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Peter W. Ensor

Jesus and His ›Works‹



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The Johannine Sayings in Historical Perspective

by

Peter W. Ensor



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Preface

This book first took shape as a PhD thesis submitted to the University of Aberdeen in 1993. The original text is reproduced here with only a few minor modifications.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have helped me in the production of this book: the Overseas Division of the Methodist Church in Great Britain, the Methodist Church in Kenya, and the Directors of St. Paul's United Theological College, Limuru, Kenya, for releasing me from my teaching duties at the college during the period 1991 to 1993 so that I might engage in doctoral research; the British Academy for providing the funding for this project; Rev. Dr. Ruth B. Edwards of the New Testament Department at Aberdeen for her work of supervision while the thesis was being written; Rev. Prof. I. Howard Marshall, head of the department, for his encouragement and perceptive comments on many points; Prof. Martin Hengel and the publishers for accepting the book for publication; and finally Mr. Andrew Warren of Wolfson College, Cambridge, for kindly agreeing to put the material into the correct camera-ready format required for publication.

It has been fashionable in biblical scholarship in recent years to yield to the current of postmodernism and engage in one of the newer forms of literary criticism of the biblical text. Nevertheless, it is my conviction that the older, historical questions will not go away, but will continue to tease the minds of scholars and ordinary laypeople for a good while to come. The Fourth Gospel provides a particularly challenging ground for such research. Despite the enormous amount of scholarly output on this Gospel over the past century and a half, there are still many important historical issues over which anything like a consensus is disconcertingly absent. The Gospel remains an enigma still.

This book deals with one corner of one issue - the 'works' sayings of Jesus as an aspect of the problem of the relationship between the Johannine presentation of the spoken ministry of Jesus and Jesus' own original speech. If its treatment of that corner is found convincing, and if it succeeds in shedding light on the wider issue, then it will not have been written in vain.

Table of Contents

Preface	iii
Abbreviations	xi
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 The Aim and Plan of the Book	1
1.2 A Survey of the Literature	2
1.3 The Authorship of the Fourth Gospel	5
1.3.1 The Internal Direct Evidence	5
1.3.2 The Internal Indirect Evidence	10
1.3.3 The External Evidence	11
1.3.4 Conclusion	12
1.4 The Fourth Gospel and the Synoptic Gospels	13
1.5 The Fourth Gospel and Other Possible Sources	16
1.6 Development Theories	21
1.7 Conclusion	25
Chapter 2: The Question of Authenticity	27
2.1 Introduction	27
2.2 The Problem of Definition	27
2.3 A Fresh Approach	32
2.4 A Modern Analogy	34
2.4.1 Type a: The Original Speech	34
2.4.2 Type b: A Close Translation	35
2.4.3 Type c: Looser Representations	36
2.4.3.1 Paraphrases	36
2.4.3.2 Summaries	37
2.4.3.3 Interpretative Clarifications	37
2.4.4 Conclusion	38
2.5 The Burden of Proof	38
2.6 The Criteria for Authenticity	40
2.6.1 Introduction	40
2.6.2 Multiple Attestation	40
2.6.3 Language, Culture and Personal Idiom	41

2.6.4 Coherence	42
2.6.5 Dissimilarity	43
2.6.6 Anti-Redactional Features	45
2.6.7 Synthesis	45
2.6.8 Summary	46
2.7 Conclusion	47
Chapter 3: Authenticity and the Johannine Sayings . . .	48
3.1 The Critical Problem	48
3.2 Some Negative Reactions	49
3.3 A More Positive Assessment	51
3.3.1 Introduction	51
3.3.2 Milieu	51
3.3.3 Points of Contact with the Synoptic Jesus	53
3.3.4 Style	56
3.4 The Critical Problem Again	57
3.5 The Fourth Evangelist's Handling of Old Testament Quotations as a Clue to his Handling of the Sayings of Jesus	58
3.5.1 Introduction	58
3.5.2 Category One	60
3.5.3 Category Two	69
3.5.4 Category Three	77
3.5.5 Conclusions	81
3.6 The Johannine Sayings of Jesus	83
Chapter 4: Jesus and His 'Works'	85
4.1 Introduction	85
4.2 Common Usage	86
4.3 Jewish Usage	87
4.4 Johannine Usage	89
4.5 Coherence with the Synoptic Evidence	91
4.5.1 Linguistic Coherence	91
4.5.2 Idiomatic Coherence	94
4.5.3 Theological Coherence	95
4.6 Conclusion	96
Chapter 5: The Divine Imperative	98
5.1 Introduction	98
5.2 The Context of John 9.3b-4	98
5.2.1 The Johannine Context	98
5.2.2 John 9.1-10.21	100

5.2.3 John 9.1-7	101
5.2.4 John 9.2-5	103
5.3 The Authenticity of John 9.3b-4	108
5.3.1 Introduction	108
5.3.2 The Authenticity of τοῦ πέμψαντός με	108
5.3.3 The Textual Crux	110
5.3.4 General Maxim or Personal Statement?	113
5.3.5 The Authenticity of John 9.4: The Criteria Applied	114
5.3.6 The Authenticity of the ἔργα Motif in John 9.3b-4	118
5.4 The Exegesis of John 9.3b-4	122
5.4.1 Introduction	122
5.4.2 John 9.4 as an Independent Saying	123
5.4.3 John 9.3b-4 in its Presumed Historical Context	124
5.4.4 John 9.3b-4 in its Total Johannine Context	125
5.5 The Exegesis of John 9.3b-4 in the Patristic Era	126
5.6 Conclusion	128
Chapter 6: Accomplishing God's Work	130
6.1 Introduction	130
6.2 The Context of John 4.34	130
6.2.1 John 4.1-42	130
6.2.2 John 4.31-34	134
6.3 The Authenticity of John 4.34	135
6.3.1 Introduction	135
6.3.2 The Criteria Applied	137
6.4 The Exegesis of John 4.34	149
6.4.1 Introduction	149
6.4.2 John 4.34 within the Context of John 4.31-34	149
6.4.3 John 4.34 within the Context of John 4.1-42	151
6.4.4 John 4.34 in its Total Johannine Context	152
6.5 The Context of John 17.4	154
6.5.1 John 13-17	154
6.5.2 John 17	155
6.5.3 John 17.1-5	156
6.6 The Authenticity of John 17.4	157
6.7 The Exegesis of John 17.4	159
6.8 The Exegesis of John 4.34 and 17.4 in the Patristic Era	161
6.9 Conclusion	162
Chapter 7: Doing What God Does (A)	164
7.1 Introduction	164

7.2 The Context of John 5.17	164
7.2.1 The Johannine Context	164
7.2.2 John 5.1-9a	165
7.2.3 John 5.9b-16	166
7.3 The Authenticity of John 5.17	184
7.4 The Exegesis of John 5.17	184
7.4.1 Introduction	184
7.4.2 John 5.17 in its Presumed Historical Context	184
7.4.3 John 5.17 in its Total Johannine Context	191
7.5 The Exegesis of John 5.17 in the Patristic Era	191
7.6 Conclusion	193
 Chapter 8: Doing What God Does (B)	 195
8.1 Introduction	195
8.2 The Context of John 5.19-20	196
8.3 The Authenticity of John 5.19-20	201
8.3.1 'Truly, truly, I say to you ...'	201
8.3.2 '... the Son can do nothing of his own accord ...'	202
8.3.2.1 The Possible Background to the Saying	202
8.3.2.2 The Criteria Applied	205
8.3.3 '... and greater works than these will he show him ...'	215
8.4 The Exegesis of John 5.19-20	216
8.4.1 'Truly, truly, I say to you ...'	216
8.4.2 '... the Son can do nothing of his own accord ...'	217
8.4.2.1 John 5.19-20a as a Saying of Jesus	217
8.4.2.2 John 5.19-20a in its Total Johannine Context	221
8.4.3 '... and greater works than these will he show him ...'	221
8.5 The Exegesis of John 5.19-20 in the Patristic Era	222
8.6 Conclusion	225
 Chapter 9: Indicators of Jesus' Identity	 227
9.1 Introduction	227
9.2 The Exegesis of the Sayings	227
9.2.1 John 5.36	227
9.2.1.1 The Context of John 5.36	227
9.2.1.2 The Scope of the ἔργα in John 5.36	229
9.2.1.3 The Exegesis of John 5.36	230
9.2.1.4 Conclusion	231
9.2.2 John 10.25, 32, 37f.	232
9.2.2.1 The Context of John 10.25, 32, 37f.	232
9.2.2.2 The Scope of the ἔργα in John 10.25, 32, 37f.	233

9.2.2.3 The Exegesis of John 10.25	234
9.2.2.4 The Exegesis of John 10.32	235
9.2.2.5 The Exegesis of John 10.37f.	236
9.2.2.6 Conclusion	238
9.2.3 John 14.10f.	238
9.2.3.1 The Context of John 14.10f.	238
9.2.3.2 The Scope of the ἔργα in John 14.10f.	239
9.2.3.3 The Exegesis of John 14.10f.	240
9.2.3.4 Conclusion	241
9.2.4 John 15.24	241
9.2.4.1 The Context of John 15.24	241
9.2.4.2 The Scope of the ἔργα in John 15.24	242
9.2.4.3 The Exegesis of John 15.24	242
9.2.4.4 Conclusion	243
9.2.5 Exegetical Conclusions	244
9.3 Coherence with the Historical Jesus	245
9.3.1 Introduction	245
9.3.2 Matthew 11.2-6 par. Luke 7.18-23	246
9.3.3 Matthew 11.20-24 par. Luke 10.12-15	251
9.3.4 Conclusion to the Argument from Coherence	254
9.4 The Johannine Redaction	256
9.5 The Exegesis of the Texts in the Patristic Era	258
9.6 Conclusion	261
Chapter 10: General Conclusions	263
10.1 The Possibility of Finding ‘Authentic’ Sayings of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel	263
10.2 The Nature of ‘Authenticity’	264
10.3 The Authenticity of the Works-Sayings of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel	265
10.4 The Johannine Presentation of the Works-Sayings of Jesus	268
10.5 The Patristic Development of the Johannine Presentation of the Works-Sayings of Jesus	270
Appendix A: U.C. von Wahlde’s Source Theory	272
Appendix B: Jesus’ Claim to ‘Do the Works of God’ in John 10.37f.	278
1 Introduction	278
2 Doing the Works which God Commands	279
2.1 Jewish Literature	279
2.2 The New Testament	280

2.3 The Fourth Gospel	281
2.4 Conclusion	281
3 Doing the Works which God Does in Imitation of Him	282
3.1 Jewish Literature	282
3.2 The New Testament	283
3.3 The Fourth Gospel	283
3.4 Conclusion	284
4 Doing the Works which God Does by Being the Means by which He Does them	284
4.1 Jewish Literature	285
4.2 The New Testament	285
4.3 The Fourth Gospel	286
4.4 Conclusion	288
5 General Conclusions	289
Bibliography	291
Index of Sources	305
Author Index	331
Subject Index	336

Abbreviations

BD	Blass, F., and Debrunner, A., <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , ET 1961, CUP.
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CQR</i>	<i>Church Quarterly Review</i>
<i>EDNT</i>	Balz, H., and Schneider, G., edd., <i>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , ET 1990, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark.
ET	English Translation
<i>ETL</i>	<i>Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses</i>
<i>Exp.T.</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<i>HJ</i>	<i>Heythrop Journal</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JEH</i>	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i> (n.s. new series)
<i>MSR</i>	<i>Mélanges de Science Religieuse</i>
<i>NT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>RechBib</i>	<i>Recherches Bibliques</i>
<i>RHPR</i>	<i>Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses</i>
<i>RSR</i>	<i>Recherches de Science Religieuse</i>
S.-B.	Strack, H.L., and Billerbeck, P., <i>Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch</i> , 1924, München, C.H. Beck'sche Verlagbuchhandlung
<i>SBL</i>	<i>Society for Biblical Literature</i>
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
<i>TB</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>TDNT</i>	Kittel, G., and Friedrich, G., edd., <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , ET 1964-1976, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans.
<i>TLZ</i>	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZTK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 The Aim and Plan of the Book

The aim of this book is to investigate the sayings attributed to Jesus in the Fourth Gospel in which he refers to his 'works', 'work' or 'working'. Within this general area special attention will be given to the linkage these sayings have with the ministry of the historical Jesus, and, to a lesser extent, to their use in the patristic era. This is how the phrase 'historical perspective' in the title of this book is to be understood. There will be no sustained attempt here to try to extract from the Gospel information about the history of the Johannine 'community' from which the Gospel is believed to have emerged, such as has been attempted in recent years by scholars such as J.L. Martyn, R.E. Brown and R.A. Whiteacre.¹ Such an attempt would in any case be very precarious, given the relatively few verses with which this book will be mostly occupied. Rather, an attempt will be made to trace, on the basis of the group of verses specified above, a trajectory of understanding concerning Jesus as a doer of the works of God, stemming from Jesus himself, through the author of the Fourth Gospel, to the writers of the patristic period.

Following a brief survey of the relevant literature available on these sayings, the rest of this chapter will be devoted to some important introductory questions which relate to the Fourth Gospel as a whole. In this part we will deal with the issues of the Gospel's authorship, its relationship with the Synoptic Gospels, its possible sources, and the stages of development through which it may have passed. In the second chapter the question of the 'authenticity' of the recorded sayings of Jesus will be addressed, and a new model will be offered for the understanding of this concept which hopefully will more fully satisfy the data which lies before us in the Gospels. In the third chapter, the particular historical problems associated with the sayings attributed to Jesus in the Fourth Gospel will be addressed, and a case will be made for the possibility of finding 'authentic' material of various kinds among the Johannine sayings, both on the grounds of some general considerations, and more particularly through a

¹ J.L. Martyn (1968), R.E. Brown (1979), R.A. Whiteacre (1982).

consideration of the manner in which the author appears to have handled Old Testament quotations in the Gospel.

In chapters 4 to 9 we will take a detailed look at the sayings themselves, examining their possible connection with the original teaching of Jesus, their meaning within the context of the Fourth Gospel, and their use in the patristic era. In these chapters, our attention will be directed to the relatively small group of sayings which speak in terms of Jesus' 'works', 'work' or 'working': Jn.4.34, 5.17, 19f., 36, 9.3f., 10.25, 32, 37f., 14.10f., 15.24, and 17.4. Thus no attempt will be made to give detailed consideration to all the sayings of Jesus and others in the Gospel which refer to 'work' or 'works' of other kinds (as in 3.19-21, 6.27-30, 7.3, 7, 8.39, 41, 14.12), though most of these texts will be mentioned at various points in the book. Rather our plan will be to concentrate mainly on those sayings in which Jesus himself is represented as speaking explicitly about his own activities.

Finally, in chapter 10 we will conclude with a summary of the major findings obtained from the research conducted in the main body of the book.

1.2 A Survey of the Literature

A survey of literature on the issues of the authenticity of the sayings of Jesus in general and the authenticity of the sayings of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel in particular will be incorporated in chapters 2 and 3 respectively, when those subjects will be dealt with. Here, we will look specifically at the literature written in recent years on the use of the 'works' concept in the Fourth Gospel.

The main impression is one of the paucity of the literature available, which is one reason why this book is being written. So far as I am aware, only two major books have appeared specifically on this theme in recent years, those of J. Riedl² and F. Grob,³ written in German and French respectively. Riedl's treatment is exegetically very thorough, but he virtually ignores the question of the possible linkage between the 'works' sayings and the historical Jesus, and his exegesis is open to the criticism of importing post-Nicene understandings into the mind of the author. Grob's treatment is less thorough, contains questionable exegesis in a number of places, and again ignores the question of 'authenticity'. Neither of these authors delves in any kind of formal way into the post-Johannine use of the texts he handles.

² J. Riedl (1973).

³ F. Grob (1986).

Apart from these books, and the notes on the relevant verses in the commentaries, there are only articles and passages from larger works to be consulted. Five categories of material may be distinguished:

(1) Firstly, there are the special sections in the commentaries devoted to the subject of 'miracles' or 'signs' or 'signs and works'. C.K. Barrett,⁴ R.E. Brown,⁵ R. Schnackenburg,⁶ and L. Morris⁷ have sections of this kind. Since these sections are mostly taken up with a discussion of the word σημεῖον, comparatively little space is devoted to a discussion of the use of the word ἔργον, with the result that these sections are of only limited value as far as our research is concerned.

(2) Secondly, there are sections in books on larger topics. Noteworthy here are the works of W. Wilkens,⁸ S. Pancaro,⁹ E. Albrecht¹⁰ and R. Heiligenthal.¹¹ The section in Wilkens' book is again relatively brief, as against the very much larger proportion he devotes to the subject of σημεῖα in the Fourth Gospel, and his Bultmannian understanding of 'works' as another way of referring to 'words' is in any case highly questionable. Pancaro's treatment is angled in certain specific directions, such as the question whether Jesus broke the sabbath commandment or was guilty of blasphemy. A comprehensive analysis of the relevant texts is not attempted, though Pancaro's material on the Jewish background of the phrase 'doing the work (works) of God' is especially useful. Meanwhile Albrecht and Heiligenthal have short sections on some of the relevant texts, but both are concerned about the specific issue of behaviour as a form of 'witness', and both seek to cover the whole of the New Testament in their treatments, so the space they devote to the Fourth Gospel is understandably rather limited.

(3) Thirdly, there are articles in dictionaries and journals on the theme of 'works' or 'signs and works' in the Fourth Gospel. Among the various biblical and theological dictionaries, the article of G. Bertram in *TDNT* on the word ἔργον and its cognates is especially valuable,¹² but, as with all such articles which seek to give an overall picture of the biblical or New Testament view of the word, the amount of space devoted to the Fourth Gospel's distinctive usage is inevitably very brief. Otherwise, the articles of

⁴ C.K. Barrett (1978²) 75-78.

⁵ R.E. Brown (1966) 1.525-532.

⁶ R. Schnackenburg (ET 1968) 1.515-528.

⁷ L. Morris (1971) 684-691.

⁸ W. Wilkens (1969) 83-86.

⁹ S. Pancaro (1975) 9-22, 54-56, 63-76, 379-402.

¹⁰ E. Albrecht (1977) 133-157.

¹¹ R. Heiligenthal (1983) 72-92, 135-142.

¹² G. Bertram (1964) *TDNT* 2.635-650.

L. Cerfaux¹³ and M. de Jonge¹⁴ are noteworthy, but, as in case of the material noted under (1) and (2) above, the attempt to deal with both the word 'signs' and the word 'works' in one article means that both can only be given a relatively cursory treatment.

(4) Fourthly, there are the articles on specific verses among those to be examined in this book, and on passages in which they appear. Thus, for example, in the former class O. Cullmann¹⁵ and C. Maurer¹⁶ have written on Jn. 5.17, C.H. Dodd¹⁷ on Jn. 5.19f., and A. Vanhoye¹⁸ on Jn. 5.36 and 17.4. In the latter class we have useful articles from J. Giblet,¹⁹ J. Bligh,²⁰ A.C. Sundberg,²¹ J. Bernard,²² F. Gryglewicz,²³ and L.Th. Witkamp.²⁴ All these will be referred to in the course of the book. They are clearly helpful in clarifying individual points, but naturally fail to present an overall picture of the 'works' sayings in the Fourth Gospel, which is what will be attempted here.

(5) Finally, the 'works' sayings of the Fourth Gospel are sometimes discussed in connection with different theories concerning the sources the author may have used in the compilation of his Gospel, in view of the fact that the word usually occurs in discourses (always, if 3.19-21 is regarded as part of Jesus' speech), whereas the word 'sign' usually occurs in narrative sections of the Gospel. H.H. Wendt²⁵ and S. Temple²⁶ used this phenomenon to argue that the 'works' sayings belonged to a more primitive layer of the Gospel, whereas W. Nicol²⁷ and U.C. von Wahlde²⁸ argued that they belonged to a later layer. Both pairs of scholars may be wrong, as we shall see later in this chapter, but in both cases the treatment of the theological significance of these verses is very slight, and the question of ultimate 'authenticity', as opposed to 'a more primitive layer', is barely touched upon, except by Wendt, whose work is now very dated.

¹³ L. Cerfaux (1958) 131-138.

¹⁴ M. de Jonge (1978) 107-125.

¹⁵ O. Cullmann (1951) 187-191.

¹⁶ C. Maurer (1957) 130-140.

¹⁷ C.H. Dodd (1962) 107-115.

¹⁸ A. Vanhoye (1960) 377-419.

¹⁹ J. Giblet (1955) 49-59, (1965) 17-25.

²⁰ J. Bligh (1962) 329-346, (1963) 115-134, (1966) 129-144.

²¹ A.C. Sundberg (1970) 19-31.

²² J. Bernard (1977) 13-44, (1979) 3-55.

²³ F. Gryglewicz (1980) 5-17.

²⁴ L.Th. Witkamp (1985) 19-47.

²⁵ H.H. Wendt (1902) 60-66.

²⁶ S. Temple (1975) 44-50.

²⁷ W. Nicol (1972) 113-123.

²⁸ U.C. von Wahlde (1989) 36-41, 184-186.

In conclusion, we find a gap in scholarship which this book is designed to fill.²⁹ Scholars who discuss ‘authenticity’ questions do not discuss the ‘works’ sayings of the Fourth Gospel in that connection. Those who discuss the ‘works’ sayings of the Fourth Gospel do not pay enough attention to their ‘authenticity’, and none pays any attention to their post-Johannine use in the patristic era. Moreover, this book will advance a new understanding of the whole concept of ‘authenticity’, and reasons why this understanding is particularly appropriate to the Fourth Gospel. First, however, we must have a brief look at some important introductory questions.

1.3 The Authorship of the Fourth Gospel

As in the case of many issues to do with the Fourth Gospel today, there is no consensus on the question of the identity of its author. Nevertheless, there is a fairly widespread belief that the Gospel was written either by one who had eyewitness experience of the ministry of Jesus or by one who was associated with such an eyewitness. That this position is not only credible but likely may now be shown by a brief summary of the evidence.

1.3.1 The Internal Direct Evidence

There are three verses in the Gospel where some form of eyewitness testimony is claimed:

Firstly, there is Jn. 1.14. Scholars are agreed that the fact that the object of the verb ἐθεασάμεθα here is δόξαν implies that the kind of ‘seeing’ in mind at least includes a ‘seeing’ with faith, but does it also include a literal seeing? This issue cannot be decided on the basis of an appeal to the usage of the verb θεῶμαι itself,³⁰ but the context definitely suggests the latter: the

²⁹ Two further works not mentioned above are those of G. Delling (1966) and H. Schlier (1968, a collection of essays which includes one on ‘Le Révélateur et son oeuvre dans l’évangile de Saint Jean’). In both cases, however, the word ‘work’ used in their titles refers to the entire revealing, saving and judging work of Christ in the Fourth Gospel as a whole and not specifically to those verses in which a word for ‘work’ occurs. The amount of space devoted to these verses is therefore very small, and once again there is no attempt to link these verses with the historical Jesus.

³⁰ The secular usage of the verb included both seeing with the eyes and contemplating with the mind (cf. H.G. Liddell and R. Scott (1940⁹) 786), and, while in the New Testament the word seems to be always used in a literal sense (cf. G. Abbott-Smith (1981³) 203), we cannot be absolutely sure that the author of the Fourth Gospel is using the verb here in a different sense from those of his other verbs of seeing, e.g. ὁρῶ, βλέπω, and θεωρῶ, which can bear a purely spiritual meaning (cf. R. Bultmann (ET

two previous clauses, both using aorist tenses, refer to the historical event of the incarnation of the Word of God, so the clause which follows them, also using an aorist tense, most naturally refers to the contemporaneous historical event of the seeing of the glory of the incarnate Word of God. Such is also the most natural meaning of the language used in 1 Jn. 1.1-3. To say this, however, does not necessarily mean that the one who penned Jn. 1.14 had himself been an eyewitness (though this remains a possible interpretation), since the plural 'we' may refer to a Johannine community which included those who had participated only vicariously in the original eyewitness experience.³¹

Secondly, there is Jn. 19.35. Most scholars are agreed that the witness referred to here is the same person as the one elsewhere described as 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' (hereafter called the 'beloved disciple' according to current scholarly convention),³² and that he is also the ἑκείνους of this verse, who is said to know that he tells the truth.³³ It is less clear

1971) 69). As is commonly recognised, the author is fond of using synonyms and these verbs may provide another example of this phenomenon (cf. C.C. Tarrelli (1946) 175-177).

³¹ As R.E. Brown (1982) 160 comments on 1 Jn. 1.1-3. Some scholars believe that Jn. 1.14 implies that the writer includes himself among those who actually saw Jesus in the flesh. So B.F. Westcott (1908) 1.22, J.H. Bernard (1928) 1.21, R.C.H. Lenski (1943) 76f., R.H. Lightfoot (1956) 84f., D. Guthrie (1965) 217, J.Marsh (1968) 109-110, L. Morris (1971) 104, R. Schnackenburg (ET 1980) 1.270, M. Hengel (1989) 63, D.A. Carson (1991) 128. Others doubt this implication. So R. Bultmann (ET 1971) 69-70, W.G. Kümmel (ET 1975) 233, C.H.Dodd (1953 *Interpretation*) 167, C.K.Barrett (1978²) 143f., 166, B. Lindars (1972) 95, *TDNT* 5.345, G.R. Beasley-Murray (1987) 14. All are agreed, however, that the writer is associating himself in some sense with the original eyewitness experience.

³² The only other alternative suggested is the soldier mentioned in 19.34, whom J.R. Michaels (1967) 102-109 identified with the centurion who is referred to in Mk. 15.39 (B. Lindars (1972) 589 also considers this possible). While this is conceivable, it seems less likely in view of the close correspondence in thought between 19.35 and 21.24 where the beloved disciple is definitely in mind. The fact that he is described as taking Jesus' mother to his own home in 19.27 is not an insuperable barrier to this interpretation, since he may have done so after Jesus' death.

³³ R. Bultmann (ET 1971) 679 agrees to this also, though he regards the text as corrupt and believes that it originally ran καὶ ἐκεῖνον οἶδμεν ὅτι, though he can only claim Nonnos in support. A few commentators have suggested that it may refer to Christ in view of the fact that the same pronoun is used for him elsewhere in the Johannine writings (e.g. Jn. 3.28, 30, 7.11, 9.28, 1 Jn. 2.6, 3.3, 5, 7, 16). So E.C. Hoskyns (1947²) 2.638 and R.C.H. Lenski (1943) 1317. But there is nothing in the context of Jn. 19.35 to suggest that this is how the word should be taken here. The most natural understanding is therefore to take it to refer to the witness of Jesus' death. See C.K.Barrett (1978²) 557f. for other, even less probable, suggestions.

whether the same person wrote the verse itself,³⁴ but, whoever its author, the verse claims eyewitness testimony for at least one event in the Gospel's narrative, namely the manner of Jesus' death, and great stress is placed on the belief that this witness is true.

Thirdly, there is Jn. 21.24, where we have the clearest internal indication of all concerning the authorship of the Gospel. The verse states that the 'disciple who is bearing witness to these things' (i.e. the beloved disciple, as 21.20-23 makes clear) also 'wrote these things'. Whatever is meant by 'these things', it is unlikely that they include 21.24 itself, since the verse continues 'and we know that his testimony is true', which is most naturally taken to refer to another person or persons.³⁵ However it is likely that ταῦτα refers to the bulk of the Gospel, rather than to just part or all of ch.21,³⁶ and while the words ὁ γράψας ταῦτα may not necessarily imply that the subject of the verb actually penned the Gospel himself, as the cases

³⁴ Some regard it to be the work of the beloved disciple himself, whom they regard to be the author of virtually the whole Gospel. So B.F. Westcott (1908) liv-lvi, D. Guthrie (1965) 218, L. Morris (1971) 820, D.A. Carson (1991) 625f. Others regard it to be the work of the 'evangelist', i.e. the author of virtually the whole Gospel who is considered to be distinct from the beloved disciple. So J.H. Bernard (1928) 2.649f., C.K. Barrett (1978²) 118, G.R. Beasley-Murray (1987) 354. Others again regard it to be the work of a redactor who also added 21.24 and possibly other verses to the Gospel. So R. Bultmann (ET 1971) 678f., B. Lindars (1972) 589, J. Becker (1979) 2.600, R. Schnackenburg (ET 1982) 3.290, F.F. Bruce (1983) 376.

³⁵ Pace e.g. D. Guthrie (1965) 219, L. Morris (1971) 879, D.A. Carson (1991) 684. Scholars differ on exactly who the 'we' might refer to. It could be fellow Johannine disciples (so R.E. Brown (1966) 2.1124, F.F. Bruce (1983) 410), or members of the church in which the Gospel originated (so B. Lindars (1972) 641), or, more specifically, the church at Ephesus (so C.K. Barrett (1978²) 588), or the elders of the church at Ephesus (so J.H. Bernard (1928) 2.713, R.C.H. Lenski (1943) 1442), or, more generally, the phrase 'we know' could be the equivalent of saying 'as is well known' (so C.H. Dodd (1953 *JTS*)).

³⁶ Pace C.H. Dodd (1953 *JTS*), who thought it could apply to 21.22, 21.20-22, 21.15-22 or 21.1-22. While this is conceivable, it has been regarded as unacceptable by the vast majority of scholars, e.g. R.E. Brown (1966) 2.1124, L. Morris (1971) 880, B. Lindars (1972) 641, W.G. Kümmel (ET 1975) 236, E. Haenchen (1980) 602, R. Schnackenburg (ET 1982) 3.373, F.F. Bruce (1983) 409, J.A.T. Robinson (1985) 104, G.R. Beasley-Murray (1987) 414f., D.A. Carson (1991) 683. The verse recalls 20.30f. which clearly speaks about the main body of the Gospel (chs. 1-20); the beloved disciple appears in the main body of the Gospel as well as in ch. 21, so if he 'witnessed' and 'wrote' about the events of ch. 21 there is no reason for denying that the same applied to chs. 1-20; and anyway, if the person who wrote 21.24 wanted to inform his readers about the origin of stories contained in ch. 21, would he not have wanted to do the same for the rest of the Gospel? (Considerations from the style of ch. 21 in comparison with that of chs. 1-20 do not help us here. We cannot know for sure whether or not ch. 21 came from the same author as the one who wrote chs. 1-20 on stylistic grounds alone).

of Pilate and his agents (Jn. 19.19, 22) and Paul and Tertius (Rom. 15.15) make clear, the use of this word here is hardly compatible with the view that the actual penman was only remotely connected with the beloved disciple, or never knew him personally.³⁷ At the very least it would seem that the beloved disciple was the direct source of the testimony recorded in the Gospel and, if, as the present tense of μαρτυρῶν suggests, he was alive at the time of the writing of 21.24,³⁸ probably gave his 'imprimatur', so to speak, to what had been written.

The identity of the beloved disciple is, of course, a highly controverted question. An examination of the texts in which he appears in the Gospel (13.23-26, 19.26f., 20.2-10, 21.7, and 21.20-23) make unlikely the view that he is a purely symbolic figure.³⁹ He seems rather to have been a disciple

³⁷ Opinions differ as to how close such a person might have stood to the beloved disciple. For some he would have written at dictation. So J. Marsh (1968) 678, L. Morris (1971) 880, B. Lindars (1972) 641, O. Cullmann (ET 1976) 84, J.A.T. Robinson (1985) 105, D.A. Carson (1991) 685. For others a looser relationship is envisaged. Thus J.H. Bernard (1928) 2.713: the writer 'put into shape' the material he received. G. Schrenk, *TDNT* 1.743, suggests that 'the beloved disciple and his recollections stand behind this Gospel and are the occasion for its writing'. R.E. Brown (1966) 2.1123: the beloved disciple 'was the source of the historical tradition that has come into the gospel'; *ibid.* 1127: 'he has borne the witness echoed in the written gospel'. R. Schnackenburg (ET 1982) 3.373: the beloved disciple is 'a guarantor of the content of the written work'. G.R. Beasley-Murray (1987) 415: γράψας implies only 'spiritual responsibility'.

³⁸ J.H. Bernard (1928) 2.713, R.C.H. Lenski (1943) 1440, L. Morris (1971) 880, and J.A.T. Robinson (1985) 104f. believe that the word μαρτυρῶν implies this, whereas B.F. Westcott (1908) lvii, R.E. Brown (1966) 2.1123, R. Bultmann (ET 1971) 717, R. Schnackenburg (ET 1982) 3.372, and R. Kysar (1986) 321 think that the beloved disciple had died. The main argument for the latter view is that 21.20-23 seems to suggest that the beloved disciple had already died, but these verses are equally compatible with the view that he was approaching death or had outlived other contemporaries of Jesus. If this argument is set aside, we are left with the fact that the present participle μαρτυρῶν naturally points towards the supposition that he was still alive. We do not find μαρτυρήσας or μεμαρτυρηκώς here, and if the writer had meant to say that the disciple was witnessing even after his death *through* the written Gospel, why is ὁ μαρτυρῶν περὶ τούτων not placed after ὁ γράψας ταῦτα rather than before? Cf. R.C.H. Lenski (1943) 1440.

³⁹ E.g. the ideal disciple, or the ideal bearer of the apostolic witness, or of Gentile christianity, or, as in the case of A. Kragerud (1959), of Johannine prophetism. Cf. W.G. Kümmel (ET 1975) 238 n. 187 and the literature cited there. Also R. Schnackenburg (ET 1982) 3.376-380 for a critique of these views. These theories have not gained general consent. The details surrounding this figure are too specific. In particular, as J.J. Gunther (1981) 135 noted, misunderstandings do not normally surround the death of merely symbolic figures, and it is unlikely that the editor(s) would have appealed to the witness of one whom they intended to be understood as an imaginary person. This is not to say that the beloved disciple does not have 'paradigmatic significance', as K. Quast (1989)

who stood in a very close relationship to Jesus. The traditional view, of course, is that he was John the apostle.⁴⁰ Other suggestions in recent times have been John Mark,⁴¹ Lazarus,⁴² Jude,⁴³ Nathanael, Matthias, the rich young ruler,⁴⁴ and some unknown contemporary disciple of Jesus.⁴⁵ No judgment on this question will be offered here. The relevant point for our purposes is that, whoever he was, the beloved disciple was an *eyewitness* of the ministry of Jesus and is said in 21.24 to have 'written' (at least most of) the Gospel.

has argued, but it is to say that he is intended to be understood as being as real as any other character who appears in the Gospel's narratives.

⁴⁰ Cf. H.P.V. Nunn (1952), D. Guthrie (1965) 216-246, E.K. Lee (1966) 300, L. Morris (1969) ch. 4, S.S. Smalley (1978) 68-82, J.A.T. Robinson (1985) 93-122, J. Painter (1991) 63-73 and D.A. Carson (1991) 68-81, G.M. Burge (1992) 44f. *Themelios* 18.1, 1992, 35 announces a forthcoming book by J. Wenham which will defend this position again. P. Parker's (1962) 35-43 objections to it do not represent the last words on the subject.

⁴¹ This identification is supported by P. Parker (1960) 97-110, G.J. Paul (1965) 25-28, J. Marsh (1968) 24f. L. Johnson (1965-6) 157f. believes that John Mark was the host at the Last Supper (see D. Rogers (1965-6) 214 and L. Johnson (1965-6) 380 for the continuation of the debate). J.K. Thornecroft (1986-7) 135-139 believes that the beloved disciple was the host at the Last Supper and was a priest, but does not identify him with John Mark.

⁴² This identification is supported by F.V. Filson (1949) 83-88, J.N. Sanders (1954-5) 29-41, and J.N. Sanders and B.A. Mastin (1968) 31f.

⁴³ This identification is supported by J.J. Gunther (1981). Gunther regards him as a late believer, hence his late appearance in the Gospel. Being a brother of Jesus he would naturally have been given a special place at the Last Supper (*if* more than the Twelve were present) and would naturally have been entrusted with Mary. Gunther's further proposals that in fact Jude *was* one of the Twelve and should be identified with Judas 'not Iscariot' (14.22) assumes that the Twelve were formed at late stage in Jesus' ministry - an assumption which runs up against Jn. 6.67, 70 as well as the Synoptic evidence.

⁴⁴ Cf. D. Guthrie (1965) 223 for these last three names.

⁴⁵ Thus, for example, B. Lindars (1972) 34 proposes an unnamed member of the Twelve; O. Cullmann (ET 1976) proposes a Judaeon disciple of Jewish heterodox origins; and R.E. Brown (1979), R. Schnackenburg (ET 1982) 3.375-388 - both modifying their previously held view that the beloved disciple was probably to be regarded as John the apostle - E. Haenchen (1980) 603, and G.R. Beasley-Murray (1987) lxxiii propose a more indeterminate unknown disciple of Jesus during the time of his ministry. Mention should also be made of M. Hengel's (1989) distinctive view that the beloved disciple was for the editors John 'the Elder', while for John 'the Elder' himself, who, Hengel believes, was the real author, he was John the apostle. This view, apart from being rather speculative, rests, of course, on the uncertain supposition that Papias spoke about *two* Johns in the well-known passage from his 'Expositions' which Eusebius quotes (*H.E.* 3.39.3f.).

We must remember that this verse was part of the Gospel when it was originally published (?90-100 AD).⁴⁶ There is no manuscript evidence for it being a later addition. It is highly likely therefore that whoever wrote it knew the truth of the Gospel's origin. As a consequence what it says must be taken with the utmost seriousness.

1.3.2 The Internal Indirect Evidence

The case for the belief that the Fourth Gospel is substantially the work of an eyewitness of the ministry of Jesus on the basis of internal indirect evidence was classically presented in English-speaking scholarship by B.F. Westcott.⁴⁷ Westcott argued strongly that in view of the author's evident acquaintance with the Old Testament, Jewish opinions and observances, the semitic character of his language, his knowledge of Palestinian geography, the vivid detail of his narrative, and his apparent claim to have been within the circle of Jesus' closest followers, he must have been a Palestinian Jew who was an eyewitness of Jesus' ministry and was in fact the apostle John.

While not many today would agree with Westcott's belief in apostolic authorship, many are convinced that eyewitness testimony lies behind the Gospel on the basis of this internal indirect evidence.⁴⁸ Others are not so sure. C.K. Barrett, for example, while conceding that 'here and there behind the Johannine narrative there lies eyewitness material',⁴⁹ thinks that many of the details may either have come from a source, or have been known by a diaspora Jew, or may have been added at a later stage of the tradition after the manner of the apocryphal Gospels.⁵⁰ The first possibility presents no problem, so long as the 'source' in question itself contains eyewitness testimony. The difficulty here is determining what in the Fourth Gospel has

⁴⁶ This is the date assigned to the Gospel by the vast majority of scholars. For notable exceptions to this consensus, we may mention J.A.T. Robinson (1975) 254-284 and L. Morris (1978) 170-172 who assign it a date before 70 AD.

⁴⁷ B.F. Westcott (1908) 1.x-lui, though cf. the equally impressive case presented before Westcott's commentary was published by J.B. Lightfoot in his *Biblical Essays* (1893) 3-44, 125-198.

⁴⁸ Cf. e.g. W.C. van Unnik (1964) 61: 'Many things in this Gospel are suggestive of personal reminiscence'; W. Barclay (1956) 1.xx: 'apparently unimportant details ... are inexplicable unless they are the memories of a man who was there'; R.D. Potter (1959) 1.337: 'We have in this Gospel ... the narrative of a reliable witness, a Palestinian Jew'. So one might go on.

⁴⁹ C.K. Barrett (1978²) 123.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 119-123. For a yet more reserved judgement cf. R. Schnackenburg (ET 1980) 1.94: 'From the narrative passages of the gospel itself, no certain arguments can be drawn either for or against the author's being an eye-witness'.

Index of Sources

I. Old Testament

<i>Genesis</i>		31.14-17	173
1.1-2.3	126	31.14	173
2.2f.	173, 182, 183, 186	31.15	173
2.2	137	31.18	122
2.3	170	33.18	239
2.6f.	102, 126	34.7	104
3	284	34.10	204
4	284	34.21	173
		35.2	173
		40.33	137
<i>Exodus</i>			
4.1-9	231	<i>Leviticus</i>	
4.1	282	4	242
4.3	282	18.5	179
4.12	238	24.16	235
4.16	197		
5.13	137	<i>Numbers</i>	
7.1	197	3-8	279
8.19	122, 122	4.3	279
12.10	66, 67	4.23	279
12.46	66, 67	4.30	280
14.13	204	4.31	279
16.2	71	4.33	279
16.4	71, 72	4.35	279
16.15	71, 72	4.39	279
17.6	74	4.43	279
19.4	204	4.47	279
20.5	104	7.1	233
20.9-11	173	7.5	280
20.9	173	8.11	279f.
20.10	173	8.19	280
23.12	173	9.12	66
24.9-11	239	14.18	104
25.9	204	14.22	204
25.40	204	15.27-31	242
26.30	204		

16.28	206, 219	5	249
20.7-11	74	5.10	102
23.3	204		
35.30	77		
		<i>1 Chronicles</i>	
<i>Deuteronomy</i>		28.10	137
3.21	204		
3.24	204	<i>2 Chronicles</i>	
4.3	204	4.11	137
4.5	204	5.1	137
5.9	104	29.34	137
5.13	173		
5.14	173	<i>Nehemiah</i>	
8.3	137, 139, 148	6.16	137
9.10	122	9.15	71f., 74
11.7	204	9.19f.	74
13.1-5	231	13.19	189
17.7	77		
18.18	250	<i>Psalms</i>	
19.15	77	2.7	210
29.2f.	204	8.3	122
30.15f.	138	18.50	77
32.39	179	19.12f.	242
32.46f.	138	22	66
33.9	142	22.1	202
		22.15	80
<i>1 Samuel</i>		22.18	65
2.30	159	31.20	187
17.15	77	34	67
20.6	77	34.21	66f.
21.1-6	175	35.19	79
		40.8	137
<i>2 Samuel</i>		41.9	76
7.12-16	77	41.10	299
7.16	77	42.2	80
12.13	199	42.7	145
18.28	76	46.4	75
18.33	202	61.6f.	77
19.4	202	63.1	80
		63.5	137, 148
<i>1 Kings</i>		69	61, 80
7.22	137	69.2	145
7.40	137	69.3	80
		69.4	79
<i>2 Kings</i>		69.9	61
2.12	202	69.15	145
		69.21	80, 82

72.5	77	26.12	285
78.1-8	72	26.19	249
78.16	75	29.15-21	252
78.24	71f.	29.18f.	249
79.8	104	29.18	101, 124
82.6	75, 197	33.1	252
89.3f.	77	35.4	62
89.35-37	77	35.5f.	249
89.36	77	35.5	101, 124
90.17	285	35.6f.	75
103.21	137	38.19	202
104.23	115	40.3	69f., 299
105.40	71	40.9	62
105.41	75	41.10	62
109.3	79	41.13	62
109.14	104	41.18	75
110.4	77	42-43	124
114.8	75	42.7	101, 124
118.25f.	78	42.19	124
118.25	78	43.1	62, 124
118.26	78	43.5	62
119.161	79	43.7	124
124.1f.	202	43.9-13	228
132.11	77	43.10	124
143.10	137	43.12	124
		43.19f.	75
<i>Proverbs</i>		44.2	62
8.22	258	44.3	75
9.5	137, 148	44.7-11	228
18.4	75	44.18	65
		44.28	137
<i>Song of Solomon</i>		48.14	137
4.15	75	49.10	75
		51.7	62
<i>Isaiah</i>		53.1	63
5.11-17	252	54.4	62
6.1	239	54.13	71-73, 82, 211
6.3	186	54.15	73, 82
6.8	250	55.1f.	137, 148
6.10	64f., 299	55.1	75
9.6f.	77	58.11	75
11.1	77	61.1	123, 246, 249-250
11.9	211	65.6f.	104
11.10	77		
12.3	75	<i>Jeremiah</i>	
14.13-15	252	1.5-7	123
21.4	145	1.6	250
		2.13	75

17.13	75	<i>Joel</i>	
17.21	189	3.18	75
23.5	77		
23.24	186	<i>Amos</i>	
24.1	204	7.1	204
31.3	73	7.4	204
31.31	73	7.7	204
31.33	73		
31.34	73, 211	<i>Obadiah</i>	
46.27f.	62	18	282
48	285		
48.10	282, 285, 289	<i>Micah</i>	
50.25	187, 285	2.1-5	252
<i>Ezekiel</i>		5.2	77
3.5	250		
11.25	204	<i>Habakkuk</i>	
18.4	179	2.9-11	252
18.9	179	2.14	211
18.20	279		
18.27f.	179	<i>Zephaniah</i>	
18.27	179	3.14f.	62
20.11	179	3.15	78
34.1ff	232	3.16	62
37.16ff	232		
37.25	77	<i>Zechariah</i>	
40.4	204	1.9	204
47.1-12	75	9.9	62, 78
<i>Daniel</i>		12.10	67
5.23	159	13.1	75
7.14	77	14.8	75
<i>Hosea</i>			
2.20	211		

II. New Testament

Matthew

3.3	69	10.17f.	54
3.9	217	10.19f.	54
3.11	247	10.23-39	241
3.17	210	10.24	53
4.1-11	245	10.26	106, 209
4.3f.	139	10.34-37	142
4.4	116	10.40	53, 109f., 144, 245
4.19	92	11.1-19	251
5-7	36f.	11.2-6	176, 246, 255
5	189	11.2	92, 124, 246, 251
5.3	246, 249f.	11.3	246
5.11	241	11.4-6	248
5.15	203	11.4f.	124, 250, 256
5.16	91, 158, 255	11.4	246-249
5.45	172	11.5f.	120, 246f.
6.2	158	11.5	124, 248
6.9	156	11.6	248
6.10	139, 143	11.11	120
6.13	156	11.12	120, 187
6.26	172	11.19	91, 251
6.30	172	11.20-24	251, 255
7.3-5	140	11.20	94
7.16-20	255	11.21-23	253
7.21f.	202	11.21f.	252f.
7.21	139, 143	11.21	93f., 251f.
7.22	93	11.22	253
7.23	92	11.23f.	252, 253
8.21f.	142	11.23	93f., 251, 252
8.27	216	11.25-30	291, 297
9.1-8	199	11.25-27	106, 295
9.2	199	11.25f.	208
9.3	199	11.25	156, 207, 209
9.15	245	11.27	56, 205, 207-212, 219, 245, 264, 295
9.27-31	101	11.28	190
9.27	101	12.3f.	173f.
9.28	92	12.5	174
9.33	216, 261	12.9-14	199
9.37f.	53, 120	12.11	174, 179
9.37	92	12.12	92, 173, 177
9.38	92	12.14	199
10	49, 113	12.18	122
10.5f.	131	12.22-30	118
10.10	92	12.22f.	101
10.15	253	12.26	122
10.17-22	241	12.27f.	118, 140

12.27	119f.	21.21	288
12.28	107, 118f., 122, 125, 246, 254, 294	21.24	92
12.31f.	122	21.27	92
12.33-35	255	21.28	92
12.39	93	21.31	139
12.41f.	120	21.33-46	207, 245
12.43	203	21.37	210, 245
12.46-50	139, 245	21.42	175
12.50	143	22.22	216
13	35-37	22.23-33	175
13.11	210	22.29	93
13.16f.	120, 249	22.41-46	175f.
13.55	203	23.1-12	255
13.58	94	23.3	91
15.1-8	175	23.5	91
15.10-20	255	23.24	203
15.24	109, 131, 144, 245	23.37	109, 144, 233, 245
15.30f.	101	24.24	90, 93
15.31	216	24.29	93
16.3	93	24.30	93
16.4	93	24.36	207, 210, 245
16.8-12	254	25.15	93
16.12	133	25.16	92
16.16	210	25.40	142
16.17	106, 209	25.46	53
16.21	245	26.10	91f.
16.24f.	241	26.18	92
17.22f.	245	26.24	245
17.27	113	26.28	211
18.12-14	53	26.31	245
18.14	139, 143	26.39	245
18.18	54	26.42	139, 143
18.35	93	26.54	115, 144, 245
19.4	93	26.62-67	200
19.12	101	26.63	200
19.26	246	26.64	93
20.1	92	27.14	216
20.2	92	27.34	61
20.8	92	27.48	61
20.18f.	245	28.19	30f., 210
20.28	245		
20.30	101	<i>Mark</i>	
20.32	92	1.2	69
21.5	62	1.7	247
21.9	77	1.11	210
21.14	101	1.16	101
21.20	216	1.17	55, 92
		1.35	156

1.38	109	8.17-21	211, 254
2.1-12	166, 199	8.22-26	101
2.5	104, 166, 168, 199	8.29	210
2.7	199	8.31	115f., 144, 245
2.9	166	8.34f.	241
2.14	101	8.34	143
2.18	177	8.38	143
2.20	245	9.1	93
2.23-3.6	167	9.23	116, 246
2.23-28	169, 189, 297	9.31	116, 245
2.23f.	174f.	9.37	53, 109f., 144, 245
2.25f.	173f., 177	9.39	92f.
2.27	300	9.40	113
2.28	178	10.6	93
3.1-6	103, 125, 166, 169, 177, 199	10.15	53
3.4	92, 173, 177	10.18	140
3.6	190, 199	10.27	246
3.20	292	10.29f.	55, 142
3.21	140, 292	10.33f.	116, 245
3.22-27	118	10.36	92
3.27	203	10.38f.	146
3.31-35	139f., 245, 292	10.38	144-146
3.33f.	140	10.45	116, 245
3.34f.	141	10.46-52	101
3.35	116, 139, 141-143	10.51	92
4.1-20	133, 298	11.3	233
4.11	210	11.9f.	77
4.20	143	11.17	140
4.21	203	11.29	92
4.22	106	11.33	92
4.30	113	12.1-12	207, 245
5.19	93	12.10f.	175
5.20	216	12.17	216
5.30	94	12.18-27	175
6.3	203	12.24	93
6.4	53	12.35-37	175f.
6.5	94	12.37-40	255
6.46	156	13.9-13	241
7.1-23	299	13.9	54
7.1-13	175	13.11	54
7.5	177	13.22	90, 92f.
7.14-23	133, 255, 298	13.25f.	93
7.33	101	13.32	56, 207, 210, 245
7.37	216	13.34	91
8.12	93, 140	14.6	91f.
8.14-21	133, 298	14.13-15	233
8.15	133, 138	14.18	76
		14.21	116, 245

14.24	211	7.18-23	246, 255
14.27	54, 116, 245	7.18f.	246
14.32-42	155	7.18	246
14.35f.	53	7.19	246
14.36	116, 158, 245	7.21f.	101
14.49	106	7.21	246
14.58	119	7.22f.	120, 246f.
14.60-65	200	7.22	124, 246-249, 250, 256
14.61	200	7.23	248
14.62	93	7.28	120
14.64	200	8.10	210
15.5	216	8.16	203
15.34	202	8.19-21	139, 245
15.39	6	8.24	202
16.17	93	8.25	216
<i>Luke</i>		8.39	93
2.35	210	8.46	93
2.49	115, 144, 245	9.1	94
3.4	69	9.18	156
3.8	217	9.20	211
3.16	144, 247	9.22	245
3.20	246	9.23f.	241
3.21	156	9.28	156
3.22	210	9.43	216
4.1-13	245	9.44	245
4.14	94	9.48	245
4.18-21	246, 249f.	9.51-10.24	299
4.18	109, 144, 245	9.51-56	131
4.21	109, 144, 245	9.51	156
4.22	216	10	113
4.43	109, 115, 144, 245	10.1-16	251
5.16	156	10.2	92, 120
5.17-26	199	10.7	92
5.17	94	10.12-15	251, 255
5.20	199	10.12	253
5.21	199	10.13-15	253
5.35	245	10.13f.	252
6.6-11	199	10.13	93f., 252
6.3f.	173f.	10.15	252
6.9	173, 177	10.16	53, 109f., 245
6.12	156	10.17-20	251
6.19	94	10.19	93
6.20	246, 249f.	10.21f.	210, 295
6.22	241	10.21	207f., 210
6.40	54, 203	10.22	205, 207, 219, 245
6.43-45	255	10.23f.	120, 249
7.11-17	103, 166	10.41	202
		11.1	156

11.2	185	18.31-33	245
11.14-23	118	18.41	92
11.14	216	19.37	94
11.19f.	118	19.38	77
11.19	119f.	20.8	92
11.20	107, 118f., 122, 125, 246, 254, 294	20.9-19	207, 245
11.21f.	203	20.13	210, 245
11.29	93	20.17	175
11.30	93	20.26	216
11.31f.	120	20.27-40	175
11.38	216	20.41-44	175f.
11.40	93	20.42	122
11.48	91	20.45-47	255
12.2-9	241	21.11	93
12.2	106, 210	21.12-17	241
12.47f.	203, 255	21.25	93
12.47	139	21.26f.	93
12.49-53	146f.	22.20	211
12.49-51	147	22.22	245
12.49	144	22.24-27	53
12.50	144, 146, 245	22.27	140
12.51-53	241	22.31	202
12.51	140	22.32	156
12.58	92	22.37	115, 144, 245
13.1-5	104	22.42	156, 245
13.10-17	103, 125, 166f., 169	22.67-70	200
13.13	173	22.69	93
13.14	92	22.70	200
13.15	174	23.25	139
13.24	55	23.34	156
13.27	92	23.46	156
13.32	144, 245	24.7	115, 144, 245
13.33	115, 144, 245	24.19	92
13.34	202, 245	24.26	115, 144, 245
14.1-6	103, 125, 166f., 169, 179	24.41	216
14.5	174, 179	24.44	115, 144, 245
14.25-27	241	24.49	93
15.3-7	53		
16.16	120	<i>John</i>	
17.11-19	102	1-20	7
17.20f.	120	1.1-18	126
17.25	115, 144, 245	1.1-3	126
17.30	106, 210	1.1	59, 83, 191, 198, 269
17.33	241	1.3	191, 270
18.7	93	1.4	104
18.8	93	1.5	104
18.27	246	1.6	123, 250
		1.7f.	228

1.7	104	3.14f.	59
1.8	104, 106	3.16-21	89, 96
1.9	12, 104	3.16	213
1.14	5f., 150, 158, 160	3.17	108, 126, 213
1.15	228	3.18-21	126, 222
1.18	213, 269	3.18	213
1.19-28	69	3.19-21	2, 4, 278
1.19	228, 275	3.19	89, 104, 287
1.20	60	3.20f.	287
1.23	59, 69, 81f., 299	3.20	89, 104, 287
1.24	274	3.21	89, 104, 106, 286f.
1.27	247	3.25	273
1.29	66, 75, 153, 214	3.26	228
1.31	106	3.28	6, 60, 123, 250
1.32	60, 228	3.29	203
1.33	123, 250	3.30	6
1.34	60, 228	3.32	214, 221, 228
1.35-50	17	3.34	221
1.35-40	22	3.35	160, 213
1.36	66, 75	3.36	213
1.41	197	4	17, 131, 150, 152f.
1.49	276	4.1-42	130, 134, 151
1.50	60	4.1-26	131
1.51	59	4.1-9	132
2.4	59	4.1	132, 274
2.5	59	4.3	130, 132
2.6	125, 168	4.4-7	132
2.10	187	4.5-9	132
2.11	90, 106, 158, 274	4.5-7	132
2.12	160	4.5	132
2.13-22	60	4.6f.	150
2.13	130	4.6	130, 132
2.16	234	4.7-26	130, 133
2.17	59-61, 68, 79f.	4.7	132
2.18	90, 214, 273f., 276	4.8	130f.
2.19	234	4.9-18	132
2.20	274	4.9	130, 132
2.21	75	4.10-21	132
2.22	60	4.10-14	148
2.23-25	90	4.14	80
2.23	17, 90, 273f.	4.16-19	132
3	104	4.17	60
3.1f.	273f.	4.18	153
3.2	90, 118, 238	4.19-29	152
3.3	53	4.19	130
3.11	60, 113, 202, 214, 221, 228	4.20-26	132
3.13	126, 221	4.20	60
		4.23	132

4.24-26	132	5.1	165
4.25-30	132	5.2-15	167, 169f.
4.25f.	132	5.2-9	167-169
4.26	234	5.2-4	165
4.27-30	132	5.2	165
4.27	132, 134	5.3	165
4.28-35	132	5.4	165
4.28-30	132	5.5	165
4.28f.	131	5.6	165
4.29	130	5.7	165
4.30	152	5.8	165, 173
4.31-38	130, 132	5.9-18	164, 169
4.31-34	130, 132-136, 140, 149, 151f., 163	5.9-16	166
4.31	135	5.9-15	168
4.32f.	134	5.9-14	167
4.32	135	5.9	165f., 168
4.33	132, 135	5.10-20	274
4.34	2, 85, 89, 97, 108, 116, 130, 134-136, 138f., 144, 147-149, 151-153, 159- 163, 195, 221, 229, 236, 245, 266f., 269, 275, 278, 281f.	5.10-18	274
4.35-38	113, 152	5.10-13	167
4.35	53, 60, 140	5.10ff.	189
4.36-38	152	5.12	167
4.37	60	5.14	104, 166-169
4.39-42	132	5.15	60, 167, 170
4.39	60, 132, 228	5.16-30	296
4.40-42	132	5.16-18	125
4.40	132	5.16	167-169, 173, 189f., 196
4.42	60, 130-132	5.17-30	302
4.44	53, 60, 197,	5.17-23	236
4.45	17	5.17	2, 4, 87, 89, 97, 138, 164, 167, 169f., 172f., 182- 184, 186-188, 190-198, 221, 222-224, 236, 245, 266f., 269, 278, 291, 294, 299
4.48	90, 274	5.18	173, 186, 189f., 196-200, 219-20
4.50	164	5.19-47	196, 257
4.51	60, 164	5.19-30	55, 164, 186, 191, 228, 295
4.52	60	5.19-29	169
4.53	164	5.19ff.	154, 198
4.54	17, 90, 274	5.19f.	2, 4, 97, 164, 183, 191, 195f., 201-207, 212, 214- 221, 222, 224f., 229, 236, 245, 266f., 269, 278, 284
5	23, 49, 125, 128, 153, 164, 169, 191, 193, 228, 230, 234, 244, 270	5.19	118, 169, 196f., 206, 222-225
5.1-18	190, 303	5.20-29	218
5.1-17	196		
5.1-15	196		
5.1-9	164f., 169, 221, 228		

5.20-22	229	6.27	89, 149, 281
5.20ff.	220	6.28f.	291, 303
5.20	89, 195, 203, 214-216, 222, 225	6.28	89, 281
5.21-25	216	6.29	89, 108, 130, 281
5.21ff.	215f., 221f.	6.30	89f., 274
5.21f.	215	6.31f.	71
5.21	203, 213	6.31	59, 71f., 81f., 299
5.22-30	126	6.32	71f., 202
5.22	160, 203, 213	6.35-58	148
5.23	108, 203, 213, 243	6.36	60, 243
5.24	60, 108, 237	6.38-40	153
5.25	60	6.38f.	126
5.26-29	216	6.38	108, 195, 198, 221
5.26	160, 203, 213	6.39	108, 160
5.27	160, 195	6.40	213
5.28	222	6.41	71, 274
5.29	53	6.42	60
5.30	108, 118, 195, 198, 216, 218, 221	6.43	71
5.31-47	164, 228, 292	6.44	73, 108
5.31-40	257, 303	6.45	59, 71-73, 81f.
5.31-33	11	6.46	214
5.31	20, 228f.	6.47	202
5.32	228f.	6.51	153
5.33-35	229	6.52	274
5.33	228	6.53	202
5.34	229	6.55	149
5.35	104	6.57	108
5.36-38	109	6.59	125, 168
5.36	2, 4, 60, 89, 97, 108, 116, 160, 195, 227-232, 234, 236, 240, 244f., 250, 256-258, 261, 269	6.62	126
5.37f.	229	6.65	60
5.37	108, 228	6.67	9
5.38	108, 237	6.70	9
5.39f.	229	7-10	232
5.39	228, 234	7	98
5.43	197	7.1-21	274
5.45	220	7.1ff.	98
6	12, 23, 49, 149, 152, 164	7.3f.	229
6.1-21	17	7.3	2, 89, 103, 239
6.1-14	49	7.4	106
6.2	90, 274	7.5	89, 140
6.14	60, 90, 236, 274	7.7	2, 60, 89, 278
6.26	90, 93, 274	7.11	6
6.27-30	2	7.12	60
		7.14-24	164
		7.16-18	213
		7.16f.	83
		7.16	221
		7.17f.	221

7.18	11, 108, 160, 197	8.38	214, 221
7.21	89, 130, 222, 229, 239	8.39-41	236
7.22f.	174	8.39	2, 89, 278, 283
7.23	167, 170, 189	8.40	11, 283f.
7.24	59	8.41	2, 89, 278, 283f.
7.25-27	273	8.42	108, 213, 221
7.28	108, 204, 213, 221	8.44-46	11
7.29	108	8.44	283f.
7.31f.	273-275	8.45f.	284
7.31	90, 236, 242, 255	8.48	60, 274
7.32	275	8.52	274
7.33-39	275	8.54	60, 160
7.33f.	117	8.55	60
7.33	108, 275	8.56	234, 283
7.35	274f.	8.57	274
7.37-39	80, 148	8.58	126, 234
7.37	74, 99	8.59	98f.
7.38	59, 73, 81f.	9	98-100, 103, 105, 123,
7.39	158, 160		153, 167, 270
7.42	60, 77, 79, 81	9.1-10.21	98, 100
7.45	274	9.1-12	113
7.47	274	9.1-7	98, 100f.
7.48	274	9.1-3	100
7.51	236	9.1ff.	98
8	98f.	9.1	99-101, 103
8.12	104, 115, 125	9.2-5	98
8.13-20	164	9.2f.	100, 103f., 168
8.13f.	11	9.2	100, 104, 107
8.13	274	9.3f.	2, 85, 97f., 100, 103,
8.14	20, 228		105-108, 116, 118, 122f.,
8.15	20		125, 126-129, 154, 245,
8.16	20, 108, 126		275, 278
8.17	60, 77, 79, 81, 228	9.3	89, 100, 104, 106f., 114,
8.18	108, 228		118, 127f.
8.21	117	9.4f.	115, 117, 126
8.22	274	9.4	89, 104-108, 110f., 114-
8.24	60, 234		118, 123f., 126-129, 136,
8.26	11, 108, 221		138, 150, 162, 187f., 195,
8.28f.	195, 198		221, 229, 236, 245, 266,
8.28	83, 204, 213, 221, 239		269, 282
8.29	108, 116	9.5	101, 104f., 115, 123, 125
8.31	274	9.6-21	100
8.32	11	9.6-17	100
8.33	60	9.6	100-103, 125f.
8.34	60	9.7	99-101, 103, 214
8.35	203	9.8-41	101
8.36	213	9.8	99f.
8.37	283f.	9.9	60

9.11	60, 99	10.30	198, 232, 235
9.13-16	274	10.32-38	258
9.14	99f., 125	10.32f.	233
9.15	214	10.32	2, 89, 97, 116, 130, 154, 214, 227, 232-236, 238, 240, 244f., 258, 261
9.16f.	100		
9.16	90, 118	10.33	89, 232, 235
9.17	60	10.34-36	232f., 236
9.18	274	10.34	59f., 75, 81
9.19	60, 214	10.36	60, 108, 232f.
9.21	214	10.37f.	2, 97, 116, 195, 227, 232-234, 236, 238-240, 244f., 259, 261f., 278f., 281, 284, 288, 289
9.22	100, 274		
9.23	60	10.37	89, 154, 240, 244, 261
9.24-34	100	10.38	89, 237, 240, 242, 244, 257, 259, 270, 287, 289
9.24-28	100		
9.25	214, 236	10.40-42	90
9.28	6, 220	10.41	11, 60, 90, 274
9.31-38	100	11.1-16	113
9.32	242, 255, 261	11.4	107, 160
9.33	118	11.5	301
9.35-41	125	11.8	274
9.35-38	100	11.9	104, 214
9.35-37	234	11.10	104
9.39-41	126, 222	11.11-14	275
9.39	59, 101, 214	11.19	273
9.40	274	11.22	116
9.41	60, 214, 243	11.25	55
10	99, 244	11.31	273
10.1-18	233	11.33	273
10.1-16	53	11.36	273
10.1-5	203	11.40	60, 160
10.7	60, 202	11.41f.	116
10.9	55	11.42	108
10.11	153	11.45	236, 273
10.15	153	11.46f.	274
10.16	59, 288	11.47	90
10.17	214	11.49	274
10.18	221	11.50-52	153
10.19	274	11.50	65
10.21	99, 118, 236	11.51	60, 274
10.22-39	98, 232, 295	11.52	106
10.23ff.	232	11.54	273
10.24-38	274	11.57	274
10.24	232-234	12.1-8	91
10.25-39	231	12.9	273
10.25	2, 89, 97, 116, 195, 227f., 232-234, 236, 238, 240, 244f., 258, 261	12.10	274
10.27-29	232f.		

12.11	236, 273	13.23	155
12.12ff.	302	13.30	125, 154, 168
12.13	59, 77f., 81f.	13.31-38	154
12.14	62	13.31	118, 154, 160
12.15	59, 61, 68-70, 78, 82	13.32	118
12.16	60, 77f., 158, 160	13.33	60, 117, 274
12.17	228	14	154, 238, 244
12.18f.	274	14.2	60
12.18	90	14.5	154
12.20-22	273	14.6	11, 55
12.23	118, 160	14.7	212
12.27	53, 59	14.8-11	231
12.28	118, 160	14.8	154, 214, 238
12.34	60, 77, 79, 81	14.9	214, 239, 243
12.35f.	115, 117, 125	14.10f.	2, 97, 227, 236, 239-241, 259, 261f., 270, 288
12.35	104, 203	14.10	83, 89, 106, 116, 154, 195, 198, 204, 213, 221, 230, 235, 238-241, 244f., 260, 270
12.36-50	63	14.11	89, 239f., 242, 244f., 257, 275
12.36	104	14.12-14	195, 287
12.37-43	90, 274	14.12	2, 89, 117, 275, 288
12.37	64, 90	14.13f.	221, 270, 288
12.38	59, 63, 66, 68f., 75	14.13	213
12.40	59, 63, 68-70, 82, 243, 299	14.16f.	154, 288
12.41	158	14.19	117
12.43	60, 158	14.22	9, 154
12.44f.	53	14.24	83, 108, 221
12.44	108	14.26	54, 288
12.45	108	14.31	106, 154, 160, 195, 198, 221
12.46	104, 115, 125	15-17	154f.
12.47f.	222	15-16	154
12.47	126	15.4f.	237
12.48	126	15.5	288
12.49f.	83	15.8	160
12.49	108, 160, 198, 204, 213, 221	15.9	214
12.50	221	15.10	221
13-17	154	15.13	153
13.1-31	154	15.14	141
13.3	160	15.18-16.4	241, 256, 298
13.4f.	53	15.18-25	78
13.11	60	15.18-21	256
13.12-17	53	15.21	108, 243
13.16	53, 108	15.22-25	241, 256
13.18	59, 75, 81f., 106, 299	15.22	239, 241f., 244
13.20	108, 110, 243		
13.21	60		
13.22	214		
13.23-26	8		

15.23	241, 243	17.22	160
15.24	2, 89, 97, 195, 227, 231, 239, 241f., 244, 254f., 260, 275	17.23	108, 214, 237
15.25	60, 78, 80f., 106, 241	17.24	156, 160, 214, 221
15.26-16.2	256	17.25	108, 156
15.26f.	288	17.26	156, 214, 237
15.26	54, 228, 270	18	275
15.27	228	18.1-3	275
16.1-4	54	18.1ff.	154
16.3	243	18.1	154
16.5	108	18.3	274
16.7-15	288	18.7	275
16.7	11, 288	18.8	60, 275
16.8	242	18.9	60
16.14	160	18.10	274f.
16.15	60	18.11	80, 149, 275
16.16	117	18.12	274
16.20	60	18.13	274
16.22	59	18.14	60, 65, 153, 274
16.24	187	18.15	274
16.26	60	18.16	274
16.32	54	18.19-24	275
17	154-156, 159	18.19	274
17.1-6	191	18.22	274
17.1-5	155-157	18.24	274
17.1	156f., 160, 213	18.26	274
17.2-4	157	18.28-35	275
17.2	157, 160	18.28f.	273
17.3f.	162	18.28	66, 125, 168
17.3	108, 152, 157, 212, 221	18.29	276
17.4	2, 4, 89, 97, 116, 130, 150, 152, 154, 157-163, 195, 229-231, 236, 275	18.30-32	275
17.5	118, 126, 156, 160	18.30ff.	275
17.6-26	155	18.30f.	275
17.6	106, 156	18.31	274f.
17.7f.	116	18.32	275
17.8	83, 108	18.33-19.6	276
17.10	160	18.33-35	273, 275
17.11	156, 160	18.33	275f.
17.12	156	18.35	274-276
17.15	156	18.36-38	276
17.17	11	18.36	274, 276
17.18	108f.	18.37	11, 60
17.19	11, 155	18.38	274, 276
17.21f.	260	19.1	276
17.21	108, 156, 237	19.4	276
		19.6-12	276
		19.6	274, 276
		19.7	274, 276
		19.9	276

19.12	274, 276	21.20-24	155
19.13	276	21.20-23	7f.
19.14f.	276	21.20-22	7
19.14	66, 125, 168, 274, 276	21.20	214
19.15	274, 276	21.22	7
19.19	8	21.23	60
19.21	60, 274	21.24	6-9, 11, 24, 228, 294
19.22	8		
19.24	59, 65, 67-69, 75	<i>Acts</i>	
19.26f.	8	1.6	211
19.27	6, 197	1.14	140
19.28	59, 67, 79-82	1.20	61
19.29	66, 80	3.2	99, 101
19.30	79, 153, 231	4.13	222
19.31-34	66	7.58	235
19.31	274	8.4-25	131
19.34	6, 67	8.7	120
19.35	6, 11, 228	9.4	202
19.36f.	66	12.17	140
19.36	59, 66-68, 82	14.8	101
19.37	59, 67-69	15.13-21	140
19.38	274	16.16-18	120
20-21	17	21.18	140
20.1	214		
20.2-10	8	<i>Romans</i>	
20.5	214	6.3f.	146
20.9	60	8.15	185
20.14	125, 168	8.29	143
20.18	60	11.9f.	61
20.19	274	15.3	61
20.20	214	15.15	8
20.21-23	288	15.18	286
20.21	90, 108f.		
20.23	54	<i>1 Corinthians</i>	
20.28	83, 191, 198, 269	4.13	187
20.30f.	7, 90, 277	8.7	187
20.30	18f., 90, 274	10.4	75
20.31f.	17	12.6	286
20.31	126, 276	12.11	286
21	7	15.6	187
21.1-22	7	15.10	286
21.1-14	17	15.58	280, 285
21.1	106	16.10	285, 289
21.7	8		
21.9	214		
21.14	106		
21.15-22	7		
21.19	158		

<i>2 Corinthians</i>		1.2	106
5.16	212	1.5	104
9.13	159	1.7	104
		2.3	212
		2.6	6
<i>Galatians</i>		2.8	104
1.19	140	2.9	187
2.8	286	2.19	106
2.9	140	2.25	157
2.12	140	2.28	106
3.5	286	3.2	106
4.6	185	3.3	6
		3.5	6, 106
<i>Ephesians</i>		3.7	6
1.11	286	3.8	89, 106
1.20	286	3.12	89
3.20	286	3.16	6
		3.18	89
		3.24	237
<i>Philippians</i>		4.9	106
2.12f.	286	4.15f.	237
3.10	212	5.20	157
<i>Colossians</i>		<i>2 John</i>	
1.29	286	8	89
2.12	146	11	89
<i>2 Thessalonians</i>		<i>3 John</i>	
2.4	198	5	89
		10	89
<i>2 Timothy</i>		<i>Revelation</i>	
1.12	212	1.7	68
4.5	283	2.26	280
<i>Hebrews</i>		11.5	61
2.11	143	12.4	61
		20.9	61
<i>1 John</i>			
1.1-3	6		

III. Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

1 Baruch

2.9 280

2 Baruch

57.2 280

Ecclesiasticus

2.6 70

7.25 137

24.21 137, 148

37.15 70

38.8 137

38.27 137

49.9 70

50.19 137

1 Enoch

49.1 77

62.14 77

3 Enoch

8.1 148

1 Esdras

8.16 137

9.9 137, 159

7.9 280

7.15 280

4 Esdras

7.24 280

Judith

8.34 137

1 Maccabees

2.32ff. 178

4.7 73

4.51 137

2 Maccabees

1.3 137

9.12 198

9.28 198

4 Maccabees

18.16 137

Psalms of Solomon

6.3 285

7.1 79

16.9 285

17.4 77

Sibylline Oracles

3.49f. 77

3.767 77

Testament of Levi

19.1 280

Wisdom

7.25f. 223

16.20 71

IV. Qumran Writings

<i>CD</i>		<i>IQS</i>	
1.1	87	1-9	142
2.14f.	291	4.4	87
2.14	87	8.14	69
13.7	87	9.13	137
<i>IQH</i>		9.20	69
		9.23	137
5.36	87		

V. Hellenistic-Jewish Literature

<i>Josephus</i>		1.49	198
Jewish War		1.97	137, 148
2.120-158	142	Opif.	
		158	137, 147
<i>Philo</i>		Sacr. Abel et Cain	
Cher.		86	137, 147
87	186	Vita Mosis	
Leg. Alleg.		2.69	137, 147
1.5f.	186		

VI. Rabbinic Literature

<i>Aboth</i>		54.1	148
1.6	135	70.5	148
5.19	282		
		<i>Kethuboth</i>	
<i>A.Z.</i>		2.9	228
10b	282		
		<i>Qoh.R.</i>	
<i>p.Bik.</i>		2.24	137, 148
3.65d.22	282		
		<i>TB Sabb.</i>	
<i>Cant.R.</i>		120a	148
1.4	148		
		<i>Sanh.</i>	
<i>Ex.R.</i>		7.5	199
3 (69d)	282		
30.9	186		
		<i>Shab.</i>	
<i>Gen.R.</i>		10.5	189
11.10	187		
		<i>S.Nu.</i>	
		5.15.8 (4a)	282

VII. Early Christian and Patristic Authors

Alexander of Alexandria

Catholic Epistle
259

Ambrose

Duties of the Clergy
1.31.162 161
Of the Christian Faith
1.2.13 224
1.3.22 260
1.3.25 260
2.8.69 224
4.4.44f. 224
4.5.59f. 224
4.6.67 224
4.10.136 162
5.11.132 260

Of the Holy Spirit
2.12.134f. 224

Archelaus

Disputation with Manes
31 192

Athanasius

Ad Afros
7 224
Contra Gentes
3.46.7 224
De Decretis
5.21 260
De Incarnatione
18.2-6 260
De Synodis
3.49 224
Festal letters
1.5 161
On Lk. 10.22
1 192

Orations against the Arians

2.15.12 260
2.16.21 192, 224
2.17.29 192
2.21.66 258
3.23 260
3.23.3 260
3.25.16 260
3.25.23 161, 260
3.26.32 260
3.27.37 260

Augustine

Harmony of the Gospels

1.4.7 260
1.47 224
4.10.14 193

Holy Virginity

28 161

On the Creed

5 224

On Ps. 86

20 260

On Ps. 110

8 260

On the Trinity

2.1.3 224
2.4.6 162

Sermons

2.14 260
21.25f. 260
75.6 193
76.5 224
76.9 224
76.10 224
76.13-15 224
85.4f. 128
86.1 127

Tractates on John's Gospel

17.16 193
18.5 224
18.6f. 224

20.8	224f.
21.2	224
21.4	224
23.11	224
43.14	162
44.6	127
48.10	260
71.2	260
91.1	261
91.3f.	261
105.3	161
105.4	162
105.5	161

Basil

Letters

8.9	224
38.8	260

On the Spirit

8.19	224
18.46	162

Cassian

Institutes

12.8	259
12.17	259

Chrysostom

Homilies on John's Gospel

3.4	260
20.3	161
36.2	192
38.2	193
38.3f.	224
38.4	224
39.1	193
40.3	258, 260
49.2	223
56.2	128
61.2f.	260
64.1	224, 260
74.2	260
77	261
80.2	162

Homily on Matthew's Gospel

40.1	193
------	-----

Homily on the Paralytic let down through the Roof

6	193
---	-----

On the Priesthood

4.1	260
-----	-----

2 Clement

9.11	140f.
------	-------

Clement of Alexandria

Eclog. Proph.

20	141
----	-----

Paidagogos

1.6	161
-----	-----

Stromata

1.1	192, 222
-----	----------

Cyprian

Test. against the Jews

3.60	161
------	-----

Cyril of Jerusalem

Catechetical Lectures

11.16	259f.
11.23	193

Dionysius of Rome

Against the Sabellians

2	259
---	-----

Eusebius of Caesarea

Eccl. Hist.

3.39.3f.	9
6.14.7	13
10.4.25	222

De Eccl. Theol.

3.19.4	260
--------	-----

Gospel of Thomas

99 141

Gregory of Nazianzus

Theol. Or.

3.17 161, 223

4.10 224

4.11 193

Gregory of Nyssa

Against Eunomius

1.39 260

2.4 260

2.9 260

2.15 192

4.8 260

6.3 260

8.5 260

9.4 260

10.4 260

On the Holy Spirit

162

Hilary

De Synodis

19 224

75 224

On the Trinity

3.1ff. 260

3.15f. 161

3.23 260

6.27 258

7.12 260

7.17 224

7.18 224

7.21 128, 224

7.26 260

7.38-41 260

7.41 260

8.4 260

8.52 260

9.20 258

9.43-47 224

9.44f. 193

9.52 260

9.69f. 260

9.72 224

11.12 224, 260

Hippolytus

Refutation of all Heresies

7.22.4 12

Irenaeus

Against the Heresies

15.2 127

Jerome

Letter to Castrutius

68.1 127

126.1 192

Letter to Pammachius

22 192

132.6 192

John of Damascus

Exposition of the Orthodox Faith

8 224, 260

18 224, 260

Justin Martyr

Apology 12

Methodius

Concerning Chastity

2.1 191

Novatian

Treatise Concerning the Trinity

14 223

15 258

21 223

26 162

28 192

Origen

Commentary on John

ad 4.34 161

10.21 223

De Principia

1.2.12 224

Against Celsus

12 259

Pseudo-Athanasius

Orations against the Arians

4.16 259

Tertullian

Against Praxeas

8 259

15 223

21 161, 192, 223, 258

22 258f.

24 259

On Fasting

15 161

Author Index

- Abbott, E.A. 109
 Abbott-Smith, G. 5, 106
 Abrahams, I. 174
 Albrecht, E. 3, 231, 233
 Allison, D.C. 119-121, 140-142, 175-177, 180f., 208-210, 246-248, 250f., 252
 Anderson, H. 140, 175, 177
 Anderson, N. 30
 Appold, M.L. 198, 236f.
 Ashton, J. 23, 50, 219
- Bacchiochi, S. 171, 184, 188
 Banks, R. 177f., 189f.
 Barbour, R.S. 40-43
 Barclay, W. 10
 Barr, J. 170, 185
 Barrett, C.K. 3, 6f., 10, 14f., 18, 20f., 23, 48, 52, 59, 61, 63f., 67-70, 72, 74, 76, 78-80, 90, 99, 101-103, 109, 111, 131, 133, 139, 150f., 154-158, 166, 197f., 203, 220, 222, 228-230, 232-235, 238, 242, 281, 287
 Bauckham, R. 185, 205, 218
 Beare, F.W. 121, 207, 248, 251
 Beasley - Murray, G.R. 6-9, 61, 65, 67, 72, 74, 79f., 99, 103f., 111, 113, 148, 151, 154, 157f., 165, 198, 203, 222, 228, 233f., 235, 239, 243, 281, 283, 288
 Becker, J. 7, 14, 16f., 19, 62, 74, 76, 99-101, 103, 107, 113, 125, 132, 135, 167, 198, 202, 215, 228f., 231f., 241, 283
 Berger, K. 201
 Bergmeier, R. 280f., 285
 Bernard, J. 4, 203f., 220, 228-231
 Bernard, J.H. 6-8, 12, 61, 63f., 67, 74, 76, 79f., 99, 101f., 104f., 109, 111f., 131, 133, 135f., 150, 152, 154, 156f., 166, 169, 197, 202, 222, 232-234, 239, 243, 280f., 283, 285, 287
 Bertram, G. 3, 88, 170, 187, 278
 Best, E. 140, 143
 Black, M. 33, 58, 141, 170f., 179f.
 Bligh, J. 4, 106, 110, 117, 135, 151-153, 169, 197, 228f.
 Blinzler, J. 13-15
 Blomberg, C.L. 29, 39, 41-44, 49, 53-55, 218
 Bock, D.L. 32
 Boismard, M.-É. 21, 23f., 238
 Borg, M. 28, 41-44, 169, 174-176, 180, 182
 Borgen, P. 14, 58f., 71
 Bornkamm, G. 32, 120, 185, 199f., 208
 Bostock, D.G. 102
 Bovon, F. 246, 248, 250
 Brederick, E. 88, 92
 Bridges, L.M. 115
 Briggs, C.A. 142, 145, 238, 252
 Brown, C. 231
 Brown, F. 142, 145, 238, 252
 Brown, R.E. 1, 3, 6-9, 14, 19, 21-24, 53, 56, 60-62, 64f., 67, 74, 76, 78, 80, 89, 99-101, 103, 105, 107, 111, 113, 124, 131, 150, 154, 156, 159, 161, 166, 168f., 197, 204, 215f., 220, 228f., 232-234, 239, 242f., 255, 281, 283, 288
 Bruce, F.F. 7
 Bultmann, R. 5-8, 16, 21, 39, 50, 52, 61, 64, 67, 71, 74, 78, 80, 99-104, 107, 110, 112, 114, 117, 119f., 125, 132f., 136, 140, 145, 148f., 152, 154-156, 165, 167, 169, 175, 177, 197f., 202, 207, 210, 215, 229-231, 233, 236, 239, 242f., 247f., 251, 280f., 283, 285,

- 287f.
 Burge, G.M. 9, 14, 53, 58, 85
 Burney, C.F. 33, 53, 110, 113, 138, 144,
 171, 206, 209
 Butts, J.R. 31
- Caird, G.B. 146f., 247
 Calvert, D.G.A. 28, 40-45
 Calvin, J. 105, 117, 150-152, 158
 Carrington, P. 141
 Carson, D.A. 6-9, 12, 18-20, 52f., 55f.,
 58-61, 64, 74-76, 79f., 85, 99, 105,
 111, 113, 133, 135, 139, 151, 154-
 158, 198, 204, 222, 229, 233-234,
 239, 255, 281, 283, 288
 Casey, P.M. 50, 159, 198
 Catchpole, D. 40-44
 Cerfaux, L. 4, 31, 239
 Charlesworth, J.H. 29f., 53
 Christ, F. 208f.
 Collins, R.F. 206
 Conzelmann, H. 144
 Cranfield, C.E.B. 94, 95, 140, 177,
 199f., 232
 Creed, J.M. 179, 247
 Crossan, J.D. 140
 Cuthmann, O. 4, 8f., 45, 53, 170f., 187f.,
 208, 219
 Culpepper, R.A. 133, 148f.
- Dalman, G. 28, 33, 58, 94, 170
 Davey, J.E. 183
 Davies, W.D. 119-121, 140-142, 175-
 177, 179-181, 208-210, 246-248,
 250f., 252
 Delling, G. 5, 53, 153
 Dewey, K.E. 110, 183, 206, 221
 Dibelius, M. 140, 207
 Dodd, C.H. 4, 6f. 14, 25, 35-38, 52, 54-
 56, 58, 62, 69, 79f., 85, 99, 101-105,
 107, 113, 115, 134, 139, 148, 150f.,
 155f., 159, 191, 197, 203f., 215f., 218,
 228f., 233, 238, 241, 283
 Donaldson, J. 127
 Downing, F.G. 39, 41-44
 Driver, S.R. 142, 145, 238, 252
 Drummond, J. 54f., 115, 138, 172
 Dunn, J.D.G. 50, 110, 119-123, 126,
 185, 207-210, 219, 247-251, 252f.
 Dunstone, A.S. 39
- Ellis, E. 120f., 176, 247, 254
 Evans, C.F. 120, 122, 144, 181, 207,
 209, 246, 251
- Filson, F.V. 9
 Findley, J.A. 131
 Fitzmyer, J.A. 28, 33, 120f., 140, 144f.,
 147, 174, 180f., 208, 246, 248, 250f.,
 253
 Fletcher, B. 28
 Fortna, R.T. 14, 16-19, 48, 100, 103-
 105, 107, 132, 165, 167-169
 France, R.T. 30f., 39, 40, 42-44
 Freed, E.D. 61f., 67, 70, 72-77, 80, 83
 Friend, H.S. 219
 Fuller, R.H. 40-44
 Funk, R.W. 31
- Gaechter, P. 203, 215
 Gardner - Smith, P. 14
 Garrison, R. 28, 54, 207f., 210
 Gerhardsson, B. 58
 Giblet, J. 4, 221, 232, 250
 Gnilya, J. 140, 142
 Godet, F.L. 184
 Goguel, M. 287
 Goodwin, C. 59, 61, 64f., 72, 76f., 80
 Gordon, C.H. 237
 Grant, F.C. 31
 Greig, J.C.G. 201
 Grigsby, B. 99
 Grob, F. 2, 105, 118, 124, 126, 150-152,
 203f., 213, 228f., 286
 Gruenler, R.G. 55
 Grundmann, W. 94, 207, 215
 Gryglewicz, F. 4, 87, 184, 201, 204
 Guelich, R.A. 175-177
 Guilding, A. 232
 Gunther, J.J. 8f., 12
 Guthrie, D. 6f., 9, 49, 53
- Haenchen, E. 7, 9, 14, 71, 73f. 101, 104,
 123, 132, 151f., 168, 228f., 231f., 239,
 281
 Hahn, F. 30

- Hanson, A.T. 50, 58f., 67, 71, 73f., 76, 79f., 241
 Harnack, A. 210
 Harrison, E.F. 55f.
 Harvey, A.E. 43f., 102, 123, 199, 208, 219, 233, 247f.
 Hasler, V. 201
 Hatch, E. 87
 Headlam, A.C. 55
 Heiligenthal, R. 3, 148, 206, 229, 231, 235, 236, 281f., 287
 Hengel, M. 6, 9, 11f., 24, 28, 42, 52f., 59, 142, 219
 Higgins, A.J.B. 14, 53f., 183
 Hill, D. 120-122, 175, 210, 251, 254
 Hooker, M.D. 28, 39-45, 141, 175
 Hoskyns, E.C. 6, 64, 74, 99, 105, 111, 113, 124, 169, 229, 232-234, 237, 239, 255, 281, 283f., 287
 Howard, W.F. 20, 54, 115, 138, 172, 183, 197, 238
 Hultgren, A.J. 174f.
 Hunter, A.M. 53, 58, 135, 147, 183, 208-210

 Jastrow, M. 88, 94
 Jeremias, J. 28f., 32, 34-39, 41, 43, 50, 110, 119-122, 138, 145, 169-171, 184f., 199, 201, 204-210, 217f., 238, 246, 249, 252f.
 Johnson, L. 9
 Jonge, M. de 4
 Jülicher, A. 218

 Käsemann, E. 27, 39f., 43, 49f., 150, 155
 King, J.S. 56
 Knox, J. 31
 Köster, H. 144, 146
 Kragerud, A. 8
 Kratz, R. 107
 Kuhn, H.-W. 201
 Kümmel, W.G. 6-8, 14f., 20, 41, 43f., 119-121, 146, 246-250, 255
 Kysar, R. 8, 16, 19, 23, 102, 105, 111, 161, 198

 Ladd, G.E. 49, 53

 Lambrecht, J. 140
 Lamouille, A. 21
 Lane, W.L. 199
 Latourelle, R. 39, 40, 42-44
 Leaney, A.R.C. 247, 251
 Lee, E.K. 9, 53
 Leivestad, R. 247-250
 Lemcio, E.E. 54, 133
 Lenski, R.C.H. 6-8, 99, 105, 111, 113, 151f.
 Leroy, H. 135
 Levy, J. 238
 Liddell, H.G. 5, 86
 Lightfoot, J.B. 10, 12
 Lightfoot, R.H. 6, 105, 113, 124f.
 Lindars, B. 6-9, 13, 18, 20-23, 50, 58, 62-64, 67, 71-76, 79f., 99-103, 110f., 131, 139, 154-157, 166-168, 197f., 204f., 215, 220, 222, 228f., 233f., 236, 238, 241, 283f., 287
 Loader, W. 58, 150, 153f., 198, 204, 214, 220, 230, 236, 238, 288
 Lohmeyer, E. 280, 285
 Lohse, E. 135, 169, 175, 177, 181, 188
 Loisy, A. 166
 Longenecker, R.N. 28, 40, 42, 43, 45

 Malatesta, E. 238
 Manson, T.W. 109, 121, 144, 176, 208, 246, 252f.
 Manson, W. 247, 254
 Marsh, J. 6, 8f., 222
 Marshall, I.H. 39, 40-45, 109, 119-122, 132, 144f., 175-177, 179-181, 199-201, 207f., 210, 217, 219, 246-250, 252
 Marshall, J.T. 113
 Martin, R.A. 53, 113, 157, 169
 Martin, R.P. 14
 Martyn, J.L. 1, 100f., 107, 111, 113, 117, 167f., 191, 198
 Mastin, B.A. 9, 14, 99, 112-114, 196, 198, 222
 Maurer, C. 4, 187f.
 McArthur, H.K. 39-42
 McEleney, N.J. 30, 39, 41f.
 McNamara, M. 58
 McNeile, A.H. 119, 121

- Mealand, D.L. 40, 42-44
 Meeks, W.A. 219
 Menken, M.J.J. 64f., 70, 72f., 76
 Metzger, B.M. 111
 Meyer, B. 39, 40, 42, 44, 140, 200, 208, 210, 247, 252
 Michaels, J.R. 6
 Mitton, C.L. 40, 42f., 45
 Miyoshi, M. 207f., 211
 Morris, L. 3, 6-12, 14, 19, 53, 57, 62, 65, 67, 70f., 74, 76, 78, 105, 109, 111, 113, 123f., 131, 135, 150-152, 155-158, 169, 188, 196, 198, 204, 217, 222, 229, 234, 236f., 239, 240, 242f., 281, 283, 287
 Moule, C.F.D. 45, 69, 219
 Müller, P.-G. 30
 Mussner, F. 58, 253
 Neiryneck, F. 15, 175, 177
 Nicol, W. 4, 16f., 19, 86, 100-102, 104, 107, 113, 132-134, 167, 214, 272
 Noack, B. 14, 59, 61, 67, 69, 71, 76, 79
 Nunn, H.P.V. 9, 12

 Odeberg, H. 117, 137, 148, 197, 229, 231, 281, 284
 Oepke, A. 145

 Painter, J. 9, 14, 53, 100-103, 107, 124, 133, 183, 191, 198, 203, 220, 228, 232, 234, 237, 281
 Pancaro, S. 3, 88, 137, 139, 150, 152, 168, 170, 182, 195, 228-230, 233, 235, 237, 278, 280f., 283, 285
 Parker, P. 9, 14, 19
 Paul, G.J. 9
 Perrin, N. 28, 39-44
 Pesch, R. 107
 Plummer, A. 133, 150, 154
 Pollard, T.E. 260
 Potter, R.D. 10

 Quast, K. 8

 Redpath, H.A. 87
 Reim, G. 15, 59, 61-64, 69-71, 73-76, 80
 Rengstorf, K.H. 108
 Reynolds, H.R. 57

 Richard, E. 133
 Riedl, J. 2, 106, 125, 149-153, 159-61, 188, 195, 204, 221f., 228, 229-231, 234, 236-239, 240, 242f., 281, 283, 287f.
 Riesenfeld, H. 14, 57f.
 Riesner, R. 30, 39, 41-45, 109, 205, 207-210, 247-249, 253
 Roberts, A. 127
 Robinson, J.A.T. 7-10, 14, 20, 53-56, 85, 98f., 102, 109, 116, 126, 151, 156, 197, 204, 208, 232f., 234, 238
 Robinson, J.M. 27, 32, 39
 Rodd, C.S. 121
 Rogers, D. 9
 Roloff, J. 175-177, 188
 Ruckstuhl, E. 16, 18-20, 58, 133f.

 Sanders, E.P. 28f., 39, 41, 44, 103, 119, 165, 173f., 181, 199f., 251
 Sanders, J.N. 9, 12, 14, 99, 111, 113-114, 196, 198, 222
 Schaff, P. 127
 Schlatter, D.A. 206, 217
 Schlier, H. 5, 217
 Schnackenburg, R. 3, 6-10, 14, 16, 18f., 50, 58, 61f., 65, 70f., 74, 76, 79f., 99, 102, 104, 107, 111, 113, 125, 131, 136, 138, 148, 150f., 154-158, 166f., 196-198, 204, 229, 232f., 236-238, 239f., 243, 281, 283
 Schrenk, G. 8
 Schulz, S. 52, 167, 209
 Schürmann, H. 144
 Schweitzer, A. 49
 Schweizer, E. 16, 58, 121, 140, 174, 199, 207, 211, 247, 251, 253
 Scott, B.B. 31
 Scott, R. 5, 86
 Selby, G.R. 28
 Sevenster, J.N. 28
 Sidebottom, E.M. 52, 58
 Smalley, S.S. 9, 14, 48, 51, 53, 138
 Smith, D.M. 14, 16, 23, 25, 53
 Sperber, A. 68
 Stanton, V.H. 54, 135
 Stein, R.H. 29f., 39-45
 Stevenson, W.D. 205

- Strachan, R.H. 152
 Strathmann, H. 50
 Streeter, B.H. 23
 Suggs, M.J. 209
 Sundberg, A.C. 4, 197
- Tarrelli, C.C. 6, 109
 Taylor, V. 109, 140, 144, 199f., 207f.
 Teeple, H.M. 16-21, 167
 Temple, S. 4, 14, 16, 18f., 53, 132, 215, 272
 Thackeray, H.St.J. 242
 Thornecroft, J.K. 9
 Thüsing, W. 113, 150, 160, 229
 Torrey, C.C. 67
 Toy, C.H. 61, 72, 76
 Trites, A.A. 228f.
 Trocmé, E. 41
 Turner, H.E.W. 39
 Turner, N. 28
- Unnik, W.C. van 10
- Vanhoye, A. 4, 150, 160, 221, 230, 235f.
 Vermes, G. 173, 185, 208, 247
- Wace, H. 127
 Wahlde, U.C. von 4, 17, 86, 100, 103, 132f., 149, 152f., 167, 229, 272-277, 280f., 285
 Weiss, H. 188, 191
 Wendt, H.H. 4, 54, 277
 Westcott, B.F. 6-8, 10, 12, 65, 73, 76, 78, 80, 99, 102, 105, 108, 117, 131, 155f., 196-198, 222, 230, 232-234, 239, 240, 242f., 281, 284, 287
 Westerholm, S. 29, 42-45, 169, 174, 176f.
 Whiteacre, R.A. 1
 Wilkens, W. 3, 21-24, 102, 107, 153, 239
 Wise, M.O. 33
 Witherington, B. 41-44, 119f., 121-123, 175-177, 185, 189, 205, 207-210, 247-249, 251f., 255
 Witkamp, L.Th. 4, 85, 168, 183
 Wright, C.J. 131
- Yamauchi, E. 52
- Zahn, T. 152

Subject Index

- Abba 171, 184-186, 193, 210
 Amen 171, 201f., 204, 215, 216f., 225, 266
 Apocryphal Gospels 10-12
 Aporia 17f., 20, 22, 24, 154, 272f., 275
 Apprenticeship Imagery 203-207, 213-216, 218-221, 224-226, 269, 284
 Aramaic Sayings of Jesus (postulated retroversions) 114, 120, 137, 141, 145, 170f., 177, 180, 205, 209, 248, 252
 Authenticity
 —burden of proof for 27, 38-40, 47
 —concept of 1, 5, 26-48, 264f.
 —criteria for 27, 32f., 40-48
 —of Jesus' Johannine sayings 1, 2, 4f., 13, 21, 24-26, 38, 49-51, 57f., 83-98, 105-122, 128-130, 135-149, 155-159, 162, 164, 170-184, 190f., 193, 196, 201-216, 221, 225, 227, 245-256, 261-268
 —of Jesus' non-Johannine sayings 1, 2, 5, 27-48, 83f., 106, 110, 116, 119f., 139-147, 174-181, 184, 207-212, 246-253
 Authorship 1, 5-13, 20, 24, 51, 263
 Beloved Disciple 6-9, 22-24
 Blasphemy 3, 197, 199f., 232, 235, 238
 Christology 22, 55, 65, 68, 82, 84, 95, 102, 126-129, 143, 151, 161-163, 167f., 177f., 182f., 189-200, 203f., 206-208, 214, 217-221, 223-226, 248, 257, 258-262, 267, 269-272, 278, 289f.
 Creation 102, 122, 126-129, 182, 186f., 191-194, 221, 224
 Crucifixion of Christ 61, 65f., 80, 116, 118, 124, 144-147, 151, 153, 155-161, 163, 187f., 248
 Dead Sea Scrolls 52, 56, 69, 87, 137, 264, 280
 Exorcisms 118-122, 125, 249, 254
 Feasts
 —Dedication 98f., 232f.
 —Passover 66, 130, 158, 165
 —Pentecost 165, 210-212
 —Tabernacles 73-75, 98-100, 102, 232
 Gnosticism 51f., 56, 127, 145, 202, 207-209, 239
 Hellenism 51f., 207-209, 264
 Hermetic Literature 51f., 203
 Herodians 199
 Johannine Community 1, 100, 135, 191, 194, 198, 200, 222, 228, 241
 Johannine Style 16-20, 22, 24, 48-53, 56-58, 65, 83, 89-91, 96, 101, 105-107, 109f., 115, 117f., 132-134, 155, 157f., 169, 184, 195, 202, 208, 214-216, 237, 240, 256f., 264, 266, 268, 272f., 281
 John's Gospel
 —development theories 1, 21-25, 51, 154, 263
 —relationship/coherence with the synoptic gospels 1, 13-16, 22-25, 48f., 51, 53-57, 62, 69, 77, 80, 91-96, 98, 101-104, 106f., 109, 115f., 118, 128, 131, 133f., 136, 138-147, 155f., 158f., 162, 164, 166f., 169, 171-184, 189, 191, 193, 199f., 203, 205-212, 216,

- 225, 229, 231, 233, 241, 245-258, 263f., 267
 —source theories 1, 4, 10f., 16-21, 25, 51, 83, 100, 103, 132, 167, 263, 268, 272-277
 —use of Old Testament quotations 2, 51, 58-84, 256, 265, 268
 John the Apostle 9-11, 22f., 146, 277
 John the Baptist 69f., 124, 145, 228f., 246-251, 273, 275
 John the Elder 9, 23
 Judgement 23, 53, 55, 64f., 101, 122, 126, 129, 182, 186f., 191, 194, 216, 218-222, 225, 228-230, 248, 251-254, 257, 262, 269f., 289
 Last Supper / Lord's Supper 53, 76, 152, 154, 156, 163,
 Law, the 55, 70-72, 125, 129, 148, 152, 163, 179, 189
 Life-Giving 151, 153, 157, 163f., 191, 194, 214-216, 219-222, 225, 228-230, 257, 262, 269f.
 Mandaean Literature 51f., 203
 Messiahship 124-126, 129f., 188, 193, 211, 234f., 244, 248-250, 254-257, 261, 272
 Miracles 3, 17-19, 21, 23, 92-94, 96, 101, 103, 106, 116, 124, 126, 130, 160, 169, 172, 174, 176, 179, 184, 188-190, 193, 196, 199, 216, 221f., 229-231, 233-235, 239, 242-244, 247, 251-254, 255, 260f., 269, 272-274, 281, 286-289
 Misunderstandings 132f., 135, 191, 275
 Moses 71, 206, 209, 219-20, 225
 Mystery Religions 51, 239
 Parable and Allegory 205, 218f., 220
 Patristic Exegesis of the Johannine 'Works' Sayings 1f., 5, 84, 98, 127-130, 161-163, 191-194, 196, 223-227, 237, 258-262, 270f.
 Pharisees 101, 129, 133, 173-175, 177-180, 182, 189, 199, 272-276
 Pre-existence 23, 126, 129, 160, 202, 231, 269
 Rabbinic Judaism 53, 104, 113, 115f., 125, 135, 137, 148, 170, 175f., 178, 180f., 186-190, 197, 206, 228, 233, 235, 242, 280, 282
 Revelation 55, 122, 153, 158, 160, 162f., 191, 194, 202, 207, 210, 214f., 220f., 225, 243, 255, 269-271
 Sabbath 3, 99f., 102, 106, 125, 129, 153, 166-170, 172-184, 186-191, 193f., 196, 199, 216, 221
 Sadducees 133
 Sanhedrin 200
 Signs 3f., 17f., 21, 25, 86, 90, 93, 96, 235, 272-277
 Son (of God) 23, 94, 126-128, 161-164, 184-186, 192-194, 200, 203-207, 210-212, 213, 218-226, 232, 234, 236, 240, 245, 256f., 258-262, 266, 269f., 276, 289
 Son of Man 94, 200
 θεῖος ἀνὴρ 17, 272
 Use of ὅτι 59f., 77, 79
 Vaticinia ex Eventu 146
 Witness 3, 97, 188, 228f., 231f., 233-235, 237, 240-246, 250, 253-257, 261, 268

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Alphabetical Index of the First and Second Series

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