, F.L. 17, 28, 36, 77, 143, 148,
 184, 207, 256
 Goodspeed, E.J. 218
 Gordon, R.P. 75, 85
 Grafe, E. 69
 Gray, J. 129, 130
 Greßmann, H. 51
 Grether, H. 14, 29
 Griffith Thomas, W.H. 261
 Guerra, A.J. 5, 22, 23
 Gundry, R.H. 188
 Gundry Volf, J. 254, 256, 262
 Gutbrod, W. 154
 Habel, N.C. 86
 Hackenberg, W. 58, 61
 Hadas, M. 178
 Hahn, F. 223, 250, 267, 270
 Haldane, R. 191
 Hall, D.R. 202, 203, 206, 207, 208
 Hamerton-Kelly, R. 240
 Hammer, R. 124, 165, 166, 247
 Hammond Bammel, C.P. 275
 Hanson, A.T. 29, 32, 143
 Hanson, P.D. 24, 176
 Hartman, L. 18
 Hatch, E. 142, 186
 Hawthorne, G.F. 238
 Hays, R.B. 11, 12, 58, 192
 Hayward, R. 170
 Headlam, A.C. 12, 13, 16, 203, 204,
 211, 255
 Heckel, U. 200, 243
 Heiligenthal, R. 141, 259
 Heinemann, I. 154, 178
 Heitmüller, W. 154
 Hendry, G.S. 73
 Hengel, M. 6, 8, 30, 64, 65, 87, 109,
 110, 112, 144, 153, 154, 156,
 176, 177, 200, 218, 225, 243, 249
 Héring, J. 96, 251
 Hermission, H.-J. 85
 Hodge, C. 184

- Hoffman, Y. 51
Hoffmann, D. 248, 249
Hoffmann, R. 55
Hofius, O. 2, 5, 9, 10, 145, 157,
 160, 197, 205, 229, 234, 235,
 236, 248
Hoheisel, K. 58
Hollander, H.W. 142, 143
Holtzmann, H.J. 132, 133
Hooker, M.D. 24, 25, 54, 121, 127
Horbury, W. 75, 231
Hort, F.J.A. 51
Howard, G. 245, 248
Howey, M. 104
Hübner, H. 33, 205, 208, 213, 235,
 250, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268,
 269, 270
Hughes, P.E. 251
Hunsinger, G. 117
Hurst, L.D. 8
Hyldahl, N. 127
Hyman, A. 182

Isaac, E. 83, 84, 89, 188, 212

Janowski, B. 73
Jastrow, M. 247
Jensen, P.P. 73, 179
Jeremias, J. 5, 50, 51, 52, 141, 248,
 249
Jervell, J. 24, 26, 55, 119, 122, 127,
 128, 129, 130, 167, 168, 169,
 180, 215
Jewett, R. 238
Joest, W. 252, 253, 254, 257
de Jonge, M. 162, 163, 164
Judge, E.A. 185
Jülicher, A. 43, 133, 154
Jüngel, E. 95, 141, 146

Kaiser, O. 86
Kamlah, E. 60
Kamm, A. 129
Käsemann, E. 6, 13, 16, 19, 22, 33,
 42, 43, 44, 61, 127, 153, 154,
 157, 177, 194, 199, 201, 206,
 208, 224, 226, 255, 264, 265, 270
Kaufman, S.A. 170
Kaylor, R.D. 9
Keck, L.E. 215, 216, 219, 222
Kee, H.C. 83, 163
Kim, S. 6
Kittel, G. 80, 118, 119, 203
Klein, G. 62, 63
Klein, Günter 213, 236, 265, 267,
 268, 269
Kleinknecht, H. 14, 80, 118, 154
Klijn, A.F.J. 84, 125, 155, 187, 224,
 225, 233, 235, 240
Klöpper, A. 23
Klostermann, E. 21, 50, 51, 52, 54
Kluge, F. 49
Knox, W.L. 24
Koch, D.-A. 192, 218, 219
Koch, K. 23
Kögel, J. 150
Kolde, Th. 256
Kranz, W. 66, 129
Krauß, S. 128
Kühl, E. 24, 41, 42, 43, 44, 48, 151,
 252
Kuhlmann, G. 35, 38, 40, 44, 47, 70,
 98, 100, 160
Kümmel, W.G. 96, 251
Küng, H. 111
Kuss, O. 141, 147, 268

Lackmann, M. 14, 33, 91, 114
Lagrange, M.-J. 13, 138

- Lambrecht, J. 264, 267, 268
 Lane, W.L. 180
 Lang, F. 112
 Laporte, J. 75
 Larsson, E. 120, 145
 Lautenschlager, M. 136, 274
 Lauterbach, J.Z. 30, 120, 128, 165,
 166, 167, 171
 Leenhardt, F.J. 41, 137, 140
 Leon, H.J. 190
 Levenson, J.D. 73, 176
 Levison, J.R. 125
 Levy, J. 128
 Lietzmann, H. 59, 96, 134, 138, 146,
 151, 153, 160, 208, 251, 252, 253
 Lightfoot, J.B. 24, 76, 96, 129, 140,
 184, 212, 261
 Lincoln, A.T. 16, 204, 216
 Lindars, B. 192
 Lindemann, A. 96
 Lindeskog, G. 69
 Link, Chr. 117
 Lipsius, R.A. 43, 132, 267
 Livingstone, E.A. 24, 187
 Lloyd-Jones, H. 154
 Locke, J. 103
 Lohmeyer, E. 226, 227, 228
 Lohse, E. 16, 230, 231, 238
 Longenecker, B.W. 193, 200
 Longenecker, R. 263
 Lovering, E.H. 204
 Lüdemann, H. 133
 Lührmann, D. 38, 39
 Luther, M. 47, 103, 118, 144, 236,
 237, 257, 263
 Luz, U. 10
 Lyonnet, S. 153
 Mackenzie, R. 234
 Martens, J.W. 175
 Martin, R.P. 7, 238
 Martínez, F.G. 52, 205, 234, 241
 Mattern, L. 135, 136, 255
 Maurer, C. 164
 McBride, S.D. 176
 McCurdy, J.F. 128
 McKane, W. 86, 87
 McLean, B.H. 171
 McNamara, M.J. 170
 McNeill, J.T. 256
 Meeks, W.A. 215
 Meiser, M. 105
 Menge, H. 33, 148
 Merk, O. 2
 Meyer, G. 140
 Meyer, H.A.W. 16
 Meyer, R. 178
 Michaelis, W. 238
 Michel, O. 13, 14, 24, 25, 33, 42,
 43, 45, 47, 127, 137, 147, 153,
 155, 209, 266, 267
 Miller, J.E. 57, 58
 Miller, P.D. 176
 Moffatt, J. 13, 159
 Moo, D.J. 3, 160, 227, 234, 262
 Moore, G.F. 51, 88, 118, 119, 166,
 168, 180
 Morris, L. 28, 55, 190, 212
 Motyer, A. 222
 Moulton, J.H. 47, 48
 Moyise, S. 220
 Mras, K. 111
 Mueller, J.T. 91
 Mulder, M.J. 171
 Müller, P.-G. 38
 Mundle, W. 152
 Murphy, R.E. 85, 88, 89

- Murray, J. 54, 211, 223
Mußner, F. 224
- Neusner, J. 111, 182, 225, 247, 249
Nickelsburg, G.W.E. 178
Nicoll, W.R. 194
Nidditch, P.H. 103
Niesel, W. 259
Nilsson, M.P. 110
Nock, A.D. 43, 80, 110
Norden, E. 67, 128, 129, 185
Nygren, A. 12, 24, 137, 139
- O'Brien, P.T. 238
Oepke, A. 14, 238
Ollenburger, B.C. 73
Oltmanns, K. 160, 161
O'Neill, J.C. 132
Ott, H. 92, 115
Owen, H.P. 25, 68, 81, 126, 127
- Pease, A.S. 66, 67, 68, 178
Pederson, S. 263
Pesch, R. 99, 179
Peterson, E. 5
Pfeifer, W. 49
Pfleiderer, O. 24, 133
Philippi, F.A. 15, 17
Pierce, C.A. 175
Piper, J. 11
Plöger, O. 87
Pohlenz, M. 31, 33, 59, 138, 144,
 147, 154, 157, 174, 175, 181
Pöhlmann, W. 7
Popkes, W. 50
Porter, S.E. 27, 48
Priest, J. 84
Procksch, O. 14
- Qimron, E. 232, 233
Quenstedt, J.A. 256
- Rabbinovicz, R.N.N. 181
Rabbinowitz, A.H. 171
von Rad, G. 80, 118
Radermacher, L. 16, 55
Räisänen, H. 133, 203, 204, 228, 263
Redpath, H.A. 142, 186
Reese, J.M. 75
Reicke, B. 147, 148, 149, 151
Rengstorf, K.H. 7, 59, 133
Reventlow, H.G. 51
Richmond, J. 106
Ridderbos, H. 149, 153, 258
Riesner, R. 7
Ringgren, H. 86
Ritschl, A. 14, 15, 106
Robinson, J.M. 76
Roetzel, C.J. 254
Rosin, H. 37, 38, 45
Rousseau, A. 15
Rüger, H.-P. 86
- Safrai, S. 62, 242
Saldarini, A.J. 250
Salomonsen, B. 181
Sand, A. 64
Sanday, W. 12, 13, 16, 203, 204,
 211, 255
Sanders, J.A. 246
Sanders, E.P. 133, 186, 224, 228,
 240, 242, 243
Sandmel, S. 174
Sasse, H. 69
Schäfer, P. 243
Schaff, P. 256, 261
Schaper, J. 218
Scharnagl, A. 181

- Schechter, S. 122
 Schelkle, K.H. 275
 Schenke, H.-M. 14
 Schiffman, L.H. 145
 Schjött, P.O. 43
 Schlatter, A. 2, 24, 33, 50, 108, 126,
 150, 151, 157, 188, 194, 244,
 257, 269, 270, 271
 Schleiermacher, F. 113
 Schlier, H. 24, 33, 35, 36, 44, 46,
 47, 49, 50, 58, 59, 61, 77, 94,
 95, 96, 108, 137, 147, 201, 206,
 223, 226, 227, 236, 273, 274
 Schlink, E. 101
 Schmeller, T. 89, 185
 Schmidt, J.M. 23
 Schmitz, E.D. 81
 Schnabel, E.J. 89
 Schneider, B. 196, 197
 Schniewind, J. 91
 Scholder, K. 104
 Schrage, W. 112
 Schreiner, T.R. 195, 198, 229, 230,
 233, 245, 250, 262, 264
 Schrenk, G. 197
 Schulte, H. 91
 Schulz, S. 24, 50, 53, 60, 63, 65, 83
 Schürer, E. 51, 155, 170
 Schweighäuser, J. 175
 Schweizer, E. 199, 200
 Schwemer, A.M. 6, 8, 218
 Schwyzer, E. 16
 Scott, J.M. 246
 Scott, R.B.Y. 87
 Scroggs, R. 57, 240
 Seifrid, M.A. 193
 Sevenster, J.N. 203
 Shiloni, J. 182
 Shinan, A. 170
 Sider, R.D. 151
 Siegert, F. 18
 Siegfried, G. 139
 Sjöberg, E. 30, 31, 183, 246
 Skarsaune, O. 220
 Skehan, P.W. 123
 Slaten, A.W. 227
 Smith, M.D. 58
 Snodgrass, K.R. 10, 132, 136, 235,
 245, 270
 Souter, A. 197
 Spencer, S.R. 99
 Staab, K. 15, 197, 198, 275
 Stählin, O. 14
 Stanley, C.D. 218
 Stegemann, H. 232, 234
 Steinmetz, R. 148
 Stelzenberger, J. 149
 Stendahl, K. 6
 Steudel, A. 231
 Stock-Hesketh, J. 240
 Stoevesandt, H. 9
 Stone, M.E. 75
 Stott, J.R.W. 140
 Stowasser, M. 57
 Stowers, S.K. 185, 186, 201, 210,
 214, 215
 Strathmann, H. 150
 Strecker, G. 7
 Strugnell, J. 145, 231, 232, 233
 Stuhlmacher, P. 7, 10, 39, 155, 191,
 200, 203, 211
 Sullivan, K. 236
 Sundberg, A.C. 248
 Sweet, J.P.M. 231
 Szekeres, A. 105
 Tasker, R.V.G. 28
 Taylor, C. 242, 247

- Temple, W. 115
Tennant, F.R. 118, 121, 123, 125
Thackeray, H. St. J. 121
Theissen, G. 79
Thiselton, A.C. 114, 117
Tholuck, J.K. 256
Thompson, R.W. 187, 264
Thrall, M. 158
Tiedtke, E. 50
Tipler, F.J. 178
Torrance, T.F. 104, 116
Toy, C.H. 87
Travis, S.H. 32, 142, 187, 239, 253,
 255
Turner, N. 48
Tyson, J. 227, 228

Ulrichsen, J.H. 162
van Unnik, W.C. 203
Urbach, E.E. 122, 169, 171, 172,
 241, 242

Vermes, G. 46, 231
Vielhauer, P. 224
Vögtle, A. 59

Wainwright, A.W. 103
Walker, R. 158, 159
Wanamaker, C.A. 130
Watson, F. 132, 190
Watson, N.M. 252, 254
Watson, P.S. 107, 118
Weber, E. 17, 21, 22, 23, 26, 81,
 125, 126, 132, 134
Wedderburn, A.J.M. 24, 96, 121,
 127, 130
Weder, H. 10, 269

Weinel, H. 133
Weisengoff, J.P. 139
Weiβ, B. 2, 15, 126, 134
Weiβ, J. 134
Wendland, P. 74, 128, 129
Wenham, D. 99
Wenham, G. 37
Wernle, P. 134
Wesley, J. 50, 54
Westcott, B.F. 51
Westerholm, S. 262, 265
Westermann, C. 37, 222
Wetter, G.P. 30, 32, 134, 142, 274
Whybray, R.N. 87
Wibbing, E. 60
Wilckens, U. 14, 17, 22, 38, 42, 43,
 44, 46, 96, 99, 138, 150, 151,
 153, 185, 203, 209, 223, 262,
 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272
Wilken, R.L. 75
Williamson, H.G.M. 75, 85
Winston, D. 75, 77
Winter, B.W. 111
Wintermute 198, 199
Wrede, W. 7, 133
Wright, D. 111
Wright, N.T. 8, 92, 112, 192, 193
Wright, R.B. 241
Würthwein, E. 64

York, A.D. 170

Zahn, Th. 15, 35, 152
Zeller, D. 268
Zerwick, M. 48
Ziesler, J. 147, 184
Zimmerli, W. 85, 86

Index of References

1. Old Testament				
		17.23		163
		17.26		163
1.1 Books of the Massoretic canon		17	264	
		18	264	
<i>Genesis</i>		27.22		166
1-3	121	27.40		166
1.1-2.4a	73			
1	68		<i>Exodus</i>	
1.2	64	3.2		39
1.21-25	121	3.4ff		39
1.26ff	127	12.17		163
1.26-27	119	12.41		163
1.26	55, 100	12.51		163
1.26a	94	15.18 LXX		69
1.26a LXX	24	18.20		233
1.27	168	19.1		165
1.28	120	19.4		122
2.9 LXX	36, 37	20.2		167, 172
3	25	20.13		166
3.8	121	20.16		172
3.23-24	121	21.24		51
3.24	72	25.31ff		72
6.1-4	24	28.29		164
6.5	123	28.30		164
6.6-7	31	32.4		122
6.7	30	34.6		31
6.12	62	35.21		226
7.13	163		<i>Leviticus</i>	
8.21	123			
9.6	51, 120	18.5		182
10	165	20		230
15	264	20.26		166
15.5-6	72	23.14		163
15.6	72, 232	23.21		163

<i>Leviticus (continued)</i>		31.9	159
23.28	163	31.21	123
23.29	163	32.39	71
23.30	163	32.48	163
24.20	51	33.2	165
		33.4	88
<i>Numbers</i>			
3.7	226, 227	<i>Joshua</i>	
3.8	226, 227	5.11	163
4.30	226	9.4 (B)	159
4.43	226	10.17	163
7.20	172	23.6	197
14.18	30		
16.46b	29	<i>Judges</i>	
		5.11	1
<i>Deuteronomy</i>		7.2	187
4.6	176	19.16	261
4.15-18	127		
4.16-18	56	<i>Ruth</i>	
5.31	71	3.13	247
6.4 LXX	5		
7.25-26	190	<i>1 Samuel</i>	
9.19a	142	2.2-3	187
10.16	195, 198	12.7	1
10.17	143	15.35	31
19.15	151	16.7b	199
19.21	51	26.19b	30
27.26	145		
27.26 LXX	246	<i>2 Samuel</i>	
27.26 MT	246	6.7-8	29
28.53	143	12.7	139
28.55	143	22	29
28.57	143	24.1	29
28.58	145, 159, 197, 246	24.25	30
29.14-15	124	<i>1 Kings</i>	
29.28	159	15.5	244
30.6	195, 198	20.11	187
30.10	246		

<i>2 Kings</i>		9.28b LXX	217
3.14	143	13 LXX	220
17.15	130	13.1-3 LXX	216, 217, 220
		13.1 LXX	217
<i>4 Regnorum</i>		13.2b LXX	217
17.15	24	13.3 LXX	217
		13.4 LXX	217
<i>1 Chronicles</i>		13.5b LXX	217
9.19	226	13.7 LXX	222
9.31	226	15.5b	244
28.9	123	18.5 LXX	98
29.18	123	18.8	29
		19	85, 89, 100
<i>Nehemiah</i>		19.1-4	113
9.18	30	19.4	98, 100, 108
9.33	206	23.1 LXX	192
		24.1	192
<i>Job</i>		29.4	165
1.8	168	35.2 LXX	217, 220
8.3	69	35.2a LXX	218
28.14	86	35.2b LXX	218
28.22	86	35.8 LXX	220
28	86	35.11 LXX	220
		45.5 LXX	173
<i>Psalms</i>		46.4	173
1	176	49.2 LXX	222
2.5	142	49.12 LXX	192
5	220	50.6 LXX	206, 207
5.6	220	50.6a LXX	206
5.10	220	50.6b LXX	206
5.10b LXX	216, 217	50.7 LXX	205
8	100, 113	50.8a LXX	205
8.4a	45	50	191
8.7	46	50.12	192
9	220	50.16-21	191
9.10	220	51	161, 205, 215
9.17	181, 182	51.4	220
9.28	220	61.12 LXX	239
9.28a LXX	216, 217	61.13 LXX	132, 141, 259

<i>Psalms (continued)</i>			
62	269	115.2	205
62.12	239	119	176
68 LXX	221	119.89-90	176
68.10 LXX	221	139.1-2	242
68.23-24 LXX	221	139.4 LXX	220
70.18 LXX	1	139.4a LXX	217
71.19	1	142.1 LXX	12
74	85	142.2 LXX	12, 45, 224
81.2 LXX	143	142.5 LXX	45
82.2	143	143.2	220, 224
82.6	122	145.8	30
82.7	122		
86.15	30	<i>Proverbs</i>	
88.17 LXX	1	3.3 LXX	163
89.17	1	3.3 MT	163
94.11	50	8	86
95.13 LXX	1	8.22-31	86, 87, 88, 92
96.13	1	8.30	86
97.9 LXX	1	15.3	241
98.9	1	16.4a	85
101.26b LXX	45	24.12	141, 239
102.22	46	25.14	187
102.26b	45	27.1	187
103.6	1		
103.8	30	<i>Ecclesiastes</i>	
104	100, 113, 118	3.11a	85
104.2	85	4.14	124
104.5	85	7.20a	217
104.6-9	85		
104.17-18	85	<i>Isaiah</i>	
104.22-23	85	1.15	219
104.24	85	1.23	219
105.20 LXX	24	3.10-11	239
105.37 LXX	219	3.16	219
106.19-23	24	8.22	143
106.20	94, 128	13.9	29
110.3 LXX	1	13.13	29
111.3	1	26.3	123

<i>Isaiah (continued)</i>			
29.16	45, 123	2.5b	130
30.6	143	2.11	24, 94
42.6	186	3.22	247
42.6b-7a	188	4.4	198
45.3	64	7.1-15	191
45.8	1	9.24	187
45.22-24	1	9.25	198
49.1-6	8	17.10	141
49.6	186	25.14	239
49.6b	188	31.31-34	198, 199
51.6	1	31.33	152, 163
51.6c	1	38.33 LXX	152
51.8	1		
		<i>Lamentations</i>	
52.5	192	1.18	206
52.5c	192	3.64	239
52.5 LXX	192		
56-66	222	<i>Ezekiel</i>	
57.1	221	2.2	163
59.1-13	222	8.10	128
59.1-21	222	11.19	198, 199
59.2	221	18.5-9	183
59.3	221	20.25	163
59.5	221	36.20	192
59.7-8	216, 218, 221, 222	36.25-29 40.1	198, 199 163
59.7	218	43.31	168
59.14-63.6	222		
59.16-19	221	<i>Daniel</i>	
59.20-21	222	8.19	14
59.20-21a	222	9.16	1
59.20	222		
59.21	222	<i>Hosea</i>	
66.15	29	1-3	191
66.18	234	5.9-10	29
		11.8b-9a	29
<i>Jeremiah</i>		13.11	142
1.5	8		
2.5	24		

<i>Amos</i>		7.25b	91
1.3-2.3	137	7.26	63
1.3	137	8.6	87
5.17-18	52	11-19	75
		11-15	139
<i>Jonah</i>		11.6-8	51
4.2	30	11.15-16	51
		12.12	76
<i>Micah</i>		13	74
6.5	1	13.1-9	23
		13.1-5	81
<i>Habakkuk</i>		13.1	50, 65, 78
3.19	218	13.3-5	79
		13.5	65, 69
<i>Zephaniah</i>		13.6-7	76
1.14-16	29	13.8-9	69
1.18	14, 29	13.8	76, 78
2.2	29	13.9	69
		14.25-26	60
<i>Malachi</i>		15.1	140
3.7	247	15.2	245
3.8-9	191	15.2a	139
		15.2b	139
1.2 Additional books from the Septuagint		15.8-16.1	51
		18.4-5	51
		18.4	188
<i>Wisdom</i>		18.9	63
1.4	94		
1.16-2.20	139	<i>Sirach</i>	
2.23	63	1.1-10	86, 92
2.24	76	1.9-10	89, 92, 176
5.17-23	75	1.19	176
6.16	94	4.11-19	86
6.19	63	6.18-31	86
7.21-8.1	86, 88	14.20-15.8	86
7.21	87	15.1	88
7.22-8.1	92	15.11-17	177
7.22a	88	15.14	123
7.25-26	76	17.11	88

<i>Sirach (continued)</i>		5.25	177
19.20	88	9.22	64
21.7	36	9.32	31
21.11	88	10.15	63
24	86, 88, 89, 92, 102	17.12 18.7-8	64 24
24.3-22	87		
24.3	87		
24.4-5	87	2. New Testament	
24.8	87		
24.9-12	87	<i>Matthew</i>	
24.12	87	5.21-48	190
24.13-17	87	6.1-6	200
24.19-22	87	6.1-4	258
24.22	87	6.16-18	200
35.12-13	143	7.1-2	139
37.19	186	12.33-35	261
42.16	46	12.37	260
51.13-30	86	12.41 15.14	194 186
<i>Baruch</i>		23.1-36	140
3.9-4.4	86	23.3 23.16	189 186
<i>1 Maccabees</i>		23.24	186
2.67	145	25.14-30 25.31-46	274 258
<i>2 Maccabees</i>			
5.9-10	51	<i>Mark</i>	
7.28	68	7.9	219
9.2	64	14.58	180
9.5-6	51		
9.18	51	<i>Luke</i>	
13.7-8	51	1.6 2.44	271 36
<i>4 Maccabees</i>		6.47	48
4.15-20	214	6.49	48
4.19	214	9.25	47
4.21	31	11.31	194
4.24-27	214	13.1-5	52

<i>Luke (continued)</i>		15.18	36
17.30	16	17	22
18.9-14	271	17.16	99, 129
18.9	184	17.21	214
23.49	36	17.22-31	21, 22
		17.23	99
<i>John</i>		17.24-29	99
1.14	39	17.30-31	22
2.19	180	17.30	99
2.21	179	17.30a	22
3.12	44	19.10	214
7.4	39	19.17	36
9.1-3	52	22.3	82
10.1	104	28.22	36
10.9	104	28.28	36
14.3	16		
14.6	104	<i>Romans</i>	
18.15-16	36	1.1-17	2
21.1	39	1-3	3
21.14	39	1-4	3, 8, 9
		1.14	213
<i>Acts</i>		1.16ff	95
1.19	36	1.16-2.10	143, 144
2.14	36	1.16-3.31	254
4.10	36	1.16-17	1, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11,
4.16	36		12, 13, 16, 134,
7.39	52		153, 160
7.41-42	52	1.16	8, 12, 144, 213,
7.42-43	52		229
7.42	52	1.16a	1, 13
9.42	36	1.16b-17	2
13	8	1.16b	2
13.38	36	1.17	1, 2, 14, 38, 39,
14	8		134
14.12	99	1.18-5.21	2
14.15-17	99	1.18-3.20	1, 3, 4, 10, 11,
14.15	50, 99		12, 16, 17, 18,
14.16	99		19, 20
14.17	99	1.18-3.9	222

<i>Romans (continued)</i>			
1.18-3.8	10		93, 95, 97, 103,
1.18-2.29	210		109, 154, 167,
1.18-2.16	17, 18, 19	1.20a	272
1.18-2.11	184	1.20b	41
1.18-32	12, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 32, 36, 108, 114, 115, 116, 118, 120	1.21-32 1.21-28 1.21-24 1.21-23	44 18, 19, 34 26 54 94
1.18-31	61	1.21-22	42
1.18ff	14, 24, 121, 173, 174	1.21	24, 26, 37, 38, 65, 69, 90, 93,
1.18-19a	26		97, 115, 130
1.18	12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 26, 27, 32, 33, 35, 55, 56, 78, 82, 96, 126, 135, 138, 143, 160, 255	1.21a 1.21b-32 1.21bff 1.21b 1.22-32 1.22-31	38, 48, 93 272 116 93, 272, 11 52 52, 58, 239
1.18b	35, 47	1.22-24	19, 50, 54, 56
1.19-3.20	12, 16, 18	1.22-23	55, 56, 58
1.19-2.16	19	1.22	53, 54, 56, 93,
1.19ff	69		96, 100, 272
1.19-32	12, 16, 17, 19, 137	1.23-27 1.23-25	121 37
1.19-25	27	1.23	24, 54, 55, 56,
1.19-23	83		94, 121, 127, 128,
1.19-21	34, 103		130
1.19-21a	23	1.24-27	24
1.19-20	18, 19, 26, 27, 35, 38, 105, 114	1.24-25 1.24	51 17, 51, 53, 55, 56
1.19-20a	37	1.25-27	19, 50, 54, 56
1.19	34, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 44, 47, 90, 93, 107	1.25 1.25a	33, 51, 54, 56, 58, 61, 65, 78 56
1.19b	26, 41, 80, 90, 93	1.25b	56
1.20	26, 27, 37, 38, 41, 42, 44, 46, 69, 79, 90, 92,	1.26-27 1.26 1.26a	24 17, 54, 55, 56 56

<i>Romans (continued)</i>		2.5ff	135
1.26b-27	56	2.5-16	19
1.26b	56	2.5-12	134
1.27	56, 57	2.5-11	18
1.28-32	54	2.5-6	19
1.28-31	10, 19, 50	2.5	16, 22, 140, 148,
1.28	17, 38, 41, 49, 54, 55, 58, 60, 61, 63, 64, 78, 90, 93, 94, 175	2.6-11 2.6	251 162 132, 140, 141, 144, 234, 235,
1.28a	58		256, 267
1.29-31	54, 59	2.7-11	19, 141
1.32	19, 26, 38, 47, 51, 61, 90, 101, 107, 138, 140	2.7-10 2.7-8 2.7	136, 141, 144 141, 143 141, 142, 214,
2	245, 251, 253, 254, 257, 258, 262, 269, 273, 275		216, 235, 245, 253, 257, 262, 267 2.7a
2.1-3.20	137	2.7b	141
2.1ff	26, 138, 139	2.8	28, 141, 142, 143
2.1-29	132, 140	2.8a	141
2.1-16	4, 19, 20, 132, 137, 138	2.8b 2.9-10	141 141, 143, 152
2.1-11	140	2.9	138, 141, 142,
2.1-5	184, 185, 200		143, 213
2.1-4	18, 19, 265, 267	2.9a	141
2.1-3	184, 200	2.9b	141
2.1-2	139, 144, 146, 148, 152, 159	2.10	138, 141, 142, 143, 144, 213,
2.1	22, 26, 137, 138, 139, 167		214, 216, 235, 260, 262, 267,
2.2	139		269
2.3-11	134	2.10a	141
2.3	22, 138, 139	2.10b	141
2.4-5	138	2.11-14	144
2.4	17, 22, 37, 140, 145, 183, 244, 245	2.11 2.12-29	3, 4, 143, 144 143

<i>Romans (continued)</i>		2.16	18, 133, 134, 139,
2.12-16	5, 18, 19, 97, 140, 142, 144, 160, 161		145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 151, 159, 161, 164,
2.12-13	140, 144, 146, 148, 161		199, 202, 204, 253
2.12	10, 213, 223	2.17-3.8	19, 20
2.12a	184	2.17ff	94, 138
2.12b	184	2.17-29	11, 184, 201
2.13ff	189	2.17-24	19, 22, 184, 185,
2.13-14	229		186, 187
2.13	132, 139, 140, 141, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 159, 229, 257, 259, 260, 267	2.17-20 2.17-19 2.17	185 184 26, 137, 138, 185, 186, 187, 214, 267
2.14-16	59, 101, 102, 106	2.18-20	188
2.14-15	95, 145, 146, 147, 153, 156, 159	2.18 2.19-20	188, 189 189
2.14-15b	147	2.19	185
2.14	138, 145, 146, 147, 148, 151, 152, 153, 156, 158, 159, 199	2.19a 2.19b-20a 2.20 2.21-24	186 188 185, 189 185
2.14b	153	2.21-23	11, 191
2.15-16	147	2.21-22	229
2.15	146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 153, 158, 159, 163, 164, 227, 233, 234, 235	2.21a 2.21b-22 2.21b-22a 2.23-24 2.23	189 189, 190, 191 191 192 185, 186, 187,
2.15ab	149, 151		191, 192, 267
2.15a	149, 153	2.23b	192
2.15bc	149	2.24	192
2.15b	145, 148, 149, 150, 151	2.25-29	5, 19, 135, 136, 152, 159
2.15c-16	147	2.25	193, 229
2.15c	145, 148, 149, 150, 151	2.26-29 2.26-27	162 194, 195

<i>Romans (continued)</i>		3.9-18	19, 215
2.26	61, 159, 193, 194, 229	3.9	162, 202, 210, 211, 212, 213,
2.27-29	194		214, 215, 222,
2.27	152, 156, 159, 197, 229	3.9a	223, 253
2.28-29	195, 199, 200	3.9b	210, 211, 212
2.28	214, 229	3.10-20	211, 212
2.29	194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 214, 229, 255	3.10-18 3.10-12 3.10-11	210, 214 162 216 251
3.1-8	11, 19, 184, 189, 201, 202, 204, 208, 209	3.10 3.11 3.11b	215, 217 217 253
3.1-2	3, 8, 202	3.13-14	216
3.1-2a	211	3.13ab	217
3.1	202, 203, 214	3.13c	217
3.2	203, 204	3.14	217
3.3-8	202	3.15-17	218
3.3-4	202, 206	3.19-20	19, 215, 222, 223
3.3	203, 204, 205, 214, 215	3.19	222, 223
3.4	204, 205, 215	3.19b	223
3.4a	205	3.20	216, 223
3.4b	208		11, 12, 18, 45,
3.4c	208		58, 61, 97, 135,
3.5-8	202, 206		159, 161, 162,
3.5	11, 16, 32, 206, 207, 209		223, 224, 229,
3.5a	207		230, 234, 235,
3.5b	207		236, 237, 239,
3.6-8	209		255, 259, 260,
3.6	207, 208		262, 263, 264,
3.7	10, 205, 207, 208, 211, 213	3.20a 3.20b	265, 268, 269, 271
3.8	201, 208, 209, 211, 212	3.21-4.25 3.21-31	229, 236 269
3.8a	209	3.21ff	4, 267
3.9-20	5, 11, 20, 95, 147		12, 201

<i>Romans (continued)</i>			
3.21-26	1, 9, 10, 11, 40, 255	4.5 4.6-8 4.6	215 274 229
3.21	1, 2, 9, 11, 12, 22, 38, 39, 40, 134, 135, 136, 153, 201, 204, 206	4.7 4.15 4.16 4.17 4.20	229 159, 230, 236 261 68 204
3.22	3	5-8	9
3.22a	4	5.1	134
3.22b	4	5.3	44
3.23	4, 12, 55, 130	5.6-11	28
3.25	10, 28, 40, 179, 213, 248	5.8 5.9	206 254
3.27-4.8	266, 267, 269	5.12ff	157
3.27-4.5	264	5.12-21	84, 97, 98
3.27-4.2	5	5.12	97
3.27ff	271	5.18-19	98
3.27-31	264	5.19	208
3.27-30	5	5.20	159, 236
3.27-28	264	6.1-8.39	2
3.27	187, 264, 266, 271	6 6.1-11	209 208
3.28-30	4	6.1	207
3.28	4, 5, 132, 159, 264	6.22 7.4	270 270
3.29-30	3	7.6	35, 196, 197
3.29-30a	4	7.7ff	189
3.29	213	7.7-25	84
3.30	5	7.7-12	97
3.30b	4	7.7-13	157
3.31	189	7.7	207
3.31b	5, 264	7.7b	159
4ff	267	7.8	236
4	264	7.8b	159
4.2	187, 229, 264, 267, 268	7.10 7.14-25	236 161
4.3	232	7.15	258
4.4	261, 268	8.1-4	208

<i>Romans (continued)</i>			
8.2	159	11.1	11
8.3	248	11.9-10	221
8.4	61, 194	11.13	152
8.19	46	11.23	204
8.29	131	11.25-32	9
8.31	207	11.25	9
8.33	260	11.26-27	222
8.39	12	11.26	8, 95, 97, 107, 133, 214, 222
9.1-11.36	2, 8, 9, 186, 189, 201, 204, 206, 239	11.32 11.32a 11.33	12 47 96
9.1-5	3, 8	11.36	91, 96
9.1	12	12.1-15.13	2
9.3	12	12-13	9
9.4-5	107	12.1	12, 42, 47, 50,
9.4	189		61, 248
9.6-29	101	12.19	32
9.7-9	9	13.4-5	14
9.10-13	9	13.8	189
9.11-12	266	13.13	60
9.12	229	14-15	9
9.14	207	14.10-12	251, 254
9.20	45, 208	15.3	221
9.22	17, 32	15.8	208
9.24	213		
9.27	95, 97		
9.30-10.4	264, 266	<i>I Corinthians</i> 1.18-25	54
9.30	207	1.18ff	95, 96
9.32	229	1.20	69
10.2	58, 112	1.21	95, 96, 98
10.3	108	1.24	272
10.4	189	1.30	91
10.9	136, 259	1.31	187
10.10	2	2.2	21
10.12	3, 213	2.6	69
10.18	98, 99, 100, 214	3.10-16	254, 255
10.19	108	3.10-15	251
11.1-10	101	3.13-15	251, 254

<i>1 Corinthians (continued)</i>			
3.13	16	14.21	223
3.15	253	15.2	35
3.16-17	180	15.3ff	39
3.19	69	15.3	213
3.20	50	15.28	91
4.1-5	254, 255	15.33	64
4.3-5	260	15.42b	128
4.5	37	15.49	128
5.1-13	252	15.53	128
5.1-8	254, 255	15.54	128
5.5	253	15.56	159
5.10-11	60	15.58	270
5.22	98	16.10	270
6.1-11	251, 254, 255	<i>2 Corinthians</i>	
6.2	194	2.14	40
6.9-11 252		3	157
6.9-10	60	3.2	152
6.19	180	3.3	152
7.10	257	3.5-6	196
7.30	35	3.6	152, 196, 197
8.6	5, 91, 96	3.14	152
8.11	252	3.16	107
9.19	47	3.18	130
9.21	152	4.4	88
10.1-12	251, 252, 254,	4.5	40
	255	4.18	42
10.11	252	5.7	42
10.12	252	5.9-10	251
10.18-20	25	5.10	251, 252, 254,
10.19-20	112		255
10.26	192	5.14-21	28
11.2	35	5.14	98
11.3	91	5.17	98
11.25	152	5.21	236
11.27-32	254, 255	6.10	35
11.29	47	6.16	152
11.32	253	8.10	46
12.3b	259	9.2	46

<i>2 Corinthians (continued)</i>		5.6	16
9.6	251, 254	6.8	251
9.8	270		
10.10	185	<i>Philippians</i>	
11.15	251, 254	1.9	58
12.20	60, 143	1.11	270
		1.22	271
<i>Galatians</i>		2.3-11	188
1.16a	7	2.6	91
1.17	8	3.2-11	7
2.15	152, 156	3.3-4	187
2.16	159, 224, 265	3.3	198
2.16b	224	3.4ff	108
2.17	208	3.4b	188
3.2	159	3.5-6	7, 161
3.5	159	3.6	188
3.10	145, 159, 197, 245, 246, 248	3.7-8	7
3.19	159	4.17	270
4.8-9	98	<i>Colossians</i>	
4.8	107, 156	1.15	64, 88
5.3	145, 193, 245	1.16	44
5.6	259, 274	1.23	214
5.13ff	254	3.5	60
5.19-21	60	3.6	16
5.19	230	3.8	60, 143
5.20	143		
5.22	270	<i>1 Thessalonians</i>	
6.4	271	1.8-10	255
6.6-10	254	1.9-10	22
6.7	251, 254	1.9b	130
		2.16	133
<i>Ephesians</i>		2.16c	14
2.8	274	4.4-5	98
2.10a	45	4.5	107
2.19-21	180	4.6	252
4.31	60, 143	4.13	274
5.3-5	60	5.9-10	136
5.6-7	15	5.9	274

1 Thessalonians (continued)

5.21 35

2 Thessalonians

1.8	22
2.1-12	254
2.6-7	35

1 Timothy

1.9-10	60
1.17	44
5.24-25	251

2 Timothy

3.2-5	60
3.5	189
4.14	251

Titus

3.3	60

Philemon

6	58
13	35

Hebrews

1.3	88
11.3	68
11.27	64

James

3.4	47

Jude

6	63

1 Peter

4.3	60

3. Pseudepigrapha*Apocalypse of Abraham*

23	121
7.1-11	99
7.12	100
8ff	100

Aristeas

15-16	111
95	63
254	30

2 Baruch

48.20	240
48.22	187
48.38	225
51.7	235

54.15	125
-------	-----

54.17-18	84
54.18	46

57.2	154
------	-----

84.6b-8	240
84.10	240
84.11	240, 245

85.12	140
-------	-----

3 Baruch

4.17	60
8.5	60

13.4	60
------	----

1 Enoch

12-36	25
36	25
36.1	83
36.2	83
36.3-4	83
42.1-2	89

<i>1 Enoch (continued)</i>		<i>Life of Adam and Eve (Apocalypse)</i>	
45.3	160	35.3	64
50.4	140		
69.4-6	25	<i>Psalms of Solomon</i>	
72-82	240	2.18	143
91.3-4	183	2.33-35	241
91.4-6	83	8.7-13	191
91.7-9	33	8.7	45
91.19	183	13.9-12	241
91-105	183		
94.6-11	183	<i>Pseudo-Philo</i>	
95.4-7	183	12.1	122
96.4-8	183		
97.2-10	183	<i>Pseudo-Phocylides</i>	
98.1-100.4	183	190-92	58
99.1-2	83		
99.3	212	<i>Sibylline Oracles</i>	
100.7-9	183	3.6-45	83
102.1-3	183	3.194-95	188
102.9-11	183	4.159-61	30
103.5-8	183	5.66	63
104.6	183	5.427	63
105.1b	188	5.498	63
<i>4 Ezra</i>		<i>Testament of Abraham</i>	
4.38	245	9.7	64
7.46	245	16.3	64
7.68	245	16.4	64
8.20-36	191		
<i>Jubilees</i>		<i>Testament of Moses</i>	
1.16	198	1.12-13	84
1.20-21	198		
1.22-26	199	<i>Testament of Asher</i>	
1.23	183, 198, 199	1.3-9	123
4.31-32	51	<i>Testament of Issachar</i>	
17.15	245	7.1	245
17.17	245		
23.10	245		

<i>Testament of Judah</i>		12.19-20	245
16.1	60	16.8	46
20	102, 155, 156, 162, 163, 177		<i>Pesher Habakkuk (1QpHab)</i>
20.2-4	164	7.11	145
20.2	164	8.1	145
20.3-4	163	12.4-5	145
20.3	163		
20.4	164		<i>Community Rule (1QS)</i>
20.4b	164	4.9-14	51
20.5	164	5.1	241
		5.8	233
<i>Testament of Levi</i>		5.21	233
19.1	227	6.18	233
		10.23	1
<i>Testament of Naphtali</i>			
3-4	24		<i>Florilegium (4QFlor)</i>
3.1-5	57	1.6-7	230
3.2-4	51	= 4Q174 3.6-7	
3.3-5	83	1.7	234
4.1	24	= 4Q174 3.7	
8.6	191	2.2	145, 232
		= 4Q174 4.2	
<i>Testament of Reuben</i>			
3.3-6	60		<i>4Q204, fragment 5</i>
4.3	164	(1 En. 104.13-106.2 + 106.13-107.2)	
			234
<i>Testament of Zebulun</i>			
1.4	245		<i>4Q212</i>
1.5	245	(1 En. 91.18-92.2 + 92.5-93.4 +	
		93.9-10 + 91.11-17 + 93.11-94.2)	
			234
4. Dead Sea Scrolls			
			<i>Miqṣat Ma'aše Ha-Torah (4QMMT)</i>
<i>Hymns of Thanksgiving (1QH)</i>			232, 233, 234,
4.30-31	245		235, 241
9.14-15	245		
9.26-27	205		
= 1.26-27			

5. Philo		<i>De praemiis et poenis</i>	
		41-42	70
<i>De Abrahamo</i>		43	74, 80, 90
4-5	155		
19	244		
175-76	177	<i>Questiones et solutiones in Genesin</i>	
275-76	155	2.34	71
		<i>Quis rerum divinarum heres</i>	
<i>De confusione linguarum</i>		114-16	71
163	190	221-25	72
<i>De cherubim</i>		<i>Quod Deus immutabilis sit</i>	
21	72	8-9	244
		52	30
<i>De congressu querendae eruditionis gratia</i>		<i>De somniis</i>	
103-105	77	2.245-49 1	73
<i>De decalogo</i>		<i>De specialibus legibus</i>	
1	155	1.33ff	70
52-53	71	1.33-34	74
		1.34ff	80
<i>In Flaccum</i>		1.34-35	80
170-75	51	2.13	177
		3.187-89	70
<i>Legum allegoria</i>			
1.82	77	<i>De virtutibus</i>	
3.97-103	70	177	244
		215-16	81
<i>De mutatione nominum</i>		216	71
54	72	12	71
		160	244
<i>De opificio mundi</i>			
3	74	<i>De vita Mosis</i>	
172	74	2.51	177
		2.98	72
<i>De posteritate Caini</i>			
28	71		
167	71		

6. Josephus*Antiquitates*

1.155-56	71, 100
3.144-46	72
3.180-86	73
4.207	190
7.153	244
12.256	189
18.81-84	190
19.315	244

Bellum judaicum

7.346	64
-------	----

Contra Apionem

2.168	111
-------	-----

7. Targumim*Targum Yerushalmi I*

Gen. 1.27	154
-----------	-----

Targum of Isaiah

Is. 4.2	145
Is. 5.20	145
Is. 7.3	145
Is. 9.6	145
Is. 10.21-22	145
Is. 10.21	244
Is. 10.22	244
Is. 13.12	145
Is. 26.2	145
Is. 31.9	145
Is. 42.21	145
Is. 53.10	145

8. Mishnah*Aboth*

2.1	241, 243
2.7	51
3.11	225
3.14 (3.15)	120
3.15	156
3.15 (3.16)	241, 242
3.17	225
4.22	242
5.18	183

Kelim

1.6-9	249
-------	-----

Kiddushin

1.10a	243
-------	-----

Oholoth

1.8	172
-----	-----

Sanhedrin

4.5	168
-----	-----

10.2	247
------	-----

Sotah

1.7-8	51
-------	----

Sukkah

3.9	241
-----	-----

Yoma

8.9	246, 247
-----	----------

9. Babylonian Talmud		<i>Kiddushin</i>	
		39b	243
<i>Abodah Zarah</i>		40b	144
2b-3a	167		
3a	131	<i>Makkoth</i>	
22b	120, 124	23b	172
55a	63	24a	172, 183, 244
<i>Baba Bathra</i>		<i>Moed Katan</i>	
16a	123	15a-15b	119
58a	128		
<i>Baba Kamma</i>		<i>Niddah</i>	
38ab	131	16b	242
38a	167, 182	<i>Sanhedrin</i>	
113a	169	56a	167
<i>Baba Metzia</i>		56b	121, 167
114b	131, 168	81a	183, 244
<i>Bekhoroth</i>		102a	122
45a	172	105a	131, 181, 182
		107b	247
<i>Berakoth</i>		<i>Shabbath</i>	
33b	242	65a	58
		88b	165
		146a	24, 120, 123, 124
<i>Erubin</i>		<i>Sotah</i>	
18b	119	9b	120
<i>Hagigah</i>		47a	247
4b	245	47b	191
15a	247		
15b	247	<i>Yebamoth</i>	
		22a	168
<i>Hullin</i>		60b-61a	131
91b	128	76a	58
		103b	24, 120, 124
<i>Kerithoth</i>			
6b	168		

Yoma

- 54b 179
87a 247

Yoma

- 3.6 179
4.8 C-D 247

10. Extra-canonical tractate*Aboth Rabbi Nathan*

- 2 (18b (2)) 167
16.2 124
29 189
40 247

11. Jerusalem Talmud*Berakoth*

- 8b (4.4) 172

Hagigah

- 77b (2.1) 247
77c (2.1) 247

Kiddushin

- 61d 242

12. Tosephtha*Kiddushin*

- 1.13-16 243

Sanhedrin

- 13.2 182

Sotah

- 14.1ff 191

13. Midrashim*Sifre Numbers*

- 112 225
(on Num. 15.31)

Sifre Deuteronomy

- 37 156, 169
45 123

- 76 171
328 183, 247

- 343 165, 166

Mekhilta Exodus

- Bahodesh 1 165
Bahodesh 5 166, 167, 171
Bahodesh 8 120
Bahodesh 9 122
Beshallah 2 131
(on 14.7)
Beshallah 7.78-84 128

Genesis Rabbah

- 8.12 120
9.9 (on 1.31) 243
9.10 243
12.6 118
16.6 121
18.6 120
20.11 120, 121
22.2 120
24.6 119, 121
39.14 168, 169

<i>Exodus Rabbah</i>		14. Other Rabbinic Works	
32.1	122	<i>Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer</i>	
32.7	122	43	247
33.7	172		
43.2	122		
<i>Leviticus Rabbah</i>		15. Early Christian Writings	
11.3	122	and Patristic Literature	
<i>Numbers Rabbah</i>		Ambrosiaster	
13.15-16	172	<i>In epistolam ad Romanos</i>	
16.24	122		152
18.21	172		
<i>Deuteronomy Rabbah</i>		Athanasius	
7.12	122	<i>Epistula I ad Serapionem</i>	
11.3	122	8	196
<i>Ruth Rabbah</i>		<i>Expositiones in Psalmos</i>	
6.4	247	100	260
<i>Ecclesiastes Rabbah</i>		Augustine	
7.8.1	247	<i>Contra Julianum</i>	
9.11.1	122	4.3.23-25	152
<i>Song of Songs Rabbah</i>		<i>De spiritu et littera</i>	
5.16.5	166	26.43-28.49	152
<i>Lamentations Rabbah</i>			
2.1.3	122	John Chrysostom	
<i>Midrash Tannaim</i>		<i>Commentarius in Epistolam ad Romanos</i>	
Dt. 5.15	248	homilia 3	15
<i>Pesikta Rabbati</i>		homilia 6.4	196
10.5	131	homilia 12.3	197
		<i>I Clement</i>	
		3.4	76
		27.5	76
		Clement of Alexandria	
		<i>Stromata</i>	
		4.26	173

Cyril of Alexandria		Lactantius	
<i>In epistolam II ad Corinthios</i>		<i>De ira Dei</i>	
3.6	196	22 (21)	28
Didymus of Alexandria		Melito of Sardis	
<i>Commentarius in epistolam secundam</i>		<i>On Pascha</i>	
<i>Pauli Apostoli ad Corinthios</i>		24-34	75
	196		
<i>Liber de Spiritu Sancto</i>		Oecumenius	
57	196	<i>Commentarius in epistolam ad Romanos</i>	
Eusebius			15
<i>Praeparatio evangelica</i>		Origen	
13.12.5	64	<i>Commentariorum in epistolam b. Pauli ad Romanos</i>	
13.12.7-8	111	1.19	36
<i>Commentaria in Psalms</i>		2.11	275
Ps. 4.	218	<i>Contra Celsum</i>	
Gennadius of Constantinople		1.24	110, 111
<i>Fragmenta in epistolam ad Romanos</i>		5.41	110
	15	6.70	196
Gregory of Nazianzus		Pseudo-Oecumenius	
<i>Orations</i>		<i>Commentarius in epistolam ad Romanos</i>	
5.2	52	on 2.29	196
Gregory of Nyssa		Tertullian	
<i>Commentarius in Canticum Cantorum</i>		<i>Adversus Marcionem</i>	
prooemium	196	5.13	197
Irenaeus		<i>Teachings of Silvanus</i>	
<i>Adversus haereses</i>		112.37-113.7	76
4.27.4	15	Theodore of Mopsuestia	
Justin Martyr		<i>In epistolam ad Romanos commentarii fragmenta</i>	
<i>Dialogue with Trypho</i>			
27.2	219		
27.3	218, 219		
92.4	195		
		15, 198	

Theodoret		3.13-15	67
<i>Interpretatio epistulae ad Romanos</i>	15	<i>De re publica</i>	
		3.33	174, 176
<i>Interpretatio epistulae II ad Corinthios</i>			
on 3.6	197	Cleanthes	
Theophylact of Achrida			
<i>In epistulam ad Romanos</i>		<i>Hymn to Zeus</i>	
caput I	15	1-2	173
		4-5	174
16. Medieval literature			
Corpus Hermeticum			
		5.10	110
		8.2	80
		8.5	80
Thomas Aquinas			
<i>Summa theologiae</i>		Dio Chrysostom	
1a.2.2	103	Or. 36 § 20	173
Hugh of St Victor			
<i>Quaestiones in epistolae Pauli ad Rom</i>		Diogenes of Apollonia	
33	43, 44	Fragment B3-5	66
17. Greek and Roman Authors			
Diogenes Laertius			
Aristotle		7.85	175
<i>Metaphysics</i>		7.87	177
9.8.1049b24ff	68	7.88	173, 176
12.7.1072aff	68	7.108	59
Cicero		7.135	109
<i>De divinatione</i>			
2.148	68	Empedocles	
<i>De legibus</i>		Fragment 133	74
1.6.18	156		
1.8.25	68		
<i>Arrian's Discourses of Epictetus</i>			
<i>De natura deorum</i>		1.6.7-8	67
2.16	67	2.20.4	36
2.37	67	3.22.43	59
2.58	67	3.22.94	175

Euripides		<i>Timaeus</i>	
<i>Daughters of Troy</i>		28C-29A	68
885-87	81	28C	68
		30A-B	68
Livy		72E-81E	66
<i>Ab urbe condita libri</i>		92C	80
45.27.11	129		
Lucretius		Plutarch	
<i>De rerum natura</i>		<i>De sera numinis vindicta</i>	
4.823-57	68	8 (553D)	52
Marcus Aurelius		<i>De tranquillitate animi</i>	
<i>Meditations</i>		20 (477C-D)	174
9.1	33	<i>Pericles</i>	
Menander		4.4	66
<i>Thais</i>		Pseudo-Aristotle	
	64	<i>De mundo</i>	
Pausanias		399b	41
<i>Description of Greece</i>		Pseudo-Plutarch	
1.17.1	129	<i>Placita philosophorum</i>	
Philodemus		905B	64
<i>De pietate</i>		Seneca	
11	173	<i>De beneficiis</i>	
Plato		4.6	67
<i>Laws</i>		<i>Naturales quaestiones</i>	
841A	64	2.45	81
886A	66	Servius	
891-99	68	<i>Ad Aeneidem</i>	
<i>Philebus</i>		4.638	110
28D-E	66	<i>Ad Georgica</i>	
30C-D	66	1.5	110
<i>Republic</i>		Sophocles	
7.517B	36	<i>Antigone</i>	
		80	212
		449-55	154

Stobaeus		Thucydides	
<i>Eclogae</i>		<i>History of the Peloponnesian War</i>	
2.7	173	2.65.3	58
		1.140.4	212
Suetonius		Xenophon	
<i>De vita Caesarum liber 3: Tiberius</i>		<i>Memorabilia</i>	
36	190	4.3.13	74
Tacitus			
<i>Annales</i>			
2.85	190		

Index of Subjects and Names

- Abraham 5, 71, 100, 155, 215, 245, 267
Absalom 52
Adam 24, 26, 48, 55, 84, 97, 100, 123, 125, 128, 157, 167, 263
R. Akiba 63, 144, 171, 241, 244
— school of 165
Ammonites 166
analogia entis 29, 46, 79
Anaxagoras 66
anthropic principle 178
anthropology 99, 131, 161, 205, 214, 246
anthropomorphism 31
anthropopathism 30, 31
antinomianism 209, 212
apocalyptic 23, 29, 30, 32, 33, 60, 82, 83, 84, 89, 125, 239
apologetic tradition 23
Apollinarius 275
Apollinaris of Laodicea 197
Aristobulus 64, 111
Aristotle 66, 68, 111
ark of the covenant 179
R. Ashi 124
Athanasius 196, 260
atonement 9, 32, 40, 213
Augsburg confession 261
Augustine 97, 152, 197

Balaam 168, 181
Barmen declaration 104, 105
blasphemy 121, 192, 247

boasting 5, 186, 187, 188, 264, 266, 267, 271

Caligula 75, 178
Calvin 234, 256, 257, 259, 264
Calvinism 107
Christ
— as wisdom of God 54, 55, 76, 82, 91
— as Word of God revealed 114
— divinity of 91, 111
— pre-existence of 41, 91
— sacrificial death of 43, 248, 250
Christology 91, 92, 118
— wisdom 88, 89, 92
Chronicler 32
Chrysippus 67
Chrysostom, John 15, 196, 197
circumcision 167, 193, 194, 195, 198, 199, 200, 202, 228, 229, 230
Cicero 67, 68, 156, 174, 176
Cleanthes 67, 173, 174
Clement of Alexandria 173
condemnation 28, 145, 146, 162, 222, 223, 255
conscience 149, 150, 151, 158, 161, 164, 175
Contarini 256
cosmological argument 68, 71, 80, 92
covenant
— with Israel 107
— with Israel and Christians 111, 112
creatio ex nihilo 68
Cyril of Alexandria 196

- David 5, 100, 168, 215, 244
 day of judgement 11, 28, 137, 255
 determinism 177
 diatribe 139, 185, 186
 Didymus of Alexandria 196
 Dio Chrysostom 173
 Diogenes of Apollonia 66
 Diogenes Laertius 59, 109, 173, 175,
 176, 177
duplex iustitia 256
- Eben Shetiyah 179
 R. Eleazar ha-Kappar 242
 election 165, 240
 — of Israel 3, 165, 188, 189, 193,
 205
 — sign of 136, 259
 R. Eliezer b. Hyrcanus 181, 182
 Elijah 215
 R. Elisha b. Abuja 247
 Elizabeth (Lk. 1.6) 271
 Empedocles 74
 Enoch 215
 Ephraem 197
 Epictetus 36, 59, 67, 175
 Erasmus 151
 Esau 9
 Euripides 64, 81
 Eusebius 64, 111, 218
 Euthymius Zigabenus 197
 Eve 24, 26, 120, 123, 125
 evil inclination 122, 123, 124
extra Calvinisticum 91
 Ezekiel 244
- faith 2, 142
 fall viii, 26, 126
 — of Adam 24, 26, 49, 94, 97, 118,
 121
- of human beings 50, 94, 97, 116
 — of Israel 24, 26, 49, 94, 97
 food laws 228, 230
 foreknowledge 241, 242
 free will 119, 123, 125, 177, 241,
 242
- R. Gamaliel II 183, 241, 244
 Gennadius of Constantinople 15
 God
 — acknowledgement of 93, 94
 — attributes of 43, 44, 90, 94, 102
 — grace of 252, 256
 — ignorance of 78, 93, 94, 97, 99
 — judgement of 22, 140, 164, 183,
 255, 274
 — knowledge of 36-50, 77, 78, 93,
 101, 121
 — mercy of 13, 14, 28
 — power of 2, 95
 see also righteousness of God;
 wrath of God; wisdom of God
 golden calf 26, 94, 97, 121, 122
 good inclination 122, 124
 gospel 1, 2, 3, 4, 39, 108, 144, 160,
 204
 — as reconciling word of God 157,
 160
 — universality of 7, 8
 Gregory of Nazianzus 52
 Gregory of Nyssa 196
- Hagar 170
 R. Hamnuna 172
 R. Hanania b. Gamaliel 167
 R. Hanina b. Hama 242
 R. Hanina b. Papa 242
Heilsgeschichte 3, 10, 239
 Hellenism 75, 78, 79, 81, 177, 178

- R. Ḥidka 167
 R. Hillel 52
 history of damnation 90, 239
 history of salvation 3, 10, 239
 Holy Spirit 116, 118, 197, 198, 199
 Homer 64
 homosexuality 56, 57, 58
 Hugh of St Victor 43, 44
- idolatry 34, 55, 66, 78, 83, 99, 100,
 108, 121, 126, 127, 128, 129,
 130, 190
- Idumaeans 8
 ignorance of God 78, 93, 94, 97, 99
 image of God 55, 100, 118, 119, 120,
 130, 131, 168
- images
 — veneration of 127, 129
- impartiality, divine 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9,
 143, 144
- inclination
 — evil 122, 123, 124
 — good 122, 124
- Irenaeus 15
 R. Isaac 122
 Ishmael 9, 170
 R. Ishmael b. Elisha
 — school of 164, 165
 R. Ishmael b. Nahmani 122
 Ishmaelites 166
 Israel
 — conversion of 107
 — election of 3, 188, 189, 193, 205
 — fall of 24, 26, 49, 94, 97
 — salvation of 95, 97
- Issachar 245
iustitia civilis 107
iustitia distributiva 11, 206
iustitia salutifera 11
- Jacob 9, 168
 Jeremiah 168
 — letter of (apocrypha) 81
 Jewish Christians
 — as Paul's opponents 1, 203
 Job 168
 R. Johanan b. Nappaha 120, 121,
 122, 165, 182
 R. Johanan b. Zakkai 191
 John Hyrcanus I 8
 John of Damascus 197
 R. Jose b. Ḥalafta 122
 Joseph (son of Jacob) 168
 R. Joshua b. Hananiah 181, 182, 241
 R. Judah b. Ilai 247
 judgement
 — according to 'grace' 240, 241,
 — according to works viii, 23, 133,
 140, 141, 144, 239, 250, 251,
 253, 254, 255, 262
 — day of 11, 28, 137, 255
 — final 14, 18, 22, 140, 155, 160,
 194, 200, 202, 211, 233, 234,
 240, 241, 246, 255, 260, 273
 — of God 22, 140, 164, 183, 255,
 274
- justification
 — by faith 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 183,
 253, 254, 255, 256, 264, 273, 274
 — by works 4, 5, 131, 132, 141,
 183, 202, 235, 253, 257, 259,
 260, 262, 263, 264, 269, 271, 272
 — of the ungodly 1, 4, 92
 — through Jesus Christ 148, 161
- Justin Martyr 195, 218, 219
- Konkordienformal* 274
 ktisiology 68, 69

- Lactantius 28
- law 135, 140, 142, 144, 145, 146, 151, 152, 156, 157, 159, 161, 167, 169, 173, 174, 177, 180, 181
- and nature 174, 176
- as condemning word of God 157
- ceremonial 231, 232
- moral 74, 230
- of the Gentiles 153, 154, 158, 159
- ontological view of 156, 177, 180, 181
- perfect obedience of 140, 144, 145, 183, 239, 243, 244, 245, 246, 248, 250
- pre-existent view of 156
- revealed to Gentiles 164, 165, 166, 167
- social function of 228
- universal 167, 169
- unwritten 154, 155, 167, 178
- see also* natural law
- legalism 263, 264
- lesbianism 57, 58
- R. Levi b. Ḥama 124, 131
- Livy 129
- Lucretius 68
- Luther vii, 47, 103, 107, 118, 144, 236, 237, 257, 263
- and the Heidelberg disputation 272, 273
- Lutheranism vii, 91, 107
- Manasseh 247
- Marcion 197
- Marcus Aurelius 33
- R. Meir 247
- Melito of Sardis 75
- Menander 64
- mercy of God 13, 14, 28
- Jewish view of 240
- mercy seat 40, 72, 180, 248
- merit 240, 241
- meritorious work 248
- Moabites 166
- Moses 168, 172, 215
- national socialism 104
- natural history 85
- natural law 56, 62, 63, 102, 153, 173, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180
- natural religion 108
- natural revelation vii, viii, 76, 85, 90, 92, 114, 115, 116
- natural theology vii, viii, 26, 45, 62, 63, 66, 69, 71, 76, 85, 90, 92, 93, 95, 98, 99, 100, 102, 103, 104, 105, 108, 109, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 125, 127, 131, 176, 179
- from perspective of faith in Christ 118
- see also* theology of nature
- neo-Kantianism 106
- Noah 168
- precepts of 167, 171
- Oecumenius 15
- Origen 36, 110, 111, 196, 275
- original sin 122, 125
- R. Pappias 128
- parousia 107
- Paul
- Damascus Road experience 6
- missionary preaching 21, 22, 23, 134
- view of the fall 125-131
- Pausanias 129

- Pelagius 197
 perfect obedience 140, 144, 145, 183,
 239, 243, 244, 245, 246, 248, 250
 Pharisees 140, 185, 243, 244, 248,
 249, 250, 271
 Philodemus 173
 Pietism 256
 pious Gentile 95, 161, 162, 194, 199,
 200, 216, 253
 pious Jew 161, 162, 199, 200, 216,
 253, 265
 Plato 36, 63, 64, 66, 68, 80
 Plutarch 52, 66, 174
 power of God 2
 predestination 9, 47, 76
 priestly writer 30, 73, 87, 178
 propitiation 30
 psalms
 — eschatological use in LXX 218
 — and Paul's hermeneutic 220, 221
- Quenstedt 256
- reconciliation 28
 reconciling act 9, 40
 reconciling word 9, 40, 157, 160
 regeneration 256
 religion 56
 — natural 108
 — God's judgement on 54, 108
 repentance 138, 140, 145, 183, 244,
 245, 246, 250, 251
 retribution 51, 52, 53, 55, 56, 61, 83,
 106, 107, 239
 Reuben 168
 revelation of God 38, 40, 41, 54, 55,
 90, 108, 113, 115
 see also natural revelation
 reward, eschatological 253, 255, 258
 righteousness of God 1, 2, 3, 4, 9,
 10, 11, 13, 16, 17, 19, 22, 38,
 153, 160, 162, 201, 255
 sacrificial cult 248, 249, 250
 sacrifice of Christ 43, 248, 250
 salvation vii, 1, 2, 108, 255
 — forensic aspect of 2
 — independent of works 274, 275
 salvation history 3, 10, 239
 Samson 52
 Samuel 168, 245
 sanctification 256, 257, 258, 259, 274
schlechthinniges Abhängigkeitsgefühl
 (Schleiermacher) 113
 self-righteous Jew 26, 184, 185, 189,
 265
 self-righteous judge 26, 138, 139
 Seneca 67, 68, 81
 Servius 110
 Seth 168
 sexual immorality 83, 94, 120, 121,
 123
 Shem 168
 R. Simeon b. Eleazar 166
 R. Simeon b. Lakish 124
 R. Simeon b. Yoḥai 131
 R. Simlai 172
 sin 10, 11, 106, 213, 215, 216
 — knowledge of 161, 235, 255
 — as ontological problem 213
 — power of 212, 213, 236, 253
 — universal nature of 18, 213, 214,
 220
 — with a high hand 22, 77
 Socrates 66
sola fide vii, 183, 253, 273, 275
sola gratia vii, 183, 253, 273, 275
 son of man 15, 89

- Sophocles 154, 212
Stobaeus 173
Stoicism 59, 60, 62, 63, 65, 67, 74,
 78, 153, 156, 174, 175, 176
Suetonius 190
synergism 166
- tabernacle 72, 73, 178, 179, 226
Tacitus 190
teacher of righteousness 232
teleological argument 70, 71, 80, 92,
 178
temple 73, 87, 178, 179
 — profaning of 191
Terentius Varro 74, 110
Tertullian 197
theocracy 81, 108, 109, 110, 112
Theodore of Mopsuestia 15, 198
Theodoret 15, 197
theologia crucis 272, 273
theologia gloriae 272
theology of nature 72, 73, 100, 113,
 178, 179, 180
Theophylact of Achrida 15, 197
thirty-nine articles 261
Thomas Aquinas 103, 197
Thucydides 58, 212
truth
 — repression of 34
 — suppression of 34, 35, 95, 109
- uncircumcision 193
Ur-Offenbarung 105, 106, 107, 109,
 112, 113
- wisdom of God 54, 85, 86, 87, 88,
 89, 95, 96, 156
 — identified with torah 87, 88
 — personified 86
word of God 2, 104, 114, 157, 160,
 252
works of law 224, 225, 226, 228,
 229, 231, 233, 234, 235, 251,
 259, 260, 262, 264, 268, 269,
 270, 271
works of thanksgiving 231
works-righteousness 245, 267, 269
wrath 28, 140, 142, 254
wrath of God 14, 15, 17, 18, 28, 29,
 31, 32, 35, 142, 143
 — impersonal view of 29, 32
 — as emotion of God 28, 29, 142,
 143
 — as eschatological 31, 33, 254
 — related to God as righteous judge
 32
 see also God, judgement of
Württemberg confession 261
- Xenophon 74
- Zacharias (Lk. 1.6) 271
Zebulun 245
Zeno 32, 67
Zerubbabel 168

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

Alphabetical Index of the First and Second Series

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