

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Adult Christian Education: *The Letter to the Romans*

This course material is intended to be used only combined with a close reading of the biblical text. The course is based on published commentaries of Joseph Fitzmyer, Leander Keck and Douglas Moo,¹ and also derives from class notes from the course “Reading Romans” (Biblical Exposition 201), prepared and offered by Prof. Garwood Anderson, as taught at Nashotah House seminary in January 2011 (used by permission). All rights in the original materials of Prof. Anderson are reserved to him.

A) Introduction: *The story behind (and in front of) the most influential letter ever written.*

1. Romans in Early Christianity:

Within the Pauline canon, Romans is the 6th or 7th of Paul’s undisputed letters (second-to-last or last). If all 13 letters attributed to Paul are authentic, it falls right in the middle. The letter is much quoted and deeply influential for Patristic theology. For example, the “Second Adam” Christology of Romans 5 is central to Christology and soteriology² of the early centuries.

2. Romans in notable conversions:

a) St. Augustine of Hippo:

Suddenly I heard a voice from a nearby house chanting as if it might be a boy or girl . . . “Pick up and read, pick up and read” . . . I seized [the Bible] ... opened it and in silence read the first passage on which my eye lit: “Not in riots and drunken parties, not in eroticism and indecencies, not in strife and rivalry, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in its lusts” (Rom 13:13-14). I neither wished nor needed to read further, at once, with the last words of this sentence, it was as if a light of relief from all anxiety flooded into my heart. All the shadows of doubt were dispelled.

—*Confessions*, Book 8.19–29

Augustine’s theology relies on Romans 5.12 in his doctrine of original sin and in his reliance on Romans 9 in insisting on “soteriological monergism” (*i.e.*, that we are saved by grace alone, and not in any way because of our own efforts).³

¹ J.A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, Anchor Bible Commentary (New York: Doubleday, 1992); Leander E. Keck, *Romans: Abingdon New Testament Commentaries* (Nashville: Abingdon Pub., 2005); Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the N.T. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

² *Soteriology* is the theology of salvation, with the term derived from the Greek word for savior, *soter*.

³ *Monergism* combines the roots of *mono* (for “one” or “single”) and *ergon* (Greek for “work” or “force”).

b) Martin Luther:

I had greatly longed to understand Paul's letter to the Romans, and nothing stood in the way but that one expression "the righteousness of God," because I took it to mean that righteousness whereby God is righteous and acts righteously in punishing the unrighteous . . . Night and day I pondered until . . . I grasped the truth that the righteousness of God is that righteousness whereby, through grace and sheer mercy he justifies us by faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before "the righteousness of God" had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gateway into heaven.

—*Luther's Works* 34:336–37

Along with Galatians, Romans is central to Luther's Reformation theology, *e.g.*: (1) that salvation is accomplished by faith alone, apart from works (Romans 4); and (2) the righteousness of God (1.16–17; 3.21–26) is not an unattainable standard by which we are judged guilty but is a gift by which we are made righteous.

c) Jean Calvin:

Romans is central to Calvin's theological vision, which includes: (1) the total depravity of fallen humanity (Romans 1–3); (2) that election to salvation is unconditional (Romans 9); (3) that those called to be saints will be preserved and empowered by God (Romans 8); (4) that Christianity is the true heir to Judaism (Romans 11); and (4) Christ is the head of new humanity (Romans 5).

d) John Wesley: The Aldersgate conversion experience.

About a quarter before nine, while he [Luther] was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me*, from the law of sin and death.

—*Journal*, 24 May, 1738

Wesley shared the Reformation's strong view of gratuity of salvation. Additionally, Wesley understood that grace not only forgives but transforms, releasing the believer from the power of sin (Romans 6). In Wesley's theology, sanctification is characterized as involving complete surrender to and transformation by God (Rom. 12.1–2), with Christian social existence conditioned by love for neighbor (Rom 13.8–10).

e) Karl Barth's "theological revolution":

In the twentieth century, Karl Barth sought to redirect theology back from a focus on the human situation (*e.g.*, how humans are redeemed) to how God reveals His will to us. If in

Romans, Luther discovers the goodness of God, Barth reasserts the *Godness* of God. For Barth, Romans is a tract asserting radical theocentrism revealed in a thoroughgoing Christocentrism.

Our relation to God is *ungodly*. We suppose that we know what we are saying when we say “God.” . . . We assume that He *needs something*: and so we assume that we are able to arrange our relation to him as we arrange our other relationships. We press ourselves into proximity with Him: and so, all unthinking, we make Him nigh unto ourselves. We allow ourselves and ordinary communication with Him, we permit ourselves to reckon with Him as though this were not extraordinary behaviour on our part. We dare to deck ourselves out as his companions, patrons, advisers, and commissioners. We confound time with eternity. This is the ungodliness of our relation to God.
—*The Epistle to the Romans* [commentary], 44

3. The power of ideas: Romans is the source for many ideas central to Christian theology, *e.g.*, original sin, justification by faith, social holiness, the legitimacy of the state, etc. These are some of the most powerful ideas in the history of Western civilization. Every one of these “great ideas” is disputed as to whether it is a valid exegesis⁴ of Romans.

4. Why Paul wrote Romans: Paul describes his future plans in Romans. He solicits aid for his future travels (15.20–24), and writes a letter of recommendation (for himself!) This latter purpose in part explains the number of greetings (ch. 16). Paul is asking for help, and to do so he sets forth the most comprehensive account of his gospel and theology.

5. The circumstances of composition:

Paul is in Greece, a.k.a. Achaia (Rom. 16.1, 23; Acts 20.3–6), preparing to make his way to Jerusalem (Rom 15.26, 31), while facing an uncertain future. Paul has collected resources for the Jerusalem poor from among the western Gentile churches. Paul is writing to a group of churches⁵ in Rome comprised of both Jews and Gentiles. The Roman Christians *had* been primarily Jews, but there are now more Gentiles. This reflects developments flowing from the *Edict of Claudius* (A.D. 49). According to Suetonius, in his *Life of Claudius*, 25.4, “[Claudius] expelled from Rome Jews who were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus.”

In A.D. 54, the new emperor Nero issued a decree allowing Jews to return to Rome. Those Christian Jews who returned were probably asking themselves, “What happened to ‘our church’?” (*i.e.*, where did all these Gentiles come from?) This situation of Jewish and Gentile tensions in Rome is reflected in the letter, in which Paul describes God’s revelation of Himself as being “to the Jew first and also to the Greek . . .” (Rom. 1.16; 2.9–10). He discusses:

- a) Is there an advantage in being a Jew? (3.1–8)
- b) Gentiles are not to be smug because they are not subject to the law (11.13–24).
- c) The “weak” (those who hold to the law as Christians) must be considered by the “strong” (those who see no need to observe the law)(14.1–15.6).

⁴ *Exegesis* describes the understanding of Scripture, what we “get out of it”.

⁵ There is no such thing as a church building at this point. Churches are congregations which meet in houses.

Paul functions, in effect, as a priest offering Gentile converts *with Jews* as a sacrifice to Israel's God (15.16). Paul wants to erase distinctions. If the tension in Galatia was a drive toward *Judaizing*, the tension in Rome is "*ethnicizing*," *i.e.*, a Gentilization of the church such that it becomes independent of and indifferent toward its Jewish roots.

Paul is writing during a pensive and reflective moment in his life (*ca. A.D.* 56–58). He is waiting (in Corinth and the city's port of Cenchreae) through the winter for more favorable sailing conditions, wondering what will happen when he brings an offering from Gentiles to Jewish Christians. He dreams about new horizons for the gospel in Spain, while living with his unpredictable Corinthian brothers and sisters, strolling through the rampant idolatry and immorality of Corinth.

Paul lives with Gaius and has fellowship with the church meeting in his house (16.23). From his rented storefront where he plies his trade, he calls for Tertius (16.22), a Christian brother who is also a professional secretary. Working day by day, laboring over each phrase, they write a letter which is less urgent, more measured, longer and more complex than any other that Paul had ever or would ever write. The letter is entrusted to Phoebe (16.1–2), a Gentile Christian, a deacon of the local church, probably an entrepreneur, and one of Paul's supporters.

While Paul heads east to Jerusalem, Phoebe heads west to Rome, and "the rest is history". Paul *will* get to Rome, but not on his terms and not as he had planned. Circumstances change. At the writing of Romans, Nero had shown himself a friend of sorts to Jews and Christians. Paul defends the authority of the emperor in Romans 13. And yet, according to reliable tradition, Paul would be martyred under the same Nero he upholds.

B) Structural outline of Romans:⁶

1. Introduction (1.1–15)
 - a. Address and Greeting (1.1–7)
 - b. Thanksgiving (1.8)
2. Paul's desire to come to Rome—statement of intentions (1.9–15).
Part I: God's Gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord (1.16–11.36)
 - a. Through the Gospel the righteousness of God is revealed. The person of faith is justified (1.16–4.25)
 - i. The theme: The Gospel discloses God's righteousness as the source of salvation for all (1.16–17)
 - ii. The theme explained, negative examples: Absent the Gospel God's wrath is manifested toward all human beings (1.18–3.20)
 1. God's wrath against the Gentiles (1.18–32)
 2. God's judgment against the Jews (2.1–3.20)
 - iii. The theme explained, positive examples: God's righteousness is manifested through Jesus Christ and experienced by faith (3.21–3.31)
 - iv. The theme expanded: In the scriptures, Abraham was justified by faith (4.1–25).
 - b. The love of God assures salvation to those justified by faith (5.1–8.39)
 - i. The theme: The justified Christian is reconciled to God and will be saved, sharing in the hope demonstrated in Jesus Christ's risen life (5.1–11)

⁶ The scheme of this outline is based principally on J.A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 98–101 and Leander E. Keck, *Romans*, 7–10.

- ii. The theme explained: New life in Christ results in threefold liberation (5.12–7.25)
 - 1. Freedom from sin and death (5.12–21)
 - 2. Freedom from sin through union with Christ, which affirms the human as created (6.1–23)
 - 3. Freedom from the law (7.1–25)
- iii. The theme expanded: Christian life is lived in the Spirit and is destined for glory (8.1–39)
 - 1. Christian life is lived in the Spirit (8.1–13)
 - 2. Through the Spirit, the believer becomes a child of God, destined for glory (8.14–30)
 - 3. A hymn of praise—God's love is manifested in Jesus Christ (8.31–39)
- c. The justification/salvation offered through Jesus Christ does not contradict the LORD'S promises to Israel (9.1–11.36)
 - i. Paul offers a lament for Israel's rejection of the Gospel (9.1–5)
 - ii. Israel's response is not in conflict with God's direction of history (9.6–29)
 - iii. Israel's failure derives from its own refusal (9.30–10.21)
- 3. Israel's failure is partial and temporary (11.1–36).
 - Part II: Hortatory Section—New life in Christ, by the Spirit (12.1–15.13)
 - a. The Christian, by the Spirit, offers worship to God (12.1–13.14)
- 4. The strong must display charity and encouragement to the weak (14.1–15.13).
- 5. Conclusion (15.14–33).
 - a. Letter of recommendation for Phoebe; commendations (16.1–23).
 - b. Doxology (16.25–27).

C) Thematic outline of Romans:

1. Letter Introduction (1.1–15) and Thesis (1.16–17):

¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel. it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live."

2. The Heart of the Gospel. Righteousness by Faith (1.18–5.11):

Jew and Gentile alike are under wrath because of sin. (They have the same problem). God's solution in Christ is for Jew and Gentile alike. The solution involves a righteousness given as a gift that reconciles Jew and Gentile alike to God.

3. The Hope of the Gospel. Transformation by Christ and the Spirit (5.12–8.39):

Christians are not just reconciled to God, but a new humanity is joined to Christ, set free from sin, made righteous beyond the law, being remade by the Spirit.

4. The Problem of Israel's Unbelief (9.1–11.36):

Paul is concerned with why the Messiah's own people don't receive their Messiah. He explains that their misstep is not unprecedented. It is not God's fault, and God is using this failure to bless the world.

5. The Fruit of the Gospel. Life in the New Community (12.1–15.13):

Those who are in Christ are consecrated to God, reconciled to one another as servants, and set apart to be a blessing to the world.

6. Letter Conclusion and Greetings (15.14–16.27).

D) The Thesis: Romans 1.1-17:

1. Chapter 1 overview:

- a. 1.1–6 Sender + ID
- b. 1.7 Receiver + Greeting
- c. 1.8–10 Thanksgiving and Prayer Report
- d. 1.11–15 *Narratio*:⁷ Paul's Intentions
- e. 1.16–17 *Propositio*: Thesis Statement
- f. 1.18–32 *Probatio*: Humans under Wrath (the first leg of argument that extends to 3:20).

2. The thesis: 1.16–17

For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live."

a) "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel ...*"

Ashamed? What's going on here? Is Paul reacting to/anticipating reasons that some would regard the gospel shameful? In the Roman Empire (a society in which personal honor is considered to be of paramount importance), the execution of the eponymous founder of Christianity would have been considered shameful. Any weakness (and love of enemies would be considered weakness) would have been considered shameful. Paul is thus engaging in the rhetorical device of *litotes* (stating a proposition in order to set forth the opposite). In other words, Paul's device here is saying "I am proud of the gospel".

What does "gospel" mean? That sets up the next phrase.

⁷ The Latin labels used here are from classical rhetoric. Paul's uses the classical rhetorical argument forms throughout Romans.

b) “... it is the power of God resulting in salvation ...”

Paul states a counter-cultural view of power (particularly so in a society focused on personal honor). What does “salvation” mean? This will be elaborated in the letter.

c) “... to every one who has faith ...”

The concept of faith/trust is central to the argument of the letter. Paul uses two words in Greek, *pistis* and *pisteuo*. A problem arises in how these words are rendered in English. In Greek *pistis* = noun, “faith” (or “belief”); *pisteuo* = verb, “to believe” (or “to have faith”). English translation forces an unfortunate disconnection between the cognate terms. A solution is suggested by the analogy between the Greek relationship between *pistis* and *pisteuo* and how the word “trust” can be both a noun and a verb in English. When Paul speaks of the “one who has faith” he is using a Greek participle, *pisteuonti* (“[the one] believing”).

d) “... to the Jew first and also to the Greek .”

Why? In what sense? The relationship is one of salvation-historical privilege (and responsibility). Gentile Christians are dependent (as grafted branches) on the root (Judaism).

e) “For in it [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed ...”

Note the use of the *passive* voice and *present* tense, “being revealed”. The gospel is the way God is displaying His righteous character; it is the testimony to and vindication of God’s righteous character—thus the gospel is both *revelation* and *theodicy*.⁸

E) The righteousness of God:

1. The problem of language: “righteousness” in Greek:

- a. *dikaiosyne* (di-kay-ow-sue-nay)= noun, righteousness or justice (used 58x by Paul). Righteousness can perhaps be thought of in this sense as “*dikaios-ness*”
- b. *dikaios* = adjective, righteous or just (17x): “*dikaios*”
- c. *dikaioui* = adverb righteously or justly (3x): “*dikaios-ly*”
- d. *dikaioma* = noun, righteous deed/act (5x)
- e. *dikaioo* = verb, to justify (27x): “*dikaios-ify*”
- f. *dikaioisue* = noun, justification (2x): “*dikaios-ification*”
- g. “righteousness of God” (genitive case): Rom. 1.17; 3.5, 21, 22; 10.3; 2 Cor. 5.21; Phil. 3.9
- h. “his [God’s] righteousness” (possessive case): Rom. 3.25; Rom. 3.26; 2 Cor. 9.9

⁸ *Theodicy* refers to the problem of how God is just.

2. Defining God's righteousness: Three interpretative options:

- a. *Uprightness, just character, moral integrity*: Characteristics of God's being, of who God is.
- b. *Saving power*: What God does; a characteristic expressed.
- c. *Faithfulness* (especially to covenant promises/people): The characteristic that God keeps His promises.

3. It depends on the meaning of the word "of": The problem of the genitive case:

When Paul speaks of the righteousness *of* God, is he describing an attribute of God, *i.e.*, righteousness that *belongs* to God as an attribute (= *possessive* genitive)? Or is he describing a status imparted to the believer, *i.e.*, righteousness *that God gives* (= *source* genitive)? Or is he describing action, *i.e.*, righteousness that God *exercises* in bringing salvation and rectifying wrong (= *subjective* genitive)? Major theological arguments turn on how the genitive case is interpreted. For purposes of this course (and as will be elaborated below), the answer will be considered to be "all of the above"!

4. It also depends on what "righteousness" means:

The Greek word *dikaiosyne* (regardless of what it says about God) must also be understood in terms of what it says about humanity before God:

- a. Righteousness can be *retributive*, the standard by which God judges. This is the interpretation found in early Luther.
- b. Righteousness can be *imputed*, a gift of righteous status. This interpretation is found in Reformed Protestantism.
- c. Righteousness can be *imparted/infused*. This interpretation considers righteousness to be the gift of moral transformation, and is found in Roman Catholicism.
- d. As set forth above, righteousness might be God's *saving power*, or God's *faithfulness to His covenant*. This latter interpretation is current in the thought of N. T. Wright: "The phrase that captures this whole train of thought, occurring in various forms in the Scriptures and post-biblical writings, is 'God's righteousness,' in the sense of God's loyalty to the covenant with Israel ..."⁹ Covenant loyalty/faithfulness is also used in the sense of God's deliverance of His people.
- e. What Paul meant by "righteousness of God" in Romans is not predetermined in its background use, nor is it determinable in *Romans 1.17*—but rather by means of *1.18-16.27*. In other words the answer "all of the above" applies!

5. Pauline usage of *dikaiosyne/righteousness*: ("All of the above")

The "righteousness of God" is the uprightness, justice, and moral integrity of God whereby:

- a. He judges evil in wrath (Rom 1.18–3.20).
- b. He justifies sinners in mercy (3.21–5.21).

⁹ N. T. Wright, *The Letter to the Romans*, The New Interpreter's Bible (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 10:398.

- c. He liberates and transforms believers (and the creation) in power (6.1–8.39).
- d. He keeps covenant in loyalty (9.1–11.36).

F) Salvation by/through righteousness/faith:

In his thesis statement, Paul says "He who through faith is righteous shall live." He quotes Habakkuk 2.4.¹⁰ What does Paul mean by "shall live"? Is Paul referring to life in an eschatological¹¹ sense, *i.e.*, that the believer will have eternal life, or is he speaking of the manner of the believer's life in *this* life, *i.e.*, of walking in faith. *Answer* = "all of the above".

What does "by faith" modify? Is this a reference to the person who is righteous by means of faith? Does the phrase "shall live" describe a faithful way of life (*i.e.*, that the righteous person will live in a faithful manner)? To get a proper sense of Paul's meaning, we have to look at the substance of his argument which follows his thesis statement. What he is saying is: "The one who is righteous by means of faith will live (eternally)."

G) The Argument: God Judges Culpable Humanity:

1. Overview:

- a. 1.18–32: Wrath of God Revealed
- b. 2.1–16: The Folly of Judging
- c. 2.17–29: Jewish Hypocrisy
- d. 3.1–8: Advantage in Being a Jew?
- e. 3.9–20: *All* are Under Sin.

2. 1.18-32: What is Paul describing?

Paul describes the condition of fallen humanity in broad and specific terms. In this sense, he is engaging in a "mythico-historical" account of the universal human condition. His words are not an historical account of the "fall" as such, and not an account of individual human experience. Rather, he describes what is true of humanity as a whole—and thus of all—but in general terms: "the way of all flesh," as it were, but with a special accent on the characteristic sins of Gentiles.

3. God's wrath:

What is "wrath"? It is God's settled antipathy toward all that violates His norms and thus corrupts His good creation. Note the parallels to "righteousness of God". "Wrath" is thus an

¹⁰ Alternative translations of Habakkuk would be "the righteous shall live by faith" or "the righteous shall live by faithfulness". Paul would have been familiar with Habakkuk in the Greek version of the Scripture, the *Septuagint*. Compare Paul's usage at Gal. 3.11; Phil. 3.9.

¹¹ *Eschatology*, from the Greek *eskaton* (meaning final or last thing) is the theology of judgment and salvation, of the end of the world.

expression of righteousness/justice, revealed in God's severe abandonment of humanity to its desires.¹²

a. *The argument of 1.18-32:*

- i. 1.18: Sub-thesis
- ii. 1.19–21: Humans are Culpable:
 - a. God is knowable (enough) that human beings are culpable (“without excuse”).
 - b. Humans (esp. Gentiles?) suppress what can be known about God and “become darkened.”
- iii. 1.22–28: Exchange and Abandonment
 - a. Three times “they exchanged” truth/right for error/wrong (23, 25, 26)
 - b. Three times “God gave them over” (24, 26, 28)
- iv. 1.29–32: A list of vices.
 - a. Characteristic (esp. Gentile) sins, evidence of depravity
 - b. V. 32, clincher: extent of depravity (brazenness, approval).

4. Wrath and sin:

According to Romans 1.18–32, truth is revealed by God, and then is suppressed/exchanged by humans. Thus, God's wrath is manifested in His divine abandonment of humans to their own devices. Humans are mired in immorality. According to the Romans 1.18–32, wrath is not so much the *consequence* of immorality, but *immorality* is the consequence of wrath.

a) *What about particulars (e.g., vv. 26–27)?*

Homosexual practice is not, for Paul, a sin of any greater gravity than any other sin. It is, however, colorfully emblematic of humanity in rebellion and under deception—thus it is sin at its most illustratively typical. Attempts to narrow or make relative Paul's condemnation prove unsuccessful.

5. Who is Paul addressing in ch. 2?

Paul is not necessarily addressing a real “opponent”. Rather, he uses a fictive interlocutor, as would be characteristic of the *diatribe* genre. Note the shift from 3rd to 2nd person (sing.):

Therefore *you* have no excuse, O man, whoever *you* are, when *you* judge another; for in passing judgment upon him you condemn *yourself*, because *you*, the judge, are doing the very same things (Rom. 2.1).

Paul shifts from the general to specific, from “whoever you are” (2.1–16) to “you who call yourself a Jew” (2.17–29).

¹² St. Augustine of Hippo: “The punishment for sin is sin.”

Diatribes in classical rhetoric is not the same thing as in modern popular meaning. It is not a repeated, vehement, berating series of statements. It is, rather, a lively fictive discourse situated in the Socratic tradition, an imaginary dialogue. Note the use of a fictional dialogue partner (e.g., “O man”), and the use of question-and-answer format. Diatribe makes use of fictive speech-in-character (*prosopopeia*), and of maxim and proverb. Almost certainly, this rhetorical form is put to use in Romans.

In diatribe the views of the interlocutor *may or may not* be held by the actual audience. The views of the interlocutor may well be those of a third party used as a foil assisting the author with the actual audience. This does not mean, however, that behind every assertion is a real opponent (so-called “mirror reading”). Diatribe also involves what somebody might think in the context of an exchange/dialogue.

6. Paul’s argument about judgment:

a) *Those who judge are often guilty themselves:*

We know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who do such things. Do you suppose, O man, that when you judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself, you will escape the judgment of God? (Rom. 2.2–3).

b) *It is keeping, not just knowing the law, that counts:*

2.13: For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. 2.25: Circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law; but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision.

c) *Is there an advantage in being a Jew? (yes and no):*

3.2: *Much, in every way.* To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. 3.9: What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all; for I have already charged that all men ... are under the power of sin.

Resolution: Paul argues that Jews have been entrusted with a vocational, salvation-historical privilege in God’s dealing with the world, but both Jew and Gentile are equally culpable and accountable for their sin.

7. Does Paul allow for salvation/judgment according to works (2.6–16)?

It appears that Paul holds out hope for a “righteous Gentile” who can be justified according to works, but this seems to run in contradiction to his overall thesis, especially of this section (1.18–3.20). Is there a solution to the apparent contradiction? Perhaps the passage is incoherent, and Paul contradicts himself. Perhaps the possibility is only hypothetical, and the continuation of the argument will show that this is a non-existent category; judgment according to “works” will only condemn. Perhaps, Paul is arguing that Gentiles who do the law are “Christians,” that only in Christ by the Spirit can the law be done; that final justification is granted on the pattern

of Christian obedience. Or, perhaps Paul is describing hypothetical (but possible) righteous Gentiles, responding faithfully to the truth they have, their righteousness characteristic of and flowing from more fundamental dispositions (2.7–8, 10, 15–16, 26).

These are all interesting possibilities, but only an actual category of persons would have force in the argument. The description is elaborate and points past deeds themselves toward a settled disposition of which deeds are evidence (vv. 7, 10). The “accuse or *perhaps* excuse” of 2.15 makes little sense if the option is hypothetical or if these are Christians.

8. Is salvation/judgment according to works consistent with 3.9-20?

The 3.9–20 passage is hyperbolic, using a *catena* of Old Testament texts:

- a. 3.10–12 = Ps. 14.1–3; but note 14.5–7
- b. 3.13 = Ps. 140.3; but note 140.13
- c. 3.14 = Ps. 10.7; but in contrast to the righteous poor
- d. 3.15–17 = Isaiah 59.7–8, Judah’s present unrighteousness
- e. 3.18 = Ps. 36.1; but note 36.10

Thus, this is not the language of a logician’s exceptionless categories, but a more poetic rendering of human depravity. Although only a real category would have force in the argument, note that 2.15 is rather tentative in character. Thus, 2.15 indicates that, although a real category may exist, this is perhaps not a category with large membership; it is exceptional and not normal, the so-called “righteous pagan”.

H) **The Righteousness of God that Comes through Faith:**

1. Overview:

The Dilemma Solved, 3.21–26: God is both *dikaios* and the “*dikaiosifier*”. God is both righteous and the One who makes believers righteous by granting righteousness *apart* from law, *through* faith, *by means of* Christ’s atoning death, *for* all who trust (believe).

- a. 3.27–4.25: Righteousness Comes through Faith
- b. 3.27–31: Introduction: Boasting is Excluded
- c. 4.1–25: The Faith of our Ancestor Abraham
- d. 5.1–11: The Results of Justification

2. Romans 3.21–26: A Difficult Passage

This perhaps most famous passage in Romans. It is tightly packed with language, using “big,” theologically-freighted words. Many theological battles have been fought over the interpretation of these verses. A three-fold structure to the exposition is evident:

- a. *God’s solution to the human dilemma*: Vv. 21–22 describe a different kind of righteousness. One which is: *apart* from the law; “*from*” (or “of”) God; *through* the “faith of Jesus”; *for* all who believe.
- b. *The extent of the solution*: Vv. 22b–24a describe that the righteousness of God is for *all* who believe/have faith, and that in this righteousness there is *no* difference

between Jew and Gentile. All¹³ sin and lack the glory of God, but are now *justified freely* through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ.

- c. *The basis of the solution:* Vv. 24b–25a set forth that we are now justified freely through the *redemption* which is in Christ (Messiah) Jesus. God put forward Jesus as *hilasterion* by *His blood* [to be appropriated] through faith.

Hilasterion: see the summary of options described in item H. 3, infra.

- d. *The logic of the solution:* Vv. 25b–26 describe God’s “passing over” of “B.C.” sin. This raises a question regarding God’s justice, His integrity. The question is answered by the fact that these sins (and presumably those after) are punished in Christ as *hilasterion*. Therefore God can be both “*just* and the one who *justifies*.”

3. *Hilasterion* in Romans 3:25: This material is a quotation from <http://theogeek.blogspot.com/2007/07/hilasterion-in-romans-325.html>

In Romans 3:25 there is a particularly (in)famous word: *hilasterion*. Biblical scholarship, and bible translations for the past century at least have been all over the place on this word, entirely unable to decide what it means. It has been variously translated with words and phrases such as: sacrifice of atonement, place of atonement, propitiation, expiation, placate, conciliate, mercy seat.

Now *hilasterion* and its various related words appear to be normal words in ancient Greek for referring to two parties settling a feud, or making peace, or one appeasing the other and thereby achieving some form or reconciliation. Often the word is used in relation to appeasing the gods, but can be equally used for when two groups of humans make peace.

However the Septuagint (LXX) translation of the Hebrew scriptures into Greek uses the word *hilasterion* as a name for a piece of the ark of the covenant often called the "mercy seat" that was on top of the ark and overshadowed by the Cherubim, on which the high priest would sprinkle blood once a year and on which God's presence would 'sit'. In Ezekiel in the LXX the word is used to refer to a particular piece of an altar, a 'ledge'.

Those are the basics. So the questions that face scholars include:

1. Is Paul meaning this as a reference to the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant, or using this in the normal usage of the Greek word? Or using it in reference to Ezekiel's altar ledges? I am somewhat partial to Stowers's argument that since the Ark had not existed for many years prior to Paul's writing Romans, and since the Temple of Paul's time had no *hilasterion* in it, he is more likely to be not referring to the Ark... but the majority opinion has generally tended to the view that he is.

2. If the Ark, what is the best translation? Mercy Seat? Dwelling Place of God? Place of Atonement? Sacrifice of Atonement?

3. If so, what theological significance should be derived from this? What is Paul meaning when using this imagery of Jesus as part of the Ark of the Covenant? Is Jesus the New Ark? Is he the new place of God's presence dwelling with man? Is Paul

¹³ “All” here is not all without exception but all without distinction—both Jew and Gentile.

referring to the atoning rituals that took place centered around the mercy seat? Is he seeing Jesus as a sacrifice taking place on the mercy seat to please God?

4. If Paul is using the word in the normal Greek manner, then what is the best translation? It's not a particularly common word in Greek so it's not easy to tell. It seems to mean something vaguely like "appeasing gift", but no one can agree precisely what.

5. If it's normal Greek usage... God is the one said to be setting forth the *hilasterion*, so is he giving the gift to *us* removing our enmity toward him, like Paul says elsewhere? Or is he, more complicatedly, providing a *hilasterion* toward himself on our behalf?

6. Regardless of which meaning Paul is thinking of for *hilasterion*, how literally is he using it? To what extent is it a metaphor? (e.g. if Christ is the "mercy seat", then clearly Christ is not literally a piece of gold-coated wood that sits on the top of the Ark of the covenant.)

The amount of scholarly work that has been poured into this problem is ridiculous. Plenty of PHDs have been done and books written on the subject, and virtually every work dealing with Romans 3:25 will try and deal with this. There is no consensus regarding translation or meaning. (for further reading, a guy who did a PHD on the topic in 2000 summarizes it here)

At the end of the day, it is my view that there is simply not enough evidence to say what Paul was meaning. It is widely believed that in Romans 3:22-26 Paul is quoting a popular Christian statement of faith which would have been known to and understood by his original readers. Thus, the original readers of Romans would have understood what the *hilasterion* in Romans 3:25 was meaning because they knew in advance. Whereas we today cannot know what it meant because Paul simply does not provide sufficient evidence. Thus, not only do I admit my ignorance of what Paul was meaning here, I assert my skeptical belief that *no one* today can determine with any level of surety or probability whatsoever what the original meaning was.

If I *had* to write a Bible translation of the passage I don't know what I'd write... maybe "reconciliation gift" with a footnote saying "or 'dwelling place of God'. Greek very unclear." If I *had* to say what I thought Paul was most likely meaning theologically here, I would lean towards the view he is speaking of God sending Christ to us as a reconciliation gift to remove our enmity towards himself, reconciling us from being enemies into friends like what is said in Rom 5:10, 1 Cor. 5:16-21, Col 1:22. But that's pure speculation, Paul could be meaning almost anything, and there is no worthwhile purpose in trying to exegete ambiguous passages. So I was somewhat amused when reading *Pierced For Our Transgressions* to see them argue that in Romans 3:25 *hilasterion* "indisputably" means propitiation and that therefore it "undeniably" teaches penal substitution. They make it all look quite simple - the only issue they discuss is whether *hilasterion* and variants mean "expiation" like C.H. Dodd thought or "propitiation" like L. Morris thought. They believe that Morris is right, and thus that Penal Substitution is undeniably taught in Romans 3:25. Ignorance is a truly powerful means of proof.

4. Romans 3.27-31 as an introduction to ch. 4:

The balance of ch. 3¹⁴ sets the stage for the development of the argument that will take place in ch. 4. Boasting is excluded (3.27), because justification is by faith, not works of the law (3.27b–28). Both circumcised and uncircumcised are children of one God (3.29–30), descendants of Abraham, the forefather of all who believe. (*See* item H. 5, *infra*.)

Abraham had no right to boast (4.1–2). Abraham was justified by faith, not works (4.3–8). Both circumcised and uncircumcised are children of Abraham (4.9–17).

5. Abraham as our father in faith:

Romans 4.1 is translated variously. Examples include:

- a. KJV: What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?
- b. RSV: What then shall we say about¹⁵ Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh?
- c. NIV: What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter?
- d. ESV: What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh?
- e. NET: What then shall we say that Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh, has discovered regarding this matter?
- f. *What the verse does not say*: Therefore, what shall we say? That Abraham was found to be our forefather according to the flesh?

In order to get a better sense of Paul's meaning, it is helpful to compare his language at Romans 4.1 to what he says elsewhere. (All quotations used here are from the ESV.)

- i. 3.5: But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, *what shall we say?* That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.)
- ii. 6.1: What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?
- iii. 7.7: What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."
- iv. 8.31: What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?
- v. 9.14: What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!
- vi. 9.30: What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith;

The point of Romans 4 then is *not* so much that Abraham is an example to follow, but Romans 4 answers the question of who belongs to Abraham's family: Both Jew *and* Gentile who are reckoned righteous on the basis of faith rather than works.

¹⁴ Chapters and verses were not used in the Bible prior to the fourteenth century. At the time of Paul's writing of Romans, he would have written in continuous text, without a distinction between "ch. 3" and "ch. 4".

¹⁵ *Or* "was gained by".

6. Paul's use of Scripture in Romans:

Abraham is not only the example of faith; he is the forefather or ancestor of all who believe. Righteousness by means of faith is not a new idea, but rather the original idea! *Compare* what Paul writes in ch. 4 with Abraham's story, and with other Scripture:

- a. Gen. 15.6 (*cf.* Romans 4.3, 9b, 22–23): “Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.”
- b. Gen. 17.5 (*cf.* Romans 4.17): “I have made you [Abraham] the father of many nations”
- c. Gen. 15.5 (*cf.* Romans 4.18): “so shall your descendents be” [*i.e.*, as numerous as the stars].
- d. Ps. 31.1–2 (*cf.* Romans 4.7–8): “Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity.”

7. Works, Faith and Justification in Romans 4:

Romans 4.1–8 offers a clear and settled antithesis between “works” and “faith”. Paul does not here refer to “works of the law,” just “works.” There is no hint that Jewish privilege is at all the issue. “Works” are a category, though inclusive of “works of the law,” now *larger* than that and more *general* (*cf.* 4.6; 9.32; 11.6). Paul is not speaking about “good works” done by Abraham, but about faithful obedience to what God requires.

“Works” are now defined as that which could be viewed as:

- a. A basis for “boasting” (4.2)
- b. As that which is meritorious (*i.e.*, “wages”)—not merely as badges of Jewish identity—over against that which is a “gift” (4.4–5)

These potentially meritorious “works” are contrasted to “faith/trust” which can only receive righteousness as “gift” (*kata charin*, 4.4).

8. “Justification” in Romans:

Justification is of the “ungodly” (not that Paul assumes they stay that way! —*i.e.*, those without claim on God by means of their own righteousness). Justification is defined via Genesis 15.6 as the “reckoning of faith as righteousness apart from works” (4.5, 6). Justification, or this status of righteousness, is described in terms of the *forgiveness of sin* via Ps. 31.1–2. It is secured not only by Christ's death but also his resurrection (4.23–25). Paul's logic requires a strongly “in Christ” conception of salvation; both Christ's death and resurrection are participated in by means of union with Christ's judgment and His vindication.

9. The Circumcised and Uncircumcised (4.10 *ff.*):

Unlike Galatians, Romans treats circumcision and uncircumcision as the metonymic description of a people group: Jews and Gentiles. Paul is not warding off a circumcision party, but arguing for the unity of the two ethnic peoples into one Abrahamic family—that Abraham is *not* our forefather according to the flesh (4.1), but according to faith. Since both the uncircumcised and circumcised are reckoned righteous on the same grounds—faith—they are children of Abraham, who himself exercised faith and was reckoned righteous *prior* to circumcision.

10. The Results of Justification (5.1-11):

Paul's description of the results of justification clarifies the conceptual field Paul intends by "justification" language:

- a. "Peace with God" (5.1b)
- b. "access to grace in which we stand"(5.2a)
- c. "hope of the glory of God" (5.2b)
- d. "reconciliation" (5.10–11).

Justification unambiguously effects a *reconciliation* between human beings, who are estranged from God by sin (v. 6, "ungodly"; v. 8, "sinners"; v. 10, "enemies") and God, who makes provision for that estrangement. In particular, "peace with God" resulting from "justification" (v. 1, 9) is directly parallel to "reconciliation" of "enemies" (v. 10), suggesting a strong conceptual parallelism. Therefore, it is problematic to limit "justification" to mere covenant membership and to make reconciliation to God an incidental or secondary corollary of covenant membership.

"Justification" and "salvation" are closely related terms but not identical. Justification refers to an essentially past, juridical reality—a status of acquittal and vindication granted to those who are in union with Christ by faith on the ground of His death (bearing a judgment for sin) and resurrection (vindication and new creation). "Salvation" is Paul's generally *more future oriented* term (at this point) for escaping wrath and gaining eschatological life in Christ. (*cf.* Rom. 13.11; Phil. 1.28). It becomes Paul's more global term for the whole reality (past, present, future) in Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles.

I) **Dying and Rising with Christ:**

1. Overview:

In ch. 5 (specifically at vv. 12–21) Paul sets forth what is known as "Recapitulation" theology. "Adam" personifies the Fall, with Jesus Christ as effecting salvation for all. Humans "earned" the Fall through Adam's sin, but we are saved as a free gift of God. Grace triumphs over merit. This argument is developed in ch. 6, which describes how believers die and rise with Christ. Believers are called into transformation. Baptism "into Christ" is baptism into His death and resurrection, in which believers are united with Jesus in His death. Just as we are united with Jesus in His death, we shall be united with Him in His resurrection. Therefore, we are to live *now* as people of resurrection, in new life.

What does new life in Christ look like? We are called to serve God's righteousness. We have earned death; we must accept salvation. Accepting salvation is made manifest in how we live. This does *not*, however, involve observance of the law. The law is good and holy in itself, but powerless to make us good (ch. 7). The law becomes toxic and exploitative when combined with sin and the flesh. Sin is a "hypostasized"¹⁶ power; it is real and wars against us. "Flesh" is the fallen human condition. Because we are "under sin" and "fleshly," the law is no solution.

¹⁶ *Hypostasis* in Greek refers to the *person*, the embodiment of a thing. Hypostasized sin refers, therefore, to sin as an actual thing, not just as a concept.

2. Baptism and Freedom:

Because we are justified, how do we live? In asking this question, Paul is talking primarily about *status*, not behavior. His argument in 6.2–11 is about status: we have been united with Christ. His question in ch. 6 is: Do believers find themselves in solidarity with Adam or with Jesus Christ? Do believers *live under* [this is a *status* issue] the reign of sin and death or under the reign of grace and righteousness? Therefore, *contra* a traditional Protestant reading of baptism as an outward expression of a believer's faith (with the emphasis being, therefore, on faith as justifying), Paul in fact argues that baptism itself changes the person, *i.e.*, that change is ontological.¹⁷

Paul characterizes baptism as a new exodus into a new promised land (the kingdom). Paul's proclamation (*kerygma*) is that there is a "new King," that sin and death have been overthrown. Therefore, those who continue to live in sin do so because they continue to serve another master. This leads into the argument in ch. 7, in which Paul examines the role of the law, and the inner conflict with which we struggle. This requires an examination of Paul's understanding of human nature.

3. Pauline anthropology:

Anthropology relates to what humans are. What is our nature? How does Paul answer this, and how does this relate to his background in Jewish and Hellenistic (Greek) thought? What is new and unique in Paul?

a) *Hellenistic v. Jewish anthropology:*

Generalization is difficult, but Greek thought tended to regard the human being as made up of distinct parts [partitively]. Hebrew thought saw the human being as a whole person existing in different dimensions [aspectively].

Jewish anthropology (dominant in Paul): There is no single "Jewish view" of things. The conception tends to be ontologically monistic,¹⁸ and morally dualistic. Human beings are an organic unity, with embodiedness and materiality as intrinsically good things created by God (though vulnerable to evil and temptation). Thus, a (general) resurrection is expected by the majority (though not by all). "Salvation" is not an escape from materiality but a transformation of it.

Human beings are torn between good and evil impulses, and are inclined toward evil (*yetzer hara*), but not irremediably. Uprightness can be sought and attained (*e.g.*, as found in the "Two Ways" tradition of Wisdom literature).

In *Greek anthropology* (dominant in the Roman Empire), the conception of the person is dualistic, distinguishing the immaterial (soul) from the material (body), and valuing the soul over

¹⁷ Ontology is the knowledge of being. Therefore, ontological change involves change in the being of something. This is referred to classically as involving change in the "substance" (soul) of the individual; that what is involved in a sacrament is not just a memorialization of what Jesus did (*e.g.*, in Baptism, in Eucharist), but is a participation in what He *does* (*e.g.*, that He is really present in the Holy Communion).

¹⁸ *Monism* describes a thing or concept as characterized by singleness and unity, as opposed to being two-part, or comprised of opposite pairs (as in *dualism*).

against the body. “The body is the prison house of the soul” is a classic Greek (Gnostic) viewpoint. “Salvation” becomes, therefore, the liberation of soul from body.

b) *Paul’s perspective:*

Paul does not accept a human duality. He does not use either *sōma* (body) or *sarx* (flesh) in a derogatory Hellenistic sense. Somatic (bodily) existence is affirmed as good, though not unproblematic. For Paul, man does not have a *sōma*; he is *sōma*. Thus, *sōma* describes human beings in their wholeness, while affirming their embodiedness. Nonetheless, the *sōma* is the site of temptation, the potential for sin, a vessel destined to corruption, thus it can be described as a “body of death . . . of sin”. But the body is also rightly the site of human consecration: Romans 6.12–14; 12.1–2.

What does Paul mean by flesh/*sarx*? He usages include:

- a) “skin” –epidermis
- b) physical existence, especially in its vulnerability and mortality
- c) mere humanness: limited powers and myopic point of view
- d) the fallen human condition which in its physicality and unaided weakness
 - i) is susceptible to temptation
 - ii) is made subject to sin
 - iii) is in opposition to the Spirit.

When Paul condemns the “flesh” it is not senses a–c that he condemns, but as in d. The antidote to the “flesh” is not an escape into non-materiality nor an anti-somatic asceticism, but rather the presence of the Spirit, who does what the flesh in its weakness cannot do: reorient the human affections to the will of God and empower the mind and body to yield.

Paul’s anthropology is theological; it is “Christian”. His journey is Christocentric, from plight to solution. It is Christocentric in that it begins with the revelation of the exalted (and thus vindicated), crucified and raised Messiah as God’s “solution.” Thus, if crucifixion of the Messiah is God’s “solution,” the human dilemma must be reconsidered.

Humanity—not just Israel (!)—needs a Messiah. Humanity needs a Messiah who, rather than judging and expurgating evil, atones for evil (indeed is the atonement). The Son of David is *also* the Suffering Servant. Moreover, a crucified Messiah as God’s answer must mean that the law is a non-solution. Sin must, therefore, be *both universal and beyond human capacity to solve*.

Paul’s anthropology is pessimistic about human beings in their natural state. Humans are corrupted and in bondage to sin, and are powerless and hopeless in themselves. However, Paul is optimistic about the power for transformation. Christians participating in Christ and indwelt by the Spirit surpass the demands of the law as a new creation. The image of God is restored as the image of Christ. Human beings are now what they are, not as they are in themselves, but as they are in solidarity with a new Adam, Christ, with whom they died to sin, to the law, and with whom they have been raised to newness of life. Christ’s death is our death. Christ’s resurrection is our resurrection, the first fruits of our destiny and of the cosmos. Christ’s reign is ours to share with him, and an eschatological restoration of our original human vocation.

J) The Problem of the Law:

1. Overview:

Is the law a good thing? Paul begins his examination of the problem with an analogy from Jewish law: A spouse can be freed from the requirements of the law (relating to marriage) by the death of his/her spouse. This illustrates that the law can pass out of our lives. (Romans 7.1–6; cf. 6.1–23, believers are freed from *sin* by dying in baptism). Believers have died to the law. The “marriage” is dissolved, and the believer may now belong to another (Jesus Christ).

2. Who is speaking?

Paul uses the first person in speaking about relations with the law. Is he describing his own struggles? Is the conflicted “I” of 7.7–25 Paul? Who is the “I” in ch. 7? Is Paul speaking of his experience or as someone else? Is it the same persona throughout?

The easy answer is “That’s me!” But, Paul is using “speech in character,” a well-attested rhetorical phenomenon (*prosopopoeia*, cf. Rom. 3.7), especially in diatribe. The character then becomes generalized as the argument develops into ch. 8: “For the law of the Spirit of life has set *you* (singular!) free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8.2). The Spirit does what the law can’t do. (This will be the substance of the argument in ch. 8.)

Does Romans 7 describe the normal Christian experience? If “normal” = “common,” yes. If “normal” = “normative,” no. Paul would not deny a struggle with sin persists (*see* 6:11–13). He would also insist that law and sin needn’t win. In effect, chapter 7 says rules are not the answer. “Been there, done that.”

In ch. 8 Paul describes how the Spirit brings new life. We are freed from the *flesh* (as the fallen human condition). Believers serve not under a written code, but under the new life of the Spirit. The law is not the answer for human righteousness but actually part of the problem. Does that mean the law is sin? (v. 7) No. It is holy, righteous, and good (v. 12), but it exploits human weakness (flesh) and actually strengthens the reign of sin.

K) New Life in the Spirit:

Romans 8 focuses on life in the Spirit, now, as a foretaste of future glory. God’s love is expressed in Jesus Christ.

The structure of Romans 8 is complicated:

- a. 17 *gar* (“for,” “therefore,” “because”) clauses.
- b. Thematic repetitions and contrasts:
 - i. 23 references to Spirit in vv. 2–16, 23–27
 - ii. 13 references to flesh in vv. 3–13
 - iii. “glory” (4x at 17–30) and “hope” (6x at 20–25), combined with other eschatological references, esp. at vv. 18ff.
- c. Structural clues (conjunctions and discourse markers):
 - i. v. 12: “so then” + vocative “brothers”
 - ii. v. 18: shift to 1st pers. sing. + catchwords, “suffer” and “glory”
 - iii. v. 31: “what then shall we say . . .?” followed by a series of rhetorical questions

Paul describes life in the Spirit as answering the flesh/law dilemma (vv. 1–11) and as involving adoption as children of God (vv. 12–17), as life lived in anticipation of future glory (vv. 18–30). He concludes his description of this life with a triumphant recitation of how we are bound to God (vv. 31–39).

In the Spirit, believers no longer live in the flesh. From this it is clear that when Paul speaks of flesh in ch. 7, he is not speaking about our bodies but about our fallen condition. Our bodies are not changed in this world because of belief. In vv. 3–4, Paul uses a play on words in how he uses “law”. He is contrasting necessity with the law as something which cannot be salvific in itself, albeit it is fulfilled in Jesus Christ (*cf.* Mtt. 5.17). Atonement is made in, by and through Jesus. The law is thus fulfilled and atonement made, and our own works are of no effect in salvation (vv. 12–13). New life involves casting off our fallen condition, and thus being adopted by God as heirs (vv. 14–17). The Spirit witnesses to this new reality (v. 16) in how we recognize our new status before God.

What is v. 19 about, especially “revealing of the sons of God”? Again, since Paul speaks of “flesh” in terms of our fallen condition, he is speaking of Creation as a whole as fallen. With the redemption of humankind, God signals that Creation itself is redeemed (vv. 19–23). God is very present, as witnessed by the indwelling of the Spirit in prayer (vv. 26–27).

L) The Problem of Predestination:

Romans 8.28–29 sets the stage for major theological debate and speculation over God’s foreknowledge of our ultimate fate as individuals and as the Church.

We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified. (Rom. 8.28-29)

a) *Major Christian views on predestination (greatly simplified):*

1. Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox: the doctrine of free choice is emphasized. Temporal matters are pre-ordained by God, but eternal matters, being supra-temporal, are subject to absolute freedom of choice.
2. Luther: Unconditional election to salvation only (not to damnation). “Single predestination”.
3. Calvinism (Presbyterian and most Congregationalists): Unconditional election to salvation and damnation. “Double predestination”.
4. Arminianism (most Baptists and Methodists): Conditional election in view of foreseen faith or unbelief.

The problem with the debates over Romans 8.28–29 is that they seek to answer questions posed by Luther, Calvin and Arminius, *not* the “question” posed by Paul! The verbs Paul uses are all *aorist* (action which began in the past and is now concluded). In other words, God has chosen–called–justified–glorified in a single, completed action.

What God “foreknew” is a *people*, a corporate entity. (Rom. 11.2: “God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew.” Cf. Ps. 94.14; 1 Sam. 12.22.) That “foreknowing” assures God’s

relational, covenantal commitment to that people. It has by no means prevented abdication from the covenant by once or would-be members. (That's what Romans 9-11 is all about.) Thus, God's foreknowing is his prior affection/election of a *people*. In other words Calvinists are probably right about the *meaning* of "foreknow" in Romans 8.29 But wrong about its object. The point is that God finishes what He starts!

b) *What about election?*

Paul is writing at a time when there is no New Testament. His usage of this term must be viewed in light of Old Testament usage. The OT does not use "election" (or "chosen") as a category of soteriology, nor especially of *individual* soteriology. In the Old Testament "elect" or "chosen" is used of:

1. The nation: a people belonging to God: Gen. 18.18–19; Deut. 7.6; 14:2; 1 Kgs. 3.8; 1 Chr. 16.13; Ps. 33.12; 105.6, 43; 106.5; Isa. 65.9, 15, 22.
2. Individual servants with a particular function with respect to the people: Num. 1.16; Deut. 18.5; 21:5; 1 Sam. 10.24; 16.12; 1 Chr. 28.5-6, 10; 29.1; 2 Chr. 6.6; 29.11; Ps. 105.26; 106.23; Hag. 2.23.

This is where Rom. 8.31–39 fits in: God will not reject the people whom He has chosen. Ch. 8 sets up the question discussed in chs. 9–11 (the problem of Israel's rejection of her Messiah).

M) The question of Israel's unbelief:

Romans 9 focuses on God's election of Israel. The problem posed in Romans 9.1–5 is the unbelief of the majority of Israel. In chs. 9–11 Paul gives a three part answer:

- a. Part 1 (9.6–29): This is not without precedent. God has always made distinctions within empirical Israel.
- b. Part 2 (9.30–10:21): Israel is still culpable for its failure; it has sought the wrong kind of righteousness and cannot claim ignorance as an excuse.
- c. Part 3 (11.1–36): Nonetheless, Israel is not without hope. The present hiatus of faith is not necessarily permanent and it has resulted in the enlargement of the borders of "Israel."

The problem of Rom. 9.1–5 is the unbelief of a majority of empirical Israel. This is a matter of personal anguish to Paul. Is this the Achilles' heel of his gospel? It is *this* question, and not a matter of abstract speculation, that Paul answers in Rom. 9–11. *God's word has not failed* (9.6).

a) *The answer, part 1, expanded: "children" and "seed" (case studies):*

Case Study 1: Isaac [and Ishmael](vv. 6b–9): Both are "children" of Abraham, but one of flesh and the other of promise. Only the latter is "seed" through whom will come God's blessing. Thus, not by *physical descent*, but by means of the *word of promise*, will God bless by means of his people.

Case Study 2: Jacob and Esau (vv. 10–13): Both were conceived by the sexual act of one man. Neither was distinguished by works. Yet the younger was "chosen" as the vehicle of

promise, "... in order that God's purpose of election might continue not because of works but because of his call" (v. 11).

Doesn't the explicit use of individuals in these passages prove the point that this text is about individual rather than corporate election? To the contrary! These individuals are representative of peoples (*see e.g.*, Mal. 1.2–3) and their salvation-historical function in God's larger plan. Furthermore, although soteriological destiny might be inferred in general terms, it is not the central point. Moreover, Isaac is not chosen at Ishmael's expense, nor Jacob at Esau's; rather Israel is chosen *for the sake of* non-Israel.

Is God's election unjust? No, because it is grounded in His merciful character and purposes (vv. 14–18). Then why does God find fault with those who cannot resist His will? (v. 19)¹⁹ Paul's answer: Who are you (sing.) to answer back to God! However one might parse out God's relationship to the universe he governs, it remains true that He is God, and as God is subject to no human authority. (Note his use of the imagery of the potter: Isa. 29.16; *cf.* Jer. 18.6.) Clearly the image has to do with peoples or nations in the Old Testament. God is free to assign roles of honor and dishonor in his salvation-historical dealings. These are not to be confused with pre-determined destinies (and *especially not of individuals*) unless we are willing to abandon the Old Testament context of Paul's usage.

What is God actually doing (as described in vv. 22–29)? If vv. 19–21 describe what God has the right to do, vv. 22–29 are Paul's claims for what God is actually doing. Namely, God's present merciful election of Gentiles is itself an act of mercy through which God continues to pursue the salvation of Israel.

b) *Key points about Romans 9–11:*

In reading this section of Romans, we need to look for the answers to *Paul's* stated question, (9.1–5) *not* Augustine's (or Luther's, Calvin's, or Arminius's). Paul is engaged in apologetic theodicy *not* systematic theology. He is speaking of a corporate *not* individualistic relationship to God, and Israel's election is a salvation-historical *vocation* not a soteriological *destiny*.

c) *Is Israel without hope? (The answer, part 2):*

Paul recognizes that Israel has been seeking righteousness, but believes that the means employed (the law) does not work. There is irony here. Gentiles, who are not seeking righteousness, find it (9.30), while those who seek the "law of righteousness," are not attaining that "law" (v. 31). Why? (v. 32a). Because they pursued it as if it was "from works" rather than "from faith" (v. 32). They stumble over the "stone of stumbling" (v. 33). Their zeal is "not according to knowledge" (10.2). They are ignorant of the righteousness of God and instead "seek to establish their own" rather than to submitting to God righteousness (v. 3). Paul here describes the problem in order that he proceed to describe God's solution.

d) *The contrast between "works" and "faith":*

Just as we saw in relation to "justification by faith," there are two schools of thought about what Paul means by "works" contrasted with "faith".

¹⁹ Note here the use of the diatribe interlocutor. A question which is both conceivable and wrong-headed.

In the traditional perspective, works = obedience the law requires, and faith = faith in Christ as an alternative means to attain righteousness. The righteousness of God = the status God gives to believers, and Paul's reference to "their own righteousness" in ch. 10 = do-it-yourself righteousness based on law-keeping.

In the past few decades, scholars such as N. T. Wright have begun to argue the so-called "New Perspective on Paul," under which:

1. works = idiosyncratic identity markers of Jewishness
2. faith = an alternative open to both Jew and Gentile
3. righteousness of God = God's faithfulness to covenant
4. "their own righteousness" = Israel's righteousness to the exclusion of Gentiles.

As useful as the New Perspective is in understanding God's righteousness (*see* items E. 4 and 5, *supra.*), the traditional perspective is more likely correct about works and law. A series of contrasts in language point toward this reading:

1. Law faith (30-31)
2. Works faith (32)
3. Their own r. righteousness of God (3)
4. R. *ek nomou* righteousness *ek pisteos* (5)

Moreover, 10.5 implies that righteousness from law is a matter of doing (*practice* of righteousness). *But*, this is not to exaggerate the legalism of Judaism, or to minimize the sociological issue of Jew-Gentile relations.

e) *Jesus Christ as the end of the law:*

At 10.4, Paul writes that "Christ is the end of the law". The word he uses for "end" is *telos*, which can mean either goal or termination. Which is Paul's meaning? Both meanings are found in Paul's writing, but the merely temporal is characteristically indicated by temporal markers in context. Here context suggests primarily *goal* or *consummation* (10.4: "For Christ is the end of the law, *that* every one who has faith *may be* justified"). The cessation of law as means of righteousness is probably implied, but is a secondary consideration in the argument at this point.

The explanation for the process described at 10.4 is set forth at 10.5–13. Paul illustrates the contrast between two ways of righteousness by personifying two Torah texts:

1. Righteousness from law (Leviticus 18.5): "Living" requires doing what the law requires.
2. Righteousness from faith (Deuteronomy 30.12 [*compare* Deut. 9.4]): The word is near. Quoting this Old Testament teaching, Paul makes it clear that God's revelation of His will is, not esoteric, not beyond you, but doable.

What are the parentheses about at vv. 6–8: (that is, to bring Christ down); (that is, to bring Christ from the dead); (that is, the word of faith which we preach)? Paul is making the point that Christ in incarnation and resurrection brings Torah (*cf.* Wisdom) of God near to hand, so that obtaining righteousness by faith is doable. Thus, Paul has "Christ-ianized" Deut. 30 as *covenant renewal text*. Jesus is its *telos*.

Rom. 10.9–10 borrows the language (mouth, heart) of Deut. 30.12 and applies it as Christian confession:

1. Confess with your *mouth*: "Jesus is Kyrios![Lord]"
2. Believe in your *heart*: "God raised him from the dead."

3. Note that v. 10 creates a chiasm,²⁰ restoring logical order (believe . . . confess).
4. Vv. 11–13 complete the thought:
5. Christ is the object of faith (Isa. 28.16; cf. Isa. 8.14)
6. Confirmation that Jesus is Kyrios! (Joel 3.5)
7. And that He is Kyrios of both Jew and Gentile.

Finally, in 10.14–15 Paul raises a series of rhetorical questions. These are normally taken as a call for evangelists and missionaries. Is this Paul's purpose? No. Paul's point is that "they have heard," and he substantiates this with three Old Testament texts: Ps. 19.4; Deut. 32.21; Isa. 65.1-2. In other words, Israel is culpable; her unbelief is not God's failure.

f) *Is Israel, therefore, hopeless?*

Paul continues (now in ch. 11) with the question "[H]as God rejected his people?" (v.1) His answer is no. His logic is: first, there's me (Paul) (v. 1); then there's Elijah and a remnant (vv. 2–6). An elect Israel remnant within Israel is the norm, not the exception (vv. 7–10; cf. 9.6).

Has Israel stumbled to the point of falling irrevocably? (v. 11) No.

1. Their present trespass is the means by which salvation comes to Gentiles, who in turn will make Israel jealous.
2. Thus, a bad thing (Israel's rejection), means the world's reconciliation (*i.e.*, Gentile inclusion).

How much more will their inclusion mean?! (*i.e.*, life from death = eschatological resurrection). Paul has certainly not forgotten Ezekiel 37.

g) *A word to the Gentiles:*

Paul now addresses Gentile believers directly (11.13–16). He sets forth his strategy, and illustrates the Gentiles' status in the lessons of the Olive Tree (vv. 17–24). All Israel will be saved (25–32).

Who is "all Israel"? Options include:

1. All Israelites without exception
2. Ethnic Israel as a whole (granting some exceptions):
 - a. By means of a "Sonderweg"²¹ (two covenant view)
 - b. By means of faith in Christ (an eschatological conversion)²²
3. Jewish and Gentile believers in Messiah Jesus.

The third option is pretty clearly what Paul intends. Does Paul use "Israel" exclusively in Rom. 9–11 to refer to ethnic/empirical Israel? If so, then a switch to "Israel" as "church" (*i.e.*, Jew and Gentile in Christ) is impossible. But is that actually the case? No! See 9.6! In fact, 9.6

²⁰ A chiasm is a literary structure found in Scripture, in which statements or propositions (which may be opposites) are placed in parallel around a central verse or statement. The structure is most common in psalms.

²¹ *Sonderweg* is German for "special way". This is the theological term for the idea that Jews are saved by God under the old covenant exclusively, as God's chosen people, with all others who are saved being saved through Jesus Christ. This theology is in clear conflict with the understanding that in Jesus Christ believers are brought into right covenant relationship with God.

²² *I.e.*, that Jews get a "second bite at the apple"; that they get to choose Jesus at His second coming.

prepares for just this distinction. Israel as Jew & Gentile in Christ is a natural and satisfying completion of the argument begun in 9.6,²³ and note the olive tree analogy of vv. 17–24. (There is only one people of God—one tree.) A separate and distinct salvation of ethnic “Israel” runs counter to the very imagery that precedes this text.

The arguments in ch. 11 set the stage for Paul’s description of new life in Christ, in ch. 12.

N) The transition (from “theology” to *paraenesis*):

Romans chs. 1–11 has included Paul’s statement of purpose, his argument for the faith, and his arguments using examples. He has used the rhetorical device of diatribe, in which contrasting positions are set forth using a fictional third party interlocutor. The letter now switches from theological argument to *paraenesis* (Rom. 12.1–15.13). *Paraenesis* is the rhetorical practice of exhortation to particular practice. Paul has used *protrepsis* (exhortation to continue in a particular practice, e.g., life in the Spirit). Now he switches to exhortation to change: How are we to live as followers of Jesus Christ? This change in his argument is marked by these discourse markers:

1. Therefore (*oun*)
2. Vocative, “brothers”—second person *plural* address.
3. First person verb, present tense (“I exhort”).
 - a. Imperative verbs.

O) Life together: New life in Christ:

Paul emphasizes that life in Christ is life *together* with other believers. Faith is not just about “Me and Jesus”! He describes Christians as a Body (3–8), one body with many members. We are not to think of ourselves only. Paul’s catalogue in ch. 12 of spiritual gifts may be compared with what he sets forth at 1 Cor. 12.1–14 (written before Romans).²⁴ The gifts set forth in Romans are those which build up the common Body: Prophecy; Ministry; Teaching; Exhortation; Giving; Leading; Showing mercy (compassion).

Spiritual gifts are to be exercised for the common good (vv. 6–8), not for the individual to “grow” spiritually. This is emphasized by the use of hortatory discourse markers in Paul’s discussion of life in community (vv. 9–16), preparing believers as a Body to face hostility (17–21). Hostility is to be expected. (Note that Jesus does not say we *may* be persecuted for our faith, but that we *shall* be. John 15.18–16.4.) Paul’s exhorts believers to focus on the good of common life.

P) The Christian and civil authorities: Romans 13.1–7:

Ch. 13 of Romans is cited by some Christians as a set of instructions for a well-ordered society. Is this what Paul says? What about tyranny? Would or could Paul have written this under late-Nero or Domitian? When he writes of the “governing authorities” (13.1), of whom does he speak? Angelic figures? Synagogue leaders? The civil government? Remember that

²³ Cf. Paul elsewhere: Gal. 6.16; 1 Cor. 10.18 (*compare* Phil. 3.4).

²⁴ *Compare also* the “five fold ministry” described at Eph. 4.11.

the Church is not at this point separate from the synagogue. Is Paul's intention here to keep them together?

In considering these questions/possibilities, it is necessary to put Paul's words in historical context. At the writing of Romans "Church and state" is an anachronism. The two are not separate when Paul writes. Christianity is still just a kind of Judaism. The "state" is not a-religious, and the passage is therefore irrelevant to the question of the "separation of church and state".

How timeless is this passage? For whom and by whom and for what purpose is this text written? This text was *not written for rulers but for subjects*. It is not about legitimating power for the sake of those having it, but for those who don't. It is a hermeneutical and ethical error to turn the survival strategy of the marginal into a divine *imprimatur* on behalf of the powerful. Note where this instruction lies in the letter, right after 12.9–21 (an exhortation to life in community, and a warning to expect hostility). Thus, the instruction is a particularization on the themes of love and non-retaliation. It is *not* "Political Theory 101". The text makes it clear that authority is deputized, not absolute, authority. Therefore, no blanket approval of government is to be implied. There are times when Christians must dissent; nothing in the passage implies otherwise. Nonetheless, the general view of "secular" authority is positive (a "common grace"), and the default mode for Christians is to respect and support it. The world is a better place for it. Rulers reward good and punish evil. When secular authority does otherwise, it falls outside of its divinely-appointed function and is justly criticized or resisted.

Paul instructs in a default stance. The Church must be apologetic. Believers must dispel false accusation by behavior that is above reproach. The Church must be beneficent: known for benefaction; for contributing to the common good.²⁵

What about "law" (Romans 13.8–10)? Paul makes it clear that observance of rules is not the focus, albeit there are rules to be obeyed. He uses transitional catchwords *ou* and *ouk* ("do not") to work through statement of rules to a summation of the law as a positive duty of love (13.9). Love thus fulfils and conditions the commandments. Love does no evil. (13.10, *cf.* 12.17, 21).

Q) The weak and the strong (14.1–15.13):

Paul now addresses issues within the community of believers.²⁶ What is the issue? Who are the "weak" and the "strong"? Whose "side" is Paul on? Paul emphasizes that being "right" can result in being wrong (14.1, 14). Conscience must remain inviolable (vv. 14, 23), and believers are not to impugn motives (vv. 5–12). Our brothers and sisters are sacred, as members of the Body (vv. 13–15). Some things are *adiaphora* ("those things not necessary for salvation"), and Paul describes the discernment of *adiaphora* as a mark of Christian maturity (vv. 17–21). Deference within the community embodies the way of the cross (15.1–3, 7–13).

²⁵ Given our different political setting (in a democracy), we also have a responsibility for the active promotion of policies that will advance the common good.

²⁶ Remember that there is a Jewish Christian/Gentile Christian divide manifest as the Jews expelled by Claudius are now returning to Rome.

R) Conclusion, Recommendation, Commendations:

a) Conclusion:

At 15.14, Paul switches from setting forth his gospel, the arguments for this gospel, and his exhortation to the Christian life, to a conclusion in which he reviews his own progress as an apostle, and discusses his future plans. He describes that he is called to preach the Gospel where it has not yet been heard; that he plans is to return to Jerusalem with support for the Church there, and then to come to Rome. He seeks the support of the Romans to go to Spain.

As we know from Acts, Paul will come to Rome (but not as he intends) and will be killed there. He concludes with an exhortation to the Roman Christians to join in his work, and then switches to recommendation and commendations.

b) Recommendation and Commendations:

Paul commends Phoebe, “a deaconess of the church at Cenchreae,” to the Romans, and enjoins that they aid her. She is described as doing the Church’s work. Paul then switches to “greetings”.

What does “greet” mean here? The word meaning is not controversial: “greet,” “welcome,” “greet warmly”. More unusual is the form: 2nd person plural imperative: “you [all] greet so and so!” Normally, the 3rd person sing./plural indicative “so and so greets you” would be used (*cf.* 16.21-23). Usually the 2nd pers., pl., imp. is to “greet one another (with a holy kiss) or to greet another church (*e.g.*, Col. 4.15). Why the difference here?

Paul extends greetings to 24 named individuals, and 2 who are unnamed. Of the people mentioned 9 are women. At least 5 are Jewish, but probably more: Prisca, Aquila, Andronicus, Junia, Herodian. This *may* represent 5 groups (house churches?) At least three house churches are referred to: Prisca and Aquila (v. 3); Asyncritus *et al.* (v. 14); Philologus *et al.* (v. 15).²⁷ Part of Paul’s purpose in extending so many greetings is to show who he knows in Rome, since he is asking for help. He is writing a “letter of recommendation” for himself.

S) Women in Romans 16:

¹ I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae, ² so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well. ³ Greet Prisca and Aquila, who work with me in Christ Jesus, ⁴ and who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles . . . ⁶ Greet Mary, who has worked very hard among you. ⁷ Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives who were in prison with me; they are prominent among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was . . . ¹² Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord. ¹³ Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; and

²⁷ And possible two more, those of Aristobulus (v. 10b) and those of Narcissus (v. 11b).

greet his mother—a mother to me also . . . ¹⁵ Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister ... (NRSV)

The underlined names are those of women. Only two (Julia and the sister of Nereus) are greeted without comment. Four are commended for their “hard work”: Mary (v. 5); Tryphaena and Tryphosa (v. 12 probably listed together as sisters); and Persis (v. 12). The Greek word *koriaou* used to describe their work is elsewhere always associated with Paul’s own missionary labors or those of others (*e.g.*, 1 Cor., 16.16; Gal. 4.11; Phil. 2.16; Col. 1.29; 1 Thess. 5.12; 1 Tim. 5.17).

Is Phoebe as a deacon described *functionally* or in terms of *office*? The Greek word *diakonos* = “a servant”. She is not described as a “deaconess”. Is Paul referring to her using a generic description of a “servant” or is it a reference to a “deacon” as a minister in a leadership role in the congregation (as in Phil. 1.1; 1 Tim. 3.8, 12; 4.6)? The descriptive phrase used of Phoebe, “of the church in Cenchreae” suggests office. Describing her as a “helper” (v. 2) may be a reference to patron or financial supporter “of many and even of me”.

What about Prisca (an affectionate diminutive of Priscilla) with Aquila? Paul says they “risked their necks for my life”; endangered themselves in partnership with Paul. Elsewhere (at Acts 18, where Prisca is referred to as Priscilla) they are described as leaders of a house church. Paul meets them (recently expelled from “Italy”) in Corinth (Acts 18.2). They travel with Paul to Ephesus (vv. 18–19). There they meet Apollos and “take him aside to teach him the way of God more accurately” (v. 26).

Did Priscilla teach Apollos? Yes, otherwise there is no point in mentioning her. Moreover, the order of names (*cf.* Paul and Barnabas) suggests that she is the more prominent of the two. (Cf. Rom. 16.3).

What about Junia? Is it Junias (a masculine name) or Junia (a feminine name)? In Greek it comes down to the accentuation, but note that Greek texts were not originally accented! While the name “Junia” is a well-attested female (Latin) name, there is not a single reference to a Junias (masc.) in Greek or Latin. No ancient translation of the Greek text gives a translation that shows an understanding of Junia to be masculine. Not a single Christian writer of late antiquity thought this person was male. Among printed (*i.e.* accented) Greek texts from the 16th to early 20th century, only one of over 40 “critical” texts is accented as a masculine. This only changed with the 13th edition of Nestle-Aland text in 1927.²⁸ Indeed, at the turn of the 5th century, no less than St. John Chrysostom wrote: “Indeed, how great the wisdom of this woman must have been that she was even deemed worthy of the title of apostle” (*Ep. ad Rom.* 31.2).

Was Junia, with Andronicus, counted as among the apostles (“notable among”) or highly regarded by the apostles (“well known to”)? The interpretation never occurred to people like Chrysostom for whom Greek was their native tongue. (In fact, it has arisen only recently with the realization that Junia must be a woman.) Why refer to “the apostles” at all? What is meant by “apostles”? The Pauline pattern is that the plural “apostles” with the definite article suggests a defined and finite body of pioneering Christian leaders: a group larger, but inclusive of, the Twelve; a group bearing authority and not merely mission responsibility. Note that Junia and Andronicus were not only fellow prisoners of Paul’s, but “in Christ before me” (v. 7). This suggests they were very early followers of Christ (followers of the earthly Jesus?), which meets a condition of strictest definition of apostleship.

²⁸ Only with the 27th ed. [1998] has this been rectified!

Conclusion: Junia was certainly a woman. Andronicus and Junia are almost certainly to be regarded as “notable *among* the apostles.” “The apostles” are to be regarded as a limited group of authoritative Christian leaders. Thus, this text without comment bears witness to a woman at the highest level of leadership in the earliest stratum of the Christian movement.