

Cambridge University Press

0521619831 - Romans and the Apologetic Tradition: The Purpose, Genre and Audience of Paul's Letter

Anthony J. Guerra

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Of all the letters in the Pauline corpus, the letter to the Romans has attracted the greatest degree of scholarly attention. Yet surprisingly scant consideration has been given to the question of its literary genre. Taking up the comparatively brief suggestions of previous scholars, Dr Guerra argues that the letter belongs to the protreptic genre – the class of writing in antiquity which urges the adoption of a particular way of life (or a deeper commitment to it), setting out its advantages, replying to objections, and demonstrating its superiority. Working through each chapter of the letter in turn, he indicates how Paul provides a critique of non-Christian ways of life (both Jewish and Gentile) and affirms the superiority of Christian gospel. It becomes apparent that the Pauline apologetics of Romans stand between the hellenistic Jewish tradition and the later Greek Christian apologists, and may have influenced the latter. In addition, Dr Guerra shows convincingly that the understanding of Romans as protreptic in character reveals its underlying logical unity, and also that the letter may be firmly located within the particular situation of the Roman church.

Cambridge University Press

0521619831 - Romans and the Apologetic Tradition: The Purpose, Genre and Audience of Paul's Letter

Anthony J. Guerra

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

SOCIETY FOR NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

MONOGRAPH SERIES

General Editor: Margaret E. Thrall

81

ROMANS AND THE APOLOGETIC TRADITION

Cambridge University Press

0521619831 - Romans and the Apologetic Tradition: The Purpose, Genre and Audience of Paul's Letter

Anthony J. Guerra

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Romans and the apologetic tradition

The purpose, genre and audience of Paul's letter

ANTHONY J. GUERRA

*Associate Professor of Humanities,
University of Bridgeport, Connecticut*



Cambridge University Press
0521619831 - Romans and the Apologetic Tradition: The Purpose, Genre and
Audience of Paul's Letter
Anthony J. Guerra
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK
40 West 20th Street, New York NY 10011-4211, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa

<http://www.cambridge.org>

© Cambridge University Press 1995

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1995
First paperback edition 2005

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data

Guerra, Anthony, J.
Romans and the apologetic tradition: the purpose, genre and audience
of Paul's letter / Anthony J. Guerra.
p. cm. – (Society for New Testament Studies monograph series: 81)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0 521 47126 5 (hardback)
1. Bible. N.T. Romans – Criticism, interpretation, etc.
2. Apologetics – Early church, ca. 30–600. I. Title.
II. Series: Monograph series (Society for New Testament Studies); 81.
BS2665.2.G84 1995 227'.106 – dc20 94–9612 CIP

ISBN 0 521 47126 5 hardback
ISBN 0 521 61983 1 paperback

Transferred to digital printing 2005

Cambridge University Press

0521619831 - Romans and the Apologetic Tradition: The Purpose, Genre and Audience of Paul's Letter

Anthony J. Guerra

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	xii
1 Apologetic and audience: making the message meet	1
Romans and the Protreptic	3
Paul's purpose and audiences in Romans	22
2 Apologetic motifs in Romans 1.18–3.31	43
Excursus: the “One God” topos in Jewish apologetic literature	84
3 Romans 4: the continuation of apologetic argumentation	102
4 Paul recommends and defends the gospel of God	126
5 Romans 9–11: Paul defends his mission to the Gentiles for the sake of the Jews	144
6 Romans 12–13 and 16: the “Roman factor”	157
7 Summary and conclusion	170
<i>Appendix</i>	180
<i>Glossary</i>	181
<i>Select bibliography</i>	182
<i>General index</i>	191
<i>Index of modern authors</i>	199

Cambridge University Press

0521619831 - Romans and the Apologetic Tradition: The Purpose, Genre and Audience of Paul's Letter

Anthony J. Guerra

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE

An interpretive hypothesis must be judged finally according to its explanatory power with respect to the parts as well as the whole of a given literary work. I argue that Romans is a protreptic writing seeking to affirm Paul's ministry and the gospel which he preached. In recent years, sections of the genuine Pauline epistles (especially 1 and 2 Cor.),¹ and even entire epistles have been considered to be self-apologies wherein Paul defends his apostleship.² This restriction of the use of the term apology to a self-defense, however, is not justified by the ancient sources for the most characteristic Jewish Hellenistic apologies were propaganda on behalf of the Law rather than the author's defense against personal accusations.³ Further, the undisputed Christian apologetic writings of the second century are not primarily defenses but positive propagandistic appeals to win converts to the new movement.⁴ These writings fulfill the same function as do philosophical Protreptics.⁵ Genre criticism, albeit important, should be complemented by analysis of content. In considering the material content of Romans, I have employed motif analysis as the primary method. This approach was chosen over, on the one hand, word analysis which is often too restrictive and may as readily obfuscate as elucidate an author's intent; and on the other hand, a thematic analysis that may promote sweeping conceptual

¹ E.g. N. A. Dahl, "Paul and the Church at Corinth According to I Corinthians 1:10–4:21" in *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission* (Minneapolis, Augsburg, 1977), pp. 51–3; and J. Bradley Chance, "Paul's Apology to The Corinthians," *Perspectives in Religious Studies*, pp. 145–55; E. Richard, "Polemics, Old Testament, and Theology: A Study of II Cor:3:1–4:6," 340–67).

² Most significantly in Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians* (Hermeneia, Philadelphia, Fortress, 1979).

³ See Helmut Koester on the definition of an apology, *Introduction to the New Testament*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1982), pp. 338–440.

⁴ See Appendix.

⁵ Mark D. Jordan, "Ancient Philosophical Protreptic and the Problem of Persuasive Genres," *Rhetorica*, 4 (1986), 309–33.

Cambridge University Press

0521619831 - Romans and the Apologetic Tradition: The Purpose, Genre and Audience of Paul's Letter

Anthony J. Guerra

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*x Preface*

generalizations which however intriguing may again have little to do with an author's intended meaning. Motif analysis, in my view, represents a middle way between these two and allows for confrontation of an author's conceptual universe while remaining attentive to specific verbal formulations. Motif analysis has been applied to the apologetic texts used in establishing the data base for apologetic theology and in the exegesis of Romans. Finally, in terms of this investigation, there was a persistent effort to recognize the significance of the historical context and circumstances of Romans. Thus, genre, motif, and historical criticism are all central to this work.

A guiding presupposition of this investigation has been that Paul seeks to communicate intelligibly and effectively to the audience which he is addressing. Thus the question of the image of this audience with which Paul operates in writing Romans is of some importance. The proposal made here is that Paul's image is of a dual audience: Jewish and Gentile Christians. Because of the theological distance and the past history of conflict between the apostle and the former, Paul attempts in Romans to present his teaching and ministry in the most inviting manner and to respond to typical objections of Jewish Christians. This primary image of Paul's audience must be brought into clearer focus by reference to the "Roman factor": that is Paul's attention to the locale of his addressees, their special sensibilities and proximity to the seat of imperial power.

My thinking about the protreptic character of Romans began at Harvard Divinity School in 1984 under the guidance of Helmut Koester and eventuated in a dissertation: "Romans 3.29–30 and the Apologetic Tradition." Chapters 2 and 3 of the present work incorporate material, with revision, from the earlier writing. While at Harvard, I received valuable assistance from several other members of the faculty including Dieter Georgi, George MacRae, Bernadette Brooten, and Krister Stendahl. The present investigation continues the analysis of the remaining twelve chapters of Romans and also considers the question of the audience of Romans which was not raised in the earlier work. I am grateful to the National Endowment for the Humanities for the opportunity to study with Professor Louis H. Feldman in his 1989 summer seminar: "The Greek Encounter with Judaism." During that period my thinking with respect to Paul's purpose and audience in Romans was crystalized. I would like to thank the Society of Biblical Literature for the privilege of chairing the consultation on "Apologetic Literature in the

Cambridge University Press

0521619831 - Romans and the Apologetic Tradition: The Purpose, Genre and Audience of Paul's Letter

Anthony J. Guerra

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Preface*

xi

Graeco-Roman World” during 1987–8. These sessions provided a context for a serious and fruitful exchange of views on ancient apologetic literature. I am also grateful to William R. Schoedel, Eugene Gallagher, and Robert M. Grant, as well as to David E. Aune, who shared his monograph on Romans before publication, and to whom, as the notes testify, I am much indebted.

I also wish to express my appreciation to Bard College for a semester sabbatical in which I was able to complete the writing of this manuscript. I am especially grateful to the Bard history department for the opportunity to teach courses in Roman history that allowed me to re-read and, yes, read for the first time much literature that New Testament scholars know they “ought” to have read. I am also much indebted to both William C. Mullen and Christopher Callanan of the Bard classics department. It is with affection that I recognize the support and encouragement from my colleagues in the Bard religion department, David Pierce, Fritz Shafer, Laurie Patton, as well as Bruce Chilton, who has read and commented on more than one draft of this work. A special note of gratitude is due to Annette Reed, my Bard student assistant who helped prepare the indices, proof read the manuscript as well as type major portions of the text. Lastly, I feel most indebted to Dr. Margaret E. Thrall in whom I have enjoyed the rare blessing of working with an editor who possesses not merely general competence on the primary text under consideration but special expertise. Her editorial comments have been consistently perceptive and have immeasurably enhanced the present work. I am, of course, entirely responsible for any shortcomings which remain.

Cambridge University Press

0521619831 - Romans and the Apologetic Tradition: The Purpose, Genre and Audience of Paul's Letter

Anthony J. Guerra

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AJSL</i>	<i>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang des roemische Welt</i>
<i>APOT</i>	<i>The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament</i>
<i>ASNU</i>	<i>Acta Seminarii Neotestamentici Upsaliensis</i>
<i>BAG</i>	<i>A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian Literature</i>
<i>BAGD</i>	Ibid. 2nd edn revised
<i>BDB</i>	F. Brown, S. R. Driver and A. Briggs, <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> , Oxford
<i>BFCTh</i>	Beitraege zur Foederung Christlicher Theologie
<i>BHTh</i>	Beitraege zur historischen Theologie
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>CAT</i>	Commentaire de l’Ancien Testament
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CNT</i>	Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
<i>EKKNT</i>	Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>ET</i>	English translation
<i>EvTh</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
<i>FRALNT</i>	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
<i>HDR</i>	Harvard Dissertations in Religion
<i>HNT</i>	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HThKNT</i>	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament

Cambridge University Press

0521619831 - Romans and the Apologetic Tradition: The Purpose, Genre and Audience of Paul's Letter

Anthony J. Guerra

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*List of abbreviations*

xiii

HUT	Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>IDB</i>	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
<i>JBC</i>	R. E. Brown et al. (eds.), <i>The Jerome Biblical Commentary</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
KAT	E. Sellin (ed.), Kommentar zum A.T.
LD	Lectio Divina
LEC	Library of Early Christianity
<i>LSJ</i>	<i>A Greek–English Lexicon</i> , Rev.
MNTC	Moffatt New Testament Commentary
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
SBLDS	Society for Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
StudNeot	Studia Neotestamentica
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vigilae Christianae</i>
VS	Verbum Salutis
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>ZThK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift Für Theologie und Kirche</i>
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>