

AQUILA H. I. LEE

From Messiah to Preexistent Son

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Aquila H. I. Lee

From Messiah to Preexistent Son

Jesus' Self-Consciousness and Early Christian
Exegesis of Messianic Psalms

Mohr Siebeck

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Preface

This book is a slightly revised version of my doctoral thesis submitted to the Department of Divinity and Religious Studies at the University of Aberdeen in 2003.

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1 March 2005

Aquila Lee

Table of Contents

Preface.....	v
Table of Contents	vii

<i>Chapter 1: Introduction</i>	1
--------------------------------------	---

1.1. The Development and Origin of Jesus' Pre-existence.....	2
1.1.1. Paul's Wisdom Christology	2
1.1.2. John's Pre-existence Christology.....	8
1.1.3. Divine Agent or Divine Identity Christology	12
1.1.4. Angelic/Angelomorphic Christology	14
1.1.5. Some Critical Observations	19
1.1.6. Our View of First Century Jewish Monotheism	21
1.2. Jesus' Self-Consciousness of Divine Sonship.....	25
1.3. Early Christian Exegesis of the OT	30
1.4. Aim and Plans of the Study.....	34

JEWISH DIVINE PRESENCE/ACTION TRADITIONS

<i>Chapter 2: Personified Divine Attributes</i>	37
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2.1. Problem of Definition	37
2.2. Wisdom of God.....	42
2.2.1. Job 28.....	44
2.2.2. Proverbs 1-9	45
2.2.3. Sirach.....	50
2.2.4. Baruch.....	53
2.2.5. Wisdom of Solomon	54
2.2.6. 1 Enoch 42	59
2.2.7. Philo.....	59
2.2.8. Summary	61
2.3. Word of God.....	62
2.3.1. Misconceptions about the Spoken Word	62
2.3.2. The Word of God in the OT.....	65

2.3.3. The Logos in the Wisdom of Solomon	68
2.3.4. The Logos in Philo	69
2.3.5. The Memra of God	75
2.3.6. Summary	76
2.4. Name of God.....	77
2.4.1. The Name of God in OT	77
2.4.2. The Name Theology in Deuteronomy	79
2.4.3. The Divine Name as a Hypostasis?	82
2.4.4. Summary	83
2.5. Conclusion.....	84
 <i>Chapter 3: Exalted Angels and Pre-Existent Messiah.....</i>	 85
3.1. Exalted Angels.....	85
3.1.1. OT Understanding about Angels.....	85
3.1.2. The Angel of the Lord	86
3.1.2.1. Relationship between God and the Angel of the Lord	87
3.1.2.2. Development in the Identity of “the Angel of the Lord”	90
3.1.2.3. Continuity of the Underlying Concept	91
3.1.2.4. Summary	96
3.1.3. Principal Angels	96
3.1.3.1. Jewish Angelology in Second Temple Judaism	96
3.1.3.2. Principal Angels as God’s Servants.....	98
3.1.3.3. A Sharp Distinction between God and Exalted Angels.....	99
3.1.3.4. Summary	99
3.2. A Pre-existent Messiah	99
3.2.1. Isaiah 9:5(6) LXX.....	102
3.2.2. Amos 4:13 LXX; Lam 4:20 LXX.....	103
3.2.3. Num 24:17 LXX.....	104
3.2.4. Jer 23:5; Zech 3:9; 6:12 LXX	105
3.2.5. Psalm 72 LXX.....	107
3.2.6. Psalm 110:3 LXX.....	111
3.2.7. Concluding Remarks	114
3.3. Conclusion to Part II	115

THE FOUNDATION FOR PRE-EXISTENT SON CHRISTOLOGY

<i>Chapter 4: Jesus’ Self-Consciousness of Divine Sonship.....</i>	<i>117</i>
4.1. Methodological Remarks	118
4.1.1. Criteria for the Authenticity of Jesus’ Sayings.....	118
4.1.2. Handing Down of the Gospel Tradition	121

4.2. Contemporary Debate on Jesus' Use of Abba.....	122
4.2.1. Evidence for Jewish Precedents.....	122
4.2.2. Linguistic Evidence for the Origin of "Abba".....	125
4.2.3. Jesus' View of God as Father	127
4.2.3.1. Did Jesus Speak of God as Father?	127
4.2.3.2. Proliferation of Father Language in the NT.....	130
4.2.3.3. The Impact of Jesus' Use of Abba	130
4.2.3.4. Is Jesus' God Father of Israel?.....	132
4.2.3.5. Inability to Know about Jesus' Experience	135
4.2.4. Conclusion	135
4.3. Exegesis of Jesus' Self-Revelatory Statements.....	136
4.3.1. Mt 11:25-27/Lk 10:21-22	137
4.3.2. Mk 13:32.....	144
4.3.3. Mt 16:17.....	147
4.3.4. Lk 22:29.....	149
4.3.5. Mk 12:1-12.....	151
4.3.5.1. Different Versions of the Parable	151
4.3.5.2. Authenticity of the Parable	155
4.3.5.3. Socio-Cultural Background of the Parable	157
4.3.5.4. Coherence of the OT References with the Parable	159
4.3.5.5. Role and Significance of the "Son"	163
4.3.5.6. Meaning and Christological Implications of the Parable	164
4.3.6. Mk 1:9-11	166
4.3.6.1. Authenticity of the Baptismal Account	166
4.3.6.2. Background and Meaning of the Theophany	168
4.4. Conclusion.....	178
 <i>Chapter 5: Jesus' Self-Consciousness of Divine Mission.....</i>	 181
5.1. "I Have Come" Sayings	182
5.1.1. Different Views about "I Have Come" Sayings	182
5.1.1.1. Idiomatic Interpretation	182
5.1.1.2. Indicative of Pre-existence.....	186
5.1.1.3. Indicative of God-given Mission	187
5.1.2. Mk 2:17.....	187
5.1.3. Mk 10:45/Mt 20:28.....	189
5.1.4. Lk 19:10.....	193
5.1.5. Lk 12:49-51/Mt 10:34	194
5.2. "I Was Sent" Sayings.....	197
5.2.1. Mt 15:24.....	197
5.2.2. Mk 9:37/Mt 10:40/Lk 9:48	198
5.3. Christological Implications of Jesus' Self-Consciousness	199

THE CATALYST FOR PRE-EXISTENT SON CHRISTOLOGY

<i>Chapter 6: Early Christian Exegesis of Psalm 110:1</i>	202
6.1. Pre-Christian Interpretation of Psalm 110.....	204
6.1.1. Original Setting and Subsequent Function of the Psalm	204
6.1.2. Later Jewish Interpretation of the Psalm	205
6.2. Early Christian Interpretation of Psalm 110:1.....	210
6.2.1. Psalm 110:1 in Early Christian Literature	210
6.2.2. Indirect Sources of Psalm 110:1	213
6.2.3. Psalm 110:1 in a Pre-Pauline Confession.....	213
6.2.3.1. Rom 8:34 (cf. 1 Pet 3:22; Col 3:1).....	214
6.2.3.2. Conclusion.....	216
6.2.4. Christological Fusion of Psalm 110:1 and Psalm 8:6.....	216
6.2.4.1. 1 Cor 15:25-27.....	217
6.2.4.2. Eph 1:20-22	219
6.2.4.3. 1 Pet 3:22	220
6.2.4.4. Polycarp Phil. 2.1	220
6.2.4.5. Hebrews 2:8-9	221
6.2.4.6. Conclusion.....	223
6.2.5. Jesus' Use of Psalm 110:1	224
6.2.5.1. Mk 12:35-37.....	225
6.2.5.2. Mk 14:62.....	231
6.2.5.3. Conclusion.....	236
6.2.6. Psalm 110:1 as Confirmation of Jesus' Lordship	237
6.3. Conclusion.....	239
<i>Chapter 7: Early Christian Exegesis of Psalm 2:7</i>	240
7.1. Pre-Christian Interpretation of Psalm 2	241
7.1.1. Original Setting and Subsequent Function of the Psalm	241
7.1.2. Later Jewish Interpretation of the Psalm	243
7.1.2.1. LXX and Targumic Translations	244
7.1.2.2. Canonical Placement	245
7.1.2.3. OT Pseudepigraphic Literature	246
7.1.2.4. Qumran Documents	246
7.1.2.5. Rabbinic Sources.....	249
7.1.2.6. Conclusion.....	250
7.2. Early Christian Interpretation of Psalm 2:7	250
7.2.1. Psalm 2:7 in Acts 13:33	252
7.2.1.1. Meaning of ἀναστήσας Ἰησοῦν.....	252
7.2.1.2. Evaluation	255
7.2.1.3. Conclusion.....	260

7.2.2. Psalm 2:7 in Rom 1:3-4	262
7.2.2.1. Original Form of the Formula	262
7.2.2.2. Is the Formula Adoptionistic?	264
7.2.2.3. 2 Sam 7:12-14 and Psalm 2:7 as Background of Rom 1:3-4	265
7.2.2.4. Exegesis of Rom 1:3-4	267
7.2.3. Psalm 2:7 in Heb 1:5 and 5:5	271
7.2.3.1. Adoptionist Christology?	272
7.2.3.2. Christology of the Exordium	272
7.2.3.3. Function of Psalm 2:7 in Hebrews	274
7.2.3.4. Conclusion	277
7.2.4. Psalm 2:7 in Mk 1:11	278
7.2.5. Conclusion	278
7.3. Early Christian Exegesis of Ps 110:1 and Ps 2:7 and Jesus' Pre-existence	279

THE ESSENCE OF PRE-EXISTENT SON CHRISTOLOGY

<i>Chapter 8: "God Sent His Son"</i>	284
8.1. Wisdom Christology in Paul	285
8.1.1. 1 Cor 1:24, 30	285
8.1.2. 1 Cor 8:6	287
8.1.3. 1 Cor 10:4	288
8.1.4. Rom 10:5-8	290
8.1.5. Rom 11:33-36	293
8.1.5.1. Hymn to God's Wisdom or to Christ as Wisdom	295
8.1.6. Conclusion	296
8.2. Pre-Pauline Sending Formula	296
8.2.1. Different Interpretations	297
8.2.2. Our Critical Assessments	301
8.2.2.1. Pre-Pauline Formula	301
8.2.2.2. Parallels to Wisdom 9:10-17?	303
8.2.2.3. Root of the Formula	304
8.2.3. Does Gal 4:4-6 Speak of the Son's Pre-existence?	305
8.2.3.1. Adam Christology?	305
8.2.3.2. Christ as the Second Moses?	308
8.2.3.3. Pre-existent Son Christology	309
8.3. Conclusion	314
<i>Chapter 9: Conclusion</i>	317

Bibliography	323
Index of Authors	353
Index of References	359
Index of Subjects	373

Chapter 1

Introduction

In recent times an area which has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention is the development and origin of the early Christian view of Jesus as a divine and pre-existent being. The early Christian conviction that Jesus of Nazareth, who suffered a shameful death on the cross, is divine and pre-existent alongside one God is indeed a very remarkable development.¹ If the late nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth was mainly dominated by the history-of-religions school's attempts to find precedents from Hellenistic and Eastern religions,² the last quarter of a century has seen a growing emphasis on Jewish backgrounds to early christology from the Second Temple period. This new trend in the discussion of the formative period of Christianity – labelled in some quarters as a new *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*³ – does not only see the development of early christology as having taken place within Jewish soils, but it also locates the emergence of high christology within the first two or three decades after Jesus' death and resurrection.

Such a renewal of interest in the parallel motifs to early christology from Second Temple Judaism has led some scholars to re-evaluate the true character of the first century Jewish monotheism. In fact, NT scholars have long been puzzled by a seemingly enigmatic relationship between Jewish monotheistic belief of one God of Israel and the divine/pre-existent status given to Jesus in the early church. What prompted the earliest Christians to regard Jesus as divine and pre-existent alongside one God? How was it possible for the pious Jews of the first century, who had been brought up with a strong monotheistic belief in one God, to be able to accord such a

¹ That the early church came to a fuller understanding of who Jesus really is from the resurrection onwards seems to be beyond question.

² They insisted that the divine status of Jesus in early Christianity was the result of syncretistic influence from "pagan" religions of the Roman era on "Hellenistic" Christians supposedly more susceptible to such influence than were "Palestinian" Jewish Christians.

³ The term was first coined by M. Hengel in his comment on the back cover of American edition of L. W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (London: SCM, 1988, 1998). See now L. W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 5-18, for a quick comparison between the old school of Göttingen and the new.

unique status to a man whose life came to an abrupt end on a Roman cross as a criminal?

1.1. The Development and Origin of Jesus' Pre-existence

Contemporary scholarship has proposed a number of different theories about the development and origin of the early Christian understanding of Jesus as a divine/pre-existent being.⁴ Although any attempts to categorize the views of others may run the risk of oversimplification, it is nonetheless necessary to group them into categories if we are to present and evaluate them effectively. We may thus for convenience group the different theories into the following categories: (1) Paul's wisdom christology; (2) John's pre-existence christology; (3) divine agent or divine identity christology; and (4) angelic/angelomorphic christology.

1.1.1. Paul's Wisdom Christology

That Paul was indebted to the Jewish wisdom tradition is widely recognized among NT scholars today, although to what extent it was influential to his understanding of Jesus is still debated.

Hans Windisch was the first scholar who argued that Paul's christology was decisively influenced by the Jewish wisdom tradition, where the figure of the Messiah had already become merged with that of Wisdom, and that Paul identified the pre-existent Christ with divine Wisdom.⁵ Windisch found the identification of the Messiah and Wisdom from two Jewish sources: (1) the description of the Son of Man in terms of Wisdom in *I Enoch* (48:2,6; 49:3; 92:1; 49:4; 42:1); (2) the LXX translation of Mic 5:1 and Ps 110:3. He claimed that behind Paul's descriptions of Jesus as the Wisdom of God (1 Cor 1-3), the following rock (1 Cor 10:4), the firstborn

⁴ Although some studies do not deal with the issue of the origin of Jesus' pre-existence specifically, they assume that the concept of Jesus' divinity is closely related to that of his pre-existence, and this assumption will be confirmed during the course of our study.

⁵ H. Windisch, "Die göttliche Weisheit der Juden und die paulinische Christologie" in *Neutestamentliche Studien: Georg Heinrici zu seinem 70. Geburtstag* (ed. A. Deissmann; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1914), 220-34. In 1966, about 50 years later his hypothesis is developed in greater detail by A. Feuillet, *Le Christ, sagesse de Dieu: d'après les épîtres pauliniennes* (Paris: Lecoffre, 1966). Recently, W. Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM, 1998) and J. Schaper, *Eschatology in the Greek Psalter* (WUNT 2/76; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), have postulated that there was a tradition about a pre-existent messianic figure in Second Temple Judaism. They find evidence of such a tradition primarily from the interpretative translation of the LXX.

of creation (Col 1:15-20), the head of the church (Eph 1:19-21), and the word of righteousness that is near (Rom 10:6-9) lies the figure of Lady Wisdom familiar from Prov 8, Sir 24, and Wis 9.

W. L. Knox popularized Windisch's view with further appeal to apocryphal literature, Philo and rabbinic tradition. Rather than claiming any direct literary influence of Sirach, Wisdom, or Philo on Paul's letters, Knox argued that a common tradition of interpretation lies behind all these different speculations about divine Wisdom.⁶

Later W. D. Davies revised Windisch's theory by locating the supposed source of the Paul's wisdom christology in the Apostle's identification of Jesus with the Torah, which itself was already understood as the pre-existent σοφία of God active in creation and redemption. Davies argued that Paul regarded Jesus as the "new Torah" by ascribing to him all the attributes of Wisdom (e.g., pre-existence and mediation in creation).⁷ He strengthened his case by bringing in a number of Jewish ideas (such as Wisdom, Torah and Messiah) that to a certain degree could be regarded as identifiable to one another. Once Paul has replaced the law with Christ, all the attributes inherent to Wisdom, says Davies, must have automatically transferred to Jesus.

E. Schweizer argued that the two clauses "God sent his Son" and "in order to redeem . . ." in Gal 4:4 (cf. Rom 8:3, John 3:17, and 1 Jn 4:9) were the basis of a pre-Pauline "sending formula" which originated from the Torah-Wisdom-Logos speculations of Alexandrian Judaism and was taken over by Hellenistic Christians to speak about Jesus as the pre-existent Son of God.⁸ To support his hypothesis, Schweizer emphasizes the parallels between Wis 9:10-17 and Gal 4:4-7 where the verb used for the sending of both Wisdom and the Son, ἐξαποστέλλειν, is a Pauline *hapax legomenon* and the sending of Wisdom/Son in both passages is followed by the sending of the Holy Spirit. He also finds parallels from Philo.

In his 1964 essay "Der vorpaulinische Hymnus Phil 2,6-11," D. Georgi discerned behind this pre-Pauline hymn the myth of the humiliation and exaltation of the wise man in Wis 2-3, a theme which itself already

⁶ W. L. Knox, *St Paul and the Church of the Gentiles* (Cambridge: CUP, 1939), 55-89, 111-24.

⁷ W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (London: SPCK, 1948, 1970), 147-76.

⁸ E. Schweizer, "Zum religionsgeschichtlichen Hintergrund der 'Sendungsformel' Gal. 4,4f., Rö. 8,3f., Jn 3,16f., 1Jn 4,9" *ZNW* 57 (1966), 199-210; Schweizer, "υἱός," *TDNT* 8.354-57; E. Schweizer, "Paul's Christology and Gnosticism" in *Paul and Paulinism: Essays in Honour of C. K. Barrett* (eds. M. D. Hooker *et al.*; London: SPCK, 1982), esp. 118-19.

interprets the Suffering Servant of Isaiah as one in whom pre-existent Wisdom dwells.⁹

M. Hengel attempted in 1975 to explain all of early Christian language about Jesus – and especially Paul’s – from Jewish wisdom traditions.¹⁰ Taking as his point of departure the title Son of God, Hengel examines the historical antecedents to what he calls “the thought-patterns involved with [the title Son of God]: pre-existence, mediation at creation and sending into the world.”¹¹ Hengel builds on Schweizer’s theory that the formula “God sent his Son” reflects Hellenistic Torah-Wisdom-Logos speculations¹² by adding his own explanation of the religio-historical background of other christological titles and confessional statements. His conclusion that “the question of the relationship of Jesus to other intermediary figures” was prompted by “the confession of the exaltation of Jesus as Son of Man and Son of God” and once the idea of pre-existence had been introduced, the attributes of Wisdom was automatically transferred to Jesus” was however essentially a revision of Davies’ explanation.¹³

S. Kim located the root of the identification of Jesus and wisdom in Paul’s own experience of the Damascus Christophany where he became convinced that Jesus is the “image of God” and the Son of God.¹⁴ While Hengel argued that Jewish identification of Wisdom and Torah led early Christians to identify Jesus with Wisdom and then with Torah, Kim reversed the chronological order of that identification by postulating the identification of Jesus with Torah first and then with Wisdom.

While accepting the influence of the Jewish wisdom tradition on Paul’s christology, J. D. G. Dunn challenged the majority view¹⁵ by arguing that

⁹ D. Georgi, “Der vorpaulinische Hymnus Phil 2,6-11” in *Zeit und Geschichte: Dankesgabe an Rudolf Bultmann zum 80. Geburtstag* (eds. E. Dinkler et al.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1964), 263-93.

¹⁰ M. Hengel, *The Son of God: the Origin of Christology and the History of Jewish-Hellenistic Religion* (London: SCM, 1976), originally published as *Der Sohn Gottes: Die Entstehung der Christologie und die jüdische-hellenistische Religionsgeschichte* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1975; rev. 1977).

¹¹ Hengel, *Son of God*, 57.

¹² On Schweizer’s hypothesis see §8.2.1.

¹³ Hengel, *Son of God*, 67, 72.

¹⁴ S. Kim, *The Origin of Paul’s Gospel* (WUNT 2/4; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981), 114-31, 257-60.

¹⁵ Those who discern the idea of Jesus’ pre-existence in Paul’s letters are among others: E. Schweizer, “Zur Herkunft der Präexistenzvorstellung bei Paulus” in *Neotestamentica* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1963), 105-9; R. Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-Existence, Wisdom, and the Son of Man*, 192 and passim; Hengel, *Son of God*, 48-51, 66-76; R. Riesner, “Präexistenz und Jungfrauengeburt” *TBei* 12 (1981), 185-86; Kim, *Origin*, 114-31, 257-60.

Paul's wisdom passages were not "intended to assert the pre-existence of Christ, or to affirm that Jesus was a divine being personally active in creation" but to speak about him as full embodiment of the creative and saving activity of God.¹⁶

However, some recent scholars seem to readily accept the majority view about wisdom influence on Paul's thought and build their own study into a possible relationship of wisdom with another particular tradition or motif in Jewish literature and Paul's letters. For example, while J. Davis examines the relationship between wisdom and the spirit in 1 Cor 1:18-3:20, E. J. Schnabel investigates the relationship between wisdom and the law in the writings of Ben Sira and Paul and draws his conclusion about Paul's ethical teaching.¹⁷ C. M. Pate, on the other hand, takes the same subject as Schnabel's monograph, but investigates how Paul employs the wisdom motif for the purpose of reversing the Deuteronomic curses and blessings.¹⁸

Despite such a strong appeal to the Jewish wisdom tradition lying behind Paul's theology or more specifically his christology, other scholars expressed their scepticism whether wisdom influence on Paul was as strong or single an influence, or whether it had direct influence on Paul's understanding of Christ as a personal being.

L. Cerfaux was the first scholar who expressed some reservations about the possibility of finding clear evidence of wisdom influence on Paul's christology. While accepting that Paul made allusions to wisdom texts and traditions, Cerfaux could find in each passage alternative interpretations to the one previously argued for. In his view, Paul nowhere specifically equates Jesus with the mythological figure of Wisdom, although he was certainly familiar with Jewish wisdom traditions and made use of those traditions to explain the nature of Christ.¹⁹

Approaching the issue from the argument of 1 Cor 2-3 itself rather than from the general question of christology U. Wilckens suggested on the basis of Gnostic references to the myth of Sophia that Paul's wisdom language does not derive directly from Jewish tradition about personified Wisdom, but indirectly from the Valentinian Gnostic language of the

¹⁶ J. D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: a New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (London: SCM, 1980, 1989), 176-96.

¹⁷ J. A. Davis, *Wisdom and Spirit: an Investigation of 1 Corinthians 1.18-3.20 Against the Background of Jewish Sapiential Traditions in the Greco-Roman Period* (Lanham; London: University Press of America, 1984); E. J. Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom From Ben Sira to Paul* (WUNT 2/16; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985).

¹⁸ C. M. Pate, *The Reverse of the Curse: Paul, Wisdom, and the Law* (WUNT 2/114; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

¹⁹ L. Cerfaux, *Christ in the Theology of St. Paul* (New York: Herder, 1959), 271, originally published as *Le Christ dans la théologie de Saint Paul* (Paris: du Cerf, 1952).

Corinthians, who *misused* σοφία as a title for Christ.²⁰ According to Wilckens, Paul responded to the Corinthians' faulty christology not by rejecting it altogether but redefining it. In other words, Paul is saying that Christ is the Wisdom of God, the Lord of Glory, but he is above all the Crucified (1 Cor 2:2).

About fifty years after Windisch's proposal, H. Conzelmann readdressed the question of Paul's relationship to the Jewish wisdom tradition from a completely different perspective, and suggested that in 1 Cor 2-3 Paul is using the vocabulary of the Corinthians and that his reworking of wisdom theology and wisdom traditions should be located within a school of Paul, located probably in Ephesus, where "wisdom" was methodically taught and discussed.²¹ In his discussion Conzelmann drew a distinction between wisdom and apocalyptic speculations.

In contrast to Conzelmann, R. Scroggs fused both wisdom and apocalyptic speculations into what he repeatedly referred to as "Jewish and Christian apocalyptic-wisdom theology," without providing any clear definition for that term.²²

R. G. Hamerton-Kelly, in his monograph on the concepts of pre-existence in the NT, examined all the passages formerly invoked in support of wisdom christology and a number of others and concluded that personified Wisdom did contribute to the early Christian understanding of Jesus, but it was Paul who modified that traditional christology substantially by means of Jewish apocalyptic categories.²³

Thus, the notion of pre-existence that Windisch and others had found in wisdom traditions Hamerton-Kelly discerns in apocalyptic literature as well.²⁴ In his view, those "entities" regarded as pre-existent in apocalyptic literature, such as The Son of Man in 4 Ezra, the law, the heavenly Jerusalem, and personified Wisdom, play a part in Paul's theology.²⁵ For Hamerton-Kelly, Paul does not see the wisdom of God primarily as Christ,

²⁰ U. Wilckens, *Weisheit und Torheit: eine exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu 1. Kor. 1 und 2* (BHT 26; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1959); see also his "σοφία" in *TDNT* 7.517-22; on criticisms of Wilckens's view, see E. E. Ellis, "'Wisdom' and 'Knowledge' in 1 Corinthians" in *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 45-62; R. Scroggs, "Paul: ΣΟΦΟΣ and ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙΚΟΣ" *NTS* 14 (1967-1968), 33-35; Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-Existence*, 112-19.

²¹ H. Conzelmann, "Paulus und die Weisheit" *NTS* 12 (1965-1966), 231-44.

²² Scroggs, "ΣΟΦΟΣ," 33-55.

²³ Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-Existence*, 195.

²⁴ Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-Existence*, 105: "the earliest Christian theology used the Jewish apocalyptic scheme of things existing in heaven before their eschatological manifestation."

²⁵ Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-Existence*, 106-7.

but as the whole apocalyptic plan of God for salvation.²⁶ Unlike Windisch, he sees wisdom and apocalyptic categories as working together in Paul's theology. Thus, the σοφία θεοῦ, far from being a christological title, is Paul's description of God's apocalyptic plan of salvation and his "identification" of Christ with the Wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24, 30) is simply his synecdochic shorthand (meaning "the whole is taken to signify its parts") for all the salvific blessings present and yet to be revealed (2:9).²⁷

In his 1974 essay A. van Roon presented a sharp criticism of any sort of wisdom christology in Paul and offered alternative religio-historical sources for Paul's language.²⁸ His examination of these wisdom passages led him to conclude that in his letters Paul is using "divine attributes for Christ and considers him equal to God. This opinion is consistent with his christology."²⁹ So for example, the phrase "and the rock was Christ" in 1 Cor 10:4 is not parallel to Wis 10:17 but is "a reapplication of the identification between God and the rock to Christ."³⁰ He also conjectured that behind those passages where attributes of God are applied by Paul to Christ lies Paul's "idea of the pre-existence of the Messianic Son of God" derived from Ps 110:3 and Mic 5:2.³¹

Convinced of the fact that Jewish apocalyptic language and thought play a substantial role in Paul's letters, E. E. Johnson examined how the different wisdom and apocalyptic elements function together in the largely apocalyptic argument of Romans 9-11.³² After an examination of the function of confluent apocalyptic and wisdom traditions in Jewish literature roughly contemporary to Paul (the Wisdom of Solomon, 1 Enoch, 4 Ezra, the Qumran documents, and 2 Baruch) she concluded that "although each of these documents is fundamentally either apocalyptic or sapiential in character, each makes use of material from both traditions."³³ In her view, the wisdom traditions in Rom 9-11 are not so prominent as the apocalyptic, and influence from wisdom texts and traditions are discernible

²⁶ Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-Existence*, 117.

²⁷ Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-Existence*, 115-17. Against Wilckens, he suggests that neither does Paul adopt any allegedly Gnostic terminology from the Corinthians nor are they themselves Gnostics; instead, they are influenced by a type of Philonic anthropology and mysticism (pp.114-23).

²⁸ A. van Roon, "The Relationship between Christ and the Wisdom of God according to Paul" *NovT* 16 (1974), 207-39.

²⁹ van Roon, "Relationship," 233.

³⁰ van Roon, "Relationship," 230.

³¹ van Roon, "Relationship," 234.

³² E. E. Johnson, *The Function of Apocalyptic and Wisdom Traditions in Romans 9-11* (SBLDS 109; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989).

³³ Johnson, *Function*, 55-109 (quotation from p.207).

in two passages (9:20-23; 10:6-8) and in the concluding wisdom hymn to God (11:33-36). Having established through the exegesis of the two chapters that Paul's argument in these chapters is substantially influenced not only by apocalyptic thought but by wisdom traditions as well, and that Paul modified the largely apocalyptic argument with elements from wisdom texts and traditions, Johnson draws the conclusion of her study in the following words:

this Pauline "modification" of apocalyptic thought is itself somewhat traditional. Even among some of the Jewish documents that define what it means to be apocalyptic, wisdom traditions in varying measures contribute to "modifications" of the ideal apocalyptic perspective. The use of sapiential traditions is obviously not the only variable in the diversity of Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature . . . But it is clear that wisdom language and motifs are one of the means available for expressing one's particular sense of apocalyptic reality.³⁴

Our survey of research into Paul's wisdom christology suggests that, while a great number of scholars today recognize that the Jewish wisdom tradition has exerted great influence upon Paul's presentation of his christology, the question whether his wisdom christology is to be understood as an explicit identification of Jesus with personified Wisdom or as speaking of Jesus in terms of Lady Wisdom is by no means settled.

1.1.2. John's Pre-existence Christology

Another area which has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention in recent decades is the relationship between early christology and Jewish monotheism and the concept of "divine agency" or "intermediary figures" in Second Temple Judaism.

As early as the beginning of the 20th century W. Bousset postulated the view that early Christianity was influenced by the Greco-Roman pagan religions.³⁵ He contended that Jewish monotheism had already been considerably compromised during the post-exilic period by the current speculations about chief angels and hypostatic beings. He believed that the erosion of Jewish monotheistic belief took place even before the flux of Gentile converts into Christianity which, at the same time, accelerated the same process by elevating Jesus into a divine status and by placing him alongside God as another object of faith.³⁶

³⁴ Johnson, *Function*, 211.

³⁵ W. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: Geschichte des Christusglaubens von den Anfängen des Christentums bis Irenaeus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913).

³⁶ W. Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums im späthellenistischen Zeitalter* (HNT 21; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1926), 302-357; also *idem*, *Kyrios Christos*.

The same issue was reviewed by J. D. G. Dunn, who asks "whether Christianity began as a departure from Jewish monotheism" or "was in fact a monotheistic faith from the beginning."³⁷ Having examined pre-Christian Jewish documents to see whether there was any concept or heavenly figure which could have constituted some kind of threat or compromise to Jewish monotheism, he comes to the conclusion that the language of personified divine attributes or any other "speculation about a being other than God" did not exercise any real threat to Jewish monotheism.³⁸

Dunn argues that the personifications of divine attributes such as Wisdom and Logos are "ways of speaking about *God* in his relation to the world" and "serve to express his immanence without compromising his transcendence."³⁹ In pre-Christian Judaism, Wisdom and Logos did not become a hypostasis or a being who existed independently apart from God, but remained a vivid metaphor for God's own attributes and activity.⁴⁰ He insists that even with growing speculations about exalted patriarchs or principal angels during the inter-testamental period Jewish monotheism was not in danger. On the contrary; the great number and majesty of the angelic hosts in Jewish apocalyptic speculations did not threaten God's sovereign authority, but rather enhanced it.⁴¹ In short, Dunn finds no clear evidence that pre-Christian Jewish monotheism was in any degree influenced or affected by speculations about divine attributes, exalted patriarchs or principal angels.

In Dunn's view, Paul applied the Wisdom category to Jesus (as in 1 Cor 1:24, 30; 8:6; 10:1-4; Rom 10:6-10; Col 1:15-20) and described the risen Christ as the full embodiment of God's Wisdom. Although it may be regarded as a significant step, it is still within the Jewish metaphorical usage. Paul and other early Christians cannot be said to have worshiped Jesus as God, since the development from Christian devotion of the exalted Christ towards "full-scale worship" was still on its way until the crisis came with the Fourth Gospel where the evangelist pushes the developing

³⁷ J. D. G. Dunn, "Was Christianity a Monotheistic Faith From the Beginning?" *SJT* 35 (1982), 303.

³⁸ Dunn, "Was Christianity," 321-22. Dunn observed one exception in "one strand of esoteric mysticism – a speculation involving the ancient idea of an angel in whom Yahweh had put his name, the man-like figure and the empty throne(s) of Daniel's vision, and the translated Enoch" (322).

³⁹ Dunn, "Was Christianity," 319.

⁴⁰ Dunn, *Christology*, 167, who acknowledges that the "tradition of (pre-existent) Wisdom has been influential at many points in NT christology."

⁴¹ Dunn, "Was Christianity," 309-13. Neither does he find any threat to Jewish monotheism in Philo or Josephus.

Wisdom speculation of early Christianity to a totally new dimension.⁴² In adapting what may have been a hymn on Logos/Wisdom within the bounds of Jewish metaphorical usage, the writer combines Wisdom christology and Son of God christology into one explicit christology of pre-existence and incarnation. Dunn concludes that a full-blown idea of pre-existence and incarnation of Jesus was limited to John's writings and that "for John Jesus was the incarnation *not* of the Son of God, but of *God* – God's self-revelation become flesh and blood."⁴³

M. Casey stands in basic agreement with Dunn that Jewish monotheism was not breached before Paul. He argues that Jesus' exaltation to divine status occurred after AD 70 when Jews in the Johannine community were expelled from the synagogue. Casey regards the repeated description of the people with whom Jesus disagrees as "the Jews" as clear evidence that the author of the Fourth Gospel and his community reflected a Gentile self-identification.⁴⁴ According to Casey, "John uses the term more than 60 times, and in the majority of cases it denotes opponents of Jesus, despite the fact that all Jesus' disciples at this stage were Jewish."⁴⁵ The continuous elevation of Jesus' status and functions during the first century was only limited by monotheism, one of the most important identity factors of the Jewish community. With Gentile self-identification the Johannine community removed the restraint of Jewish monotheism, and declared the deity and incarnation of Jesus. In this way, a "Jewish prophet" became a "Gentile God."⁴⁶

Without specifically linking to the question of Jewish monotheism J.-A. Böhner argues that the "sending" concept in John, the basis for his pre-

⁴² J. D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism, and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM, 1991), 205-206, 228-229.

⁴³ Dunn, *Partings*, 229.

⁴⁴ M. Casey, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God: the Origins and Development of New Testament Christology* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991), 27. In general terms, Casey denies the historical accuracy of the Johannine account and argues that the christology of the Fourth Gospel is the product of Johannine community; cf. also M. Casey, *Is John's Gospel True?* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996).

⁴⁵ Casey, *Jewish Prophet*, 27. For other interpretations, see R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (AB; London: Chapman, 1971), lxx-lxxiii; J. D. G. Dunn, "The Making of Christology: Evolution or Unfolding?" in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ: Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology* (J. B. Green et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 442-43; N. N. Hingle, *Jesus, a Divine Agent: Three Christological Comparisons Between the Gospels of Matthew and John* (Aberdeen Univ. Ph.D. dissertation, 1995), 15.

⁴⁶ Casey, *Jewish Prophet*. In his list of the eight identity factors "monotheism" becomes the controlling difference between acceptable and unacceptable christological claims.

Index of Authors

- Abelson, J. 82
 Adams, J. C. 221, 223
 Albl, M. C. 33, 211, 235
 Alexander, P. S. 245
 Allegro, J. M. 247
 Allen, L. C. 204, 205, 263, 264, 266, 267
 Allison, D. C. 137, 139, 147, 148, 149, 153, 167, 170, 177, 188, 192
 Anderson, H. 231, 232
 Anderson, K. 253
 Arens, E. 182, 183, 184, 185, 188, 195
 Arvedson, T. 139
 Aune, D. E. 282
 Aus, R. 163
- Balchin, J. F. 216
 Bammel, E. 158
 Barclay, J. M. G. 21, 304
 Barclay, W. 252
 Barker, M. 16, 21, 71, 75, 76
 Barr, J. 40, 63, 64, 88, 89, 94, 95, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126
 Barrett, C. K. 3, 192, 253, 297
 Barthélemy, D. 104, 248
 Bartsch, H. W. 305
 Bauckham, R. 13, 14, 19, 21, 23, 24, 25, 98, 140, 282
 Baumgarten, J. M. 160
 Bayer, H. F. 153, 156, 163
 Beare, F. W. 150, 197
 Beasley-Murray, G. R. 145
 Bellinger, W. H. 246, 255
 Bentzen, A. 111, 242
 Best, E. 169, 285, 286
 Betz, H. D. 301
 Betz, O. 232, 264, 266
 Bietenhard, H. 79, 257
 Black, M. 109
 Blenkinsopp, J. 52
- Blomberg, C. 120, 163
 Bock, D. L. 23, 24, 227, 228, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 253, 254, 255, 259, 261, 271
 Boman, T. 67
 Borgen, P. 69, 70
 Bornkamm, G. 144, 289, 293
 Boström, G. 48
 Bousset, W. 8, 26, 27, 38, 108, 111, 127, 207, 224, 225
 Box, G. H. 37, 40, 76
 Bretscher, P. 169, 172, 174, 175
 Briggs, C. A. 242
 Brooke, G. J. 145, 153, 159, 160, 247
 Brown, R. E. 10, 117, 147, 175, 235, 251, 267, 269
 Brown, W. P. 289
 Brownlee, W. H. 245
 Bruce, F. F. 223, 238, 253, 256, 275, 276, 277
 Büchsel, F. 274, 275
 Bühner, J.-A. 10, 11, 187
 Bultmann, R. 4, 26, 43, 121, 127, 137, 138, 139, 144, 147, 148, 149, 155, 182, 187, 189, 191, 313
 Burger, C. 229, 253, 265, 266
 Buss, M. F.-J. 253
 Byrne, B. 309
- Cadoux, A. T. 152
 Caird, G. B. 50, 272
 Callan, T. 203
 Carlston, C. E. 157, 187
 Carrell, P. R. 17, 18, 19, 20, 24, 68, 69, 93, 95, 96
 Casey, M. 10, 11, 12, 19, 28, 235
 Charlesworth, J. H. 23, 101, 145, 154, 156, 157, 163, 206, 208, 246, 294
 Chilton, B. D. 154, 160
 Christ, F. 45

- Clements, R. E. 80, 81, 257
 Coggins, R. J. 52
 Collins, J. J. 52, 55, 57, 97, 109, 114,
 145, 234, 248
 Colson, F. H. 70
 Conzelmann, H. 6, 43, 47, 52, 218, 285,
 286, 287, 288
 Craigie, P. C. 241, 242, 246
 Cranfield, C. E. B. 188, 269
 Crossan, J. D. 153
 Cullmann, O. 26, 27, 147, 148, 170,
 173, 229, 281

 Dahl, N. A. 19, 264, 266, 309, 310
 Dalman, G. H. 126, 144
 Daube, D. 230
 Davies, W. D. 3, 4, 137, 139, 147, 148,
 149, 153, 167, 170, 177, 188, 192,
 286, 289
 Davis, C. J. 78, 79, 282
 Davis, J. A. 5
 Davis, P. G. 94
 de Dinechin, O. 150
 de Jonge, M. 270
 de Lagarde, P. A. 108
 de Moor, J. C. 161
 de Vaux, R. 204
 Deissler, A. 242
 Derrett, J. D. M. 157
 Deutsch, C. 138
 Dey, L. K. K. 60
 Di Lella, A. A. 50, 51, 52, 53, 124
 Dibelius, M. 166
 Dillon, J. M. 56, 70
 Dix, G. 59
 Dodd, C. H. 31, 34, 73, 140, 155, 190
 Donaldson, T. L. 256, 257
 Dormandy, R. 158
 Duling, D. C. 266
 Dunn, J. D. G. 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 19,
 21, 24, 28, 41, 42, 44, 48, 52, 53, 58,
 60, 61, 62, 65, 68, 69, 72, 73, 74, 75,
 83, 89, 99, 100, 101, 109, 117, 124,
 133, 140, 144, 145, 155, 164, 167,
 178, 221, 237, 238, 251, 262, 263,
 264, 265, 269, 272, 275, 280, 281,
 283, 286, 290, 298, 299, 301, 303,
 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 310
 Dupont, J. 124, 203, 218, 253
 Durham, J. I. 89, 94, 265

 Dürr, L. 45, 63, 64, 66, 67

 Eaton, J. H. 242
 Eichrodt, W. 63, 87, 88, 89, 90
 Ellingworth, P. 221, 223, 276
 Ellis, E. E. 6, 249
 Evans, C. A. 118, 145, 146, 154, 158,
 160, 161, 162, 164, 193, 227, 247,
 248, 249

 Fee, G. D. 286, 288, 289, 290
 Feldmeier, R. 163
 Festugiere, A. J. 47
 Feuillet, A. 2, 287
 Ficker, R. 87
 Fieger, M. 153, 154
 Fitzmyer, J. A. 124, 125, 126, 138, 139,
 142, 145, 153, 193, 194, 198, 205,
 206, 227, 228, 247, 248
 Fleddermann, H. 198
 Fletcher-Louis, C. H. T. 17, 18, 20
 Flusser, D. 227, 257
 Foakes-Jackson, F. J. 252
 Fossum, J. E. 16, 17, 20, 43, 68, 72, 79,
 82, 83, 95
 France, R. T. 19, 118, 189, 192
 Frankowski, 216
 Freedman, D. N. 89, 95
 Fretheim, T. E. 65, 67
 Fuchs, E. 214
 Fuller, R. H. 26, 27, 119, 146, 170, 309,
 310
 Funk, R. W. 226
 Furness, J. M. 306

 García Martínez, F. 145
 Gärtner, B. 161
 Gathercole, S. J. 186, 188, 189, 193,
 194, 196
 Gese, H. 287
 Gibson, A. 39, 40
 Gieschen, C. A. 17, 20, 22, 24, 25, 38,
 43, 44, 45, 46, 58, 67, 68, 72, 79, 87,
 88, 90, 94, 95, 96, 99, 286
 Giles, P. 221, 223
 Gnilk, J. 152, 153, 170
 Goldberg, A. 38, 82, 104, 107, 110
 Goldsmith, D. 247, 271
 Goodenough, E. R. 73
 Gordis, R. 248

- Goulder, M. D. 147
 Gourgues, M. 203, 214
 Grässer, E. 273, 275
 Grether, O. 63, 64, 65, 79, 81
 Grundmann, W. 176
 Guelich, R. A. 169, 171, 172, 173
 Guillet, J. 150
 Gundry, R. H. 139, 140, 147, 148, 152,
 153, 163, 168, 171, 172, 177, 189,
 198, 229, 230
 Gunkel, H. 241, 256

 Haenchen, E. 157, 167, 253
 Hagner, D. A. 153, 192, 198, 199
 Hahn, F. 26, 27, 33, 139, 140, 144, 170,
 193, 224, 225, 266
 Hamerton-Kelly, R. A. 6, 7, 29, 289
 Hamp, V. 63
 Hannah, D. D. 17, 19, 75, 90, 91
 Hanson, A. T. 295, 299
 Harris, J. R. 31, 32
 Hawthorne, G. F. 306
 Hay, D. M. 32, 203, 205, 210, 211, 213,
 215, 216, 217, 218, 220, 228
 Hayman, P. 16, 21
 Hays, R. B. 292
 Hayward, R. 76
 Heidt, W. G. 87, 88
 Heinisch, P. 87
 Hengel, M. 1, 4, 21, 27, 33, 43, 47, 157,
 158, 192, 203, 205, 206, 207, 208,
 209, 210, 214, 215, 217, 219, 220,
 223, 235, 248, 286, 289, 300, 304,
 311
 Herzog, W. R. 159
 Hester, J. D. 159
 Hill, D. 177, 197
 Hingle, N. N. 10
 Hirth, V. 86, 87, 89, 95
 Hoffmann, P. 176
 Hooke, S. H. 204
 Hooker, M. D. 3, 120, 192, 297
 Hoover, R. W. 306
 Horbury, W. 2, 54, 100, 101, 102, 103,
 104, 105, 107, 110, 111, 113, 114,
 234, 244, 282
 Horsley, R. A. 285, 287
 Howard, G. 305
 Huffmon, H. B. 77
 Hultgren, A. J. 153, 154

 Hunter, A. M. 59, 142, 172
 Huntress, E. 250
 Hurst, L. D. 272, 299
 Hurtado, L. W. 1, 12, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21,
 25, 38, 39, 41, 42, 49, 58, 72, 76,
 269, 282
 Hyatt, J. P. 80

 Isaac, E. 23, 163, 169, 173, 208, 246

 Jacob, E. 18, 51, 55, 63, 64, 65, 74, 78,
 87, 104, 106, 291
 Jacobson, A. D. 176
 Jeremias, J. 28, 29, 80, 122, 123, 124,
 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131,
 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140,
 144, 146, 148, 153, 155, 156, 169,
 170, 171, 174, 182, 188, 189, 192,
 195, 197
 Jervell, J. 253
 Jewett, R. 262, 264, 265, 266
 Johnson, A. R. 79, 242
 Johnson, E. E. 7, 8, 291, 292, 293, 294,
 295, 296
 Johnson, L. T. 135
 Johnson, M. D. 141
 Juel, D. H. 32, 33, 34, 232, 247
 Jülicher, A. 155, 157

 Kaiser, W. C. 69, 82, 149, 214, 218,
 225, 289
 Käsemann, E. 119, 262, 265, 274, 275,
 290, 293, 312, 315
 Kayatz, C. 46, 47, 52
 Kazmierski, C. R. 171, 173, 233
 Kidner, D. 205
 Kilpatrick, G. D. 173
 Kim, S. 4, 208, 265, 266, 286, 292, 299,
 300, 301, 306
 Kimball, C. A. 163
 Kingsbury, J. D. 163
 Kinzer, M. S. 216
 Kissane, E. J. 205
 Klausner, J. 109, 229
 Klein, G. 195
 Kloppenborg, J. S. 55, 56, 57, 138, 162,
 176
 Klostermann, E. 138, 149, 151
 Knight, G. A. F. 63
 Knox, J. 281

- Knox, W. L. 3, 47
 Kramer, W. R. 265, 266, 311, 312
 Kraus, H. J. 111, 202, 204, 242, 243
 Kruse, H. 188
 Kuhn, H. B. 38
 Kim, S. 4, 5, 14, 218, 279, 280, 301, 307, 314, 315, 317, 322
 Kümmel, W. G. 27, 144, 145, 149, 155, 156, 157, 196

 Lagrange, M.-J. 147, 151, 186, 188
 Lake, K. 254
 Lambrecht, J. 153, 163, 218, 219
 Lane, W. L. 222, 277
 Larcher, C. 43, 55
 Levenson, J. D. 163
 Levey, S. H. 244
 Lindars, B. 31, 32, 34, 117, 155, 170, 229, 251
 Linnemann, E. 264, 265, 266, 269
 Linton, O. 222
 Llewelyn, S. R. 157
 Loader, W. R. G. 203, 273
 Lods, A. 88
 Lohfink, G. 214
 Lohmeyer, E. 146, 188, 226, 307
 Lohse, E. 189, 247, 257
 Longenecker, R. N. 253, 256, 298, 302, 304
 Lövestam, E. 117, 172, 174, 243, 250, 251, 253, 254, 255, 259, 260, 261, 275
 Lowe, M. 163
 Lührmann, D. 138, 289
 Luz, U. 138, 139, 218, 219, 289

 Mach, M. 86, 87, 101
 Mack, B. L. 47, 48, 56, 57
 MacNeill, H. L. 275
 Mann, C. S. 153
 Manson, T. W. 140, 150, 195, 196
 Marböck, J. 47, 52, 53
 Marcus, J. 153, 169, 170, 172, 174, 175, 176, 230, 267, 294
 Marcus, R. 43
 Marshall, I. H. 27, 28, 106, 129, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 145, 146, 148, 149, 150, 169, 171, 172, 173, 174, 191, 193, 195, 196, 198, 199, 206, 224, 225, 226, 228, 229, 230, 231, 237, 238, 268, 270, 271, 277, 293, 304, 306, 307, 308, 311, 312
 Martin, R. P. 33, 293, 307
 März, C. P. 195
 Mays, J. L. 207, 245
 McBride, S. D. 38, 83
 McConville, J. G. 81
 McKay, J. W. 241
 Meier, J. P. 118, 119, 144, 166, 167, 168, 273
 Meier, S. A. 87, 88, 94, 96
 Mell, U. 156, 157, 158, 163
 Ménégos, E. 274
 Mettinger, T. N. D. 80, 81, 83
 Metzger, B. M. 144, 152
 Michel, O. 274
 Milavec, A. 163
 Moffatt, J. 274
 Moore, G. F. 38, 76, 82, 127
 Morrice, W. G. 153, 154
 Moule, C. F. D. 238, 281
 Mowinckel, S. 109, 111, 241, 256
 Muñoz Leon, D. 38, 76
 Murphy, R. E. 43, 52, 53

 Newsom, C. A. 46, 49, 86, 89, 93, 95, 97
 Nicholson, E. W. 81
 Nickelsburg, G. W. E. 147
 Nikiprowetzky, V. 69
 Nolland, J. 106, 107, 142, 143, 150, 153, 193, 195, 227, 228, 230
 Norden, E. 139, 293, 294
 North, R. 157

 Oehler, G. 87
 Oesterley, W. O. E. 37, 40
 Olyan, S. M. 38, 39, 40, 93, 94, 97

 Page, S. H. T. 189, 190, 191
 Pate, C. M. 5, 286, 287, 302, 303
 Patterson, S. J. 153, 154, 159, 195
 Perdue, L. G. 46, 47, 48, 49, 50
 Pesch, R. 187, 192, 238, 253
 Peterson, D. 274, 275
 Petzoldt, M. 163
 Pfeifer, G. 37, 38, 39, 43, 67, 79
 Poythress, V. S. 262, 263
 Procksch, O. 63, 64
 Puech, É. 145

- Rainbow, P. A. 14, 19, 20, 21, 39, 299
 Ramsey, A. M. 228
 Rankin, O. S. 43
 Reese, J. M. 55, 56, 57, 285, 287
 Rehm, M. 205
 Reinbold, W. 232
 Rese, M. 253
 Richardson, H. N. 248
 Ringgren, H. 37, 40, 43, 45, 47, 48, 59,
 63, 67, 68, 79, 88
 Robinson, B. P. 147
 Robinson, J. A. T. 152, 272
 Robinson, J. M. 43, 119
 Rohling, A. 87
 Röttger, H. 87
 Rowland, C. 15, 16, 17, 20, 43, 96
 Runia, D. T. 69, 70, 72, 75
 Rylaarsdam, J. C. 69

 Sanders, E. P. 38, 82
 Sanders, J. T. 51, 306
 Sandmel, S. 45, 69
 Saydon, P. P. 242
 Schaper, J. 2, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112,
 113, 114, 207, 244, 282
 Schencke, W. 37, 40, 43
 Schierse, F. J. 274
 Schimanowski, G. 108, 109, 110, 111,
 113
 Schmidt, H. 242
 Schmidt, K. L. 121, 257
 Schnabel, E. J. 5, 287, 289, 295, 299
 Schnackenburg, R. 146
 Schneider, G. 225, 229, 230, 238, 253
 Schrage, W. 153
 Schramm, T. 152, 164
 Schuller, E. M. 125
 Schulz, S. 138, 149
 Schürmann, H. 149, 150, 151, 176, 191,
 195
 Schweizer, E. 3, 4, 28, 117, 149, 172,
 173, 197, 206, 251, 253, 264, 266,
 287, 297, 298, 299, 301, 302, 303,
 304, 309, 315
 Scott, B. B. 153, 157
 Scott, E. F. 272
 Scott, J. M. 262, 263, 264, 265, 266,
 267, 269, 270, 271, 300, 301, 302,
 303, 308, 309
 Scott, R. B. Y. 43

 Segal, A. F. 16, 17, 43, 71, 75, 96
 Sevrin, J. M. 153, 154
 Sheppard, G. T. 52, 54
 Sibinga, J. S. 152
 Sigal, P. 248
 Snodgrass, K. R. 152, 154, 157, 158,
 159, 161, 163, 164, 165
 Soards, M. L. 252
 Spicq, C. 274, 277, 306
 Stanton, G. N. 141, 252
 Stauffer, E. 147
 Steichele, H. J. 172, 174
 Stein, R. H. 118, 163
 Stern, D. 152, 163
 Stier, F. 93
 Strack, H. L. 205, 249
 Strathmann, H. 274
 Strauss, M. L. 141, 253, 254, 255, 258,
 259, 260, 261, 266, 313
 Strobel, A. 232
 Stuckenbruck, L. T. 17, 18, 21, 25
 Suggs, M. J. 141, 290, 291, 292

 Talbert, C. H. 59, 68, 305
 Taylor, V. 169, 226, 228, 231
 Theisohn, J. 206
 Theissen, G. 120
 Thiselton, A. C. 45, 63, 64, 67
 Thompson, J. W. 275
 Thompson, M. M. 29, 127, 128, 129,
 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136,
 179
 Tobin, T. H. 56
 Tournay, R. J. 111
 Turner, C. H. 173

 van der Woude, A. S. 79, 82, 87, 88
 van Iersel, B. M. F. 26, 117, 138, 144,
 155, 164, 226, 251, 270
 VanderKam, J. C. 101
 Vanhoye, A. 273, 274
 Vermes, G. 109, 123, 169, 247, 248
 Vielhauer, P. 149, 225
 Vögtle, A. 167
 Volz, P. 108, 110, 111, 112, 207
 von Harnack, A. 176, 196
 von Rad, G. 43, 44, 63, 79, 80, 81, 86,
 88, 90, 94

 Wallace, D. H. 306

- Wallace, D. P. 246
Walton, S. 252
Wanamaker, C. A. 265, 269, 306, 313
Watts, J. W. 245, 250
Webb, R. L. 166, 167, 168, 176, 177
Weinfeld, M. 79, 80
Weiser, A. 204, 243
Wendt, H. H. 253
Wengst, K. 264, 265, 269
Wenham, G. J. 86
Werner, M. 11
Westermann, C. 89, 90
Whitsett, C. G. 263, 264, 266, 267, 270, 271
Whybray, R. N. 43, 47
Wicks, H. J. 59
Wilckens, U. 5, 6, 7, 43, 253, 285, 293, 295
Williamson, R. 54, 60, 70, 71, 72, 277
Willis, J. 242, 243, 245
Wilson, I. 80, 81, 82
Wilson, R. M. 274
Winston, D. 54, 55, 56, 69, 70
Witherington, B. 29, 30, 123, 124, 127, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 140, 141, 143, 144, 155, 165, 175, 190, 191, 194, 196, 197, 198, 226, 227, 228, 230, 237, 252, 285, 287, 289, 292, 293, 299
Wolfson, H. A. 70, 71, 72, 73, 75
Wong, T. Y.-C. 306
Wright, G. E. 81
Wright, N. T. 19, 29, 40, 41, 49, 127, 153, 163, 238, 259, 265, 269, 287, 306, 307, 313
Wright, R. 246
Young, B. H. 163
Zimmerli, W. 82
Zimmermann, J. 145
Zorn, R. 214

Index of References

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis

1:26-27	306
3:5	306
4:26	78
12:8	78
13:4	78
15:1	65
15:4	65
16:7-16	87
21:33	78
21:8-19	87
22:2	169, 171, 173
22:9-18	87
22:12	171, 173
22:16	171, 173
26:25	78
31:10-13	87
31:13	71
32:22-32	87
48:15-16	87
49:10-12	32

Exodus

4:22	171
4:22-23	169
7:1	23
12:23	68
12:40	309
23:20-21	90, 92, 94, 95
32:34	90
33:1-3	90
33:2-3	90
33:19	78
34:5	78

Leviticus

18:5	292
------	-----

Numbers

16:22 LXX	101
24:17 LXX	32, 101, 102, 104, 105, 107

Deuteronomy

4:19	104
4:36	82
6:4-5	21
10:12	21
11:13	21, 77
11:22	77
12:5	82
12:11	82
14:23-24	82
16:11	82
18:5	78
18:7	78
18:22	78
19:9	77
21:5	78
26:36	82
30:6	77
30:12-14	290, 291
30:16	77
30:20	77
32:8-9 LXX	16

Joshua

22:5	77
23:11	77

Judges

2:1-5	92
5:31	107
6:11-24	87, 91
13:1-23	91

1 Samuel

15:10 65
17:45 78
20:42 78

2 Samuel

6:18 78
6:20 195
7:4 65
7:10-14 32, 247
7:11-14 247
7:12 267
7:12-14 265
7:14 247, 248, 271, 276
12:1-7 161
24:11 65
24:15-17 92

1 Kings

3:5-12 43
6:11 65
8:13 77
8:16 95
8:20 77
8:27 77
8:29 77, 95
9:3 95
13:20 65
18:24 78
18:32 78
19:7-9 92
22:16 78
22:19 104

2 Kings

1:3 92
1:15 92
2:24 78
5:11 78
17:28 77
19:35 91, 92

1 Chronicles

16:2 78
16:35 77
16:7 77
17:11 227
17:14 227
21:15-16 68
21:19 78

2 Chronicles

5:13 77
7:6 77
18:15 78
32:21 91, 92, 93
33:18 78

Esther

4:17r LXX 101

Job

11:14 43
28:12 44
28:12-28 291
28:23 44
28:25-26 44
28:27 44
41:3 295

Psalms

1:1 247
2:1-2 247, 249, 258
2:2 246
2:6 203, 242, 243, 255,
256, 258, 259, 260,
261, 269, 270, 278,
279, 280, 314, 321
2:6-8 258
2:7 28, 32, 34, 35, 36,
115, 118, 145, 167,
168, 169, 170, 171,
172, 173, 174, 175,
177, 180, 200, 201,
202, 239, 240, 241,
242, 243, 244, 247,
248, 249, 250, 251,
252, 253, 254, 255,
258, 259, 260, 261,
262, 264, 265, 266,
267, 268, 269, 270,
271, 274, 275, 276,
277, 278, 279, 281,
283, 284, 296, 297,
300, 305, 309, 313,
314, 315, 317, 318,
320, 321, 322
2:7-8 258
2:11-12 246
4:6 77
8:1 222

8:4	223		227, 228, 229, 230,
8:5-6	221		231, 232, 234, 235,
8:6	32, 33, 204, 216, 217,		236, 237, 239, 240,
	218, 219, 220, 221,		250, 256, 257, 258,
	222, 223, 239, 256,		261, 270, 279, 280,
	258, 276, 307, 321		283, 296, 297, 300,
8:6-8	222		305, 307, 309, 313,
8:7	218		314, 317, 320, 321
8:7a	222, 276	110:3	2, 7, 100, 102, 107,
8:9	222		111, 115, 207, 244,
9:12	77		258, 282
16:10	254, 255	110:4	275
20:1	78	113:1	77
22:1	128	115:5	65
30:5	77	115:11	77
33:6	66	118:10	78
33:8	77	118:11	78
33:21	77	118:12	78
43:3	43	118:22	153
54:1	79	118:22-23	155, 160, 163
54:6	79	118:26	78
54:6-7	82	122:4	77
54:8	77	129:8	78
57:3b	43	135:1	77
66:2	77	135:3	77
68:5	77	135:16	65
72:5 LXX	102, 107	138:2	77
72:17 LXX	102, 107, 109	140:14	77
72:19 LXX	108	142:8	77
75:1	78	147:15	66
80 (79):5 LXX	101	147:18	66
85:10-11	43	148:5	77
87:3	257	148:13	77, 79, 82
89:26-27	248	149:3	77
92:2	77		
96:6	43		
98:5	77	<i>Proverbs</i>	
99:3	77	1:20-22	49
102:16	77	1:20-33	45, 46, 47, 49
104:24	60	2:6	49
106:47	77	3:13-18	45
107:20	66	3:15	49
107:42	43	3:19	49, 56, 60
110:1	13, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36,	8:1-3	47
	118, 200, 201, 202,	8:1-11	46, 47
	203, 204, 205, 207,	8:1-21	49
	208, 210, 211, 212,	8:1-9:12	45
	213, 214, 215, 216,	8:4-11	47
	217, 219, 220, 221,	8:22-29	42
	223, 224, 225, 226,	8:22-31	45, 46, 47
		8:23	46

8:27-31	56	10:5	65
8:30	56	10:6	78
8:30a	47	10:12	60
8:32-36	46, 47	11:21	78
18:10	79, 82	20:9	66
30:3-4	292	23:5 LXX	105
<i>Isaiah</i>		23:5-6	227
5:1-7	160, 161	23:29	66
5:2	155	26:9	78
9:1 LXX	102, 107	26:16	78
9:2-7	227	26:20	78
9:5 (6) LXX	102	30:9	227
9:5	195	31:9	134
9:7	65	33:15	227
11:1-2 LXX	102	33:15-17	247, 249
11:1-9	227	33:22	227
12:5	77	44:16	78
14:12 LXX	107	50:6	198
24:15	78	<i>Lamentations</i>	
26:4	77	4:20 LXX	102, 103
30:26 LXX	107	<i>Ezekiel</i>	
30:27	78	1:26-28	15
35:10	43	8:2-4	15
40:13	295	34:23-24	194, 227
42:1 LXX	167, 168, 169, 170, 171	37:24	227
43:3-4	192, 193, 194	<i>Daniel</i>	
45:20-25	21	10:5-6	15
46:10	146	12:3	107, 112
48:1	78	2:37-38	143
50:10	77, 78	7:10-14	97
51:9	43	7:13	15, 223, 231, 232, 236, 237
52:13	192	7:14	143
53:10	192	7:9-11 LXX	208
53:11	192	7:9-14	205
53:12	192	<i>Hosea</i>	
55:3	254, 255	3:5	227
55:10-11	66	6:5	65
56:6	77	11:1	308
58:8 LXX	107	<i>Joel</i>	
58:10 LXX	106, 107	2:26	77, 82
59:19	77	3:5	78
60:1-3 LXX	107	<i>Amos</i>	
60:2 LXX	107	4:13 LXX	102, 103
60:3 LXX	107		
<i>Jeremiah</i>			
5:14	66		
7:12	95		

9:11	227, 247, 249	15:24	181, 194, 197, 198, 298, 310
<i>Micah</i>		16:13-20	147, 148
4:5	78	16:17	147, 177
5:1	2	16:17-19	147
5:2	7, 100	19:28	149, 210
<i>Zephaniah</i>		20:28	189
3:12	77	21:32	186
3:9	78	22:44	210, 211, 223
<i>Zechariah</i>		23:34-36	141
12:10	232	25:11	224
14:7	146	25:31	210
3:1-5	92	25:37	224
3:9 LXX	105	25:44	224
6:12 LXX	32, 102, 105	26:39	167
9:1	65	26:64	210, 211
		27:63-64	233
<i>Malachi</i>		<i>Mark</i>	
1:11	82	1:1	28, 234
2:6-7	18	1:9-11	166, 318
3:20 LXX	105, 107	1:11	168, 170, 268, 279, 318
3:22	183	1:38	181
NEW TESTAMENT		2:17	132, 181, 187, 319
<i>Matthew</i>		2:18-20	224
3:17	168, 177	3:11	234
5:17	300	3:16	147
6:9	129	3:28-29	167
7:14	195	5:7	28, 234
7:21	224	7:13	142
7:22	224	8:27	228
10:6	197	8:34	228
10:34	194-196	9:7	28, 268
10:40	198	9:12-13	186
10:41	188	9:16	228
11:13	300	9:33	228
11:16-19	141	9:37	181, 197, 198, 298, 310
11:25-27	28, 129, 135, 136, 137, 143, 167	10:33	228
11:27	141, 146, 148, 177	10:35-45	191
12:18	171, 172	10:38b	194
12:27-28	167	10:42-45	191
12:31-32	167	10:45	181, 189, 190, 191, 192, 300, 319
12:42	141	12:1-12	151, 161, 177, 231
13:30	196	12:1-9	162, 270
13:43	107, 112, 188	12:5	158
13:49	188	12:6	298, 310
		12:7	161

- | | | | |
|-------------|--|-------------|--------------------|
| 12:29-30 | 21 | 19:10 | 132, 192 |
| 12:35-37 | 204, 207, 225, 227,
230, 231, 237, 240,
321 | 19:19 | 319 |
| 12:36 | 210, 211, 217, 223 | 20:42-43 | 210, 211, 223 |
| 12:37 | 230 | 22:24-27 | 191 |
| 12:43 | 228 | 22:27 | 189 |
| 13:30 | 144 | 22:28-30 | 149 |
| 13:32 | 28, 144, 146, 177 | 22:29 | 149, 177 |
| 14:24 | 190, 192 | 22:42 | 167 |
| 14:36 | 126, 128, 135, 142,
167 | 22:69 | 210, 211 |
| 14:61-62 | 224, 232 | <i>John</i> | |
| 14:62 | 204, 209, 210, 211,
225, 226, 228, 231,
232, 235, 237, 240,
321 | 1:1-18 | 42 |
| 15:34 | 128 | 1:3 | 276 |
| 15:39 | 234 | 1:14 | 173 |
| 16:19 | 210, 211 | 1:18 | 143, 173 |
| <i>Luke</i> | | 1:32-34 | 168 |
| 1:54 | 171 | 1:34 | 169, 171, 174, 177 |
| 1:69 | 171 | 1:42 | 147 |
| 1:78-79 | 105, 106, 107 | 3:16 | 173, 270, 313 |
| 3:22 | 171, 175, 259 | 3:16-17 | 301, 322 |
| 4:6 | 142 | 3:17 | 3, 177, 270, 284 |
| 4:16-21 | 167 | 3:18 | 173 |
| 4:18 | 298, 310 | 5:23 | 199 |
| 7:22 | 228 | 5:6 | 144 |
| 7:31-35 | 141 | 6:6 | 144 |
| 9:35 | 171, 259 | 7:12 | 233 |
| 9:48 | 198 | 7:47 | 233 |
| 9:54 | 196 | 8:14 | 144 |
| 10:16 | 199, 298, 310 | 9:3 | 144 |
| 10:21-22 | 129, 135, 136, 137,
167 | 11:11-15 | 144 |
| 10:22 | 141, 146, 148 | 12:44-45 | 199 |
| 11:2 | 129, 142 | 13:1-3 | 144 |
| 11:19-20 | 167 | 13:11 | 144 |
| 11:31 | 141 | 13:20 | 199 |
| 12:10 | 167 | 14:9 | 143 |
| 12:49 | 181, 319 | 20:23 | 147 |
| 12:49-50 | 194 | <i>Acts</i> | |
| 12:49-51 | 194-196 | 1:9-11 | 224 |
| 12:51 | 181, 188, 319 | 2:22 | 238 |
| 13:34-35 | 141 | 2:24 | 253, 254 |
| 14:14 | 188 | 2:30-36 | 228 |
| 16:16 | 300 | 2:32 | 253, 254 |
| 19:9-10 | 197 | 2:33 | 210, 212, 213 |
| | | 2:34-35 | 210, 211, 234 |
| | | 2:36 | 238 |
| | | 3:13 | 171 |
| | | 3:20-21 | 224 |
| | | 3:22 | 253 |
| | | 3:26 | 171, 253 |

4:10	254	10:6-8	8
4:25	171	10:6-9	3
4:25-26	258	10:13	282
4:27	171	11:21-32	296
4:30	171	11:28-32	296
5:30	254	11:33-36	8, 292
5:31	210, 212, 213	11:34-35	295
7:37	253	15:7-9	269
7:55-56	210, 212	15:8-9a	266
7:59-60	282	15:12	266
9:14	282		
9:21	282	<i>1 Corinthians</i>	
10:38	238	1:2	282
10:40	254	1:9	311
10:42	270	1:24	7, 9, 285
13:16-41	252	1:24-30	289
13:23-31	253	1:30	7, 9, 285
13:23-39	228	2:2	6
13:30	254	2:6-16	286
13:32-33	247, 253	2:9	7
13:33	28, 171, 249, 252, 258, 268, 270, 283, 322	3:13	196
13:34	253	8:5-6	42, 224
17:31	253, 270	8:6	9, 287, 298, 310
22:16	282	10:1-4	9
		10:1-13	308
		10:4	7, 288, 310
		10:21-22	289
<i>Romans</i>		11:2	142
1:2-4	228	11:23	142
1:3	311, 312	15:3-7	34
1:3-4	28, 242, 258, 262, 283, 303, 322	15:24	133
1:4	254, 311	15:24-28	256, 258
1:9	311	15:25	210, 211, 213
1:17	188	15:25-27	216, 217, 219, 223, 283
4:1	269	15:27	307
5:8-11	313	15:28	213, 311
6:4	133	15:45-49	305
8:2	311	16:22	224
8:3	3, 177, 305, 307, 310		
8:3-4	270, 284, 299, 301, 312, 322,	<i>2 Corinthians</i>	
8:15-16	129	1:18-19	311
8:29	307, 311	1:3	133
8:32	311, 313	12:2-10	282
8:34	210, 211, 213, 214, 215, 234, 283	3:17	290
9:3	269	3:18	307
9:20-23	8	5:10	210
10:5-8	290, 291	6:10	307
		8:9	305, 310

Galatians

1:15-16	311
1:15-18	147
2:19-20	313
3:17	309
3:23-25	309
4:1-2	309
4:1-7	300
4:4	177, 270, 307
4:4-5	284, 297, 298, 301, 302, 307, 311, 312, 322
4:4-6	299, 303, 304, 305, 314
4:4-7	3, 297, 298
4:6	129
4:9	309
4:25	290
4:26	256

Ephesians

1:19-21	3
1:20	210, 211, 213, 234
1:20-22	216, 217, 219, 223
1:22	307
2:4-10	216
4:9	290
4:13	307
4:24	307
5:2	313
5:25	313

Philippians

2:11b	294
2:6	306
2:6-11	3, 305, 310, 311, 312
2:6-7	308
2:7	306
2:9-11	238, 239
3:21	218, 307

Colossians

1:13-20	313
1:15-17	298, 310
1:15-20	3, 42
1:16	276
1:18	254
3:1	210, 211, 213, 214, 215, 234
3:10	307

1 Thessalonians

1 Thess 1:10	311
--------------	-----

1 Timothy

1:15	192
2:5-6	191

2 Timothy

2:8	267
-----	-----

Hebrews

1:1-3	42
1:1-4	158
1:2	222, 272
1:2-3	216, 277
1:3	210, 211, 213, 234
1:3-14	228
1:4	222
1:4-2:9	276
1:5	171, 247, 258, 259, 267, 271, 268, 322
1:5-13	272, 274
1:13	210, 211, 213, 219, 222, 234
2:6-9	219
2:8	222
2:8-9	221, 223, 307
2:11-13	274
5:5	258, 259, 268, 271, 322
5:5-6	275
5:8	274, 276
8:1	210, 211, 213, 234
10:12	213, 234
10:12-13	210, 211
12:2	210, 212, 213, 234
12:9	101
12:22	256, 257

James

5:16	188
------	-----

1 Peter

2:21-24	190
3:18-22	220
3:22	210, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 219, 220, 223

<i>1 John</i>		14:3	124
1 3:7	188	15:3	287
1 4:10	177	18:14-16	68
1 4:14	177	18:15-16	83
1 4:9	3,177, 270, 284, 301, 322		
<i>Revelation</i>		<i>Sirach</i>	
1:5	254	1:4	287
2:27	129	1:8-9	46
3:21	129, 210, 212	16:26	53
3:5	129	18:1	53
19:10	25	18:2	53
22:9	25	18:4	53
22:16	104	23:1	124
		23:4	124
		23:14	195
		24:1-23	50
DEUTERO-CANONICAL BOOKS		24:3	56
		24:4	56
<i>Tobit</i>		24:5	292
12:18	25	24:5-11	60
		24:20	158
<i>Wisdom of Solomon</i>		24:23	52
7:15-17	287	24:25	52
7:15-22	56	36:13	257
7:22	56	39:14-16	294
7:22-8:1	54	51:10	124
7:22b-23	54		
7:24	56	<i>Baruch</i>	
7:25-26	55, 56	3:9-4:4	43, 53
7:26	287	3:29-30	290, 291
8:1	287		
8:4	287	<i>1 Maccabees</i>	
8:6	56	6:24	158
8:7	287	14:41	205
9:1-2	69		
9:4	23, 56	<i>3 Maccabees</i>	
9:10	23, 56	6:3	124, 142
9:10-17	3, 297, 298, 299, 303	6:8	124, 142
10:1-2	55		
10:5	55	<i>4 Maccabees</i>	
10:6-8	55	18:24	294
10:9-12	55		
10:10	287	OLD TESTAMENT PSEUDEPIGRAPHA	
10:13-14	55		
10:15-12:11	55	<i>1 Enoch</i>	
10:17	7	16:7	112
10:17-18	289	22:14	294
11:4	289	39:7	112
11:17	43	42:1	2
12:12-19:22	55	42:1-2	59

- | | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|------------------------------|---------------|
| 46:1 | 111 | <i>4 Ezra</i> | |
| 46:2-4 | 234 | 4:40-42 | 254 |
| 46:5 | 24, 247 | 4:44-52 | 146 |
| 48:2 | 2, 234 | 4:51-52 | 146 |
| 48:2-3 | 109 | 7:26 | 257 |
| 48:3 | 107 | 8:52 | 257 |
| 48:5 | 24 | 10:25-28 | 257 |
| 48:6 | 2, 111 | 10:38-59 | 257 |
| 49:3 | 2 | | |
| 49:4 | 2 | <i>Apocalypse of Abraham</i> | |
| 51:3 | 24, 208, 210 | 10:8 | 97 |
| 53:6 | 257 | 18:11-14 | 97 |
| 55:4 | 208, 209 | | |
| 60:2-6 | 97 | <i>Ezekiel the Tragedian</i> | |
| 61:8 | 209, 210 | 68-69 | 23 |
| 61:9-13 | 97 | | |
| 62:2 | 24 | <i>Psalms of Solomon</i> | |
| 62:2-3 | 209 | 17:4 | 267 |
| 62:3 | 209, 210 | 17:21 | 146 |
| 62:5 | 24, 210, 234 | 17:21-24 | 246 |
| 62:6 | 24 | 17:23 | 114, 227, 267 |
| 62:7 | 111, 233, 234 | 17:30-31 | 246 |
| 62:9 | 24, 234 | 17:33 | 257 |
| 62:14 | 234 | 17:47 | 114 |
| 63:11 | 234 | | |
| 63:5 | 210 | <i>Pseudo-Philo</i> | |
| 69:27 | 24, 210, 234 | 18:6 | 97 |
| 69:29 | 24, 210, 234 | | |
| 70:1 | 234 | <i>Sibylline Oracles</i> | |
| 71:14 | 234 | 2:241-45 | 212 |
| 71:17 | 234 | 2:243 | 213 |
| 77:2 | 233 | 6:1-2 | 210 |
| 84:2-3 | 23 | | |
| 90:28-29 | 257 | <i>Testament of Job</i> | |
| 92:1 | 2 | 33:3 | 205 |
| 93:11-14 | 294 | | |
| 104:1 | 107 | <i>Testament of Levi</i> | |
| 104:2 | 112 | 18.3-4 | 107 |
| | | | |
| <i>2 Baruch</i> | | QUMRAN TEXTS | |
| 4:2-6 | 257 | | |
| 21:8 | 146 | 1QH | |
| 32:2 | 257 | 7:26-33 | 294 |
| 59:4 | 257 | 10:3-7 | 294 |
| 75:1-5 | 294 | | |
| | | 1QS | |
| <i>2 Enoch</i> | | 1QS 9:11 | 186 |
| 20:4-21:1 | 97 | 11:15 | 294 |
| 55:2 | 257 | | |

1QSa		JOSEPHUS	
1:11-13	257	<i>Antiquities of the Jews</i>	
2:11-12	246, 248	1.155-56	25
2:14	186	5.112	22
1QM		8.359-60	158
12.1-2	257	<i>The Jewish War</i>	
4Q246		2.249	158
	145	PHILO	
4Q372		<i>Agr.</i>	
1.16	125	51	69
4Q375		<i>Conf.</i>	
	233	60-3	105
4Q376		63	69
	233	96f.	74
4Q400		146	69, 105
2	101	146-147	75
5	101	<i>Cong.</i>	
4Q491		12f.	60
	234	<i>Dec.</i>	
4Q500		65	22, 71
1	159	<i>Det.</i>	
4QFlor		115-8	289
1:7-13	247	117	60
1:10-12	246	124	60
1:10-13	267	160	70
1:10-14	139, 145	160-62	23
1:11-13	227, 256	<i>Deus</i>	
1:18-19	247, 267	182	69
4QShirShab		<i>Ebr.</i>	
	257	44	74
11QMel		132	72
2.18	234	157	73
CD		<i>Fug.</i>	
19:10-11 (B)	186	97	60
		101	74
		<i>Her.</i>	
		119	72
		127	59

205	69	1.227-30	69
205-206	75	1.228-230	71
280	72	1.239	74
		1.239-40	69
		2.242	60
<i>Leg. All.</i>		<i>Qu. Ex.</i>	
1.64f.	60	2.67	74
1.65	60		
2.1	70	<i>Qu. Gen.</i>	
2.82	60	1.4	105
2.86f.	60, 289	2.62	69, 75
3.3	59	4.110-11	69
3.46	59		
3.52	60	<i>Spec. Leg.</i>	
3.99	61	1.32-50	74
3.177	69	4.75	60
<i>Mos.</i>			
1.155-62	23	EARLY CHRISTIAN LITERATURE	
2.127-29	73		
<i>Mut.</i>		<i>1 Clement</i>	
15	74	36:5	215
87	69	36:5-6	212
<i>Op.</i>		<i>Ascension of Isaiah</i>	
16-25	72	8:5	25
16-44	73	10:14	212
20	73	11:32	212
36	72	<i>Didache</i>	
<i>Post.</i>		9.2-3	171
136-8	60	<i>Epistle of Barnabas</i>	
<i>Praem.</i>		12:10-11	212
45	74	Eusebius's <i>Demonstratio Evangelica</i>	
<i>Prob.</i>		3, 3, 1-4	233
13	60	3, 6, 1	233
117	60	Eusebius's <i>Historia ecclesiastica</i>	
<i>Sac.</i>		4, 6, 2	104
9-10	23	<i>Excerpt of Theodotus</i>	
64	61	62.1-2	212
80-3	73	Justin Martyr's <i>1 Apology</i>	
<i>Som.</i>		31	104
1.66	72	Justin Martyr's <i>Dialogue with Trypho</i>	
1.102-14	73	45.4	107
1.157	75		

69.7	233	<i>m. Sukkah</i>	
76.7	107	2.9	183, 186
108.2	233	<i>m. Demai</i>	
106.4	105	2.3	184
Origen's <i>Contra Celsum</i>		<i>m. Hull.</i>	
1:23-24	22	9.5	184
1.68	233	<i>m. Maas.</i>	
1.71	233	5.5	184
Polycarp's <i>Epistle to the Philippians</i>		<i>m. Hall.</i>	
2.1	212, 216, 217, 220, 223	3.4	184
GNOSTIC TEXTS		<i>m. Peah</i>	
<i>Apocryphon of James</i> (NHC I, 2)		4.8	184
14:30-31	212	The <i>Palestinian Talmud</i>	
<i>Apocalypse of Peter</i> (NHC, VII, 3)		<i>Shab.</i>	
6	212	18b	184
<i>Gospel of Thomas</i> (NHC, II, 2)		116ab	185
63-65	154	<i>Berak</i> 58a	185
65	152, 153, 154	The <i>Babylonian Talmud</i>	
66	153	<i>b. Ber.</i>	
RABBINIC TEXTS		9b	245
The <i>Mishnah</i>		<i>b. 'Erub.</i>	
<i>m. Ber.</i>		54b	233
5.5	199	<i>b. Hag.</i>	
7.3	233	14a	234
<i>m. Ed.</i>		<i>b. Meg.</i>	
8.7	183, 184, 186	31b	233
<i>m. Shab.</i>		<i>b. Pesah.</i>	
16.6	183	54a	107
<i>m. Ned.</i>		<i>b. Šabb.</i>	
10.7	183	88b	233
<i>m. Sanh.</i>		<i>b. Sanh.</i>	
7.4	233	38b	234
8.1	184	43a	233
<i>m. Sotah</i>		96b-97a	249
1.6	183		

99a	146	<i>Sifre Numbers</i>	
<i>b. Ta'an.</i>		112	233
23b	123	TARGUMIM	
34b	122	<i>Tg. Isa.</i>	
<i>b. Yebam.</i>		53:12	192
105b	233	<i>Tg. Job</i>	
<i>Exodus Rabbah</i>		5:8	233
15.6	101	<i>Tg. Mal.</i>	
<i>Mekilta on Exodus</i>		2:10	123
14:31	199	<i>Tg. Ps.</i>	
16:28-36	146	72:17	107
18:12	199	89:27	123, 124
<i>Midrash on Psalms</i>		118:19-27	161
2.9	250		
<i>Pesiqta Rabbati</i>			
36.12	104		

Index of Subjects

- Abba, 28, 29, 35, 116, 122, 123, 124,
125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131,
132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 139, 142,
146, 178, 179, 201, 318
- Adam christology, 221, 298, 299, 301,
305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310
- Adoptionist christology, 264, 276
- Angel of the Lord, 16, 17, 43, 87, 90,
95, 317
- Angelomorphic christology, 2, 18, 45
- Baptismal theophany, 136, 168, 178,
180, 278, 318
- Blasphemy, 209, 233, 236
- Confessional formula, 263, 268, 271
- Criteria of authenticity, 118, 188
- Deuteronomistic History, 80
- Divine agency, 2, 8, 13, 14, 18, 47, 201,
320
- Divine hypostasis, 37, 39, 40, 44, 45,
46, 48, 50, 51, 53, 54, 55, 58, 59, 61,
62, 68, 69, 72, 75, 77, 82, 95, 286
- Divine identity, 2, 13, 25, 196, 314
- Divine mission, 34, 35, 36, 115, 165,
181, 187, 190, 198, 200, 201, 280,
281, 283, 284, 296, 297, 298, 300,
305, 309, 310, 313, 314, 315, 319,
322
- Divine Name, 16, 42, 82, 90
- Divine sonship, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30,
34, 35, 36, 115, 117, 120, 146, 151,
155, 165, 167, 168, 172, 178, 179,
180, 181, 200, 201, 202, 240, 241,
243, 250, 251, 255, 258, 259, 260,
261, 263, 266, 267, 269, 270, 271,
276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 283,
284, 296, 297, 298, 300, 305, 309,
310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 318,
319, 320, 321, 322
- Divine Wisdom, 2, 3, 41, 42, 277, 299,
300, 303, 314
- Enochic Son of Man, 24, 206, 208, 210
- Enthronement, 14, 24, 34, 46, 171, 172,
178, 203, 204, 206, 211, 241, 242,
256, 258, 275, 281, 313, 314
- Exaltation, 3, 4, 10, 21, 24, 32, 202,
203, 204, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213,
214, 215, 216, 217, 219, 220, 222,
223, 224, 225, 235, 237, 238, 239,
251, 255, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261,
266, 269, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276,
277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 305, 313,
320, 321
- Exalted angels, 15, 24, 35, 85, 99, 115,
317
- Father language, 29, 127, 130, 131, 132,
133, 134, 136, 179
- God as Father, 29, 30, 122, 127, 128,
129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 135, 142,
281
- God-given mission, 181, 182, 187, 189,
193, 194, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200,
319, 320
- Heavenly Jerusalem, 6, 256, 258, 261,
270, 279, 321
- Hypostasis, 9, 13, 22, 35, 38, 39, 41, 42,
43, 48, 53, 54, 58, 62, 67, 75, 76, 78,
80, 82, 83, 84, 88, 299, 317
- Incarnation, 10, 11, 42, 99, 222, 274,
276, 292, 298, 303, 305, 307, 315
- Inspiration, 65, 103, 229, 235, 303, 304

- Intermediary beings, 4, 8, 12, 13, 14,
 15, 17, 22, 23, 24, 25, 38, 79, 85, 98,
 99, 317
- Jewish angelology, 11, 17, 18, 19, 20,
 21, 87, 317, 322
- Jewish monotheism, 1, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12,
 14, 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 25, 41, 72
- Jewish wisdom language, 62, 284
- Josephus, 9, 21, 22, 25, 70, 158
- Literary personification, 39, 42, 43, 56,
 58, 62, 69, 284
- Logos, 9, 10, 41, 47, 48, 56, 57, 59, 60,
 61, 62, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75,
 76, 87, 105, 272, 287, 304
- Memra, 62, 75, 76
- Messiahship, 133, 172, 174, 178, 180,
 187, 202, 229, 259, 266, 271, 279,
 318, 322
- Messianic psalms, 34, 35, 36, 118, 203,
 219, 223, 244, 258, 280, 284, 296,
 305, 315, 320, 322
- Messianic sonship, 146, 151, 175, 178,
 279
- Metaphorical language, 34, 49, 67, 72,
 280
- Moses typology, 308
- Name of God, 16, 22, 24, 35, 37, 40, 42,
 43, 72, 77, 79, 82, 83, 84, 94, 95, 96,
 317
- Parables, 154, 155, 159, 162, 164, 237
- Personifications, 9, 13, 24, 45, 48, 67
- Personified divine attributes, 9, 12, 24,
 25, 35, 37, 39, 40, 42, 44, 49, 84, 85,
 115, 317
- Philo, 3, 9, 17, 19, 22, 23, 39, 44, 45,
 55, 56, 59, 60, 61, 62, 69, 70, 71, 72,
 73, 74, 75, 76, 87, 105, 275, 277,
 287, 289, 298, 299
- Pre-Christian Judaism, 9, 12, 15, 17, 20,
 41, 99, 100, 101, 115, 204, 208, 226,
 244, 271
- Pre-existence, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 28,
 36, 42, 100, 101, 103, 105, 106, 107,
 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115,
 116, 117, 118, 143, 179, 182, 186,
 187, 188, 193, 194, 196, 199, 200,
 201, 203, 238, 239, 251, 262, 265,
 275, 276, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283,
 284, 286, 287, 290, 296, 297, 298,
 299, 302, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308,
 309, 310, 311, 313, 314, 315, 317,
 318, 319, 320, 321, 322
- Pre-existent messiah, 35, 85, 100, 101,
 103, 107, 110, 114, 115, 201, 207,
 282, 317, 320
- Pre-existent Son, 3, 34, 35, 36, 115,
 117, 165, 180, 181, 201, 240, 280,
 284, 288, 296, 297, 300, 309, 311,
 313, 314, 315, 317, 319, 322
- Pre-existent Wisdom, 4, 286, 293, 296,
 297, 303
- Pre-Pauline confession, 283, 303
- Pre-Pauline formula, 270, 315
- Principal angels, 9, 12, 13, 16, 24, 35,
 44, 94, 98, 99, 115, 317
- Resurrection, 1, 12, 21, 27, 28, 33, 34,
 117, 147, 148, 200, 201, 202, 203,
 212, 214, 215, 217, 219, 224, 237,
 238, 239, 240, 241, 251, 252, 253,
 254, 255, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261,
 264, 266, 267, 268, 269, 272, 275,
 276, 279, 280, 281, 313, 314, 320,
 321, 322
- Right hand of God, 24, 34, 115, 202,
 203, 204, 208, 209, 210, 212, 213,
 214, 216, 218, 220, 224, 237, 239,
 255, 257, 258, 260, 269, 279, 280,
 281, 283, 297, 320, 321
- Royal Messiah, 28, 117, 267
- Second Moses, 308, 309
- Self-consciousness, 26, 28, 29, 30, 34,
 35, 36, 115, 117, 120, 135, 143, 146,
 151, 155, 165, 172, 173, 178, 179,
 180, 181, 193, 194, 197, 198, 199,
 200, 201, 241, 251, 259, 271, 278,
 280, 281, 283, 284, 296, 297, 300,
 310, 313, 315, 318, 319, 320, 322
- Sending formula, 3, 284, 297, 298, 299,
 302, 309, 315
- Son of David, 28, 207, 225, 226, 227,
 228, 229, 230, 231, 265, 267, 270,
 271
- Son of God, 4, 7, 10, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30,
 34, 35, 100, 116, 117, 139, 142, 145,

- 156, 157, 169, 171, 173, 174, 175,
180, 186, 202, 208, 212, 214, 226,
228, 232, 233, 235, 248, 250, 253,
254, 258, 260, 262, 263, 264, 265,
266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 275,
276, 277, 278, 279, 283, 286, 289,
297, 299, 300, 303, 306, 308, 309,
311, 312, 313, 318, 320, 322
Son of Man, 2, 4, 15, 18, 23, 24, 100,
109, 150, 204, 206, 208, 209, 210,
217, 221, 222, 223, 234, 235, 237,
246, 281, 289
Suffering Servant, 4, 190, 192, 193
Testimonia, 31, 32, 33, 234
Torah, 3, 4, 41, 49, 51, 52, 53, 55, 61,
70, 138, 185, 247, 291, 292, 293,
299, 314
Wisdom christology, 10, 42, 277, 280,
300
Word of God, 35, 41, 42, 45, 62, 64, 65,
66, 74, 84, 100, 317
Worship of Jesus, 12, 16, 18
Zion, 80, 242, 247, 255, 256, 257, 258,
261, 270, 279, 321

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