

Re CS 222
The Letter to the Romans: Christian Theology According to Paul

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Fall 2014

OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE:

The Letter to the Romans, written by Paul to a congregation that he had never visited, is commonly thought to represent the apostle's most complete theological reflection. The church has turned to Romans as a primary resource for thinking about a range of theological topics including justification, baptism, predestination, and the relationship of Law and Gospel.

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the Letter to the Romans as a resource for Christian theology and ministry. Attention will be given to the background to the Letter to the Romans, to a close reading of extended passages in Romans, and to classical and contemporary interpretations of theological issues in this letter.

TEXTBOOKS AND RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

The following books are required in this course, and portions of each should be read according to the schedule below:

Frank J. Matera, *Romans*. Eerdmans (Paideia Commentaries), 2010.
N. T. Wright, *Paul in Fresh Perspective*. Fortress, 2005.

In addition, it is expected that each student will have a copy of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible and will bring it to each class session. The following edition of the NRSV New Testament is especially recommended: Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*. Oxford, 2011.

EXAMINATION:

Note-taking and learning the professor's views is an essential component of higher education. Accordingly, there will be an examination in this course on October 28.

TERM PAPER -- *Toward a Pauline Theology of Judaism:*

Paul believed during at least part of his career that the return of Christ and the culmination of all things would occur during his lifetime.¹ Thus Paul did not develop a theology of an ongoing Jewish faith and its relationship to Christianity. But what might a present-day Christian seeking to be faithful to Paul say about the relationship of Christianity to contemporary Judaism?

Classical and contemporary Christian understandings of the relationship of Christianity to Judaism have included:

- (a) *Supersessionism or Replacement Theology*: Christianity has replaced Judaism in the biblical covenant. After Jesus, Judaism has no spiritual significance above that of any other religion.
- (b) *Dispensational Theology*: Only believers in Christ are saved. The Jewish people are still loved by God, and will be restored at some time in the future.
- (c) *Two-Track Theology*: Judaism and Christianity are different but equally faithful ways of responding to God.

A more recent perspective, arising mostly from the Jewish side, is:

- (d) *Biblical Faith Adapted for the Gentiles Theology*: There is one covenant, the ancient covenant between God and Israel. Christianity is a "missionary wing" of Israel, theologically adapted to bring Gentiles to the worship of God.²

¹ See "we who are alive" in 1 Thessalonians 4:15, 17. 1 Thessalonians is thought to be Paul's earliest letter, and as such it is the oldest extant piece of Christian writing.

² The term "missionary wing" is my own, an attempt to represent Michael S. Kogan's *Opening the Covenant: A Jewish Theology of Christianity* and Pinchas Lapide's amazing book *The Resurrection of Jesus: A Jewish Perspective*.

Based on a close reading of Romans 8-11 and any other relevant passages, present a Pauline statement of the relationship of Christianity to contemporary Judaism. What are the implications of your findings for a present-day Christian understanding of Judaism? Show how you would adopt, modify, or explicitly reject at least one of the perspectives summarized above. Your task is not to echo Paul, but to present what Paul's theology would suggest for answering a question that he himself did not address.³ This paper will require your own theological reflection based on a careful reading of applicable passages.

Note: The textbooks for this course and other secondary resources may assist you in writing this paper. What I will be looking for, however, is not a summary of these but a discussion based on your reading of Paul himself. Your primary references should be to passages in the letters of Paul and any other relevant biblical texts. This paper is due on November 18, and will be the topic of a discussion session on that day.

COMMUNICATIONS:

I will be available to meet students on campus after most class sessions. I also respond to e-mail: HannBob@aol.com.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

The following is the schedule for this course. Students' interests, the length of classroom discussions, and other similar matters may cause minor changes in this schedule. **The dates for the examination and the term paper are firm.**

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| August 28 | Introductory Matters What Are We Doing Here? An Introduction to the Course How to Read Romans – and Anything Else in the Bible Introduction to Reading Scripture Exegetically | |
| September 2 | Locating the Roman Church Hellenistic Judaism, the Septuagint, Philo, the Diaspora Synagogues Roman History, Culture, Religion The Expulsion of the Jews by Claudius | Read: Matera, pp. 2-23, Wright, pp. 3-20, 62-68, 76-79 |
| September 9 | Readings in Romans Introductory Matters – Romans 1-2 Idolatry and the Ubiquity of Sin – Romans 2 | Read: Matera, pp. 24-77 |
| September 16 | Righteousness by Faith – Romans 3 Our Father Abraham – Romans 4 | Read: Matera, pp. 78-120 |
| September 23 | <i>Issues in Interpreting Romans: I</i> <i>Justification and Faith: Aquinas, Luther, N. T. Wright</i> | Read: Wright, pp. 47, 108-125 |
| September 30 | Salvation and Baptism – Romans 5-6 | Read: Matera, pp. 121-163 |
| October 21 | The Law and Hope – Romans 7-9 | Read: Matera, pp. 164-234 |
| October 28 | Examination | |
| November 4 | <i>Issues in Interpreting Romans: II</i> <i>Election and Predestination: Augustine, Calvin, Arminius, Barth, McDonald</i> | Read: Matera, pp. 231-282 |
| November 11 | The New Life in Christ – Romans 12 The State and Concluding Matters – Romans 13-16 | Read: Matera, pp. 283-348 |
| November 18 | <i>Issues in Interpreting Romans: III</i> <i>Toward a Pauline Theology of Judaism</i> | Discussion Session Term Papers Due |
| December 2 | Reading Romans in the Church Today | Read: Wright, pp. 154-174 |

³ See N. T. Wright's reflections on being faithful in "the fifth act," in his *Paul in Fresh Perspective*, pp. 170-174.

BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR ADVANCED READING:

“Of the making of books there is no end,” lamented the ancient Preacher (Ecclesiastes 12.12). The following bibliography includes works that may be useful for advanced reading in the topics covered by this course. Those marked with an asterisk are especially recommended for further study and for use in ministry.

THE BOOK I DID NOT ASSIGN:

According to many reviewers, the definitive book on Paul is N. T. Wright’s magisterial *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*. Fortress, 2013. Why didn’t I assign it? It’s huge: 1600 pages. And it’s not inexpensive: it lists for \$89.00. But it may be the most important book on Paul in recent years, and as such it is essential reading for those interested in an exhaustive exploration of the apostle and his message.

GENERAL REFERENCE ON PAUL:

*Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. InterVarsity, 1993.

*Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*. Oxford, 2011.

PAUL AND HIS WORLD:

Karl Paul Donfried, *Judaism and Christianity in First-Century Rome*. Eerdmans, 1998.

Julie Galambush, *The Reluctant Parting: How the New Testament’s Jewish Writers Created a Christian Book*. Harper San Francisco, 2005.

Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, *Paul Between Damascus and Antioch: the Unknown Years*. Westminster John Knox, 1997.

Helmut Koester, *History and Literature of Early Christianity*. De Gruyter, 2000

Larry Hurtado, *At the Origins of Christian Worship*. Eerdmans, 1999.

*Larry Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity*. Eerdmans, 2003.

James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity*. InterVarsity, 1999.

Helmut Koester, *History, Culture, and Religion in the Hellenistic Age*. De Gruyter, 1995.

Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*. Yale, 2003.

Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries*. Fortress, 2003

*E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. Fortress, 1977.

Samuel Sandmel, *The First Christian Century in Judaism and Christianity: Certainties and Uncertainties*. Oxford, 1969.

Krister Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*. Fortress, 1976.

Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth*. Fortress, 1982.

Robert L. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*. Yale, 1984.

THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS:

*Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*. Oxford, 1968.

Brendan Byrne, *Romans*. Liturgical Press, 1996.

C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. T & T Clark, 1975.

James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, Word, 1988.

Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*. Doubleday, 1993

*A. Katherine Grieb, *The Story of Romans*. Westminster John Knox, 2002.

Robert Jewitt, *Romans: A Short Commentary*. Fortress, 2013.

Richard N. Longnecker, *Introducing Romans: Critical Issues in Paul’s Most Famous Letter*. Eerdmans, 2011

Martin Luther, *Commentary on Romans*. Zondervan, 1954.

*Frank J. Matera, *Romans*. Eerdmans (Paideia Commentaries), 2010.

Jerry L. Sumney, *Reading Paul’s Letter to the Romans*. Society of Biblical Literature, 2012

Ben Witherington III and Darlene Hyatt, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*. Eerdmans, 2004.

N. T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: Romans*. Westminster John Knox, 2004

N. T. Wright, “The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible: Acts - First Corinthians* (Volume 10), pp. 393-770. Abingdon, 2002.

INTERPRETING PAUL:

- Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor*. Macmillan, 1979.
- J. Christiaan Beker, *Heirs of Paul: Paul's Legacy in the New Testament and in the Church Today*. Fortress, 1991.
- J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought*. T & T Clark, 1980
- Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan, *The First Paul: Reclaiming the Radical Visionary Behind the Church's Conservative Icon*. HarperCollins, 2010.
- Michael J. Cook, *Modern Jews Engage the New Testament: Enhancing Jewish Well-Being in a Christian Environment*. Jewish Lights, 2008.
- *James D. G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul*. Eerdmans, 2008.
- *James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*. Eerdmans, 1998.
- Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle*. Harper Collins, 2009.
- Eldon Jay Epp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle*. Fortress, 2005.
- Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Paul and His Theology*. Prentice-Hall, 1989
- Martin Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul: Studies in the Earliest History of Christianity*. Fortress, 1983.
- Richard Horsley, *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power on Roman Imperial Society*. Trinity Press International, 1997.
- Richard Horsley, ed., *The Shadow of Empire: Reclaiming the Bible as a History of Faithful Resistance*. Westminster John Knox, 2008.
- *Michael S. Kogan, *Opening the Covenant: A Jewish Theology of Christianity*. Oxford, 2008.
- J. Gresham Machen, *The Origin of Paul's Religion*. Solid Ground Christian Books, 2006.
- Suzanne McDonald, *Re-Imaging Election*. Eerdmans, 2010.
- John Muddiman and John Barton, *The Pauline Epistles*. Oxford, 2001.
- Norman Perrin and Richard B. Hays, eds., *Jesus, Paul, and the People of God: A Theological Dialogue with N. T. Wright*. IVP Academic, 2011
- John Piper, *The Future of Justification*. Crossway, 2007.
- Calvin J. Roetzel, *Paul: the Man and the Myth*. Fortress, 1999.
- Samuel Sandmel, *The Genius of Paul*. Schocken, 1970.
- Samuel Sandmel, *A Jewish Understanding of the New Testament*. Jewish Lights, 2005.
- Paul M. van Buren, *A Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality: Discerning the Way*. University Press of America, 1995.
- Paul M. van Buren, "Probing the Jewish-Christian Reality," *The Christian Century*, June 17-24, 1981, pp. 665-668.
- Marvin R. Wilson, *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith*. Eerdmans, 1989.
- Ben Witherington III, *The Paul Quest: The Renewed Search for the Jew of Tarsus*, InterVarsity, 1998.
- N. T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan & Paul's Vision*. InterVarsity, 2009.
- *N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*. Fortress, 2013.
- *N. T. Wright, *Paul in Fresh Perspective*. Fortress, 2005.
- N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* Eerdmans, 1997.