

B. J. OROPEZA

Paul and Apostasy

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

115

Mohr Siebeck

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Herausgegeben von
Martin Hengel und Otfried Hofius

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B. J. Oropeza

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Eschatology, Perseverance,
and Falling Away
in the Corinthian Congregation

Mohr Siebeck

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Die Deutsche Bibliothek – CIP Einheitsaufnahme

Oropeza, B. J.:

Paul and apostasy : eschatology, perseverance and falling away in the Corinthian congregation / B. J. Oropeza. - Tübingen : Mohr Siebeck, 2000

(Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament : Reihe 2; 115)

ISBN 3-16-147307-8

978-3-16-157389-7 Unveränderte eBook-Ausgabe 2019

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The book was typeset by Martin Fischer in Reutlingen using Times typeface, printed by Gulde-Druck in Tübingen on non-aging paper from Papierfabrik Niefen and bound by Heinr. Koch in Tübingen.

Printed in Germany

ISSN 0340-9570

To My Mother

Preface

My interest in questions related to apostasy, perseverance, and eschatology arose from my previous research and studies which often focused on new religious movements that had (what would be considered by many as) extreme apocalyptic views. At the University of Durham in England I had the opportunity to concentrate more on aspects related to the New Testament. Some additional information was included during my professorship at George Fox University. The fruit of my endeavours are compiled in this present work. Many people have assisted me along the way. At Durham I wish to thank all the faculty and students who participated in the New Testament Seminar classes on Monday nights. I wish to thank especially Professor James D. G. Dunn and Dr. Loren Stuckenbruck, my doctoral supervisors, for critically assessing the many pages of my rough drafts, for providing helpful feedback, and for directing me to relevant sources. I wish to thank Dr. Alan Ford and Dr. Natalie Knödel for their assistance regarding questions related to computers. They know the many hours I spent staring in front of the Macintosh SE/30 screen in the Computer Room of the Theology Department. I also wish to thank the secretarial department, especially Margaret Parkinson, for assisting with information on the technicalities of this thesis. Other people who deserve to be mentioned for their feedback or some other means of assistance are as follows: Prof. C. K. Barrett, Dr. Stephen Barton, Dr. Mark Bonnington, Dr. Marco Conti, Dr. Alan Ford, Dr. Larry Hurtado, Dr. Natalie Knödel, Dr. Leena Lybeck, Dr. James McGrath, Prof. I. Howard Marshall, Doug Mohrmann, Astrid Pallash, Elizabeth Raine, Dr. Brian Rosner, Stephen Ross, Jerry Truex, Tet-Lim Yee, and Ian Yorkston.

I also wish to thank my wife Cathie and son Jared for their support and the long hours they spent waiting for me to come home many evenings. As well, I thank my mother, Magda Sanchez and her husband Henry, for their financial assistance. Finally, I would like to thank those many people who assisted us financially, or helped in some way or another in reference to Cathie's cancer. All the people from the King's Church in Durham, who are too numerous to mention, thank you. Those who sacrificed for us in very exceptional ways were Brian and Rhoda Clarke, Reverend Peter and Ruth Scott, Richard and Janet Bagnall, and Iris Prizeman. Other people connected with Victory Outreach who assisted or provided some means of support were Reverend Sonny and Julie Argunizoni, and their secretary Kathy Clark, Reverend Brian and Vivian Villa-

lobos, Reverend Mike and Johann Pike, Reverend Mitchell and Nellie Peterson, Alex and Leah Newcomb, and Laura Richardson. Other people and organisations who helped or encouraged us in special ways include Zina and Jim Hopson, Danny and Maggie Gallardo, Fr. C. K. and Debbie Robertson, Jerry and Vangie Truex, Ian and Valerie Yorkston, Andrew and Vicki Carver, Daniel and Diane Koh, Atty Fujiwara and family, Tet-Lim and Josephine Yee, Desra Percaya, Dr. Gillian Baughton, Angie Stephenson, Dr. Michael Richardson, Steven Rwamiinyo, "Rushty," Anthony Moss, Kate Silverton from BBC, Student Ministries International, and the Macmillan Cancer Relief Fund. In the States, special thanks to Reverend Eldon and Doreen Babcock and all the people from the church in Sherwood who helped us out.

At George Fox University I wish to thank the faculty for the use of facilities in the Religion and Library departments. Laurie Lieggi, Sandy Maurer, and Charles Church deserve special mention. A very special thanks to Jenae Donohue, my assistant at GFU. Special thanks also to Prof. Dr. Martin Hengel, Prof. Dr. Otfried Hofius, and Herrn Georg Siebeck for publishing this book in the scholarly series, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament*.

Newberg, Oregon, July 1999

B. J. Oropeza

Table of Contents

Preface	VII
<i>Chapter 1: Introduction: Perspectives on Apostasy and Perseverance</i>	1
1. Apostasy and Perseverance in Church History	1
1.1 Pre-Reformation Perspectives on Apostasy and Perseverance ...	2
1.1.1 Challenges to the Faith: Sedition and Vices	3
1.1.2 Deception and Heresies	5
1.1.3 Persecution and Perseverance: Martyrdom and Lapsis	7
1.1.4 Apostasy and Perseverance in the Middle Ages	10
1.2 The Post-Reformation Debate about Apostasy and Perseverance	13
1.2.1 Reformation and Counter-Reformation Perspectives	13
1.2.2 From the Remonstrance and Synod of Dort to the Twentieth Century	17
1.3 Recent Approaches to the Question of Perseverance and Apostasy	22
1.3.1 The Classical-Theological Approach to Perseverance and Apostasy: G. C. Berkouwer	22
1.3.2 The Traditio-Historical Approach to Perseverance and Apostasy: I. Howard Marshall and D. A. Carson	24
1.3.3 Judith Gundry Volf's Contribution to the Study of Perseverance and Apostasy	28
1.4 Evaluation of the Recent Debate	33
2. Rhetorical Approaches to New Testament Interpretation	34
2.1 George A. Kennedy: The Rhetorical Method	35
2.2 Margaret Mitchell: Rhetorical Method Employed in Paul's Letter to the Corinthians	36
2.3 Rhetorical Methods in Light of This Study	39
3. Social and Cultural Anthropological Approaches to New Testament Interpretation	40
3.1 Mary Douglas: Purity and Contamination	40
3.1.1 Purity and Boundaries	40
3.1.2 Evaluation	42

3.2 Victor Turner's Liminality Phase	45
3.2.1 Ritual and Pilgrimage Processes	45
3.2.2 Evaluation	46
3.3 Socio-Anthropological Approaches to Apostasy	50
3.3.1 Dale Martin: Boundaries of the Social Body	50
3.3.2 Jerome Neyrey: Entrance and Exit Rituals	52
4. The Purpose and Scope of This Study	53
<i>Chapter 2: The Corinthian Situation and Meat Sacrificed to Idols</i>	55
1. The Situation in Corinth	55
2. Unity and Disunity in the Message on Meat Sacrificed to Idols	56
2.1 The Problem of Unity in 1 Corinthians 8:1–11:1	56
2.1.1 The Unity of Sections "A" and "B"	56
2.1.2 The Relationship of Idol Meats with 1 Corinthians 9	58
2.2 The Unity of 1 Corinthians 8:1–11:1 in Light of Rhetorical Discourse	59
2.3 Coherency in Paul's Argument Regarding Meat Sacrificed to Idols	61
2.4 Idol-Meat Observations in Light of Socio-Anthropological Studies	64
3. Outline of Paul's Argument in 1 Corinthians 10:1–13	67
<i>Chapter 3: The Election of Israel through Initiation and Sustenance in the Exodus/Wilderness Episode</i>	69
1. Israel's Baptism in Moses as a Mark of Solidarity (1 Corinthians 10:1–2)	69
1.1 Paul's Introduction to the Pericope	69
1.2 The "Fathers" of the Corinthians	72
1.3 The Solidarity of the Israelites' Experiences	72
1.4 Correlation of Baptism into Moses with Baptism into the Body of Christ	73
1.4.1 Paul and the Antecedents toward His View on Baptism	74
1.4.2 Baptism from the Corinthian Congregation's Perspective	79
1.4.3 The Relationship Between the Persons of Moses and Christ ..	82
1.4.4 Baptism in the Name of Jesus Christ and Moses	85
2. Israel's Initiation in the Cloud and Sea	90
2.1 Red Sea Traditions	91
2.2 Pillar of Cloud Traditions	92

2.3 The Cloud as a Metaphor for Baptism in the Holy Spirit	95
2.3.1 Excursus: The Body of Christ and Ethical Obligation	97
2.4 Baptism as a Boundary Marker for the Body of Christ	99
2.5 Baptism as a Rite of Separation	102
3. The Solidarity of Spiritual Consumption in the Wilderness	
(1 Corinthians 10:3–4)	104
3.1 Antecedents to the Lord’s Supper	106
3.2 Food and Drink as Sacramental	109
3.3 The Function of Πνευματικός	111
3.3.1 Interpretations of Πνευματικός	111
3.3.2 Πνευματικός as Rhetoric	113
3.4 Meal Sharing in Corinth	113
Conclusion	115
<i>Chapter 4: The Divine Judgements on the Wilderness Generation: Eschatological Prefigurations for the Corinthians</i>	<i>117</i>
1. God’s Rejection of Israel in the Wilderness (1 Corinthians 10:5)	118
1.1 “All,” “Many,” and “Some” Wilderness Rhetoric	118
1.2 Divine Judgement in the Wilderness	119
1.2.1 God’s Rejection of the Majority	119
1.2.2 Wilderness as a Place	120
1.2.3 Corporate and Eschatological Judgement in Jewish Tradition . .	122
1.2.4 Judgement in the Wilderness Traditions	123
1.2.5 Κατεστρώθησαν	126
2. Types: That the Corinthians Would Not Lust After Evil Things	
(1 Corinthians 10:6)	128
2.1 Chiasm and Ταῦτα Δὲ	128
2.2 Τύπος	130
2.3 Midrash and Paul’s Wilderness Account	133
2.4 The Central Issues in Paul’s Wilderness Narrative	134
2.4.1 <i>Excursus: Psalm 105[106] in Relation to Paul’s Wilderness Narrative</i>	136
2.5 That We Should Not Lust After Evil Things	138
3. The Golden Calf and the Problem of Idol Meats (1 Corinthians 10:7)	139
3.1 The Golden Calf Incident and Idolatry	139
3.2 Idolatry in the Corinthian Situation	142
4. Πορνεία Cultus (1 Corinthians 10:8)	143
4.1 Sexual Immorality	143
4.1.1 Πορνεία at Baal-Peor	143
4.1.2 A Great Number of Deaths	144

4.2 The Corinthian Situation	145
4.3 Divine Judgement and Sexual Immorality	147
5. The Provocation of Christ in the Wilderness (1 Cor. 10:9)	149
5.1 Tempting the Lord Past and Present	149
5.1.1 Paul's Sources	149
5.1.2 Israel's Destruction	151
5.1.2.1 <i>Excursus: Textual Criticism in 10:9a: "Christ" or "Lord"</i>	153
5.2 Testing Christ in Corinth	155
6. Discord and the Grumbling Motif (1 Corinthians 10:10)	157
6.1 Sources behind the Grumbling Vice	157
6.2 The Grumbling Situation in Corinth and Corollary Judgement	160
7. The Wilderness Vices in Relation to Paul's Ethics	163
8. Eschatology and Boundaries in a Liminal State (1 Corinthians 10:11)	167
8.1 The Ends of the Ages Have Come upon the Corinthians	167
8.1.1 "These Things"	167
8.1.2 Εἰς Οὓς τὰ Τέλη τῶν Αἰώνων Κατήντηκεν	169
8.2 Jewish Eschatological Influence on Paul	170
8.3 Paul in the Age of "Now" and "Not Yet"	173
8.3.1 Paul and the Apocalyptic Centre	173
8.3.2 The Tension of "Now" and "Not Yet"	174
8.3.3 Paul's Existential and Salvific Dualism	177
8.4 The Eschatological Journey of the Corinthians	179
8.5 Purity and Contamination	182
8.5.1 Individual and Corporate Contamination	182
8.5.2 Boundary Blurring and Exit Rituals	184
8.6 Misperception in a Liminal Journey	187
Conclusion	190
<i>Chapter 5: A Warning against Apostasy and a Word of Perseverance</i>	192
1. Introduction	192
2. Apostasy: Falling Away (1 Corinthians 10:12)	192
2.1 The One Who Thinks He Stands, Let Him Beware, Lest He Fall	192
2.2 Standing and Falling	193
2.2.1 The One Who "Seems" to Stand	193
2.2.2 Apostasy: Falling from Grace into Eschatological Death	196
2.3 Sub-Group and Individual Falling Away	204
2.3.1 <i>Excursus: Election in Romans 8:28–39 in Light of Israel's Election and Apostasy</i>	206

2.4 Apostasy and Idol Meats	210
3. Perseverance: God Will Not Allow You to Be Tempted beyond Your Capabilities (1 Corinthians 10:13)	212
3.1 Human Temptation	213
3.2 Bearing up under Temptation with the Help of a Faithful God ...	214
3.2.1 The Faithful God Provides a Way to Escape	214
3.2.1.1 <i>Excursus: The Faithful God, Ἀποστασία, and Encouragement in the Thessalonian Correspondence</i>	218
3.2.2 The Way of Escaping Temptation	220
3.3 Warning and Encouragement in the Corinthian Situation	221
Conclusion	222
 <i>Chapter 6: Conclusion: Paul and Apostasy</i>	 223
1. Paul's View of Apostasy	223
2. Final Conclusion	225
 Appendix: Selected Works Related to Apostasy and Perseverance	 231
Bibliographies	
Abbreviations Bibliography	235
Commentaries Bibliography	237
General Bibliography	240
Indices	
References	277
Authors	309
Subjects	315

Chapter 1

Introduction: Perspectives on Apostasy and Perseverance

1. Apostasy and Perseverance in Church History

Whether Judas Iscariot betraying Christ, or Christians renouncing their faith due to severe persecution, heresy, temptation, or sceptical reasoning, apostasy has plagued the church throughout the ages. There remains a much needed enterprise to explain apostasy in comprehensible terms. The definition Richard Muller has offered is that apostasy (*ἀποστασία* and *apostasia*, respectively) is “a wilful falling away from, or rebellion against, Christian truth. Apostasy is the rejection of Christ by one who has been a Christian, the ultimate or final apostasy being the so-called unforgivable sin, the *peccatum in Spiritum Sanctum* (q. v.), the sin against the Holy Spirit; apostasy is also one of the characteristic evidences of antichrist.”¹ Although this statement may be valid, there is warrant for attempting a more refined meaning by examining the matter more closely in light of recent biblical interpretative methods. The aspect of apostasy which will be significant for this study is the notion of “falling away” from the faith; the antipode of the perseverance of the saints: “die Beharrung, Bewährung und Kontinuität des Glaubens in der Geschichte.”² A thorough overview of approaches on apostasy and perseverance throughout the entire history of the church is beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, since the interpretation of some recent New Testament scholars often seem coloured by their respective traditions arising from earlier theological conflicts – especially those from Calvinist and Arminian persuasions – a brief background for this discussion is in order. I will attempt a preliminary overview of some of the most significant tensions in its history.³

¹ MULLER, DLGT, 41.

² MOLTSMANN (1986), 5:226–27.

³ Unfortunately, few sources specifically trace questions related to apostasy and the perseverance of the saints throughout its history. It was important to compile a list of works which were helpful in this pursuit. See appendix for sources.

1.1 Pre-Reformation Perspectives on Apostasy and Perseverance

If Christianity emerged from a Jewish matrix, then it seems important to mention the relationship between the two groups in reference to apostasy. The earliest Christians did not entirely abandon their Jewish roots when they accepted Jesus as Messiah. Perhaps it is correct to suggest that the Christians were in some sense understood as “heretics” to Jewish groups who thought themselves to be more traditionally Jewish.⁴ It seems that at least Pauline Christianity posed a threat to other Jews, especially over the area of Gentile and Jewish relationships. Paul was portrayed by his opponents as teaching apostasy (ἀποστασία) from Moses (Acts 21:21).⁵ J. T. Sanders suggests that even though the Jewish *birkat ha-minim* (blessing/curse on heretics) in the Eighteen Benedictions (c. 80 C. E.) may not have originally included a curse against the Nazarenes, Jewish Christians still may have been the primary focus of the curse. After the Jewish war, expulsion from the synagogues rather than sporadic persecution of the Christians became a factor in Jewish-Christian relationships, and John’s Gospel seems to reflect this pattern⁶ (e.g., John 9:22, 34). Three observations follow from this. First, it seems unlikely that Jewish Christians would not be included at least among the heretics of this curse. Second, if they were being banished from some of the synagogues, this would indicate some sense of defection from the beliefs of the Jews who expelled them. Third, while the boundaries between Christianity and early Judaism may be rather blurred before 70 CE, a more definite parting of the ways began to take place afterwards. By the time of Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* (c. 155), the boundaries between the two groups are defined better.⁷

A survey of the warning passages in the New Testament warrants that at least three basic dangers threatened the early Christian communities: deception and heresies from within the body of believers, persecution from external powers, and temptations arising from vices associated with the practises of non-Christians.⁸ Persecution, for example, is stressed in Hebrews and 1 Peter. Issues

⁴ Cf. GROSSI (1992), 1.376.

⁵ The subject of apostasy was not unimportant to Jewish tradition. See appendix for listings. Feldman maintains that Judaism and Christianity were the only ancient religions to teach “exclusionary ‘conversion’” (1993:288). Kippenberg, however, adds that while exclusivity was foreign to Greco-Roman religions, the limits of toleration were reached when citizens defected from their ancestral religion. For examples of the phenomenon, see KIPPENBERG, 1987:1.354.

⁶ J. T. SANDERS (1993), 58–61.

⁷ Along with Sanders’ work, other studies on early Jewish-Christian relationships include DUNN (1991); MEISSNER (1996); SEGAL (1990); MAIER (1982); BARCLAY (1995a), 89–120; NEALE (1993), 89–101; HARVEY (1985), 79–96; and RÄISÄNEN (1983), 543–53.

⁸ Scholars normally recognise these topics within the respective writings. See for example the general introductions of R. BROWN (1997) and EPP & MACRAE, eds. (1989). Natu-

related to false teachers/teachings are found in the Johannine and the Deutero-Pauline writings, 2 Peter, and Jude. The *paraenetic* sections of the Pauline writings and James focus on vices and virtues. These and other early texts helped to shape the trajectory of Christian response to the phenomenon of defection in the post-apostolic era. The Christians were to persevere through various types of opposition, standing firm against temptation, false doctrine, hardships and persecution.

1.1.1 Challenges to the Faith: Sedition and Vices

Vices related to sedition not only threatened the unity of the Corinthian congregation in Paul's time but also a generation later when Clement of Rome (c. 96) writes to the congregation. The latter attempted to settle a faction related to the members' deposition of the established leaders in the congregation. In his letter the Corinthians are exhorted in the virtue of obedience and are to cast aside vain toil, strife, and jealousy, which lead to death. God appoints judgement and torment for the doubters and double-minded who turn aside to disobedience. Such people are prefigured in the example of God's judgement against Lot's wife, who was not in accord with her godly husband (*1 Clem.* 9–11). The Corinthian instigators are warned to repent and submit to the presbyters – it would be better for them to humble themselves than be exalted but cast out from the “hope of God” (*57:1–2*; cf. *2 Clem.* 6:7). Similar to Clement, Ignatius of Antioch (c. 107) writes that the Christians who follow a schismatic person will not inherit the kingdom of God, yet the Lord is able to forgive anyone who repents and returns to the unity of God and the bishop (*Ign. Phld.* 3:2; 8:1). He exhorts his readers to avoid heresy and hold fast to apostolic teachings.

In the epistle of Barnabas (c. 100), the author sets Christians before two ways, which are described in the metaphors of light and darkness in terms of the abstaining from or practising of vices (*Barn.* 18–21). If the Christians fail to learn more accurately about their salvation, the prince of evil may gain an entrance through deceit and hurl them away (ἐκσφενδονήσῃ) from their life (*Barn.* 2:10). The readers are to take heed in the last days and flee from the lawless works of the evil way, for God will judge all according to their deeds. Those who slumber over their sins will be cast out from the Lord's kingdom (*Barn.* 4). The *Didache* (c. 100) also maintains two ways: the way of life or death. The way of life is associated with loving God and one's neighbour. It involves abstaining from vices mentioned in the Ten Commandments or related to bodily lusts, sorcery, and idolatry (including meat sacrificed to idols). The way of death includes the practice of these vices (*Did.* 1–6).

rally, I am not claiming that these topics were the only important themes in the respective writings or that there is no overlap of ideas among the sources.

The vice of covetousness is a significant danger in Polycarp's epistle to the Philippians (2nd c.). Here it is written that a former presbyter named Valens and his wife apparently committed some act of covetousness. The writer hopes that the Lord would grant them repentance. The person who does not refrain from coveting will be defiled through idolatry and punished "as one of the Gentiles who know not the judgement of God" (Pol. *Phil.* 11). Presbyters are instructed to turn back members who have gone astray, and they are to refrain from both false Christians and the love of money (Pol. *Phil.* 6). A more generalised admonition against vices is found in an ancient homily where the author exhorts his Christian audience to repent from the evil deeds of the flesh. If they desire worldly things, they will fall away from the path of righteousness and suffer eternal punishment (2 Clem. 5–8).

If a warning against vices and call to repentance marks a facet of apostasy in the patristic writings of the late first and early second centuries, the Shepherd of Hermas epitomises this aspect. Those who have sinned grievously and committed apostasy are beckoned to return. Falling away and repentance are portrayed in complex ways, and this perhaps compliments the multifaceted nature of earliest Christian discourses on the issue. Contrary to the book of Hebrews, which seems to teach that baptised Christians are not given a second chance once they fall away (cf. Heb. 6:4–6; 10:26–31), the Shepherd of Hermas affirms that apostates may be forgiven while a gap of time remains before the final eschaton. A refusal to respond to this offer will result in final condemnation. Those who have denied the Lord in the past are given a second chance, but those who deny him in the coming tribulation will be rejected "from their life" (*Herm. Vis.* 2.2).

In the vision of the tower under construction (the church), numerous stones (believers) are gathered for the building. Among the rejected are those who are not genuine Christians; they received their faith in hypocrisy. Others do not remain in the truth, and others who go astray are finally burned in fire (*Vis.* 3.6–7). Some others are novices who turn away before they are baptised, and still others fall away due to hardships, being led astray by their riches. They may become useful stones, however, if they are separated from their riches. The penitents receive 12 commands; salvific life depends on their observance (*Herm. Man.* 12.3–6). Repentance would become unprofitable for the Christian who falls again after restoration (*Man.* 4.1:8; 3:6).

In the Parables, rods of various shapes and sizes represent different kinds of believers: the faithful, rich, double-minded, doubtful-minded, and hypocritical deceivers. These are allowed to repent – if they do not, they will lose eternal life (*Herm. Sim.* 8.6–11). Apostates and traitors who blaspheme the Lord by their sins are completely destroyed (*Sim.* 8.6:4). Another parable describes apostates as certain stones which are cast away from the house of God and delivered to women who represent 12 vices. They may enter the house again if they follow virgins who represent 12 virtues. Certain apostates became worse than they

were before they believed and will suffer eternal death even though they had fully known God. Nevertheless, most people, whether apostates or fallen ministers, have an opportunity to repent and be restored (*Sim.* 9.13–15, 18 ff). Hermas and his audience are to persevere and practise repentance if they wish to partake of life (*Sim.* 10.2–4).

Penance is stressed in the Shepherd of Hermas and becomes a recognisable discipline developed in the patristic era.⁹ Those who committed serious sins were to do public penance which included confession, exclusion, absolution, and restoration (*exomologesis*). Bishop Callistus I (d. c. 222) introduced penance reforms which were interpreted by Hippolytus as giving license to loose morals. Callistus allegedly permitted those who sinned “unto death” (1 John 5:16) to remain in the church, affirming that tares are permitted to grow along with the wheat and that Noah’s ark housed both clean and unclean animals (*Hipp. Refut.* 9.7). More normative was the view that penance may be granted one time after baptism and that some sins (such as idolatry and adultery) were more heinous than others. Some sins were in fact too grievous to be forgiven (*peccata irremissibilia*).¹⁰ Eternal condemnation or lifelong excommunication awaited the person whose sin was irremissible (cf. Tert. *De Paen.* 7; Clem. *Strom.* 2.13; Orig. *De Orat.* 28).¹¹ More lenient approaches seemed to be adopted on a wider scale after the persecutions of Decius and Diocletian claimed many defectors.¹²

1.1.2 Deception and Heresies

Prior to the establishment of ecumenical creeds, we may question the boundaries of what would be considered a true deviation from the Christian faith and whether the term “apostate” aptly categorises the people from multifarious heretical or heterodox systems.¹³ No doubt, the apologists of the early church – who refuted groups such as the Gnostics, Marcionites, Montanists, Encratites, and

⁹ On further issues related to penance, see WATKINS (1961); HEBBLEWAITE & DONOVAN (1979).

¹⁰ For examples of sin categorisation, see BASIL, *Epistles* 188, 199, 217.

¹¹ Cf. QUASTEN (1992), 2:31–34, 69–71, 84–85, 299–302, 380–81; J. KELLY (1978), 216–19.

¹² In Spain, however, the Council of Elvira (c. 306) ordered lifelong excommunication with no hope of reconciliation even at death.

¹³ Beugnet makes some interesting distinctions between heretics and apostates (1907:1.1602–03). The two terms may frequently overlap in meaning, especially when a person abandons one faith for another (e.g., Ammonius Sakkas and Julian the Apostate defected from some form of Christianity and became Neoplatonists). Perhaps a useful distinction for the early church is that apostates normally renounce/abandon their faith (whether or not they actually join another religious system), while heretics embrace a faith that deviates from the faith of those who oppose them. On distinction and overlap between heresy and schism in the patristic era, see references in GROSSI (1992:1.376).

Monarchians – believed themselves to be defending the apostolic faith. An intensive examination of this sort, however, is beyond our current study.¹⁴ The aspect of heresy I wish to consider is this: early Christians frequently believed that apostasy came by way of deceivers at the instigation of the devil, and terrible consequences awaited such people.

The final section of the *Didache* echoes the Synoptic tradition (Matt. 24:4–13, 15, 21–26; Mark 13:5 ff; Luke 21:8 ff; cf. 2 Thes. 2:3 ff; Rev. 13:13–14) when it warns against apostasy through the deception of false prophets in the last days. In those days it is said that sheep will be turned into wolves and a world deceiver will appear and do great signs and wonders. Though many will fall away and be destroyed (σκανδαλισθήσονται πολλοὶ καὶ ἀπολοῦνται), those who endure in their faith will be saved (*Did.* 16).

In the letter of Ignatius to the Ephesians, the readers are exhorted to avoid corrupting the faith. They should not be deceived by the teachings of the prince of this world. People who are led astray will suffer unquenchable fire and be robbed of the life set before them (Ign. *Eph.* 16–17). Similarly, apostates in the *Apocalypse of Peter* (2nd c.) will suffer eschatological judgement involving floods of fire and darkness (*Apoc. Pet.* 5).

The eschatological scheme of Irenaeus (c. 130–200) describes the beast of the *Apocalypse* as leading astray the inhabitants of the earth. This figure embodies in his own person all apostasy, evil, and false prophecy. He likewise possesses the number 666 – he is the summation of both 600 years of wickedness caused by the apostate angels before the Deluge and 6000 years of apostasy related to the age of the world (*Adv. Haer.* 5.28–29). Irenaeus claims that when Polycarp met Marcion the heretic, he promptly denounced him as the “first-born of Satan” (Iren. *Haer.* 3.3:4 cf. Pol. *Phil.* 7). Justin Martyr (c. 100–165) views the devil himself as apostatising from the will of God (*Dial. Tryph.* 125:4 f).

Tertullian (c. 160–225) compares heresies with idolatry and concludes that both have been introduced by the devil (Tert. *De Praescr.* 40). Heresy could end up destroying even people who were thought to be faithful – the very disciples of Jesus turned away from him in John’s Gospel (John 6:66). For Tertullian, no one is a Christian except the one who perseveres to the end (*De Praescr.* 3).¹⁵

In the view of Eusebius (c. 260–340), Simon Magus was the author of heresy (cf. Acts 8:9–24), and the devil is to be blamed for bringing the Samaritan magician to Rome and empowering him with deceitful arts which led many astray (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* 2.13). The magician was supposedly aided by demons

¹⁴ Here the reader may wish to consult more thorough analyses on heresy in works such as LÜDEMANN (1996); FRENCH (1985); H. BROWN (1984); PRESTIGE (1977); W. BAUER (1977); J. T. SANDERS (1993).

¹⁵ On patristic use of defection in John 6:66, see DOIGNON (1992), 111–14; TANCA (1984), 139–146.

and venerated as a god, and Helen, his companion, was thought to be his first emanation (Just. *Apol.* 1.26; *Adv. Haer.* 1.33; cf. *Iren. Haer.* 1.23:1–4).¹⁶ Simon's successor, Menander of Samaria, was considered to be another instrument of the devil; he claimed to save humans from the aeons through magical arts. After baptism, his followers believed themselves to be immortal in the present life. It is stated that those who claim such people as their saviours have fallen away from the true hope (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* 3.26). Basilides of Alexandria and Saturninus of Antioch followed Menander's ways. Adherents of the former declared that eating meat sacrificed to idols or renouncing the faith in times of persecution were matters of indifference. Carpocrates is labelled as the first of the Gnostics. His followers allegedly transmitted Simon's magic in an open manner. Eusebius asserts that the devil's intention was to entrap many believers and bring them to the abyss of destruction by following these deceivers (*Hist. Eccl.* 4.7).

The use of anathemas and excommunications became the normative means of handling heresy. Hippolytus (c. 170–236) affirmed that there was no place for the heretic in the church; expulsion from the earthly Eden was their lot. Cyprian (c. 258) viewed the heretics as those who lose their salvation because they put themselves outside the unity of the church.¹⁷ Cyril of Alexandria (c. 444) anathematised Nestorianism, and creeds (such as the Athanasian) declared anathemas on those who did not hold to the tenets of the creed. The condemnation of heretics gave way to abuse as church and state distinctions were blurred after the time of Constantine.

1.1.3 Persecution and Perseverance: Martyrdom and Lapsis

The *Martyrdom of Polycarp* is sometimes considered to be the first of the "Acts of the Martyrs."¹⁸ In this document Polycarp is killed for refusing to confess Caesar as Lord and offer incense; he refuses to revile Christ (*Mart. Pol.* 8 ff; similarly, *Ign. Rom.* 7). Other Christians did not always follow his example. Some fell into idolatry in the face of persecutions.¹⁹

¹⁶ In the Acts 8 account of Simon, S. Brown argues that the magician himself was not a true apostate because he was never a Christian in any "full sense": unlike other Samaritan converts in the narrative, he did not receive the gift of the Spirit (1969: 110–12).

¹⁷ GROSSI, 1:367; J. KELLY (1978), 201. Studies on excommunication include: HYLAND (1928); VODOLA (1986); DOSKOCIL (1958); GAUDEMET (1949), 64–77; BOUDINHON (1913), 6:678–91.

¹⁸ Cf. QUASTEN, 1:77.

¹⁹ Cf. e.g., FOAKES-JACKSON (1908), 1:623 who cites Pliny's report (*Ep.* 10.96). For the sake of brevity, no concentrated effort will be made to verify the historicity of information presented in this overview. It will have to suffice to assume that the authors intended to portray their information as true and "factual" from their point of view. One may call into question the actual amount of defectors in church history, but this does not nullify the affirmation that many *did* defect.

Stirred by his own experience under the Diocletian (c. 284–305) persecution, Eusebius wrote *Collection of Martyrs* and emphasised persecution and martyrdom in his *History of the Church*. He describes Christians who persevered and others who fell away. Polycarp and Germanicus were found to be faithful in the persecution at Smyrna (c. 160), but Quintus threw away his salvation at the sight of the wild beasts (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* 4.15). During Marcus Aurelius' reign (c. 161–80), Eusebius affirms that the Christians confessed their faith despite their suffering from abuse, plundering, stoning, and imprisonment. It is recorded that in Gaul some became martyrs, but others who were untrained and unprepared (about 10 in number) proved to be “abortions” (ἔξέτρωσαν), discouraging the zeal of others. A woman named Biblias, who had earlier denied Christ, confessed him and was joined with the martyrs. Certain defectors did likewise, but others continued to blaspheme the Christian faith, having no understanding of the “wedding garment” (ie., Matt. 22:11 ff) and no faith (*Hist. Eccl.* 5.1).

During the reign of Decius (c. 249–51), the Christians of Alexandria are said to have endured martyrdom, stoning, or having their belongings confiscated for not worshipping at an idol's temple or chanting incantations. But some readily made unholy sacrifices, pretending that they had never been Christians, while others renounced their faith or were tortured until they did (*Hist. Eccl.* 6.41). In his account of the Diocletian persecution, Eusebius commends the heroic martyrs but is determined to mention nothing about those who made shipwreck of their salvation, believing that such reports would not edify his readers (8.2:3).²⁰ He recollects Christians who suffered in horrible ways which included their being axed to death or slowly burned, having their eyes gouged out, their limbs severed, or their backs seared with melted lead. Some endured the pain of having reeds driven under their fingernails or unmentionable suffering in their private parts (8.12).²¹

Eusebius commends the forgiving attitude of the faithful toward Christians who fell during persecution. He was apparently writing against the unmerciful conduct of the Novatians, who argued that lapsed (*lapsi*) believers should not be admitted back into the church (*Hist. Eccl.* 5.2:8; 6.43; cf. *Cyp. Ep.* 50[47]; 52[48]). Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage (c. 258), classified the persecuted believers into 6 categories: 1) those who made sacrifices [to gods or emperor] (*sacrificati*); 2) those who burned incense but did not eat sacrifices (*turificati*); 3) those who bought the certificate of sacrifice (*libellatici*); 4) those who fled (*stantes*); 5) those who refused to sacrifice and lived (*confessores*); and 6) those who confessed Christ and died (*martyres*). Many of the lapsed believers desired

²⁰ Croix maintains that there was a large number of defectors during the persecutions of the early fourth century (1954:82).

²¹ See also FRENCH (1965), ch. 15.

to return to the church after the Decian persecution was over, seeking reconciliation through the *confessores*. The amount of time spent in penance for lapsed Christians apparently depended on how severely they were afflicted, and it was often granted to those who were near death (cf. Cyp. *De Lap.*; *Ep.* 18[12]; Peter of Alexandria, *On Penance*).²² Cyprian wrote that defectors who celebrate the eucharist without penance do violence to the body and blood of Christ and sin more against the Lord than when they had denied him (*De Lap.* 16). Ambrose (c. 339–97) criticised the Novatian’s use of Hebrews 6:4–6 (ie., that it is impossible for apostates to have a second chance to repent) and argued that such passages were to be harmonized with the less strenuous writings of Paul.²³ Consequently repentance was made possible because what is impossible with humans is possible with God (*De Paen.* 2.2).

The Donatists stressed the importance of the priest’s involvement with the sacraments and claimed that the church was a visible institute of the elect. They refused to accept the consecration of Caecilian, the bishop of Carthage (c. 311), because his consecrator had betrayed the faith in the Diocletian persecution – traitors needed to be rebaptised or remain outside of the church. Augustine (c. 358–430) contended for the validity of such appointments, arguing that the true administrator of the sacraments was Christ. Rebaptism or reordination was not necessary.²⁴ On the issue of sin and penance, Augustine affirmed three categories: repentance of sins before baptism, daily forgiveness for post-baptismal venial sins, and formal penance for mortal sins which the church was able to remit through the keys of Peter (cf. Matt. 16:18–19).²⁵ Defectors could be accepted back into the church through proper penance. No sin was beyond forgiveness except persistent impenitence until death, which Augustine seemed to equate with blaspheming the Spirit. He warns that the Donatists, who continue to shun the Catholic church, were in danger of the unpardonable sin (*Sermo* 71).²⁶

Regarding ecclesiology, Augustine believed that not everyone who received “birth” in the church belong to it except those who persevere and do not lack charity (Aug. *De Bapt.* 1.10[13]). For Augustine, there is an invisible communion of believers which is not entirely equated with the visible church. More than this, even people who seem to be part of the invisible fellowship may not possess the gift of perseverance, and others who are presently heretics or unconverted may eventually inherit eternal life. Thus, the elect are not precisely the same as either the visible or invisible church – they are those who persevere to the end (Aug. *De Bapt.* 5.27–28[38–39]; *De Corrept. et Gra.* 38–42; *De Dono*

²² Cf. SATO (1992), 628–29; BEUGNET, 1:1605; H. BROWN, 197.

²³ Ambrose believed that Paul was the writer of the Hebrews epistle.

²⁴ HÄGGLUND (1968), 125 ff.

²⁵ J. KELLY, 437–38.

²⁶ Cf. TIPSON (1984), 306–307.

Persev. 21).²⁷ Augustine also affirmed that individuals could not be certain about their predestination and salvation until they departed from this life. The number of those who will persevere is kept hidden so that no Christian will become high-minded. The graces of justification and salvation could still be lost (*De Corrept. et Gra.* 40; *De Dono Persev.* 1, 33).

1.1.4 Apostasy and Perseverance in the Middle Ages

As the Medieval church involved itself in the affairs of the state, sin and apostasy were dealt with primarily in terms of penance, excommunication, or judicial punishment. Pope Innocent III (1160–1216) defended excommunication as a distinct penalty which was intended as a medicinal corrective for the offender. Civil laws such as found in the Theodosian Code (c. 439) and Justinian Code (c. 529) deprived apostates of wills, possessions, and sometimes the right to live.²⁸ Fear of abandonment to Judaism or paganism seemed common. Legal abuse in this regard eventually devolved into the Inquisition. In Spain (e.g., 1480–92), it was directed at apostates and Marranos (Jews who outwardly converted to Christianity but who practised Judaism in secret). Certain Christians among the Turks and Moors, on the other hand, defected in order to enjoy advantages reserved for Muslims.²⁹

The problem of sin often seemed to overshadow any comfort related to salvation. Not only were seven deadly sins identified in this period (pride, gluttony, sloth, anger, lust, covetousness, envy), but Alexander of Hales and Peter Lombard's *Sentences* recognised six species of sins against the Spirit (despair, presumption, impenitence, obstinacy, assaulting the known truth, envy of another's grace). Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–74) wrote regarding three ways the church had understood the blasphemy of the Spirit: 1) attributing Christ's works to the demonic; 2) final impenitence; and 3) a special sin committed through malice.³⁰ Penance was available for the person who had not committed the unpardonable sin. Private confession, however, eventually replaced public penance. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) affirmed that every baptised church member was to make private confessions of sin at least once a year.

Questions about the church's relationship with apostate monarchs are also significant at this time. Emperor Frederick II (1215–50), for example, was excommunicated by the pope four times. The papacy viewed him as the Antichrist

²⁷ Cf. HÄGGLUND, 128–29, 139; J. KELLY, 416. The issue of apostasy is perhaps better related to the Augustinian debate with the Donatists; perseverance, on the other hand, arises more out of the Pelagian controversy.

²⁸ Some of the codes seem directed against defectors to Judaism. See codes and penalties in BOUCHÉ (1935), 1:644–50; GUZZETTI (1968), 1:75; BEUGNET, 1:1607; FOAKES-JACKSON, 1:624–25.

²⁹ Cf. FOAKES-JACKSON 1:625. On Islam and apostasy, see Zwemer (1924).

³⁰ For more precise nuances, see TIPSON, 307–09.

References

Old Testament (with Apocrypha)

Genesis

1:2	93, 121
1:26–27	81
2:23–24	98, 146
3	152
3:3	179
3:19	179
5:2	81
9:19–23	155
18:19	207
21:14	121
26:8	140
38:24	148
39:12–13	221
44:32ff	47
50:11	47

Exodus

1–2	84
2:25	207
3–6	84
3:1–4:31	88
3:2	155
3:13–15	87, 155
4:22	119
7:8f	189
12	186
12:12–23	159
12:12	217
12:15	24
12:23	154, 161, 186
13:17–14:31	94
13:21f	90f, 92
14	84, 100, 186
14:10–12	125

14:13	91
14:16f	186
14:19ff	90, 92, 155
14:30	91
15:2	91
15:13	91
15:16	91
15:20	140
15:22ff	84, 125, 140
16:1–17:7	104
16:1–4	125
16:2	160
16:4	104, 112, 214
16:7f	157f, 160
16:8	104
16:10–11	92
16:12–15	112
16:14	107
16:19–20	125
16:27–30	125
16:31	107
17:1–4	125
17:1–7	149
17:2	149
17:3	157
18–19	166
18:25	83
19ff	84
19:5–6	172
19:9f	93
19:10	76
20	165
22:19	141
23:20	88, 155
24:3–8	76
24:8	101

24:11	140	<i>Numbers</i>	
24:15–18	93	1:23	125
31:14	141	1:46	118
32	125, 135	2:1–5:4	83
32:1–3	140	5:1–4	83
32:6	57, 129, 133, 139ff	6	48
32:7f	141	6:22–27	86
32:9–10	123, 205	9	186
32:11	140	9:15–23	92
32:19	140	9:15f	94
32:21	140	11	133, 138
32:24	140	11:1f	124, 157
32:26–29	140f	11:1–3	158
32:28	136, 144	11:1f	186
32:30	140	11:4–10	110
32:32f	141	11:4–6	124
32:34–35	141, 155	11:4	134ff
32:35	136, 140, 145, 186	11:4–10	138
33	155	11:4	138
33:9–10	155	11:8	104
33:14	93, 95	11:16ff	94f
33:15–16	100	11:18–20	110
34:28	84	11:20	186
40:34–38	94, 96	11:25f	94
<i>Leviticus</i>		11:31–34	110, 124
7:20f	24	11:32	135
10	157	11:33	136, 186
12:2–8	47	11:34	134, 138
12:3	47	12	124
16	185	12:5–6	93
16:10	121	13–14	124, 158ff
18	165	13–17	160
18:22	146	13:22–24	73
18:23f	41	13:26–27	159
19:18	57	13:28–14:2	159
19:19	41	14	123, 137, 159f, 201
20:2–4	141	14:2	160
20:3–6	151	14:9	218
20:5	141	14:11	94
20:10ff	146, 148	14:16	126
21:9	148	14:22–23	94
21:16–20	99	14:22	150
21:20f	53	14:23–24	179, 210
22:24	53	14:27–29	157, 160
26:8	217	14:29	126
26:15	216	14:30	118
26:44	216	14:30–35	179
		14:32	126

14:35f	160	<i>Deuteronomy</i>	
14:37–38	159	1–6	166
15	160	1:15	83
15:30f	24	1:19	120
15:32–36	125	1:26–46	124
16	135, 159	1:27	137, 157
16–17	158	1:31	119, 120
16	186	1:32–33	93
16:1–35	125	1:35	179
16:11	157, 159	2:7	83
16:11–14	160	4:9–14	100
16:31–33	123	4:23–31	205
16:31	160	4:28–31	210
16:35	160	4:32f	100
16:41–50	125	4:34	119
16:41	157, 159	4:37	92, 155
16:41–50	159	5:10	208
16:49	159	6:4f	57, 149
17	159	6:14–15	57
17:5	157, 159	6:16	124, 149
17:10	157, 159	7:5	141
19:20	141	7:7ff	102
20	137	7:9	208, 215
20:1–13	104, 125, 149	7:25f	141
20:10–13	183	7:36	147
20:15	72	8	124
20:16	155	8:2–3	120, 124
21	137, 150, 156	8:2	175, 214
21:4–9	125, 150	8:3	104
21:4	151	8:10–16	120
21:4–9	152	8:10–20	216
21:4	186	8:15	120, 152
21:4–9	186	9:7–21	124
21:5	150	9:12–21	139
21:5–6	152	9:14	141
21:6	151	9:14–19	141
21:7	150	9:22	124, 138
25	125, 135, 137, 141, 143ff, 161, 202	9:23	124
25:2	144	9:25f	124
25:5	144	11:1–8	92
25:8	186	12:9–10	179
25:9	144	13:1–9	141, 198, 208
25:18	186	13:4	214
26:14	125	13:6ff	141
26:51ff	118	13:10	218
26:62	144	13:13	218
26:65	118	17:7	51, 217
31:15–16	202	18:15f	82

18:18–19	82	32:18–20	216
19:19	217	32:19–22	216
20:6–7	42, 190	32:19–25	216
20:15–18	141	32:21	120, 156, 215 f
21:10–14	47	32:26–36	216
21:21	217	32:30	95
22:20–24	148	32:30–31	105, 215
22:21f	217	32:30	217
23:1	53	32:31	217
23:13–29	146	32:37–39	215
23:17–18	148	32:37–42	216
24:7	217	32:37–39	217
28	102	32:39	95, 154, 216
28–29	165	32:43	216
28–32	166	33:8	149
28–29	186	34	157
28–32	186, 206	32:28–29	217
28:10	86		
28:20	151	<i>Joshua</i>	
29:1ff	102	1:13	179
29:9–20	198	5:2f	76
29:12ff	102	7	24, 183
29:13–18	195	14:6ff	73
29:17	142	22:18	218
29:18–20	208	22:22f	218
30–32	102	24:7	93
31–32	124		
31:8	216	<i>Judges</i>	
31:15f	93	2–6	210
31:16–20	139, 216	2:1	216
31:16–22	216	5:11	122
31:29	216	11:34	140
32	105, 215, 227	13	48
32:1	95	15	48
32:1–6	216	21:21	140
32:4	105, 215, 217		
32:7–18	216	<i>1 Samuel</i>	
32:8–10	119	2:6ff	154
32:10	120	8	172
32:12	216	16	172
32:13ff	105, 217	31:11–13	47
32:15	105, 150, 215		
32:15–18	216	<i>2 Samuel</i>	
32:15–22	216	6:2	86
32:16–17	215	7:12ff	172
32:17	57, 120, 142	12:15–24	47
32:17–21	142	23:23	217
32:17	156, 215		
32:18	215		

24:1–17	183	<i>Ezra</i>	205
24:15–17	159	9–10	76
<i>1 Kings</i>		<i>Nehemiah</i>	
2:8–10LXX	154	2:19	218
7:25	138	9:7f	218
8:10–13	96	9:9–34	72
11:1ff	147	9:9–21	92, 100
11:14	219	9:12	93, 94
12:25–30	141	9:17	218
12:26–14:11	139	9:19–20	94
12:28	138	9:20f	218
12:32	138	9:28	218
14:10–14	141	9:31–32	218
14:22–23		9:35	218
18	141	<i>Job</i>	
18:26	140	6:18	120
19	48, 141	12:23	126
19:3ff	120	12:24	120
19:14–18	210	14:10	144
19:18	205	24:5	121
21:21	141	30:4	83
29:5	140	<i>Psalms</i>	
<i>2 Kings</i>		9:17	118
1:8	48	15	164
18:4	152	18:3	217
21:14	205	18:31	217
25:12	205	28:1	217
25:22ff	205	36:20LXX	162
25:27ff	205	61:2	217
<i>3 Kings LXX</i>		62:2	217
14:22–23	156	66	124
<i>1 Chronicles</i>		66:6–12	91
12:17	219	67:2–3LXX	162
16:25–26	142, 216	67:16LXX	119
21:12–15	159, 162	68	124
21:15	161	68:7–10	94, 121
<i>2 Chronicles</i>		68:9LXX	130
7:14	86	68:18	94
12:5	216	71:3	217
28:6	210	74:13f	121
29:5	185	74:13–14LXX	177
29:19	218	77LXX	119ff, 134, 156
		77:13–30LXX	120
		77:16–20	94

77:17–18LXX	150	105:20LXX	141
77:18LXX	150	105:21LXX	136
77:22LXX	120	105:22LXX	137
77:24–25LXX	112, 120	105:23LXX	125
77:26–31LXX	138	105:23–25LXX	157
77:32LXX	120	105:24 fLXX	124, 136f
77:40 fLXX	150	105:28LXX	136
77:41LXX	150	105:28–31LXX	137
77:56–58LXX	150	105:28–37LXX	142
77:56LXX	150	105:28–31LXX	144
77:58LXX	156	105:29LXX	94
77:59–72LXX	150	105:30LXX	125
78	124	105:32–37LXX	120
78:5	72, 217	105:32LXX	136
78:8ff	218	105:32–33LXX	137
78:11–55	92	105:33LXX	94
78:14	92, 94	105:34 ffLXX	137
78:21	92	105:37–39	93
78:31	92	105:37LXX	137, 141 ff, 216
78:33–34	92	105:43LXX	137
78:35	120, 155	106	124, 218
78:40	94, 120f	106:5LXX	121
78:59–60	24	106:6–7	72, 218
80:5–7	120	106:7–11	92
81	218	106:11LXX	94
89:26	217	106:12	92
90:4	176	106:13–21	92
91:9LXX	162	106:15	136
94:8 fLXX	149	106:16–18	161
95	124	106:24	92
95:1	217	106:32–33	93
95:5LXX	216	107	124, 218
95:7–11	95, 120, 179, 218	107:4–9	121
99:6–7	93	107:35–38	121
104	137	107:40	120
104:8–10LXX	195	113:4–7LXX	216
104:37–41	137	114	124
105	124, 134	126:4	94
105LXX	136f, 157	134:15–18LXX	216
105:7LXX	137	136	124
105:8LXX	136	136:13–16	92
105:11LXX	136		
105:12LXX	136	<i>Proverbs</i>	
105:13–14LXX	136	1:22	138
105:14–15LXX	136	5	146
105:14LXX	137	6:24–35	146
105:14–15LXX	138	15:10–11	151
105:16LXX	137	16:18	196
105:19–23LXX	136, 157		

18:12	196	35	121
26:11	202	35:6–10	94
		40–66	109
<i>Isaiah</i>		40:3–5	93
1:2	95	40:3	122
1:9	26, 205	40:3–5	179
2:2	169	40:13	95
4:2–6	93	40:18–20	142
4:4–6	93	41:4	216
4:5	93	41:11	162
6:1ff	152	41:17–20	94
7:14	172	41:18f	121
8:17	216	42:1	78, 94, 98, 119,
9:1f	172	42:1ff	205
9:6	172	42:6ff	102
9:7	102	43:1–3	91
10:20ff	26	43:2–17	93
11	82	43:7	86
11:1–2	78	43:10	216
11:1	82	43:11–13	95
11:1–15	93	43:13	216
11:1	172	43:16–21	82
11:1–2	172	43:16–19	84, 92
11:10	82	43:16–21	94, 132, 179
11:10–16	82, 173	43:18–21	109
11:11–16	26	44:3–4	94, 109, 121, 173
13:21–22	121	45:6–7	154
14:29	152	46:4	216
17:10	217	48:12	216
19:1	93	48:20–21	93, 109
19:19–20	132	49:6–11	102
22:13	94	51:3	94, 109
22:14	24	51:9–11	177
24:5	206	51:10–11	92
25:6f	107	52:1–2	93
25:8	95	52:12	93
26:20	93	53	98
27:1	177	54:5	146
27:12–13	93, 177	54:10	102
28:11–12	95	55:3	26, 102
29:14	95	59:21	94
30:1	218	61:1f	94
30:6	152	61:8	102
30:7	177	63:7–14	93
30:17	95	63:9–10	93, 155
30:29	217	63:10	94
31:5	92ff	63:11–13	93
32:15	78, 94, 173	63:11	94
34:11–15	121	63:14	93, 94f, 179

Jeremiah

1:5	207
2	121
2:1-4:4	148
2:14ff	
2:22-23	141
3:14	218
5:10	210
5:18	210
7:24-29	210
9:22-23	154
10:3-11	142
11:10	139, 216
14:10ff	24
15:16	86
16:14-15	179
17:5-6	120
23	16
23:5-6	172
30:9	172
31:2LXX	122
31:2ff	179
31:33	26, 173
31:36-37	210
32:37f	26
33:15f	172
35	121
50:5	26

Lamentations

4:3	121
-----	-----

Ezekiel

1:10	138
4:1ff	175
4:4-8	83
11:19	78
12:23-25	176
14:7	141
16	141, 148, 206
18:5-17	164
18:21-24	19
20	121, 132
20:8	138
20:24	138
20:30	141
20:35-38	210

29:3-5	177
34:23	172
34:25	122
36	121
36:24-27	173
36:25-27	78
37:24	172
43:5	94
44:3	108
47:1-2	94

Daniel

2:31ff	169
7:3ff	169
8:3ff	169
8:17ff	172
9:9	218
9:24-27	175
12:2-3	172
12:11-13	172
12:13	169

Hosea

1-2	141, 148
2:14-18	82, 121
2:16-25	122
3:1-3	146, 148
3:5	169
4:1-2	164
6:7	206
8:5	139
9:10	137
10:5-6	139
11:1	119
11:8-11	79
12:9-13	79
12:9	82
13:4f	79, 121
13:5	207
13:14f	79
14:4f	121

Joel

1-3	172
2:1	176
2:15	176
2:28-32	173
3:3	93

Amos

2:10–3:2	79
3:1–2	207
5:18–20	172
9:11	172

Obadiah

15	176
----	-----

Micah

2:12	26
3:4	216
4:1–8	79
4:7	26
5:1–5	172
7:11–15	79, 82
7:15ff	92
7:18–20	210

Habakkuk

1:12	217
2:4	119
3:1–7	79

Zephaniah

1–3	172
2:14f	121
14:4–9	172

Haggai

2:4–5	79
-------	----

Zechariah

3:2	155
3:8	172
6:12	172
10:8–12	79
12:8	79
12:10–13:1	173
14:8–9	79
14:8	94

Baruch

1:20–22	138
4:7	142

4 Ezra

1:10–13	92
4:2ff	171
4:25	86
4:36	26
4:44–52	172
5:1–13	219
6:25	169
6:49–52	107
7:26–44	172, 175
7:30	175
7:31	171
7:32–38	175
7:46–61	122
7:50	171
7:51ff	171
7:112–114	171
8:53	179
11:44	169, 176
12:31–34	172
14:10–12	169

Judith

7:14	126
7:25	126
12:7	77
14:4	126
14:10	76

1 Maccabees

1:10ff	219
--------	-----

2 Maccabees

5:26	126
7:9	172
7:24	202
7:36	221
9:17	76
11:11	126
12:28	126
14:35	119
15:27	126

3 Maccabees

2:6–8	92
6:4	92

<i>4 Maccabees</i>		11:12	213
5:2	63, 143	12:2	168
		12:26	168
<i>Sirach</i>		14:12	144, 147
		14:22–31	164
1:30	196	16:6	168
2:7	196	16:20	107
2:15–16	208	18	159
18:30–19:3	148	18:3–7	92
22:27–23:1	196	18:6	72
28:22–26	196	18:13	92
33:1	214	18:20–25	159, 186
45:1–5	88	18:22	168
		18:25	168
<i>Tobit</i>		19:6ff	92
1:5	139	19:7	93
8:3	121	19:19f	92
13:2	172		
<i>Wisdom</i>			
10:15–11:4	105		
11:10	168		

Pseudepigrapha

<i>Apocalypse of Abraham</i>		<i>1 Enoch</i>	
29	171	1:9	122
31	171	5:6–10	122
31.1	26	10:4	121
		10:11	148
<i>2 Baruch</i>		10:13ff	171
13:9–10	198	39:6	26
15:7–8	171	40:4f	26, 98
21:23	171	45:3ff	26, 205
29–30	172, 175	46:3f	26
29:3–6	107	48:1	94
30:1–2	171	48:10	205
39–40	175	60:7	107
40:3	171	60:24	107
44:9–15	171	61:8	26, 98
54:21	171	62:14	107
59:6	123	69:14	87
72–74	175	71:15	171
73:1	179	89:16–40	92
85:10	172	91–93	169
		91:1–17	172

91:7–8 123
 91:12–17 169, 172
 103:5–7 123
 931–10 169

2 Enoch

30:16 179
 32:2–33:1 172
 53:4 72f
 65:7–10 171
 66:6 171

Epistle of Aristeas

227 76

Hellenistic Synagogal Prayers

12.73f 92

Joseph and Aseneth

5:7 107
 8:5 63, 107
 8:11 107
 10:12–13 63
 11:8 63
 15:5 107
 16:1–15 107
 16:7–8 107
 19:5 107
 21:13f 63
 22:13 107

Jubilees

1:23–29 172
 20:4–5 148
 23:14–21 219
 23:26–31 172
 30:7–17 148
 36:10 123
 39:6 148
 49:2 161

Lives of the Prophets

2.14 82

Odes of Solomon

6 94
 6:8–18 107

Prayer of Jacob

9 87
 15 87

Psalms of Solomon

3:9–12 196
 17:21 172
 18:3–7 122

Pseudo-Philo

3:10 171
 15:5f 158
 16:3–7 160
 19:7–13 171

Sibylline Oracles

2.95 63
 2.149–53 143
 2.39–55 143
 2.95 143
 2.95–96 143
 2.250–82 148
 3.5–10 76
 4.47–91 170
 8.311 169

Testament of Job

48 181

Testament of Moses

1:14 88
 11:16–19 88
 12:4 169

Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs

Testament of Reuben

3.2–3 148
 3.3–6 164
 4.6–8 148

Testament of Simeon

7:1–2 172

Testament of Levi

4.6 148

14.6 76

14:1 139

Testament of Judah

16:1 138

Testament of Issachar

5:1–2 208

Testament of Naphtali

4:2–3 205

Testament of Joseph

4.4–5 76

Qumran Literature

IQH (Thanksgiving Hymns)

2:21ff 195

3.336 161

5.24f 162

11:13 195

IQM (War Rule) 83

1:6 171

4:3f 195

7.3–7 83

12:1 26

13:7–10 26

13:9–12 171

13:12 161

14:6–7 195

14:8–10 26

18:2–3 171

IQpHab (Commentary on Habakkuk)

5:7–8 172

7:2–14 172

7:13 139

12:7–9 184

IQS (Community Rule)

1.25 72

1 102

1:7ff 78

1:15f 175

2.21ff 83

2.7–8 161

2.11–17 198

2:17–21 107

3 102

3:6ff 78

3:17–4:21 171

4:2–14 161

4:2–6 164

4:14–23 78, 102

4:20–21 78

5.13 78, 102

5:13–20 183

6:4–6 107

7:4–5 183

7:15–18 183

7:18 162

8.13–16 83, 122

8:4–10 183

8:13–14 122

8:21–24 183

9:3–6 183

9:19–20 122

CD (Damascus Rule)

1:3–11 83

2.6 161

3:6–10 124

3:11ff 124

3:12–14 205

4:17–19 164

5:6–7 184

7.6 83

7:9–8:3[19.9–13] 171

19:1–2	208	<i>4Q175 (Testimonia)</i>	
19:35–20:1	83, 122	1–13	83
20:15	175		
20.13 ff[8:21 ff]	83, 122	<i>4Q180 (Ages of Creation)</i>	
20.26[B]	83		139
<i>IQSa (Messianic Rule)</i>			
1:1	169	<i>4Q423</i>	
		fr.5	162
<i>IQ22 (Words of Moses)</i>			
1.1	83, 175	<i>11QMel.</i>	
2.5f	83, 175	4–18	170
<i>4Q171 (Commentary on Psalms)</i>			
2–3	122	<i>11QPsa.</i>	
3:1	122	37	175
<i>4Q174 (Midrash on the Last Days)</i>			
1:2	169		
1:15	169		
1:19	169		

Philo and Josephus

Philo		<i>De Praemiis et Poenis</i>	
<i>De Aeternitate Mundi</i>		152–72	205
127–128	144	<i>De Specialibus Legibus</i>	
<i>De Cherubim</i>		1.54–57	148
49	88	1.172–74	165
<i>De Decalogo</i>		1.191–92	165
1.2	122	1.213–15	165
2.10–13	122	3.131	98
<i>De Ebrietate</i>		3.125f	133
95	133	4.126–31	120
99	37, 135	<i>De Virtutibus</i>	
<i>De Fuga et Inventione</i>		20.103–04	76
90	133	<i>De Vita Contemplativa</i>	
137–39	112	22–23	122
<i>De Legatione ad Gaium</i>		85–86	100
36	70	<i>De Vita Mosis</i>	
<i>De Posteritate Caini</i>		1.24	37
182–85	37, 135	1.155–57	88
		1.78–79	100
		1.302	140

1.295–305	144	Josephus	
1.165f	155	<i>Antiquities</i>	
2.254f	100f	2.275	87
2.162	133	2.276	88
2.174	135	3.295	37
2.183	135	3.26–32	112
2.162	140	4.140	37
<i>In Flaccum</i>		4.306–16	124
7	70	4.12–15	135
		4.140	135
<i>Legum Allegorae</i>		4.32	135
2.84	105	4.36	135
2.86	105	4.59	135
2.77	152	4.66	135
3.169–70	112	4.126–58	148
<i>Quaestioneset Solutiones in Genesis</i>		18.65–80	144, 145
2.62	105	20.97–99	83
		14.7.2[111–115]	70
<i>Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres</i>		<i>Bellum</i>	
202–04	100	2.259–260	83
<i>Quod Deterius Potiori Insidiari Solet</i>		4.406–07	162
115–18	105	7.452	142
		7.3[43–45]	70
		<i>Vita</i>	
		11	78

Tannaitic, Mishnaic, and Related Literature

<i>'Abodah Zarah</i>		<i>Mekilta Bahodesh</i>	
3.12f	86	1.238–39	118
55a	64	2.236	118, 185
<i>'Abot de-Rabbi Nathan</i>		<i>Pesahim</i>	
9	140	7.13	76
<i>Exodus Rabba</i>		<i>Pesiqta Rabbati</i>	
41	140	4a-c	#m, 175
<i>Gerim</i>		<i>Pirqe 'Aboth</i>	
1.7	86	2:7	171
<i>Megilla</i>		4:1	171
70d	172	4:21–22	171
		6:4	171
		6:7	171

Sanhedrin

10.1f	171
13.2	118
63b	64
97a	172
99a	175
601	118

Tanhuma 'Ekeb

7b	83
----	----

Yerbamot

45b	85
47b	85

New Testament

Matthew

2:1–18	84
2:23	84
3:1ff	48
3:11	97
3:13f	84
3:16–17	84
4:1–11	48, 84
4:1–2	84
4:1–11	149
5–7	35
5:1ff	84
5:29–30	206
7:13	151
7:15–23	26
8:11–12	107
10:28	162
12:28–29	174
12:43	121
13	174
13:24–30	53, 185
13:47–50	53, 185
16:18–19	9
18:15–17	51
22:11ff	8
22:37–41	57
23:15	76
24:4–13	6,
24:4ff	219
24:15	6
24:21	6
24:26	6, 83, 103
24:32–25:14	176
25:12	156
26:26ff	108

Mark

1:2–8	48
1:5	77
1:8	78, 97
1:12–14	121
7:4	77
8:35	151
9:38–40	88
9:43ff	206
10:28–31	48
10:30	174
10:32	168
10:35–45	71
10:38	91
13:5ff	6, 219
14:22f	108

Luke

1:13ff	48
1:17	48
1:46–55	35
1:77	221
1:79	221
1:80	48
2:21	47
3:1–6	48
3:1ff	48
3:2–4	48
3:7	127
3:15	83
3:16	97, 127, 174
3:16ff	174
4:1–14	48, 149
4:17f	174
8:13	218
8:29	121

9:25	162
9:35	98, 205
9:39	213
9:57ff	48
10:18	174
11:20	174
12:49f	71, 78
14:26	26
15:4	151
15:8	151
17:30–33	219
18:11	166
18:30	174
20:35–36	182
21:8ff	6, 198
21:8–18	219
21:8ff	
22:19f	108
23:35	205
24:14	168

John

1:12f	28
1:15ff	82
1:19ff	83
1:26–33	97
1:33	78
1:34	205
3:3–7	28
3:5	90
3:14–16	151
4:19ff	82
6	26
6:14	82
6:31ff	112
6:35f	28
6:35	107
6:36–40	25
6:37–40	25
6:48	107
6:66	6
9:22	2
9:34	2
10:28	17
14:10	28
15:4ff	28
15:6	28
17:2f	28
17:12	151, 162

Acts

1:5	94, 97
1:7	139, 174
2	34, 79
2:3–4	94
2:17	94, 174
2:17ff	174
2:19f	93
2:21	86
2:33	94
2:38	77
2:38–39	79
2:38	85, 86
2:38–39	90
3:17–26	82
3:19	94
3:22–26	84
5:9	151
7:20–43	84
7:29–30	84
7:30–38	155
7:35	84
7:36ff	70
7:58	84
8:9–24	6
8:12	77
8:16	85
8:26ff	86
9:2ff	173
9:17–18	90
9:30	49
10:28	76
10:48	85
11:6	97
11:25	49
13:17–18	70
13:40f	198
15	55
15:20	145
15:29	63, 145
18:1–17	70
18:1–2	70
18:7	70
18:8	70
18:17	70
18:18	49
18:24	70
18:27	70

19:3–5	85	5:14	131
19:13–16	88	5:21	177
21	34, 228	6:1–4	71
21:21	2, 219	6:3	74, 77
21:25	63	6:3f	80
21:38	83	6:3	85
21:39–22:3	101	6:4	74
22:16	77, 86	6:5	30, 178
26:11	156	6:11	97, 205
26:12–18	173	6:12f	177
		6:21–22	177
<i>Romans</i>		7:4	98, 146, 178
1–8	199	7:5	177
1:2	168	7:7–8	138
1:2–4	173	7:13	179
1:7	86	7:14	112
1:11	112	7:18	177
1:13	70	7:25	177
1:16	178	8	32, 199, 206ff
1:17–3:20	123	8:1–13	34
1:17	177	8:1	97, 205
1:18ff	79, 148, 165, 175	8:3–13	177
1:21	101	8:3–4	217
1:24f	138, 146, 221	8:5–8	199
1:26–29	146	8:6	177
1:29–31	164	8:7	200
1:29	164	8:9	97
1:32	165, 179	8:9–11	128
2:1–16	34, 199	8:11	30, 95, 178
2:3–5	123	8:12–13	197, 209
2:4	208	8:13	177, 182, 199
2:5	123	8:15–17	86
2:8f	151	8:16	19
2:19	101	8:17–18	213
2:26–29	72	8:18–25	101, 175
3:1–2	168	8:23	29, 177f
3:24	178	8:24	178
3:26	175	8:28–39	206ff
4:1f	72	8:28	208
4:5–6	177	8:29–30	29, 32
4:23f	130	8:29	173
5:1	178	8:29–30	193, 207f
5:2	195	8:31ff	209
5:5	88	8:33	193
5:9	175, 178	8:35–39	209
5:10–11	177	8:38–39	174
5:10	200	8:39	209
5:12–21	98, 177, 179	9–11	30, 32, 84, 198, 206ff, 225

9:1-4	198	11:22	196, 198, 201, 208f, 225
9:1-6	207	11:23-24	200, 207
9:3	208	11:23	225
9:4-5	114	11:25	70,
9:6-8	207	11:26	30
9:8	72	11:26-29	199
9:11	206	11:26	199
9:13	207	11:26-29	207ff
9:18	199	11:26	207f
9:19-23	199	11:28	199
9:19	207	11:28-29	205
9:21-23	200, 207	11:30	177
9:24ff	207	11:33ff	208
9:24	207	11:36	57
9:30-31	199	12:2	175
9:30	207	12:5	205
9:30ff	207	13:8-10	138
9:31-32	225	13:8	164
9:32-33	199	13:9	209
10	199	13:11-14	101
10:1-4	198	13:11-12	176, 178
10:1	208	13:13	164
10:6-13	217	14:1-23	29
10:9-13	86, 97	14:1-15:4	58, 130, 198
10:9	178	14:4	198
10:16	225	14:8-9	99
10:17-21	199	14:9	217
10:18-21	207	14:13	198, 209
10:20	207	14:15	151, 198, 209
10:21	225	14:17	95, 174
11	198ff, 209f, 227, 228	14:20ff	198
11:1	193, 207	14:23	209
11:1-7	207	15:3-4	58
11:2	193, 207	15:4	58, 84, 130, 200
11:5	175, 207	15:14	168
11:7	199	15:27	112
11:7ff	199	16:13	207
11:7	207	16:17	219
11:11-12	198		
11:11ff	200	<i>1 Corinthians</i>	
11:13-22	207	1	36
11:15ff	198	1:1	70
11:17-24	72, 199	1:1-2	101
11:17	203	1:1-9	194, 214, 221
11:20	195	1:2	86
11:20-22	195f, 198	1:2-3	154
11:20ff	200	1:2	214
11:20-22	200	1:4-9	36
11:21	203		

1:5	214	2:12	101
1:6-7	214	2:15-3:1	181
1:7-8	92	2:16	95
1:7-10	154	3:1-4	160, 217
1:7-8	179	3:2	181
1:8-9	32, 169, 214	3:3	166, 219
1:9	214f	3:10-15	212
1:10	36f, 59	3:13f	179
1:10-17	89	3:15	178
1:10-12	135	3:16-17	96, 98, 184, 193, 212, 223f
1:10-17	160	3:17	152
1:10-12	167	3:19-20	154, 168
1:10-4:21	181	3:19	175
1:10	219, 223	3:21-23	160
1:11-12	36	3:21	166, 192
1:11-17	37, 39, 44, 59	3:22	174
1:11ff	98, 166	3:23	99
1:12-17	36, 181	4:1	0170
1:13f	64	4:1-5	212
1:13	77f	4:4-5	154, 160, 179
1:13-17	78, 79	4:5	192
1:13	85	4:6	156, 163, 166
1:13f	85, 89	4:7ff	49, 180, 188
1:13	97	4:8	103, 181
1:14	70	4:8-13	181, 217
1:14-17	90	4:14f	86, 168
1:17	80	4:15	194
1:18-29	36	4:18	135, 156, 166
1:18-4:21	37	4:19-20	92, 156, 166
1:18-15:57	59	4:20	174, 180
1:18-4:21	59	5	51, 123, 165
1:18-2:16	75	5-10	189
1:18-29	101	5	205, 212
1:18	152, 175, 178	5-6	212
1:18-3:3	180	5	224
1:18	194	5:1-5	30, 32
1:19	95, 168	5:1-11:1	37
1:20	175	5:1-7:40	37
1:21	119, 177	5:1-5	51
1:26ff	49, 135	5:1-11:1	59
1:29-30	154	5:1-7:40	60
1:30-31	36, 97	5:1-5	99
1:30	101, 177, 205	5:1	146
1:31	154, 194	5:1-5	149, 183
2:4-5	92	5:1	185
2:6ff	113, 175, 217	5:1-5	185
2:7	17	5:1	194
2:8	101, 154	5:1-5	212, 224
2:9	168		

5:2	147, 156, 166, 181	6:20	202, 206
5:4	85	7:1	68
5:4-5	154, 185	7:1-2	146
5:5-7	123	7:1ff	182
5:5	162, 177, 180, 184	7:4	146
5:5-7	197	7:5	213, 220
5:5	212	7:8f	146
5:6-8	37, 71	7:12-15	101
5:6	100	7:14	101
5:6-8	183, 194	7:16	185
5:7	108, 197	7:17	154
5:8-13	179, 197	7:22-23	99
5:9-12	51, 100, 165, , 194	7:23	202
5:10	75, 101	7:25	68
5:10-11	143	7:29-31	175f
5:10	175	7:31	101, 175
5:10-13	185	7:34	101
5:11	185, 194	7:36-38	146
5:12-13	101, 185	8-9	38
5:13	180, 184, 194, 217	8-10	38
6:1	101, 166	8-14	42
6:1-8	165, 185	8-10	51, 54
6:2	185	8	55ff
6:3	179	8-9	55
6:6	101, 166, 194	8-10	55, 133
6:7	166	8	143
6:9-11	30, 32, 38, 79, 85, 92, 101, 103, 127, 138, 143, 146, 148, 165, 174, 179, 182, 197	8-10	166, 210ff, 217
6:10	165, 197, 212	8	226
6:11	77, 85, 90, 97, 99, 101, 103, 148, 194, 223	8-10	228
6:12-20	42, 63, 64, 98, 103	8:1-11:1	33, 37f
6:12f	146f	8:1-13	37, 51
6:12-20	146ff, 165f, 181	8:1	55
6:13	64, 146	8:1-11:1	55
6:13-14	146, 180f	8:1	57
6:14-15	206	8:1-6	57
6:15	97	8:1	62
6:15-17	98, 142, 146	8:1-3	63
6:15	147,	8:1	68
6:15ff	212	8:1-11:1	69, 70
6:16-17	37, 146	8:1-3	75
6:16	163, 223	8:1-11:1	135, 143
6:17	97, 223	8:1-13	143
6:18	64, 147, 220, 224	8:1-3	142
6:18f	224	8:1	156
6:19-20	99, 146, 184, 194	8:1-11:1	156, 163, 194, 199
		8:1-13	210
		8:1-11:1	210ff
		8:1-6	216
		8:1-3	217

8:1–11:1	222, 226	9:23–27	58, 210
8:2	164	9:24–27	33
8:3	86, 156	9:24–10:22	56
8:4	55	9:24–27	58, 67, 70, 73, 123, 129, 134, 143, 161, 178
8:4–6	57, 61	9:24–10:22	182
8:4	62	9:24–27	183
8:5	75	9:24–10:22	195, 197, 210, 224, 226
8:5–6	142, 149, 154, 166, 195	9:25f	108, 110
8:6	57, 223	9:27	32, 70
8:7–13	29, 32	10:1–13	chs. 2–6
8:7	55f, 62f	10:1–11	chs. 3–4
8:7–13	63	10:1–12	chs. 3–5
8:7	101, 135, 210	10:1	33
8:7–13	211	10:1–13	33, 37f
8:8	62	10:1–4	39, 44
8:8–13	152	10:1–12	49
8:9	56	10:1–13	52, 53, 54
8:9–13	55	10:1–22	56–68
8:9	58, 63, 198	10:1–4	67
8:9–13	198, 210	10:1–5	68
8:10	55, 61–63, 64, 190	10:1	69–104
8:11	56, 152, 195	10:1–2	69
8:11–12	210	10:1–4	69–116
8:12	63, 64, 195, 211	10:1–22	95
8:13	55f, 198	10:1–11	99, 108
9:1–27	37, 38	10:1–22	110, 113
9:1	58, 154	10:1–4	117f, 124
9:1–27	161, 183	10:1	130
9:1ff	195	10:1–4	133, 139
9:4	55	10:1–22	142
9:4–6	58	10:1–4	168, 177f
9:5	154	10:1–2	182
9:8–10	37	10:1–4	183, 185f
9:9–10	58, 168	10:1	192
9:10	163	10:1–11	192
9:11	112, 195	10:1	194
9:12	58, 65, 211	10:1–4	195, 200, 204
9:13	37	10:1–22	215
9:15–19	65	10:1–11	223f
9:16–17	58	10:1–4	223f
9:18	58	10:2	57, 69, 138, 164, 185, 216
9:18ff	164	10:3–4	37, 104–116, 126, 129, 223f
9:19	56, 58	10:4	13, 26, 105, 135, 153ff
9:19–23	58		
9:19–22	65		
9:20–22	55f		
9:23–27	30		
9:23, 62	32		

10:4–10	197	10:11–12	72
10:4	202, 215	10:11	84
10:5–10	38	10:11–14	95
10:5	67, 69	10:11	103
10:5–10	73	10:11–12	105
10:5	72f	10:11	105, 109f
10:5–10	91	10:11–12	152
10:5f	91	10:11	167–191, 194, 200, 223ff
10:5–10	92, 95	10:12	13, 30, 32, 33, 38f, 67
10:5	99	10:12–13	128
10:5–10	100	10:12	144, 184, 192–212
10:5–11	100	10:12–13	192–222, 223f
10:5–10	102	10:12	224
10:5–11	103	10:13	32, 33, 58, 67, 212– 222, 223f
10:5–10	111	10:14–17	38
10:5–11	113f	10:14–22	38
10:5	116, 117–128	10:14–23	42
10:5–10	117–167	10:14	58f, 61, 64, 68, 140, 143, 147
10:5–11	117–191	10:14–22	190
10:5	197, 200, 204	10:14	198
10:5–11	204	10:14–22	210
10:5f	206	10:14	213
10:5	217	10:14–15	217
10:5–11	222ff	10:14	220
10:6	38	10:15–22	59, 61
10:6–7	58	10:16–17	57, 64, 97, 100, 102, 108
10:6	67, , 84, 103, 109, 128–139	10:16	109
10:6–13	186	10:16–22	109, 114, 126, 134, 138, 140, 143, 154, 184, 189, 195
10:6	194f	10:16–17	205
10:6–10	196	10:17	57, 223
10:6	200, 223f	10:18	37
10:7–10	39	10:18–22	57
10:7	57f	10:19	62
10:7–8	63	10:20–22	57, 61
10:7	67	10:20–21	64
10:7–10	67f, 72	10:20–22	120, 137
10:7	79, 139–143, 196	10:20–21	142
10:7–10	197, 200, 202, 216f, 220	10:20–22	154, 156
10:7–8	226	10:20–21	215
10:8	143–149	10:20–22	215
10:9	84, 105, 149–157, 202	10:22	156, 165, 216
10:9–12	211	10:23–11:1	37, 55–61, 98
10:9	217	10:23	181
10:10	57, 157–167		
10:11	38, 67		
10:11–12	67		
10:11	72		

10:23–11:1	210	12:1–2	70
10:24–25	61	12:1	110, 112
10:25	64	12:2	79, 92, 103, 106, 138, 142, 156, 185
10:25–28	185	12:3	44, 97, 154, 155, 223
10:27	56	12:4	110
10:27–29	61, 63, 64	12:4–6	154
10:27	65f, 101	12:4–11	223
10:28–29	55	12:5	223
10:28	62	12:6	223
10:28–29	62	12:7–11	92
10:29–30	59, 60, 62	12:7ff	113
10:30	55	12:9	110
10:31	56	12:11ff	94
10:31–11:1	61, 164	12:12	97
10:32–33	211	12:12–27	97, 223
10:33–11:1	58	12:13	42, 64
10:33	178, 224	12:13ff	64
11	42	12:13	78f, 81, 85, 90, 96f, 112, 128
11–14	76, 107	12:13ff	184
11:1–16	188	12:13	189, 194, 206, 224
11:2–14:40	37	12:26–27	164
11:2–16	37	12:27	205
11:2–14:40	60	12:28–31	110
11:2–16	106, 182, 188f	13:1ff	164
11:3–16	81	13:1	181
11:7–8	81	13:1ff	181
11:12	57	13:2	181
11:16ff	44	13:4	156, 166
11:17–34	106ff, 193, 194, 212	13:4–7	166, 181
11:18–21	166	13:5	166
11:19	194	13:6	166
11:21	79	13:7	181
11:23–26	79	13:8–10	103, 181
11:23–25	102	13:8–12	182
11:23	108	14	42, 92, 113
11:25f	102, 206	14:1	112
11:26	108f, 114, 179	14:2	181
11:27–34	30, 32, 49	14:21	37, 95
11:27–30	110	14:23	101, 106
11:29	114, 179, 184	14:31f	188
11:30	114, 184	14:34	163
11:31–32	221	14:38	156
11:32	101, 110, 154, 179	14:39	192
11:33	192	15:1–57	37, 60
12	42	15:1f	195
12–14	49	15:2	30, 32, 197
12	98	15:3	163
12–14	180, 188f, 217		
12:1	68		

15:12ff	103, 113	3:6	206
15:12	135, 180	4:3	152
15:12ff	180ff	4:4	101, 162, 175, 177
15:18	152	4:14	30
15:20–50	98	4:17	213
15:20f	146	5:1–11	176
15:20–28	173	5:5	29, 95, 177
15:20f	180	5:9–10	211
15:22	180	5:14–15	99
15:23	99	5:14–17	146
15:23ff	170, 176, 180	5:17	84, 97
15:23	180	5:17–20	177
15:24	169f, 174, 180	5:17	205
15:24f	180	5:20–6:2	211
15:24	190	6:1	30f, 197, 220
15:28	180	6:6f	165
15:29	39, 74, 79	6:11–7:1	62
15:32	37	6:13	86
15:32–34	79	6:14	101
15:32	94	6:14–7:1	211
15:34	135, 166	6:15	162
15:35ff	146, 180	7:1	101, 146
15:40	113	10–13	211
15:44	112	11:2	98
15:45	111	11:2–3	146, 178
15:48	113	11:3ff	211
15:50	174	11:24	144
15:51	170, 180	11:26	121
15:51ff	176, 180	12:20f	148, 156, 164
15:54	95, 180	12:20–13:2	166, 211f
15:56	177	12:20–21	211f
15:58	60, 192	12:21	101, 148
16:1	68	12:27	162
16:12	68	13:1–2	212
16:13	195	13:1ff	211
16:15–18	60	13:5	
16:21–22	179	13:5ff	211
16:22	114, 156, 186, 197, 224	13:5	213
		13:10	212

2 Corinthians

1–9	211
1:8	70
1:9	176
1:22	29, 177
1:24	195
2:5–11	211
2:15	152
3	79

Galatians

1:1–4	79
1:4	101, 175
1:6–9	197
1:6	202
1:8–9	225
1:11–17	173
1:14	173
1:15–17	53

1:15–16	56	5:7	197
1:15	119	5:9	197
1:17–21	49	5:10	197
2	34, 228	5:12	53
2:2	30, 56	5:13–19	177
2:2ff	56	5:15	197
2:2	197	5:16–21	138
2:16–17	53	5:19–21	30, 143, 148
2:16–21	197	5:19	164
2:20	97	5:19–21	165, 182, 197
2:21	197	5:20	219
3–5	197	5:21	165, 174, 197
3:1–5	53	5:22–23	165
3:2	97	6:1	213
3:4	197	6:6–10	197
3:6–13	53	6:7–10	193, 197
3:6–9	72	6:8	95, 177, 182, 197
3:6f	103	6:12–14	53
3:7–18	98	6:15	75
3:10	221	6:16	72, 84
3:26–4:6	86		
3:27–28	42	<i>Ephesians</i>	
3:27	74, 77	1:4–11	205
3:27–28	80f	1:5	119, 209
3:27	81, 85	1:9	119
3:27–28	205	1:11	119
3:28	47, 75, 80, 188	1:13–14	97, 177
3:29	72	1:20–22	175
4:4–6	86	1:22–23	57
4:4	130, 178, 217	2:2	101, 175
4:8–9	177	2:3	175
4:9	86	2:8	177
4:11	30f, 197, 220, 220	2:11–12	175
4:14	213	3:5	175
4:17	53	3:17	97, 205
4:19	86	4:4–6	79
4:21–31	53, 84	4:8–12	94
4:24–25	105	4:13	170
4:24	206	4:17–18	101
4:28	72	4:17–24	148
4:29	112	4:25–32	164
4:30	53,	4:31	147
5–6	197	5:3	145
5	227	5:3–5	148, 164
5:1–4	30, 195ff	5:5	101, 143
5:1	197	5:8	177
5:2–4	53	5:18	101, 112
5:4	53, 196f, 225	5:21–23	147
5:5	178, 197	5:25–32	98

5:25f 99
 6:4 168
 6:11–14 195
 6:12 101

Philippians

1:3–11 214
 1:6 29, 176, 214
 1:19 97
 1:20–23 176
 1:20 176
 2:6–11 217
 2:9–11 217
 2:12 27, 192
 2:13 119
 2:14 161
 2:15 175
 2:16 30
 3:3 72
 3:5–7 53
 3:5 173
 3:11–12 30, 170
 3:17 131
 3:20 176
 4:1 192, 195
 4:5 176
 4:8 165

Colossians

1:13 101
 1:15–20 217
 1:16 57
 1:18 173
 1:21 175
 1:22–23 27, 201
 1:26 175
 1:27 97, 205
 1:28 168
 2:8 198
 2:11–13 71
 2:12 178
 2:13 177
 2:14 147
 2:18 1556
 3:3–4 127
 3:5f 143
 3:5–10 148
 3:5f 148

3:5 164
 3:7–8 177
 3:8 148, 164
 3:11 81
 3:12f 165
 3:16 168
 4:12 195

1 Thessalonians

1:4 86, 219
 1:6f 219
 1:7 131
 1:9–10 79, 175
 1:9 219
 1:10 127, 219
 2:5 86
 2:12 174
 2:13ff 219
 2:15 195
 3:5 213, 220
 3:12 164
 4:1–6 146
 4:1–8 220
 4:3f 146
 4:3–8 193
 4:5 148
 4:10 86
 4:13 70
 4:16f 97, 176
 4:17–18 176
 5:1f 139
 5:1–11 176
 5:1–3 176
 5:4–5 101
 5:6–7 101
 5:9 29, 175, 219
 5:12 168
 5:14 168
 5:22 221
 5:24 219

2 Thessalonians

1:5 174
 1:11 119
 2:1ff 176
 2:3ff 6
 2:3 151, 218
 2:3ff 219

2:7	219	3:7–4:13	200f
2:9–11	219	3:7	201
2:10	152	3:8f	151
2:12	219	3:12	198, 201
2:13–14	29	3:12–13	201
2:13	97	3:12	218
2:13–14	206	3:13	201
2:13–3:5	219	3:14	27, 201
3:1–3	219	3:15	201
3:3	218, 221	3:16	84, 201
3:5	30	3:17	201
3:9	130	4:1	201
3:14	194	4:6	201
3:15	168	4:11	201
		5:11–6:12	200
<i>1 Timothy</i>		6:1–4	79
1:3–11	164	6:4–6	4, 15, 17, 25, 27, 34, 174, , 228
1:10	209	6:6–8	200
1:20	162, 194	9:26	139
4:1–3	164, 218f	10:19–39	200
4:12	130	10:23	218
5:15	162	10:26–31	4
6:4–5	164	10:26–29	15, 200
		10:26–31	200
<i>2 Timothy</i>		11:26	202
2:22–25	164	11:28	161
2:22	221	11:38	121
3:1–9	164	12:1–29	200
3:11	221	12:15	201
4:6–7	176	12:25	198, 200
4:10	175	13:7	220
		<i>James</i>	
<i>Titus</i>		2:7	86
1:12–13	26	5:19–20	34, 228
2:7	130		
2:11	177	<i>1 Peter</i>	
2:12	175	1:2	209
3:5	90, 97, 99	2:4ff	205
		2:19	221
<i>Hebrews</i>		3:21	86
1:1–2	174	4:12	168
2:1–4	200	5:12	195
2:2–3	200		
2:9	17	<i>2 Peter</i>	
3–4	202, 227	1:10–11	27
3:6	27, 201	2–3	219
3:7–11	95, 107		

2	227	5 ff	202
2:1	27	10	151f, 202, 212
2:1–22	27	11	151, 202
2:1	152	12–13	151
2:1–3	202	12–15	202
2:1	202	15	151
2:1–22	202	16	151, 202
2:4–9	152, 202	17–18	202
2:9	221		
2:10	151		
2:12–13	152, 202	<i>Revelation</i>	
2:12	212	1:1–3	174, 176
2:15–16	152, 202	1:19	174
2:17	152, 202	2:14	63, 142–144
2:19–22	202	2:20	63
2:20–21	202	2:20–22	142
2:22	202	2:20	142–144
3:1ff	174	2:20–22	145
3:2–4	202	3:10	221
3:8	176	9:11 ff	161
3:9	152	9:20–21	142
		11:2	177
<i>1 John</i>		11:5	177
2:18	174	11:8	111
2:19	25–28	12	124
2:24	28	12:1–5	177
2:28	28	12:6ff	177
5:16	5	12:7	153
		13:13–14	6
<i>2 John</i>		15:6	96
7–11	28	17–18	124
8	28	17:10	144
		18:2	121
<i>Jude</i>	227	19:9	107
4–7	145	21:8	143, 148
4	151f, 201f	22:15	148
5	151f, 154, 201	22:19	27
		173	148

Early Christian Literature

Acts of Paul and Thecla		<i>1 Clement</i>	
25	87	9–11	3
34–35	87	11	202
		47	37, 202
Ambrose		51	202, 227
<i>On Penance</i>		57:1–2	2
2.2	9	<i>2 Clement</i>	
Apocalypse of Peter		5–8	4
5	6	5–6	202
		5:1–6:9	202
		6:7	3, 202
Augustine		Clement of Alexandria	
<i>De Baptismo</i>		<i>Stromateis</i>	
1.10[13]	9	2.13	154f
5.27–28[38–39]	9	Cyprian	
<i>De Correptione et Gratia</i>		<i>Epistulae</i>	
38	9	18[12]	9
40	10	50[47]	8
<i>De Dono Perseverantiae</i>		52[48]	8
1	10	<i>De Lapsis</i>	
21	9f	16	9
33	10	Egerton Papyrus	
<i>Sermo</i>		2	88
71	9	Epiphanius	
Barnabas		<i>Haereses</i>	
2:1	203	42.12.3	153
2:4	203	Eusebius	
2:10	3, 203	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>	
2:18–21	203	2.13	6
4	3, 227	3.26	7
4:6–14	203	4.7	7
11:2	203	4.15	8
18–21	3	5.1	8
19:2	203	5.2:8	8
Basil		6.41	8
<i>Epistles</i>		6.43	8
188	5	8.12	8
199	5		
217	5		

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|-------------------------------|----------|
| 8.2:3 | 8 | <i>Against Heresies</i> | |
| <i>Didache</i> | | 1.33 | 7 |
| 1–6 | 3 | <i>Epitomia</i> | |
| 6:3 | 63 | 2.7 | 88 |
| 7 | 87 | <i>Historiae Philippicae</i> | |
| 10.3 | 106 | 36 | 88 |
| 10:6 | 114 | | |
| 16 | 6 | Origen | |
| Epistula Apostolorum | | <i>Contra Celsus</i> | |
| | 202 | 1.6 | 87 |
| | | 5.42 | 88 |
| Ignatius | | <i>De Oratione</i> | |
| <i>Ephesians</i> | | 28 | 5 |
| 16–17 | 6 | <i>Stromateis</i> | 154f |
| 20.2 | 37 | Peter of Alexandria | |
| <i>Philadelphians</i> | | <i>On Penance</i> | 9 |
| 3:2 | 3 | Polycarp | |
| 8:1 | 3 | <i>Martyrdom of Polycarp</i> | |
| <i>Romans</i> | | 8 ff | 7 |
| 7 | 7 | <i>Philippians</i> | |
| Irenaeus | | 6 | 4 |
| <i>Adversus Haereses</i> | | 7 | 6 |
| 1.23:1–4 | 7 | 11 | 4 |
| 3.3:4 | 6 | Reliques of the Elders | |
| 4.27:2–3 | 152 | 9 | 203, 227 |
| 5.28–29 | 6 | Shepherd of Hermas | |
| John of Damascus | | <i>Visions</i> | |
| <i>Heresies</i> | | 2.2 | 4 |
| 1–4 | 11 | 3.6–7 | 4 |
| 99 | 11 | <i>Mandates</i> | |
| 101 | 11 | 4.3:6 | 4 |
| <i>Orthodox Faith</i> | | 4.1:8 | 4 |
| 2.29–30 | 12 | 12.3–6 | 4 |
| Justin Martyr | | <i>Similitudes</i> | |
| <i>Apology</i> | | 8.6–11 | 4 |
| 1.26 | 7 | 8.6:4 | 4 |
| <i>Dialogue with Trypho</i> | | 9.13–15 | 5 |
| 75:1–2 | 88 | 9.18 ff | 5, 152 |
| 125:4f | 6 | | |

10.2–4	5	Thomas Aquinas
Tertullian		<i>Summa Theologica</i>
<i>On Repentance</i>		Ia IIae Q. 109 Art. 10 11
7	5	Ia IIae Q. 114 Art. 9 11
<i>On the Soul</i>		IIa IIae Q. 12 Art. 1–2 11
9	181	IIa IIae Q. 12 Art. 3f 11
<i>De Praescriptione Haereticorum</i>		
3	6	
40	6	

Classical, Hellenistic, and other Ancient Writings & Inscriptions

Aristotle		<i>Greek Magical Papyri</i>
<i>Rhetoric</i>		2.114 89
3.1.1358a	35	5.108–18 88
		13.343–44 89
		13.1077 89
Athenaeus		
<i>Deipnosophistae</i>		Isocrates
571c–74e	145	<i>Panegyricus</i>
		28–29 80
Catallus		
<i>Poems</i>		Juvenal
63	81	<i>Satires</i>
<i>Corpus Hermeticum</i>		2.79ff 162
1.4.4	80	6.314–41 81
<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>		6.474–541 81
6.510	80	6.316–19 106
		6.314–41 164
Dio Chrysostom		Livy
<i>Orationes</i>		<i>History</i>
34.40	205	2.32 98
39.5	98	
Diogenes Laertius		<i>Orphicorum Fragmenta</i>
7.166	202	232 79
7.37	202	<i>P. Oxy.</i>
		926 65
Epictetus		<i>P. Köln</i>
<i>Dissertationes</i>		57 65
2.10:4–5	98	<i>P. Yale</i>
		85 65

P. Oslo

157 65

Pausanias

Description of Greece

2.7.5f 81

9.39:5 80

Pliny (the elder)

Natural History

30.11 88

Pliny (the younger)

Epistles

10.96 7

Plutarch

How to Study Poetry

22F 80

Moralia

267B 81

479B 206, 224

Polybius

5.111 201

24.9.6 202

Seneca

De Clementia

1.51 98

Strabo

Geography

8.6.20 145

Authors

- Abraham, W. 19, 26
Abrahams, I. 86, 94
Allison, D. 71, 82, 83, 84
Alló, L. 90, 100f, 135, 156, 195
Anderson, B. 93
Arminius, J. 16
Arrington, F. 182
Aune, D. 75, 80, 87, 121, 170, 171, 174f
Aycock, D. 48
- Badke, W. 71, 143
Bailey, K.E. 55
Bandstra, A. 71f, 91, 104f, 110, 131
Bangs, C. 16
Barbour, J. 27
Barclay, J. 2, 197
Barrett, C.K. 61, 65, 78, 82, 103, 112, 114, 130, 156f, 161, 169, 177, 194, 199, 211, 213, 221
Barth, K. 21
Barth, M. 199
Barton, G. 142
Barton, S. 100
Bauckham, R. 151f, 202
Bauder, W. 218
Bauer, W. 6
Baxter, R. 18
Beasley-Murray, G. 76
Beet, J.A. 20
Behm, J. 168
Beker, J.C. 173, 178, 182, 204
Bell & Skeat 70, 83, 88, 142, 162
Belleville, L. 60
Beougher, T. 18
Berkhof, L. 21
Berkouwer, G.C. 22–25
Bertram, G. 140
Best, E. 97f, 143
Betz, H.D. 85, 88, 122
- Beugnet, A. 5, 9, 10
Bigg, C. 151, 202
Black, M. 78f, 102, 107f
Blomberg, C. 176
Böcher, O. 121f
Boettner, L. 21
Bogle, M. 170
Bonnington, M. 63
Borchert, G. 26
Borgen, P. 63, 65, 148
Bornkamm, G. 104, 110, 176
Bouché, J. 10
Boucher, M. 80
Boudinhon, A. 7
Bouttier, M. 56
Broer, I. 195
Bromley, D. 22, 27
Broneer, O. 81
Brown, A. 170
Brown, H. 6, 9
Brown, N. 218
Brown, R. 2, 120
Brown, S. 7, 24, 218
Bruce, F.F. 41, 61, 219
Brueggemann, W. 121, 126
Brunner, E. 21
Brunt, J. 55, 62f, 66
Büchsel, F. 142f
Bultmann, R. 24
Burton, E. 55
- Callan, T. 139
Calvin, J. 15, 19, 21, 25, 213, 228
Campbell, A.G. 218
Carrez, M. 130
Carson, D. 21, 24–28, 33f, 201
Chafer, L.S. 21
Charlesworth, J. 87, 172
Chavasse, C. 84
Chesnutt, R. 107

- Coats, G. 119, 137f, 150, 152, 157, 160f, 163
 Cohn, R. 48f, 189
 Collier, G. 56, 68, 128, 133–135, 140, 161, 167f, 214
 Collins, J.J. 170–172, 175, 188
 Colson & Whitaker 88
 Connelly, J.J. 14
 Constantelos, D. 14
 Conzelmann, H. 61, 63, 71, 80, 90, 102, 103, 119, 144f, 151, 157, 169, 195, 213, 220
 Cook, R. 27
 Cope, L. 56
 Countryman, L.W. 38
 Court, J. 169, 170
 Craig, W.L. 22
 Craigie, P. 216, 217
 Croix, G. 8
 Cullmann, O. 174f, 189, 201
- Dalman, G. 171
 Damer, T.E. 26
 Danell, G.A. 210
 Davenant, J. 17
 Davidson, R. 78, 93, 102, 104, 109f, 130, 131, 155f, 166, 168
 Davies, W.D. 96
 Davis, J.J. 11, 15
 De Planhol, X. 122
 De Ridder, R. 76
 Dellling, G. 169
 Denton, D.R. 219
 Dillon, J. 81
 Doddridge, P. 18, 22
 Doignon, J. 6
 Donfried, K. 123, 170
 Doskocil, W. 7
 Douglas, M. 40–43, 45, 51, 64, 99, 107, 183, 190
 Driver, S.R. 217
 Dunn, J. 2, 85, 96f, 98, 164, 174, 178, 197–199, 205, 207f
- Easton, B. 164
 Edwards, J. 19
 Ehrman, B. 153, 154
 Eliade, M. 79
 Ellicott, C. 90, 126
- Ellingworth, P. 201
 Ellis, E. 56, 82, 105, 112, 130, 154, 168
 Engberg-Pedersen, T. 110
 Epp & MacRae 2
 Eriksson, A. 56
 Evans-Pritchard, E. 46
- Fantham, E. 81
 Faur, J. 139
 Fee, G. 44, 52, 55, 58f, 61f, 69f, 85, 90, 97, 105, 108, 110, 129, 131, 134, 138, 156, 159, 163, 166, 168, 182, 196, 211, 215, 218, 220
 Feldman, L. 2, 76, 88
 Ferguson, E. 106
 Feuillet, A. 84, 105, 131
 Finney, C. 20
 Fishbane, M. 132
 Fisher, F. 71
 Fisk, B. 59, 61–63
 Fitzmyer, J. 199
 Foakes-Jackson, F.J. 7, 10
 Fohrer, G. 71
 Ford, J.M. 145
 Forkman, G. 141, 198, 206
 Friend, W. 6, 8
 Fung, R. 194
 Furnish, V. 99, 146, 163, 164–166, 175, 177
- Gager, J. 71, 88f, 165, 174, 188
 Gander, G. 77f
 Gardner, P.D. 55f, 59, 65, 72f, 93, 100, 104, 109, 119, 120, 157, 193, 195f, 215, 217
 Garlington, D. 198
 Gaudemet, J. 7
 Gavin, J. 17
 Genep, A. van 45f, 49, 75, 103, 185, 187, 189, 190
 Giblin, C.H. 219
 Gill, J. 20
 Ginzberg, L. 88
 Gitay, Y. 34, 35
 Godet, F. 127, 144, 195f, 213
 Gooch, P. 55, 65f
 Goodman, M. 76
 Goodwin, J. 17
 Goppelt, L. 130f

- Graf, F. 81
 Greeley, A. 27
 Grosheide, F.W. 112, 127f
 Grossi, V. 2, 5, 7
 Grundmann, W. 195
 Gundry Volf, J. 26, 28–33, 111, 127,
 166, 193, 194f, 197, 199f, 206, 208–
 211, 218, 221
 Guthrie, W. 80f
 Guzzetti, G.B. 10

 Hadaway & Roof 27
 Hadaway, C.K. 22, 27
 Hägglund, B. 9, 10
 Hahn, H-C. 151, 161
 Hahn, F. 213
 Halperin, D. 139
 Hamilton, N. 95
 Hansen, F.A. 46, 71
 Hanson, P. 171
 Hanson, R. 84, 90, 103
 Harris, G. 188
 Harris, H. 20
 Harrison, A. 19f
 Harvey, A. 2
 Hasel, G. 205
 Hauck, F. 143f, 146–148
 Havener, I. 185
 Hays, R. 95, 105f, 130, 196, 206, 215,
 218
 Hebblewaite & Donovan 5
 Hegle, M. 21
 Heitmüller, W. 85, 87, 185
 Helm, P. 22
 Hemer, C. 70
 Hendel, R. 48
 Hengel, M. 70, 171
 Hepe, H. 20
 Héring, J. 77, 105f, 112, 114, 131, 145
 Heyd, M. 46
 Hinz, C. 58
 Hoard, S. 17
 Hodge, C. 20
 Hofius, O. 201
 Holleman, J. 170
 Holmberg, B. 188
 Horrell, D. 55–57, 65f
 Horsley, R. 142
 Howard, J.K. 24, 71, 100

 Howell, D. 20, 177
 Hughes, P. 219
 Hunsberger, B. 22, 27
 Hunt, W.B. 27
 Hurd, J. 55f, 58f, 68, 110
 Hurtado, L. 88
 Hyland, F.E. 7

 Jacob, E. 48, 87, 121, 140, 207
 Jeremias, J. 25, 76, 77, 82f, 88, 101,
 213
 Jervis, L.A. 81
 Jeske, R. 106
 Jessup, H. 21
 Jocz, J. 206
 Joest, W. 32
 Johnsson, W. 200

 Karmiris, J. 14
 Karris, R. 198
 Käsemann, E. 98, 110, 112, 115
 Kee, H.C. 70, 148
 Kelly, J.N.D. 5, 7, 9f
 Kempthorne, R. 146
 Kendall, R.T. 21
 Kennedy, G. 35f, 67
 Kippenberg, H.G. 2
 Kistemaker, S. 217
 Kittel, G. 121
 Klauck, H-J. 84, 98, 106f, 136
 Klein, W. 205
 Kline, M. 91
 Knibb, M. 83, 122, 184
 Koch, D-A. 94
 Koch, K. 171
 Krause, A. 95, 216
 Kreitzer, L. 71, 87, 106
 Kroeger, R. & C. 76, 80f, 106
 Kuck, D. 181
 Kuhn, G.K. 213, 220

 Laansma, J. 201f
 Ladd, G.E. 171, 178, 188
 Lampe, G.W.H. 177
 Lane, W. 201
 Lang, F. 71, 106, 195
 Latourette, K.S. 15
 Leach, E. 48, 187
 Lefkowitz & Fant 81

- Lenski, R. 140, 145
 Liddel/Scott 218
 Lightfoot & Harmer 203
 Lincoln, A. 172
 Longenecker, B. 199f
 Lüdemann, G. 6
 Luther 13
 Luzarraga, J. 93f, 96

 MacDonald, D. 182
 Maier, J. 2
 Malan, F.S. 142, 154
 Malherbe, A. 56
 Malina, A. 40–43
 Marshall, I.H. 24–28, 34, 107f, 206,
 209, 214, 220
 Martelet, G. 72, 84, 102, 131
 Martin, D. 51f, 64f, 100, 146–148, 181,
 183, 205, 211
 Martin, R. 211
 Martin, L. 81
 Mauser, U. 71, 73, 83, 104, 119, 121f,
 178, 186, 201, 204
 McEleney, N. 164f
 McEwen, A. 105, 215
 McKnight, S. 27, 76f, 200f
 McVann, M. 46, 49, 103, 121
 Mearns, C. 180
 Meeks, W. 46, 56, 64f, 80f, 86, 114, 133,
 137, 140, 150, 180, 182, 185, 188
 Meissner, S. 2
 Merklein, H. 56
 Meslin, M. 79, 80
 Metzger, B. 77, 155, 157, 167
 Meyer, L. 210
 Michaelis, W. 196
 Miley, J. 20
 Millard, A.R. 186
 Mitchell, M. 36–39, 42, 57, 59, 60, 67,
 98, 110, 111, 134f, 147, 161f, 194,
 204–206, 214, 223
 Moiser, J. 176
 Moltmann, J. 1
 Moody, D. 20
 Moore, G.E. 76f, 80, 96
 Morris, L. 144
 Moule, C.F.D. 118, 127, 192
 Muller, R. 1, 15, 16
 Murphy-O'Connor, J. 52, 55, 61

 Murray, J. 21, 76, 78, 96, 115f, 207

 Neale, D. 2
 Nelson & Bromley 27
 Neusner, J. 133
 Newton, M. 162, 184f
 Neyrey, J. 40, 43f, 52f, 101, 106f, 184–
 186, 201, 206
 Nixon, R.E. 71
 Noll, M. 19
 Nuttal, G. 11, 18

 Oepke, A. 77, 79, 152
 Oesterreicher, J. 199
 Olson, C. 190
 Oropeza, B.J. 19, 57, 80, 134
 Osburn, C. 153–155
 Osten-Sacken, P. 197
 Oster, R. 70
 Oswalt, J. 139
 Owen, J. 17

 Painter, J. 106
 Patrick, D. 20, 215
 Pearlman, M. 21
 Pentikäinen, J. 188
 Perkins, W. 15, 16, 28
 Perrot, C. 134, 142, 159, 161, 185
 Peterson, R. 20f
 Pfitzner, V. 211
 Pfürtner, S. 13
 Pinnock, C. 21
 Piper, J. 207
 Piper, O. 173
 Plumptre, E.H. 153
 Pogoloff, S. 65
 Pope, W.B. 10, 20
 Porter, S. 201
 Praamsma, L. 16
 Prestige, G. 6
 Prichard, R. 18
 Pritchard 46
 Probst, H. 56

 Quasten, J. 5, 7

 Rahlston, T. 20
 Räisänen, H. 2
 Rengstorf, K.H. 163

- Rich, G. 19
 Rigaux, B. 218
 Ringgren, H. 71, 172
 Robertson & Plummer 93, 105, 112,
 144, 147, 149–151, 168, 213, 221
 Robinson, H.W. 205
 Roetzel, C. 118, 122, 123, 156, 178,
 185, 193, 196, 210
 Rohrbaugh, R. 43
 Rosner, B. 146, 163, 166, 168
 Rowland, C. 170–172
 Rowley, H.H. 205
 Russell, D.S. 83, 88, 170–172
- Sabourin, L. 93f
 Sahlin, H. 71, 78, 82–84, 99, 108
 Sandelin, K.-G. 56, 198
 Sanders, E.P. 29, 98, 209
 Sanders, J.T. 2, 6, 43, 65
 Sasse, H. 169, 171, 175
 Sato, Y. 9, 27
 Schaff, P. 15, 17
 Schattenmann, J. 106
 Schlatter, A. 80, 103, 106
 Schleiermacher, F. 20
 Schlier, H. 219
 Schmithals, W. 56, 74
 Schnackenburg, R. 84, 86–88
 Schneider & Brown 214
 Schoeps, H.J. 172, 175f, 199
 Schrage, W. 72, 90, 118f, 144, 161
 Schreiner, T. 18, 21f, 25, 26, 200, 207
 Schrenk, G. 119
 Schürer, E. 70
 Schweitzer, E. 164
 Scott, J. 83, 138, 208, 215, 218
 Seesemann, H. 149
 Segal, A. 2, 75, 88, 173
 Sell, A. 20
 Sellers, C.N. 21
 Shank, R. 21, 23
 Shedd, W. 20
 Silva, M. 94f, 133
 Smiles, V. 197
 Smit, J. 56f, 93, 155, 163
 Smith, D.E. 57, 107f, 112
 Snodgrass, K. 133
 Soards, M. 169, 173
 Songer, H. 61
- Spencer, J. 139
 Steele, D. 21
 Stoeffler, F.E. 19
 Stone, M.E. 175
 Strack, H.L. 133
 Strobel, A. 156
 Stuhlmacher, P. 199f
 Suggit, J.N. 108
 Synofzik, E. 39, 123
- Talmon, S. 120–122
 Tanca, R. 6
 Thiel, W. 206
 Thiessen, H.C. 21
 Thiselton, A. 166, 180f, 194
 Thrall, M. 61
 Tipson, B. 9f, 15–17
 Tomson, P. 57, 62
 Turner, V. 45–46, 49f, 75, 81, 187,
 188ff
 Turner, V. & E. 45, 188
- Ursinus, Z. 15
- Van Ruiten, J. 216
 Vielhauer, P. 171
 Vodola, E. 7
 Von Rad, G. 71, 92, 120, 149, 155,
 216
 Von Soden, H. 56, 58, 65
 Von Wahlde, U. 43
 Vriezen, T. 71
- Waetjen, H. 103
 Wakefield, G. 17
 Walter, N. 57
 Wanamaker, C. 218
 Ware, T. 14, 21, 200
 Watkins, O.D. 5
 Watson, D. 35, 58, 60, 214
 Watson, N. 32, 39, 54, 110, 123, 222
 Watson, T. 17
 Watts, R. 71
 Wedderburn, A.J.M. 40, 46f, 74f, 79,
 80, 86, 97f, 111f, 187
 Weinfeld, M. 206
 Weiss, J. 56
 Wenham, D. 181
 Wesley, J. 19, 20

- Whitaker 88
White, R.E.O 86, 98
White, W 18
Whitefield, G. 19, 20
Wibbling, 164f
Wiebe, W. 71
Wiley, H.O. 21
Wilk, F. 95
Williams, E. 21
Willis, L. 68
Willis, W. 56, 58, 65, 70, 85, 105, 119,
128, 132, 138, 151, 157, 193, 195f,
198, 213
Willoughby, H. 80, 107
Wimbush, V. 175
Winter, B. 64
Witherington, B. 59, 63, 103, 142, 146,
164, 176, 207, 209
Wolff, C. 130, 146, 195f
Wolterstorff, N. 22
Wright, N.T. 57
Wright, D. 142, 185
Yamauchi, E. 74
Yeo, K.-K. 56
Yonge 152
Young, F. 130, 132
Zaas, P. 164
Zerwick, M. 55, 85, 208
Zuntz, G. 77, 114, 153
Zwemer, S. 10

Subjects

- Acts & Paul 39f
- Amyraldism 18
- Anathema 7, 155f
- Angels (Tongues Of) 181f
- Antichrist 1, 5–7
- Apocalypticism 169ff (Cf. Eschatology),
- Apostasy (Cf. Table of Contents, Verse Index, Names Index, Standing & Falling, Jewish/Fall Of Israel, Appendix)
 - Berkouwer, G. C. 22f
 - Calvinism & Arminianism 17ff, 228, Appendix
 - Carson, D. A. 25ff
 - Continuity of Pauline Tradition with Others 200ff
 - Corinthian Situation 179ff, Chs. 2, 5
 - Deception & Heresies 5ff
 - Definition 1, Ch. 6
 - Eschatological Death 196ff
 - Eschatology 167ff
 - Fall from Grace 196ff
 - Gundry Volf, J. 28ff
 - Idol Meats 142ff, 210ff, Ch. 2
 - In 2 Corinthians 211
 - In Early Christian Literature 2–10, 200ff, 227, Appendix
 - In Galatians 196f
 - In Romans 195, 198–200, 206ff
 - In Thessalonians 218
 - Israelite Wilderness Chs. 3–4
 - Israel's Fall 198ff, 206ff
 - Jewish Tradition 2–3, 231
 - Judgement 196ff, Ch. 4
 - Marshall, I. H. 24ff
 - Middle Ages 10ff
 - New Methods 22, 33ff
 - Paul's View Chs. 5–6
 - Persecution & Martyrdom 7ff
 - Reformation & Counter-Reformation 13ff
 - Sedition & Vices 3ff, 163–167
 - Sources Appendix
 - Terms for Apostasy (Gk./Heb.) 218f
- Aquinas, Thomas (Cf. Verse Index)
- Arminius, Arminianism 1, 13–22, 24, 33–34, 228, 232–233
- Assurance 13, 15, 18, 19f, 19f, 24–28, Appendix
- Augustine (Cf. Verse Index)
- Authority 58, 85, 122, 124, 126, 159, 164, 166, 174, 177
- Baal-Peor 143ff
- Baptism 5, 7, 9, 10, 39, 42f, 44, 47, 48, 49, 53, 54, 69–104, 115, 224f
 - Jewish Proselytism 76f
 - Moses & Jesus 73ff, 82ff
 - Name Representation 85ff
 - Spirit Baptism 92ff
- Belief, Unbelief 1, 13ff, 30, 34, 51, 62, 64, 73ff, 79f, 83f, 92, 123, 149, 161, 168, 169, 196, 198ff, 209, 218f
- Birkat Ha-Minim 2
- Blasphemy, Unforgivable Sin 1, 10, 15
- Body
 - Body of Christ 73ff, 97ff, 146, 182ff
 - Social Body 50ff, 204ff, 223ff (Cf. Boundaries, Sexual Immorality, Individuality, Elect, Expulsion)
- Boundaries 40ff, 50ff, 99ff, 146ff, 164f, 167ff, 184ff, 224 (Cf. Cosmos, Body)
- Caesar 7ff
- Calvin, Calvinism 1, 13–22, 24, 32, 33–34, 228, 232–233
- Chiasm 128–130, 214
- Christ (Cf. Messiah, Rock)
 - „In Christ,“ 97ff, 205
 - Christology 104–106, 153ff
 - Lord 153–155

- Classical-Theological Approach 22
 Cloud, Pillar of 92ff
 Codes (Civil) 10
 Consumption 104ff
 Corporate Body (Cf. Body, Election)
 Cosmos, Cosmology 73ff, 99ff, 142, 171ff, 224 (Cf. Boundaries, Body, Eschatology)
 Councils 5, 13ff
 Counter-Reformation 13ff
 Covenant 72, 76, 78f, 83, 94, 101ff, 115, 121–123, 127, 139–142, 150–160, 163, 165, 195, 198, 203, 206, 214, 278 (Cf. New Exodus, Exit Rituals)
 Covetousness 4, 12, 134ff (Cf. Vices)
 Creeds 7, 13ff

 Death 3, 3, 5, 6, 9, 9, 12, 14, 34, 40, 46, 47, 48, 127ff, 144ff, 151ff, 196ff (Cf. Judgement, Eschatology, Destruction)
 Decian Persecution 9
 Desert 120ff, 186 (Cf. Wilderness)
 Destruction, Destroyer 151ff, 158ff, 196ff (Cf. Judgement, Eschatology, Death)
 Deuteronomic Tradition 56f, 75, 82, 92, 95, 99, 102, 104ff, 119, 124, 134, 137, 141f, 154f, 195, 208, 214ff
 Devil 6–7, 11, 49, 101, 149, 152f, 161–167, 219f
 Diocletian Persecution 6, 8, 9, 9
 Discord, Division (Cf. Faction)
 Donatists 9
 Drinking (Cf. Food, Idol Meats)

 Eastern Orthodox 11, 14
 Eating (Cf. Food, Idol Meats)
 Eighteen Benedictions 2
 Elect, Election 9, 9, 15, 15f, 17f, 18f, 21, 23, 26, 30, 33, 69–73, 86, 90, 97–102, 107, 109, 111, 115–120, 124, 127f, 130, 137, 139, 142f, 148, 150, 158, 161, 192–194, 199f, 204–210, 214–216, 219, Appendix
 Eschatology, Eternal, Kingdom 3, 3, 25, 31, 54, 121ff, 167ff
 – Eternal Condemnation 15
 – Eternal Life & Death 3–5, 9f, 12f, 15, 15, 30, 151–153, 161ff, 196ff
 – Jewish Eschatology 170ff
 – Now & Not Yet 173ff
 – Salvific Dualism 177ff (Cf. New Exodus, Apocalyptic, Liminality)
 Eternal Security (Cf. Assurance)
 Ethics 97ff, 163 (Cf. Vices)
 Eucharist (Cf. Lord's Supper, Messianic Banquet)
 Examples (Cf. Typology)
 Excommunication 7, 7, 11, 12, 52, 54
 – Exit Rituals/ Expulsion 52ff, 101f, 141, 184ff, 194

 Faction 3, 38ff, 59f, 134ff, 157 (Cf. Sedition)
 Faithful God 214ff
 Fathers of Israel 72
 Food 104ff, 133ff, 139ff, 149ff (Cf. Idol Meats)
 Foreknowledge (Cf. Predestination)
 Fornication (Cf. Sexual Immorality)

 Gnostic, Gnosticism 8, 74f
 Golden Calf 133, 136, 139ff (Cf. Idolatry)
 Grace 11, 11, 14, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 30, 31, 33f, 117, 118, 124, 126, 127, 148, 193, 195, 211, 214, 221 (Cf. Election, Standing & Falling)
 – Fall from 196ff
 – Spiritual Benefits Ch. 3
 Greco-Roman Religion (Cf. Mystery Religions, Idolatry)
 Group/Grid Axis 41ff
 Grumbling 157

 Heresy, Heretics 1–3, 12, 37
 Holy Spirit 90f, 95ff, 104–116 (Cf. Blasphemy, Baptism, Spirit)

 Idol Meats 139ff, 210ff, Ch. 2
 Idol, Idolatry 5, 8, 8, 38, 38, 42, 53, 133ff, 139ff, Ch. 2 (Cf. Idol Meats, Vices)
 Individuality 182ff, 204ff (Cf. Body, Election)
 Initiation Ch. 3 (Cf. Baptism)
 Isaianic Tradition 13, 79, 82f, 92ff, 98, 102, 121, 142, 177, 215–216 (Cf. New Exodus)

- Islam (Cf. Muslims)
 Jesus (Cf. Messiah)
 Jew/Jewish 3, 25, 26, 27, 30, 42f, 50,
 51, 54, 55 (Cf. Eschatology)
 – Fathers Of Israel 72
 – Jew/Gentile Relationships 1–3, 55,
 72
 – Jewish Proselytism 76f
 – Traditions 109ff, 119 (Cf. Deutero-
 nomic-, Numbers-, Isaianic Tradition)
 – Wilderness Generation Chs. 3, 4
 Judaism 2, 10, 11f, 46f (Cf. Jew)
 Judgement (Divine) 3, 3, 7, 30, 35, 39,
 39, 52, 54, 54, Ch. 4 (Cf. Eschato-
 logy, Death, Destruction)
 Justification 15, 17, 18, 20, 33, 47

 Kadesh Barnea 158f
 Kingdom Of God (Cf. Eschatology)
 Korah 159f

 Law (Cf. Moses, Covenant)
 Liminality 45ff, 75, 103ff, 187ff
 Lord (Cf. Christ)
 Lord's Supper 106ff

 Magic 87ff (Cf. Mystery Religions)
 Massah & Meribah 120
 Meal Sharing 113ff (Cf. Food, Lord's
 Supper, Solidarity)
 Messiah, Messianic Redeemer,
 Messianic Banquet 82ff, 107f, 172f
 Midrash 56, 133ff
 Moses 2, 49, 73ff, 82ff
 Murmuring (Cf. Grumbling, Vices)
 Muslims 10, 11
 Mystery Religions 74–82, 106f

 New Exodus 79, 82ff, 92ff, 108, 121f,
 174f (cf. Isaianic Tradition)
 Novatians 8, 14
 Numbers Tradition 73, 92, 95, 119,
 124–126, 134–139, 144, 148, 149ff,
 157–161, 186 (cf. Kadesh Barnea,
 Baal Peor, Korah)

 Obedience, Disobedience 3, 19, 28,
 110f, 120, 141, 181, 198, 209
 Ordo Salutis 15, 17, 29f

 Penance (Cf. Repentance)
 Persecution 1, 2, 3, 7–10, 14
 Perseverance 212ff (Cf. Apostasy,
 Faithful God, Table Of Contents,
 Appendix)
 – Berkouwer, G. C. 22f
 – Calvinism & Arminianism 17ff, 228,
 Appendix
 – Carson, D. A. 25ff
 – Deception & Heresies 5ff
 – Definition 1, Ch. 6
 – Eschatology 167ff
 – Gundry Volf, J. 28ff
 – Marshall, I. H. 24ff
 – Middle Ages 10ff
 – Paul's View Chs. 5–6
 – Persecution & Martyrdom 7ff
 – Reformation & Counter-
 Reformation 13ff
 – Sedition & Vices 3ff, 163–167
 – Sources Appendix
 Predestination 10, 14, 14, 17f, 19f,
 23–24, 31, 33f, 207–208, Appendix
 Presumption, High-Mindedness 10, 63,
 156, 191, 195–196, 199, 221, 225
 Protestantism (Cf. Reformation)
 Provocation 149ff (Cf. Testing, Tempta-
 tion, Vices)
 Psalm Tradition 92–95, 118f, 124f, 134,
 136–138, 149f, 155, 157f, 161, 218
 Punishment 4, 11, 14, 18 (Cf. Judge-
 ment)
 Purity 40ff, 182ff

 Red Sea 91ff
 Reformation 2, 13–16
 Reformed Tradition (cf. Calvinism,
 Reformation)
 Rejection 118ff (Cf. Judgement)
 Remnant (Cf. Restoration, Election)
 Repent, Repentance 3–5, 10f, 14, 17,
 22, 83, 150, 194, 207, 210, 211
 Restoration 4–5, 12f, 14, 21, 34, 210
 (Cf. Elect)
 Rhetoric, Rhetorical Method 34ff, 59f,
 113, 118f, 227
 Righteous, Unrighteous 170 (Cf. Justifi-
 cation, Obedience, Judgement)
 Rites Of Passage (Cf. Liminality)

- Rock 104ff, 217f (Cf. Deuteronomic Tradition)
 Roman Catholicism (Cf. Counter-Reformation)
 Sacraments, Sacramentalism 109ff (Cf. Lord's Supper, Baptism)
 Satan (Cf. Devil)
 Sedition 3 (Cf. Faction)
 Sex Roles 81f
 Sexual Immorality 12, 143ff, 194 (Cf. Body, Vices, Expulsion)
 Simon Magus 6
 Sin 1, 5, 9, 10, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 25, 26, 30, 31, 39, 44, 52, 53 (Cf. Vices)
 Socio-Anthropological Method 40ff, 64ff, 227f
 Solidarity 72f, 104ff, 118f (Cf. Individuality, Body)
 Some (Cf. Solidarity, Individuality)
 Song Of Moses 215ff
 Spirit, Spiritual, Pneumatics 104–116, 179ff (Cf. Holy Spirit)
 Standing & Falling 192ff
 Strong & Weak 50ff, 55ff, 189, 198 (Cf. Lord's Supper, Idol Meats, Presumption)
 Sustenance 104ff
 Taberah 158f
 Taboo 40ff (Cf. Purity, Socio-Anthropological Method)
 Temptation, Tempting 1, 2f, 12, 17, 149ff, 213ff (Cf. Testing)
 Testing (Christ) 155ff (Cf. Provocation, Vices)
 Tongues (Cf. Angels)
 Traditio-Historical Method 24ff
 Traditions (Cf. Deuteronomic, Numbers, Isaianic, Psalm, Jewish Eschatological, Wilderness)
 Trent (Cf. Councils, Counter-Reformation)
 Two Ways 5 (Cf. Ethics, Wisdom)
 Typology, Prefigurations 128ff, 168, 190, 195, 225
 Unity Of Discourse Ch. 2
 Unpardonable Sin (Cf. Blasphemy)
 Vices 3–5, 13, 38, 163ff (Cf. Sin, Ethics, Idolatry, Covetousness, Provocation, Sexual Immorality, Temptation, Grumbling)
 Warnings 3, 4, 18, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 32, 33, 39, 39, 53, 54, 221f (Cf. Rhetoric, Typology)
 Water in the Desert 94, 121 (Cf. Isaianic Tradition, Restoration)
 Wesleyanism (Cf. Arminianism)
 Wilderness 109ff, Ch. 4 (Cf. New Exodus)
 Wisdom 16, 75, 84, 105f, 109, 113, 159, 168, 175f, 180–182, 196, 202, 214, 217f

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

Alphabetical Index of the First and Second Series

- Ådna, Jostein*: Jesu Stellung zum Tempel. 2000. *Volume II/119*.
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- see *Hofius, Otfried*.
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- Klinghardt, Matthias*: Gesetz und Volk Gottes. 1988. *Volume II/32*.
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- see *Walter, Nikolaus*.
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- Lichtenberger, Hermann*: see *Avemarie, Friedrich*.
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- Löhr, Hermut*: see *Hengel, Martin*.
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- Metzner, Rainer*: Die Rezeption des Matthäusevangeliums im 1. Petrusbrief. 1995. *Volume II/74*.
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- Noack, Christian*: Gottesbewußtsein. 2000. *Volume II/116*.
- Noormann, Rolf*: Irenäus als Paulusinterpret. 1994. *Volume II/66*.
- Obermann, Andreas*: Die christologische Erfüllung der Schrift im Johannesevangelium. 1996. *Volume II/83*.
- Okure, Teresa*: The Johannine Approach to Mission. 1988. *Volume II/31*.
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- Philippi. Volume 1 1995. *Volume 87*.
- see *Ego, Beate*.
- Pöhlmann, Wolfgang*: Der Verlorene Sohn und das Haus. 1993. *Volume 68*.
- Pokorný, Petr und Josef B. Souček*: Bibelauslegung als Theologie. 1997. *Volume 100*.
- Porter, Stanley E.*: The Paul of Acts. 1999. *Volume 115*.
- Prieur, Alexander*: Die Verkündigung der Gottesherrschaft. 1996. *Volume II/89*.
- Probst, Hermann*: Paulus und der Brief. 1991. *Volume II/45*.
- Räsänen, Heikki*: Paul and the Law. 1983, ²1987. *Volume 29*.
- Rehkopf, Friedrich*: Die lukanische Sonderquelle. 1959. *Volume 5*.
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- Reiser, Marius*: Syntax und Stil des Markus-evangeliums. 1984. *Volume II/11*.
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- Rissi, Mathias*: Die Theologie des Hebräerbriefs. 1987. *Volume 41*.
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- see *Burchard, Christoph*
- Salzmann, Jorg Christian*: Lehren und Ermahnungen. 1994. *Volume II/59*.
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- see *Thüsing, Wilhelm*.
- Sommer, Urs*: Die Passionsgeschichte des Markusevangeliums. 1993. *Volume II/58*.
- Souček, Josef B.*: see *Pokorný, Petr*.
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- Spanje, T.E. van*: Inconsistency in Paul?. 1999. *Volume II/110*.
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