

BASIC MATERIALS
prepared for a study/discussion of

CHRISTIAN VIEWS OF REPENTANCE

by
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SPERTUS INSTITUTE OF JEWISH STUDIES
618 South Michigan Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60605

If you need to get in touch with me you may write to me at the above address. You may also call me, at any appropriate time at **773 288 3889**. Of course, I have e-mail, but I continue to prefer slow mail and telephone conversations.

The emphasis in my presentation will be on "Sin and Repentance" in the New Testament. Such a study/discussion is a necessary *BASIS* for *any* further study/discussion of views of sin and repentance in the various Christian communities and by Christian theologians since the New Testament.

I am very much looking forward to a spirited discussion based on the reading of some or all of the materials in this collection. Please, bring all mistakes and suggestions for improvement to my attention.

ARTICLES

- I suggest the reading of articles in the *basic* dictionaries (before turning to books on the subject), e.g.,
- 1962 *IDB* = *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. An Illustrated Encyclopedia*. Buttrick, George Arthur, Dictionary Editor. New York, Nashville: Abingdon, 1962.
- 1964- *TDNT* = *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1964-1976.
Translated from *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1957- (1933-).
10 Volumes.
- 1972 *EncJud* = *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Jerusalem: Keter, 1972.
- 1976 *IDBSup* = *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. An Illustrated Encyclopedia*. Supplementary Volume.
Crim, Keith, General Editor. Nashville: Abingdon, 1976.
- 1979- *ISBE* = *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. 4 vols. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1979-1988.
- 1974- *TDOT* = *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Botterweck G. Johannes and Helmer Ringgren, eds.
Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1974- . Translated from *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1970-. 10 volumes have been published. Not completed, as yet.
- 1992 *ABD* = *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. David Noel Freedman, Editor-in-Chief. New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Auckland: Doubleday, 1992.
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SIN

- 1962 • "Sin, Sinners, *IDB* 4 (1962) 261-376 (S. J. De Vries).
- 1964 • "αμαρτανω, ..., αμαρτια," *TDNT* I (1964) 267-316
- A. Sin in the OT, 267- 1. The Words used in the OT, 267- 2. The Legal and Theological Content of the OT Concept of Sin, 271- 3. Sin and Guilt, 279- 4. The Story of the Fall (Gn. 3), 281- (Quell)
- B. Theological Nuances of *αμαρτια* in the LXX, 286-289 (Bertram)
- C. The Concept of Sin in Judaism, 289-293 (Stählin/Grundmann)

- D. The Linguistic Usage and History of *αμαρτανω*, *αμαρτημα* and *αμαρτια* before the NT, 293-296 (Stählin)
- E. Sin and Guilt in Classical Greek and Hellenism, 296-302 (Stählin/Grundmann)
- F. Sin in the NT. 1. The Synoptic Gospels and Acts, 302- 2. John, 305- 3. Paul, 308- 4. The Other NT Writings, 313-316 (Grundmann)
- 1972 "Sin," *EncJud* 14 Red-SI (1972 1587-1593 (E. Lipinski, L. Jacobs)
Not part of this set of materials because I suppose that you have access to the *EncJud* and that you might read this article before our session
- 1980 • "חַטָּא *chātā*? ..., " *TDOT* IV (1980) 309-319 (Klaus Koch)
This is an excellent article. He adds an important brief paragraph on the Intertestamental Period and the growing view that "sin" is a controlling irresistible power.
So, also later, the Apostle Paul of Tarsus. When this paradigm for "sin" is used then getting rid of sin becomes an impossible task for humans. Repentance, obedience, following the TORAH (=Teaching), sacrifices, repentance, etc. ... no longer work to overcome the gulf, break ... with God. It now becomes impossible to use "free will" against the *יצורה* ר, "the inclination toward evil," which now has become "THE Impulse of Evil," a Divine Bad/Evil Power, which can not be resisted and overcome by humans. The solution to the problem is, according to Paul, a Divine Good Power, which kills the Divine Evil Power. This power Paul calls "Christ." Although "*christ*" is a translation of Hebrew "*meshiach*," Paul, obviously, did not mean The Messiah. See below.
- 1988 • "Sin," *ISBE* IV Q-Z (1988) 518-525 (G. W. Bromley)
- 1992 • "Sin, Sinners," *ABD* 6 Si-Z (1992) 31-47. "Old Testament," 31-40 (Robin C. Cover). "New Testament," 40-47 (E. P. Sanders)

REPENTANCE

- 1962 • "Repentance," *IDB* IV R-Z (1962) 33-34 (W. A. Quanbeck)
- 1967 • "νοεω ..., " *TDNT* I (1967) 948-1008
νοεω. 1. Linguistic Data, 948- 2. Biblical Theology, 950- *νους*, 951- A. Meaning of the Term, 952- B. The Term *νους* in Greek Philosophy and Religion, 954- C. *νους* in the New Testament, 958- D. *νους* in the Oldest Christian Literature after the New Testament, 959- *νοημα*, 960- *ανοητος*, 961- *ανοια*, 962- *δυσνοητος*, 963- *διανοια*, 963- 1. The Use outside the NT, 963- 2. The Usage in the New Testament, 965- *διανοημα*, 968- *εννοια*, 968- 1. Use outside the New Testament, 968- 2. Use in the New Testament, 971- *ευνοεω*, *ευνοια*, 971- *κατανοεω*, 973-
- FINALLY, *μετανοεω*, *μετανοια*, *TDNT* I (1974) 975-1008
A. Greek Usage, 976- I. *μετανοεω*, 976- II. *μετανοια*, 978. III. Historical Significance of the Data, 979-980 (Behm). B. Repentance and Conversion in the Old Testament, 980- I. Cultic and Ritual Forms of Penitence, 980- II. The Prophetic Concept of Conversion, 984- III. The Exilic and Post-Exilic Period, 988-989 (Würthwein) C. *μετανοεω*/*μετανοια* in Hellenistic Jewish Literature, 989- I. The LXX, 989- II. Other Literature, 991- 1. Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, 991- 2. Philo, 993- 3. Josephus, 994- D. Conversion in Rabbinic Literature, 995- E. *μετανοεω* and *μετανοια* in the New Testament, 999- I. The Linguistic Understanding, 999- II. The Concept of Conversion, 1000- 1. John the Baptist, 1000- 2. Jesus, 1001- 3. Primitive Christianity, 1003- F. *μετανοεω* / *μετανοια* in the Ecclesiastical Writings of the Post-Apostolic and Early Catholic period, 1006- *αμετανοητος* -, *αμεταμελητος*, 1009- *προνοεω*, *προνοια*, 1009 A. The Usage, 1009- B. The Concept of Divine Providence, 1012- 1. In Greek and Roman Antiquity, 1012- 2. In the Old Testament, 1013- 3. In Judaism, 1014- 4. In the New Testament, 1016- 5. In the Early Church, 1017- *υπονοεω*, *υπονοια*, 1017- *νουθετω*, *νουθεσια*, 1019-1022 (Behm)
- 1972 "Repentance," *EncJud* 14 Red-SI (1972) 73-78. "Repentance," 73-74 (J. Milgrom). "Rabbinic Views," 74-75 (Louis Jacobs). "In Jewish Philosophy," 76 (S. Rosenblatt). "Post-Medieval Period, Modern Developments," 76-78 A. Unterman).
Not part of this set of materials because I suppose that you have access to the *EncJud* and that you might read this article before our session
- 1976 • "Repentance in the OT," *IDBSup* (1976) 736-738 (J. Milgrom)
- 1976 • "Repentance in the NT," *IDBSup* (1976) 738-739 (G. F. Snyder)
- 1988 • "Repent," *ISBE* IV Q-Z (1988) 135-137 (B. H. Dement, E. W. Smith, Jr.)
- 1992 • "Repentance," *ABD* 5 O-Sh (1992) 671-674 (A. Boyd Luter, Jr.)
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- 1998 • Blumenthal, David R.,
"Repentance and Forgiveness," *Cross Currents* (Spring 1998) 75-82.

I find this article to be *very* instructive, especially, for Christians, but it might also be helpful for Jewish persons to review the ideas expressed in this article.

19.. • Prager, Dennis, "The Sin of Forgiveness,"

I can not remember the reference. Help! Neither in the Tanakh nor in the New Testament is there such a thing as forgiveness *without* repentance and newness of life.

In Christian circles this is called "cheap grace." It is sickening how many Christians live according to the "gospel," the "good news," of cheap grace: "Oh, Jesus died for my sins, therefore, I do not need to do a thing. That would be work's righteousness, the *earning* of forgiveness and at-one-ment, atonement, with God. It is Jews who have to work for their salvation (which is, of course, impossible, because, we are all sinful and unclean). We do not. We are saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ." The consequences of such "salvation," are rarely emphasized.

I agree (as a Christian) with D. Prager that to give forgiveness BEFORE the oppressor, sinner, victimizer, etc., has (1) confessed (2) *and* has asked for forgiveness (3) *and* has promised restitution (in whatever form) (4) *and* has promised newness of life ... is a sin.

Jesus of Nazareth shares this view. Read, e.g., the story in Matthew 18:23-35. A king forgives one of his officers 10,000 talents. Ten thousand talents are supposed to be about one million dinarii. So, what happens to a person who is forgiven one million dinarii - *AFTER* a plea for patience and *the promise of payment* - when that person does not forgive a person who owes him a mere one hundred dinarii?

(32) ... "You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. (33) Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?" (34) And in anger his lord handed him over *TO BE TORTURED UNTIL HE WOULD PAY HIS ENTIRE DEBT*. (emphasis mine) (35) So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.

Of course, it is understood (see the beginning of the story) that this brother or sister will confess and ask for forgiveness.

Recently, a very important official in the Christian community told me, "Why don't you just forgive (i.e., your victimizer)?" Yes, I am a forgiven sinner, yes, I have a forgiving heart, and I will forgive, but the victimizer *MUST* come to me and confess and ask for forgiveness. Just to forgive, *WITHOUT* repentance, is not appropriate according to the biblical vision, including the teachings of Jesus.

BOOKS I have not, as yet, found a book on "Christian Views of Repentance" which I like. Any suggestions?

SIN AND REPENTANCE IN THE WRITINGS OF PAUL, THE APOSTLE

Paul's view of "sin" will be discussed. It is *completely* (?) different from the views expressed in the Tanakh, the Gospels and in the rest of the New Testament (which are the same views on sin and repentance as those in the Tanakh). Paul's view may be confusing, but, I just do not think that it is so difficult to understand in his time and context.

For some Jews of the first century C.E., e.g., HILLEL, one important question was: How can the "Gentiles" the "non-Sinai people" be part of the People of G-d? Much of the New Testament and, esp., then Paul respond to this question. (By the way, I tend to agree with the views of Harvey Falk in his book *Jesus the Pharisee: A New Look at the Jewishness of Jesus*. New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1985, i.e., that Jesus followed Hillel)

How can the Gentiles be part of the People of G-d? We all remember the story of the encounter between Hillel and the Gentile. Jesus seems to have upheld the views of Hillel and of his followers. Jesus' criticism (against the "Pharisees") was directed against the followers of the School of Shammai who denied "salvation" to the Gentiles.

What does it mean to make "disciples of Jesus?" To my mind it means the same as making disciples of Hillel and not disciples of Shammai.

It is always dangerous to state a complicated view, briefly, and in general, almost cartoonish ways. Years ago, I heard Samuel Sandmel attempt a quick explanation of Paul's view of sin and the remedy of that sin. It went something like this:

The reason why Paul's view of sin is so important is because Paul has a different view of "sin," - different from the rest of the Scriptures (including the Gospels in the New Testament).

His paradigm for sin is different from the one in the Tanakh. For him "sin" is something like a *divine demonic power*. So, a different view of sin necessitates then a different view of the removal of sin (i.e., the gulf, barrier between G-d and humans), of at-one-ment with G-d. If sin is like a *divine demonic power* then following the Torah (Teaching, Instruction, Revelation from G-d) is useless, doing good is impossible, and only a *divine good power* can remove the *divine demonic power*. This *divine good power* Paul knows as the "Resurrected

Christ" (i.e., not "Messiah" [of the LORD] ... or?). The relationship of this "Resurrected Christ" to Jesus of Nazareth is not that obvious in Paul's writings. Once a person accepts the free gift of "Christ" (... sounds almost like "the Holy Spirit," the spirit of the "Messianic Kingdom," the "Kingdom of G-d") this person then is "a new creation" and is "in Christ" (part of that divine Holy Spirit), that person is filled with the Holy Spirit and is no longer even willing to sin (... sounds like "the "New Covenant," e.g., of Jeremiah). If this is so then why do "Christians" commit crimes, sins? Does this mean that they are not "Christians" in the Pauline view of what it means to be a "Christian?"

With Paul's view of "sin" how then is "repentance possible? Repentance, ... on the part of a human being is then impossible. How can one "repent" of the demonic power which has possessed a person? It is impossible.

Only "Christ" can "save" according to this view. It is obvious that this view makes sense, especially to Gentiles in the first century. It is also clear why Jews rejected this view, because the view of sin and repentance in the Tanakh worked just fine.

But, Gentiles (and assimilated "Hellenistic Jews"), unfamiliar with Jewish views, and hostile to Jews and Judaism (given the political climate), almost immediately turned against Jews and understood their "Christian" views as *superior* to the Jewish view and, not only "superior," but, actually, as "*superseding*" the Jewish view and making the Jewish view "obsolete," "old." The "Christian" teaching of contempt for Jews and Judaism began and prepared a climate in which pogroms and then the Shoah became possible. The papal nuncio in Slovakia (in the fall of 1944!) said, "There is no innocent blood of Jewish children in the world. All Jewish blood is guilty. You have to die. This is the punishment that has been awaiting you because of that sin" (meaning the death of Jesus). This incident has been reported in many publications, e.g., in Eliezer Berkovitz, *Faith after the Holocaust* (New York: Ktav, 1973) 17.

With the political/military victory of Constantine and "Christianity" becoming the state religion/ideology it is no wonder that "genuine" "Christianity" (however expressed ... if there ever was such a thing) was doomed. Imperialistic, "orthodox" "Christianity" ruled ... and still rules in the minds of many people in spite of the Reformation and in spite of the Shoah/Holocaust. The poison of anti-Jewish attitudes in Christianity must be removed from Christian teaching. If not then Christians, post-Shoah, are worse than the worst Nazis. I continue to be convinced that "Christianity" is not *basically* anti-Jewish, although many deny that this is possible. I must admit, though, that "Christianity" since the fourth century C.E., is anti-Jewish. "Progress" has been made in the thinking of Christians toward Jews, but, even the least anti-Jewish Christians - deep down - want Jews to convert (and in this manner eradicate Jews and Judaism).

A BRIEF BIBLIOGRAPHY ON PAUL ... arranged according to the date of publication ... I just picked them off my shelves. The literature on Paul is enormous.

BOOKS

- 1968 . Furnish, Victor Paul, *Theology and Ethics in Paul*. Nashville & New York, Abingdon Press, 1968.
1971 . Bornkamm, Günther, *Paul*. Translated by D. M. G. Stalker. New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1971 (1969). - I studied with G. Bornkamm in Heidelberg 1956-57.
1976 . Stendahl, Krister, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976. - I have heard (and spoken to) K. Stendahl many times and I favor his approach. Stendahl does not think that Paul was a "convert."
1990 . Segal, Alan F., *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990. (courtesy of E. Krentz) - was Paul a "convert" or not? I have begun to read this book (April 1998)
1998 . Dunn, James D. G., *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*. Grand Rapids, Michigan / Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998. (courtesy of E. Krentz) I have begun to read this book (April 1998)

DICTIONARY/ENCYCLOPEDIA ARTICLES

- 1962 . Purdy, A. C., "Paul the Apostle," *IDB* III K-Q (1962) 681-704
1972 . Flusser, David, "Paul of Tarsus," *EncJud* 13 P-Rec (1972) 190-192
1976 . Hurd, J. C., "Paul the Apostle," *IDBSup* (1976) 648-651
1986 . Bruce, F. F., "Paul the Apostle," *ISBE* III K-P (1986) 696-720
1986 . Webster, J. H. and J. H. Gerstner, "Pauline Theology," *ISBE* III K-P (1986) 720-729
1992 . Betz, Hans Dieter, "Paul," *ABD* 5 O-Sh (1992) 186-201