

CHAPTER XIII

ROMANS 11:1-36 - THE GOSPEL AND ISRAEL'S SALVATION

IN the history of human kind, there is one race that stands out above all others with regard to resilience in the face of persecution and unstoppable existence; it is plainly the Jew, whose very name is synonymous with the most malicious slander and persistent vilification that any group of people has ever experienced. We have already maintained that Paul was decidedly pro-Semitic in spite of the intense persecution which he, “a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin” (Rom. 11:1), “a Hebrew of the Hebrews” (Phil. 3:5), frequently faced from his fellow co-patriots; at times he was not beyond responding with intense indignation (I Thess. 2:14-16), yet love for his “brethren according to the flesh” (Rom. 9:3) proved to be unquenchable. If ever an opportunity presented itself for Paul to renounce unbelieving Israel once and for all it would be at this juncture where the argument of chapter 10 has so conclusively demonstrated the accountability of the Jew for his blatant rebellion against the light of the gospel. A similar situation presented itself in 2:28-29 where we were told that, “he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.” Surely at that point the extinction of national Judaism could have here been affirmed once and for all. But we immediately read: “Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? Great in every respect.” So here at the commencement of Romans 11 we find another passionate endorsement for the national descendants of Abraham that has aroused intense investigation in challenging anti-Semitism and a-Semitism, both racial and theological, at their roots.

During the Nuremberg Trial of the Nazi war criminals in 1945, one of the most despicable of all of these unsavory defendants was Julius Streicher, a man obsessed with hatred for the Jews. In the course of his defense he audaciously quoted the rancorous, anti-Semitic writings of Martin Luther, concerning which the Luther scholar, Jaroslav Pelikan, has called for frank acknowledgment that this animosity was simply beyond defense.¹ However, we ought not to think that the German Reformer's attitude was distinctive. Another important Luther Scholar, Heiko Obermann, also concluded that “all of the great figures of the [Reformation] age, as diverse as they were on almost every other issue, stood united as anti-Jew” thus providing “a point of continuity from medieval to modern society.”² Hence the Reformers were but participants in ongoing antipathy, toward conceding any God-acknowledged status for the Jew, that had originated in the early church and been fostered, especially since Constantine, on through the Medieval centuries. Thus *Calvin Theological Seminary* Professor, David E. Holwerda writes:

From the early days of the Church the opinion that the Jews had been disinherited as a result of their unbelief was widely held. Many believed that the Jews' role in the history of redemption had come to an end. Already in the middle of the second century, Justin Martyr, in his famous *Dialogue with*

¹ Clark M. Williamson, *Has God Rejected His People?* p. 101. “Luther's last sermon, preached a few days before his death, importunately appealed that all Jews be driven from Germany,” p. 102.

² Eugene J. Fisher, “Anti-Semitism and Christianity: Theories and Revisions of Theories.” *Persistent Prejudice: Perspectives On Anti-Semitism*, edited by Herbert Hirsch and Jack D. Spiro, p. 23.

Trypho, argued that Christians, not Jews, were the children of Abraham, those who formed the new nation that would inhabit the Holy Land during the millennial reign of Christ. God's covenant with Abraham was in effect established with Gentile Christians, not with Jews. The Jews had been excluded from the purposes of God. This expressed view became dominant for centuries in the Church, and the Reformation did not significantly change it.³

Certainly the most notorious example of such early anti-Semitic acrimony comes from the fourth century "golden-mouthed" expositor and Bishop of Constantinople, John Chrysostom. From a series of sermons entitled, "Eight Orations Against The Jews," Catholic scholar Edward Flannery provides the following quotations:

How can Christians dare 'have the slightest converse' with Jews, 'most miserable of all men' (Homily 4:1), men who are '. . . lustful, rapacious, greedy, perfidious bandits.' Are they not 'inveterate murderers, destroyers, men possessed by the devil' whom 'debauchery and drunkenness has given them the manners of the pig and the lusty goat.' . . . '[T]hey have surpassed the ferocity of wild beasts, for they murder their offspring and immolate them to the devil' (1:6). . . . Indeed Jews worship the devil; their rites are 'criminal and impure;' their religion is 'a disease' (3:1). Their synagogue, again, is 'an assembly of criminals . . . a den of thieves . . . a cavern of devils, an abyss of perdition' (1:2, 6:6).⁴

Not surprisingly, Chrysostom understood, concerning Romans 9-11, that "[T]he event of Christ and the New Covenant for the Gentiles have divested the Jews as a people of any special standing before God."⁵ In a similar manner, for Augustine, "Judaism is simply relegated to the latter [non-elect] category, and its status in salvation-history assigned to the pre-Christian past."⁶ So we better appreciate the similar estimate of the sixteenth century Augustinian monk of Wittenberg born of a shameful legacy within the Catholic church.

However, while we might ponder the course of western history had their been a different estimate concerning the future of Israel according to Scripture, and thus a more respectful attitude toward the Jew, nevertheless there has been a lineage of Christians that has evidenced a more considerate, indeed Pauline appreciation of the Hebrew people. While acknowledging the hard-heartedness of the Jew to this day and the jeopardy of his soul on account of unbelief, yet they have maintained an appreciation for the legacy that the Christian has nevertheless inherited from this people, and that chiefly being salvation by a Jew according to a Book that is largely Jewish. Because of love for this Jewish inheritance, an inevitable result has been interest in Jewish evangelism, as originated in Scotland during the last century that resulted in the conversion of such Hebrew Christians as Alfred Edersheim, David Baron, and Adolph Saphir.⁷ Horatius Bonar, in being associated with this movement and at the same time convinced of a national future for Israel according to Romans 11, wrote the following verses based on v. 1.

³ David E. Holwerda, *Jesus & Israel, One Covenant or Two?* p. 2. He draws upon Jeffrey S. Siker's significant book, *Disinheriting The Jews*, which documents the gradual change that overtook the early church whereby the inclusion of the Gentiles (cf. Rom. 11:17) was supplanted by the concept of the exclusion of the Jews.

⁴ Edward H. Flannery, *The Anguish Of The Jews*, pp. 50-51.

⁵ Peter Gorday, *Principles Of Patristic Exegesis: Romans 9-11 in Origen, John Chrysostom, and Augustine*, p.129.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 333.

⁷ This thrust sprung from the interest of Robert Haldane and Thomas Chalmers in the Jews, and included the involvement of Robert Candlish, Robert Murray M. Cheyne, and Andrew and Horatius Bonar. During that period the British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel amongst the Jews, founded in 1809, was flourishing and received the support of C. H. Spurgeon. David L. Larsen, *Jews Gentiles, & The Church*, pp. 128-9.

Forgotten; no that cannot be;
 All other names may pass away,
 But thine, MY ISRAEL, shall remain
 In everlasting memory.

Forgotten! No, that cannot be;
 Inscribed upon My palms thou art,
 The name I gave in days of old
 Is graven still upon My heart.

Forgotten! No, that cannot be;
 Beloved of thy God art thou
 His crown forever on thy head,
 His name forever on thy brow.

Forgotten! No, that cannot be:
 Sun, moon, and stars may cease to shine,
 But thou shalt be remembered still,
 For thou art His and He is thine.⁸

It is important to note that the last stanza of this hymn makes reference to Jeremiah 31:31-37 in which God makes a new covenant with “the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” in which “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people,” vs. 32-34. This promise is certified to be as sure as the fixity of the sun, moon, and stars in the heavens, vs. 35-37, and it would seem that Paul has this same conviction regarding the certainty of national Israel’s restoration and regeneration since, “they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable” (Rom. 11:28-29). Ultimately the issue here is one of God’s covenant faithfulness in fulfilling His promises, and that without redefining the term “Israel.” Thus Haldane, in commenting on v. 27, concludes: “Israel, then, shall be restored to their own land, which God gave for an everlasting possession. God hath said that He will make a full end of all the nations whither He had driven them, but He will not make a full end of them (Jer. 46:28; Ezek. 37: 21, 25). ‘And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God’ (Amos 9:15).”⁹

However, even amongst Christians of this twentieth century, who are indebted to the Reformation for the recovery of the gospel of the free grace of God, there has been vigorous disagreement with regard to the future destiny of Israel. And this writer has no hesitation in declaring, from the outset, his strong commitment to God’s promise of a regenerated nation of Israel in Palestine under its acknowledged Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, it is believed that a prima facie reading of Romans 9-11 will readily lead to this conclusion; it is only when a preconceived system of doctrine becomes dominant, such as in the magisterium or teaching authority of the Catholic Church, or entrenched covenant theology, or denominational/creedal loyalty, that an alternative interpretation is desperately sought. Nevertheless, this being asserted, let one practical test be put to this whole contentious situation, and that is the question as to how one looks today upon Jews in general, and consider how it measures up to Paul’s indomitable love that was sorely tested yet never diminished. In meeting a confessing Jew, does one secretly regard that individual as a non-person, as self-deceived, as nationally beyond hope in the sight of God, as wholly deluded in terms of claiming to be a biblical Jew, as having carnal Zionist hopes,

⁸ Horatius Bonar, in *Knight’s Master Book Of New Illustrations*, p. 337.

⁹ Robert Haldane, *Romans*, p. 552.

while one outwardly gives token and polite acknowledgment to that person being a Jew? Or does one yet regard this person as an exile, an unbelieving family member, “a kinsman [through Christ] according to the flesh” (9:3)? Surely this latter response is closer to the Apostle’s attitude and that which caused him to so vehemently respond: “Perish the thought; let it be unthinkable to suggest that God has rejected His people.” Cranfield is right to designate Paul’s dogmatic exclamation here as being not only reflective of national Israel, but also the theme of this chapter.¹⁰

A. Israel’s rejection by God is denied, vs. 1-10.

In vs. 1-10 we have an introductory unit in terms of Paul’s climactic purpose expressed in vs. 11-36. It establishes the fact that within Israel as a whole, only a remnant is presently saved, yet this in itself proves that God has not forsaken His people, even in an anticipated inclusive sense.

1. The proof of a remnant in Israel, vs. 1-6.

Paul probably expects his readers to recall earlier remnants in the history of Israel, such as that which returned from the Babylonian captivity (Jer. 50:20) as well as that which in the future will be regathered after being scattered abroad (Jer. 23:3). This fact of Israel’s continuance in the past, in spite of considerable defection from the faith with resulting divine discipline, is good reason for confidence in Israel’s future.

a. Paul is an Israelite, v. 1.

An expanded translation reads: “Therefore I raise a critical question in the light of such abject unbelief [10:21]. God has not rejected His people, the present unbelieving nation of Israel, has He? Surely not! No, a thousand times, no! For I myself am presently an Israelite, that is a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe and land allocation designated as Benjamin.” This denial is most emphatic, though the reason for such certainty is connected with the term for Israel as “His people,” those belonging to God through covenant and purchased by God through redemption (Deut. 31:6; I Sam. 2:22; I Kings 6:13; Ps. 94:14). The point is that God will not cast aside, in a final sense, those who belong to Him since His integrity would be at stake. In the light of the preceding context, Paul has more in mind than the present remnant, and that is the salvation of the larger national body, his “kinsmen according to the flesh” (9:3; cf. 10:1).

We believe that Paul is not speaking here of himself as an “Israelite” in the present tense as replacement theology might postulate, that is by claiming to be a secular Israelite without believing in any divine, covenantal, national recognition. Therefore we must conclude that here is a declaration that supports the relevant comment of John McRay that, “the book of Romans in its first century context, . . . will demonstrate that Paul was not a 16th century Protestant Reformer but a first century Jewish Rabbi who accepted Jesus as his savior.”¹¹ Hence while Paul

¹⁰ Cranfield, *Romans*, II, p. 542, 574-77.

¹¹ Cited by Joseph Shulam with Hillary Lecornu, *A Commentary on The Jewish Roots of Romans*, p. vi. McRay is Professor of New Testament and Archaeology at Wheaton College Graduate School.

includes himself with the remnant, yet at the same time he identifies with the nation of Israel “according to the flesh” presently comprised of “Israelites, to whom belongs [present tense] the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises” (9:3-4). In boasting of being a Benjamite, as were Saul, and Jeremiah, Paul identifies with a distinct people whose strategic territory included Jerusalem.¹²

There are those who in reality deny Paul's affirmation here while using language that is ambiguous. Some like Lenski and Pieters agree with Paul simply because the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus had not yet taken place; however, after 70 AD they would affirm that God has finally finished with Israel and the Jews. Others such as Calvin support Paul by using “Israel” inclusively of believing Jews and Gentiles in the church, though again national identity has been lost. Still others such as Hendriksen believe that Paul only has in mind a remnant to the end that does not have any national standing in the sight of God. All of these views refuse to let the meaning of “Israelite/Israel” have its contextual national sense as do Cranfield, Haldane, Moo, Morris, Murray, and undoubtedly associated with this perspective is a dominant, regrettable Reformation legacy concerning the Jews that lacks any passionate Pauline regard (9:3).¹³

b. Israel was foreknown, v. 2a.

Paul returns to the thought of election when he exclaims: “God has not rejected [spurned/permanently pushed aside] His people who in eternity past He foreknew [foreordained] according to pure forelove.” Here the meaning of προσηνωσκω, *proginoskō*, describes God's love in eternity past for His people themselves, and not simply things about them according to prescience. This word is used to describe Christ being “foreknown” (foreordained, KJV) in I Peter 1:20, presumably by the Father. Jeremiah was similarly “foreknown/ foreloved” even before he was born (Jer. 1:5). So here Paul has the same thought concerning the Father's love for Israel which Amos 3:2 describes: “You only have I chosen [known] among all the families of the earth.” Further, such “foreknowledge” is

¹² To suggest, as some do such as Bruce, Stott, that the New Testament and Paul in particular are silent with regard to the land is to ignore the common Hebrew appreciation of “the covenants [and] . . . the promises” (9:4), the legacy of “the fathers . . . [and] the gifts and the calling of God” (11:28-29) as well as here being a “Benjamite” that would never dream of making such a disassociation. Refer to Walter Kaiser, “The Land of Israel and the Future Return (Zechariah 10:6-12),” *Israel, The Land And The People*, ed. H. Wayne House, pp. 209-27. Johannes Munck, in his classic work *Christ & Israel*, p. 12, notes that, “There,” ἐκεῖ, in 9:26 is “a natural designation for Palestine, in order to imply that the Gentile nations will gather in Jerusalem and the Messianic kingdom will be established there (cf. 11:26).”

¹³ Consider Albertus Pieters who in his *The Seed Of Abraham*, pp. 132-4, as a professor of Dutch Reformed convictions, writes that following the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, the subsequent Jewish lineage was comprised of illegitimate usurpers. Thus, “their program [turned out to be] the exact opposite of Christ, and in this unholy endeavor they were only too successful, with the result that untold calamities were brought down upon themselves and upon the whole world. Ignorant that their separateness from the rest of the world was in the divine purpose temporary, they strove to render it permanent. Thus that which had been in itself good and holy became through their error a source of poison in the life of the world; and ‘The Jew’ became the great persistent international problem.” Thus replacement theology has its unpleasant consequences, whereas, in general, those who see a divine future for national Israel, especially premillennialists, have been respectful and kindly toward the Jew even in his unbelief. For proof of this assertion refer to David Rausch, *Fundamentalist Evangelicals And Anti-Semitism*, pp. 206-8.

surely intended to prompt recollection of that particular first link which attached to the “golden chain” of God’s predestinating purpose in 8:28-30. In the light of this, Israel’s participation in such a course determines that rejection, as proposed here, be regarded as quite impossible.

However, is this “foreknowledge” concerning “His people” with respect to the nation as a whole or the elect remnant within the nation? “His people” here is a restatement of this expression in v. 1 where the context is surely with reference to “a disobedient and obstinate people” described in 10:21.¹⁴ Thus Murray comments that, “Israel had been elected and peculiarly loved and thus distinguished from all other nations.”¹⁵ There is no twist of meaning from the nation to the elect. What follows with regard to evidence of a past and present remnant is offered as proof concerning the divine perpetuity and future of the nation. God, in eternity past, loved a nation comprised of twelve tribes having a destiny guaranteed by covenant (Gen. 13:1-3; Ezek. 37:21-22). It is the fixity of the Abrahamic covenant that guarantees a present and future existence for Israel as a nation, even as vs. 28-29 affirm.¹⁶

c. Elijah represents a past remnant, vs. 2b-4.

Following the victorious contest with the 450 prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel, and immediate drought relief, Elijah flees from the fury of Jezebel in Jezreel to a cave at Mt. Sinai (I Kgs. 19:8-9). He had earlier felt alone (I Kgs. 18:22), received divine relief from hunger and depression (I Kgs. 19:4-8), and yet again becomes depressed feeling solitary in the prophetic ministry. All of Israel seems lost; divine intervention has not resulted in significant repentance.

(1) He is blind to God’s remnant, vs. 2b-3.

In despair, Elijah pleads with God “against Israel,” because of seeming total spiritual bankruptcy (I Kgs. 18:21), which contrasts with the Gentile kindness of the widow of Zarephath (I Kgs. 17:8-16), so that he seeks divine judgment. The quotation of I Kings 19:14 may suggest the belief of Elijah that the day of final rejection has come. Jewish tradition indicates that: “The

¹⁴ Morris explains that “Paul is referring to ‘the people he foreknew’, not ‘those of his people whom he foreknew.’” *Romans*, p. 399. Likewise Moo, Murray.

¹⁵ Murray, *Romans*, II, p. 68.

¹⁶ It is astonishing therefore, to note that a number of Calvinist writers and commentators, while strenuously upholding the unconditional nature of the New Covenant, that is the security of its participants according to particular electing grace even though subject to sober warnings, yet are reluctant to grant the same characteristic to the Abrahamic Covenant with regard to Israel’s early participation that also included sober warnings, and especially the unconditionality so plainly revealed in Genesis 15:1-21. William Cox writes that, “In Genesis 15:6 we read that Abraham ‘believed God’ and that it (Abraham’s belief) was counted unto him for righteousness. Belief here was a condition (understood). . . . the Old Testament promises to Israel were conditional and . . . Israel failed to observe these conditions.” *Biblical Studies In Final Things*, pp. 50-55. Yet this author’s Calvinism would certainly confess the conditionality of faith in the New Testament to ultimately subsume under the biblical truth that saving faith is a sovereign bestowal. Also refer to Crenshaw and Gunn, *Dispensationalism, Today, Yesterday, and Tomorrow*, where Appendix Three, “Conditional and Unconditional Covenants,” pp. 321-25, does not so much as mention Genesis 15, let alone consider the vital ramifications of the sovereignty of God here.

misdeeds of the people had swelled to such number that they could no longer reckon upon 'the merits of the fathers' to intercede for them; they had overdrawn their account. When they sank to the point of degradation at which they gave up the sign of the covenant, Elijah could control his wrath no longer, and he accused Israel before God."¹⁷

(2) He is informed of God's remnant, v. 4.

So Paul confidently reasons: "But what is the divine authoritative response [χρηματισμός, chrēmatismos, oracle]? 'I have kept for myself seven thousand men [households?] who have not bowed the knee to Baal' [I Kgs. 19:18]." Within the comprehensive nation of Israel in the flesh God had preserved, according to His gracious working, a remnant, even larger when women and young people are included, comprised of Jews in flesh and Spirit. Elijah had a vision that was too exclusive since in those days God had neither forsaken Israel nor abandoned the Abrahamic covenant. Hence there is implicit hope here for Israel in the present and future.

So in times of declension, we may be like Paul at Corinth who appears to have been so depressed and fearful that the Lord found it necessary to visit him and declare, "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city" (Acts 18:9-10)

d. Paul describes a present remnant, v. 5-6.

"In the same manner¹⁸ there has also come to be, at the present [now time], a remnant according to God's gracious choice." The word λείμμα, leimma, means "that which is left over," such as II Kings 19:4 where the besieged Jerusalem is a "remnant" when compared with the nation as a whole, the northern kingdom having already gone into captivity.

(1) It is according to gracious election, v. 5.

The point here is not the meager size of the present believing Jewish population, but the very sovereign origination and maintenance of this small Christian community. Now, as in Elijah's time, the remnant's divine existence is attributed solely to the grace of God. This being so, and with support from the vehement denial of v. 1, then implicit is the certain future of national Israel since it is ultimately dependent upon this same elective will. Hence the divine purpose, according to unconditional covenant promise, is bound to triumph over those who are "a disobedient and obstinate people," 11:21. Such an accomplishment is described by Ezekiel as follows: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, . . . I will give you a new heart, . . . I will put

¹⁷ Louis Ginzberg, *Legends Of The Bible*, p. 588.

¹⁸ The use of οὕτως, houtōs meaning "in the same manner" or "even so" should be noted in view of its disputed meaning in v. 26. Here there is an obvious temporal association concerning the past era of Elijah and the "now time."

My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, . . . I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life" (Ezek. 36:25-27; 37:5).

- (2) It is exclusive of law works, v. 6.

Here, with regard to the past and present remnant, conditionality is not a factor, and therefore it will not be a factor when the "transgressing" multitude comes to "fulfillment" v. 12. As Haldane comments, "It was an unconditional choice, resulting from the sovereign free favor of God."¹⁹ Faith here is not eliminated, nor is it elevated, but rather subordinated to the pure grace of God. And the pure grace of God must eliminate works of any sort, but especially the thought of a little worthiness or gratitude from unbelieving Israel.

From a broader perspective, it is abundantly plain that for Paul both Jew and Gentile, individually and collectively, are saved according to God's gracious election that will not admit of human works in the most absolute terms. Grace, which for Paul becomes here a synonymous term for election, and works are mutually exclusive. Again, means of grace are not eliminated, but neither are they elevated to a point where man retains the initiative over God. Here we are faced with the question as to whether the dominion of grace, the reign of grace will rise above the paralysis of sin that is so embodied in the nation of Israel as a whole. Such recalcitrance is further described in vs. 7-10 that raises the inevitable question of v. 11.

2. The proof of hardening in Israel, vs. 7-10.

These verses appear to recall the teaching of 9:18-24 that expounded upon God's hardening of Israel on account of its obdurate heart; the purpose of this reemphasis concerns the need of maintaining a focus on God as being in full control of Israel's ultimate destiny. Further, such a reminder, in conjunction with the ensuing prospect of national salvation, will only enhance the purity of grace that v. 6 has delineated.

- a. The hardened nation of Israel according to Paul, v. 7.

We expand in translation: "Then what is the meaning of national Israel's ongoing state of unbelief in the light of the present remnant that exists solely on the basis of grace? Certainly in Israel's present zealous seeking of the law-principle of righteousness [9:31; 10:2-3] it has not attained that which it aspired to achieve. However the elect remnant did attain to the faith-principle of righteousness while the rest of the nation became hardened according to God's just intervention." Here Paul, from personal experience, clearly distinguishes between the nation of Israel as a whole and its components that comprise the elect remnant and the hardened remainder. And it is this larger part that he now emphatically describes as presently abandoned by God; yet the stage is at the same time being set for explaining the ultimate triumph of sovereign grace over "the rest," as well as "the remnant," when God "will remove ungodliness from Jacob," v. 26. How often Paul must have reflected upon, in his volatile Jewish opponents, that hardness of

¹⁹ Haldane, *Romans*, p. 534.

heart which he formerly manifested. But then he would also have mused that if sovereign grace could save him, the chief of sinners, then there was similar hope for the nation of Israel as a general whole.

- b. The hardened nation of Israel according to the Old Testament, vs. 8-10.

This montage of Scripture quotations incorporates the three major divisions of the Old Testament, the law, the prophets, and the writings,²⁰ and thus establishes the punishment of divine hardening with comprehensive authority.

- (1) The testimony of the law, Deuteronomy 29:4; v. 8a.

Emphasis on the divine imposition of hardening upon Israel is indicated by Paul's turning of the negative, "the LORD has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear," into the positive, "God gave them . . . eyes to see not and ears to hear not." Even just prior to crossing the Jordan into the promised land, there is recollection of Israel's continuing dullness

- (2) The testimony of the prophets, Isaiah 29:10; v. 8b.

Here the words "a spirit of deep sleep" are injected into Deuteronomy 29:4 and become "a spirit of stupor." Again, it is God who has appointed this comprehensive spiritual coma that includes the prophets; in particular there will be a national blindness to the Word of God (Isa. 29:10-12). However what God imposes in judgment is a result of accountable sinfulness so that the preceding v. 9 declares, "Blind yourselves and be blind."

- (3) The testimony of the writings, Psalm 69:22-23; vs. 9-10.

In this psalm as a whole, quoted in the N.T. with reference to Christ's sufferings, David is deeply distressed on account of the assaults of his enemies. The fact that David laments, "I have become estranged from my brothers and an alien to my mother's sons. . . . Those who sit in the gate talk about me, and I am the son of the drunkards," vs. 8, 12, indicates that his opposition is from "the rest" of the nation in general while he identifies with the faithful "remnant." Thus for Paul this prayer to God was answered in that the requested judgment became a fact of history. Note that these verses, describing, as Paul puts it: "Let their eyes be darkened to see not, and bend their backs forever," v. 10, immediately follow the Messianic reference of Ps. 69:20-27, cf. Matt. 27:34, 38. Thus the imagery of a "table becoming a snare," of "eyes being darkened," of "backs being bent," strongly suggests a divine subjection to suffering and humiliation that history has all too clearly demonstrated. Consequently we are poised at a most crucial point since this terrible divine consignment raises the inevitable question that was earlier raised in 9:6: "But it is not as though the Word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel." Of course there the point was that a godly remnant remained within national Israel. But now we are

²⁰ Moo, *Romans*, p. 681.

concerned about the unbelieving “rest” of the nation. Has God abandoned the larger part of the nation forever? Romans 11:11-32 addresses this point.

B. Israel's stumbling at Christ is temporary, vs. 11-24.

The preceding stark definition of Israel's blindness, even as the church at Rome could so plainly observe, might lead to the belief that the nation as a whole had been finally abandoned by God. Further it would then be assumed that the saved Gentiles now constituted the new spiritual nation comprised of all races, including a Jewish remnant. Sadly the early Christian church, in embracing replacement theology, did eventually come to this conclusion, and with tragic consequences for the Jew.²¹ Hence Paul most adamantly rejects such a denial of the promises given to the “fathers,” 9:4-5; 11:28-29. What follows reveals how the dark night of Israel's present sojourn will give way to the bright day dawning when, “the Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob,” v. 26.

1. God will bless the Gentiles to bless the Jews, vs. 11-15.

Here is a fourfold portrayal of a basic gospel theme, namely that national Israel, presently bound in unbelief, shall achieve salvation through their being prompted to jealousy by the saving of the Gentiles and ultimately through the resurrection power of God, vs. 11, 12, 13-14, 15. For Paul, while his own distinctive Gentile ministry is significant in this divine saga, yet his ultimate vision concerns the saving of Israel, “their fulfillment,” and “life from the dead.”

a. Portrayal one - Israel's jealousy through Gentile salvation, v. 11.

An expanded translation reads: “Therefore I raise a further critical question in the light of such ongoing abject unbelief [10:21]. National Israel did not trip/stumble and yet recover in its earthly pilgrimage so that a fatal, irrevocable fall eventually resulted, did it? Surely not! No, a thousand times, no! But rather through their transgression/unbelief salvation has come to the Gentiles for the purpose that the Jews be made jealous [10:19].” Simply put, while Israel's rejection has not been total, v. 1, now we understand that it has not been final. Thus when Jesus Christ declared, “the kingdom of God will be taken away from you [the nation of Israel] and given to a people, producing the fruit of it [the Gentiles]” (Matt. 21:43), it is eisegesis to suggest that this abandonment is permanent. Israel's “stumbling” v. 11, is “transgression” v. 11, is “failure” v. 12, is “rejection” v. 15, is “branches broken off, . . . the rich root of the olive tree” v. 17, which is on account of “unbelief” v. 20, which must surely be with regard to the rejection of Jesus of Nazareth as the Lord's Messiah, 9:32-33.

²¹ While the first century was dominated by the Jewish mother church at Jerusalem that acknowledged the inclusion of the Gentiles into the blessings of Abraham, during the second to the fourth centuries a change evolved so that by the time of Constantine the Jews were believed to have forever forfeited the blessings of Abraham that had now been inherited by the Gentiles. Refer to H. Wayne House, “The Church's Appropriation Of Israel's Blessings,” *Israel, The Land and the People*, ed. H. Wayne House, pp. 77-110; Walter Kaiser Jr., “An Assessment Of ‘Replacement Theology,’” *Mishkan* 21, (February 1994), pp. 9-20; Ray Pritz, “Replacing The Jews In Early Christian Theology,” *Mishkan* 21, (February 1994), pp. 21-27; Jeffrey S. Siker, *Disinheriting The Jews*, 296 pp.

However, “salvation has come to the Gentiles” v. 11, which is “riches for the world” v. 12, which is “the reconciliation of the world” v. 15, which is “wild olive branches, . . . grafted into the rich root of the olive tree” vs. 17, 24, which is according to “God’s kindness” v. 22, which is “to make them [the Jews] jealous” v. 11. In God’s plan, the Gentile church does not supercede national Israel, but rather is instrumental in the restoration of the Jewish people to God. Notice the importance of the *purpose clause* here, “to make them jealous.” But why? Obviously unbelieving national Israel is in mind, yet if this people has no future, this is meaningless, even worse, since it suggests a divine teasing of those who have been abandoned!

But specifically, how are the Gentiles intended to provoke jealousy amongst the Jews? The intensive παραζηλώω, parazēloō, cf. Deut. 32:21; Rom. 10:19, means zealous desire on account of acknowledged personal poverty, so that, “I will make them [Jews of the synagogue of Satan] come and bow down at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you [Philadelphia Gentiles]” (Rev. 3:9). Clearly Paul feels a compulsion to contribute toward this process, v. 13-14; he must proclaim and demonstrate that with “a [foolish] nation without understanding will I anger you,” 10:19, in a way similar to that of the elder brother becoming jealous at the rich grace being poured out upon the repentant prodigal (Luke 15:25-32). Thus the Jews are to become desirous of God’s evident blessing poured out upon the Gentiles, not that they might become Gentiles, but fulfilled Jews under their covenant head and Messiah. David Larsen comments: “Christian love, instead of arrogance [cf. vs. 18, 21], ought to foster ‘envy or jealousy’ among the Jews for what Christians possess in Christ (Rom. 11:11). How frequently has this phenomenon been in evidence in Christian history or now?”²²

b. Portrayal two - Israel’s fulfillment through Gentile enrichment, v. 12.

An expanded translation reads: “For if the transgression of national Israel leads to the riches of gospel mercy being poured out *upon the world* at large, and their faith failure results in rich grace for the Gentiles, then how much more abundant will the nation of Israel’s ultimate fulfillment be *for the world*.” Paul uses the familiar a fortiori form of argument here, cf. 5:9, 10, 15, 17, from the lesser to the greater, so that the major question concerns how the lesser “faith poverty of national Israel” will become the greater “fulfillment”? The word πλήρωμα, plerōma, means “full measure” or “completeness” that can be understood either qualitatively or quantitatively.²³ The contrast with “the [large numbered] fullness of the Gentiles,” v. 25 and implicit here, strongly suggests “the prospective large numbered fullness of the Jews.”²⁴ That is the Jews will ultimately experience the “much more,” πόσω μᾶλλον, posō mallon, cf. v. 24, fulfillment, that is national salvation (Ezek. 37:1-28; Hos. 3:4-5; Zech. 8:1-8; 12:10-14; 31:1-2; 14:9-11), including union with the remnant, that transcends the preceding blessing of the

²² David L. Larsen, “A Celebration of the Lord our God’s Role in the Future of Israel,” *Israel, the Land and the People*, ed. H. Wayne House, p. 319.

²³ Moo, *Romans*, p. 689.

²⁴ Johannes Munk, *Christ and Israel*, pp. 119-121, 132-136.

Gentiles. Thus Alford comments: "If then the *disgrace of Israel* has had such a blessed accompaniment, how much more a blessed a one shall *Israel's honor* bring with it, when His own people shall once more be set as a praise in the midst of the earth, and the glory of the nations."²⁵ The language of Paul hardly envisages a mere totality of the remnant, as Hendriksen suggests.²⁶ Then will be fulfilled the words of Christ: "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD'" (Matt. 23:38-39). As Barrett states: "Paul looks beyond the advantages conferred on the Gentiles by the unbelief of Israel to the far greater eschatological bliss which Israel's return will inaugurate."²⁷

c. Portrayal three - Israel's provocation through Paul's ministry, vs. 13-14.

Aware of his enthusiasm for the glorious future rebirth of Israel, as well as most likely the large Gentile constituency of the church at Rome, the Apostle is careful not to disassociate his own distinctive calling from the present saving of Jews. In other words, in ministering to Gentiles, Paul constantly has evangelistic interest in mind for his kinsmen according to the flesh.

(1) It is glorious for Gentile ministry, v. 13.

As many today mischaracterize Paul's calling to the Gentiles as being detached from his former involvement with Judaism, so similar clarification is needed for the Gentile Christians in Rome. "Yes," says Paul, "I am an apostle of Gentiles." But further, "I boast and exalt in my [appointed] ministry, even as you are its fruit; nevertheless there is a greater goal in view here that you need to keep in mind. There is a transcendent purpose, going beyond your salvation, that I always have in focus." Thus he corrects "Gentile Christians [who] might appeal to Paul himself, 'the apostle to the Gentiles,' as further reason to disdain Jews and Jewish Christians."²⁸

(2) It is provocative in Jewish evangelism, v. 14.

Expanded translation: "My Gentile ministry is fulfilled since by it I also have hope that it might provoke my kinsmen according to the flesh [9:3; I Cor.

²⁵ Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, II, p. 403.

²⁶ "His [Paul's] words 'their fullness' pertain to the salvation not of a physical unit, 'the people of Israel'; but of the sum of all Israel's remnants." Hendriksen, *Romans*, p. 368. This author is committed to the denial of any national restoration and future for Israel; refer to his *Israel and the Bible*, 63 pp. Thus he finds a difficulty here using tenuous exegesis in that the "remnants" hardly reflect the greater glory of Israel that Paul so enthusiastically describes as being future, vs. 17-32. Further, if the "their transgression" refers to *national* Israel, as v. 11 indicates, then surely "their fulfillment" refers to a similar and related comprehensive body of people, that is, national Israel. Of the same amillennial exegesis are Bavinck, *The Last Things*, pp. 104-107, and Hoekema, *The Bible And The Future*, pp. 142-145. Back of this opinion is an overriding presupposition that the Christian church has superceded the nation of Israel as the one people of God. Thus the concept of the nation of Israel being saved according to Romans 11 is quite inadmissible. For further refutation of this interpretation, refer to v. 26.

²⁷ C. K. Barrett, *Romans*, p. 214.

²⁸ Moo, *Romans*, p. 691.

10:18] and result in some of them being saved.” In other words, Paul desires that Gentiles, in all of their godless paganism, might embrace the God of Abraham through faith in Christ, and thus stimulate carnal Jews to be partakers of the same rich blessing through the same means. The expression, “and save some of them” indicates that the carnal Jew, outside of Christ, is lost. But who are the “some of them”? Surely in the light of the future hope of national Israel’s “fullness,” v. 12, here Paul has in mind present additions to the remnant that are “no more than a modest contribution.”²⁹ However, “[s]uch conversions of individual Jews, though few in number, are a precious foretoken of the salvation referred to in v. 26.”³⁰ Thus for Paul, his pro-Semitic stance is unfading since “God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew,” v. 2, and especially because “the natural branches [will] be grafted into their own olive tree,” v. 23, at a future time when “all Israel will be saved,” v. 26, with a glory that shall eclipse “the fullness of the Gentiles,” v. 25. Here Paul participates in the prelude, the theme of which subsequent centuries have ill-maintained; but he always has in view God’s grand finale.

d. Portrayal four - Israel’s resurrection through Gentile evangelism, v. 15.

The use again of the *a fortiori* form of argument returns us to the same basic proposition of v. 12, yet with added emphasis here on divine initiative. The downside is the nation of Israel’s “rejection,” ἀποβολή, apobolē, its being “cast away” (cf. Ezek. 37:11), which is parallel with the cause of this abandonment, that is the “transgression” of unbelief. As a result comes “the reconciliation of the world,” which is parallel with “riches for the world,” certainly not universalism, yet “a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues” (Rev. 7:9; cf. Matt. 24:14; 28:19; Acts 1:8; 2:17; Col. 1:23). Consequently the up side for the nation of Israel is “their acceptance,” πρόσλημψης, proslēmpsis, or “receiving,” which is parallel with “their fulfillment,” which is more wonderfully described as nothing less than “life from the dead.” While it is grammatically possible that this last expression could refer to physical resurrection of the Gentile and/or Jewish world, yet the ongoing emphasis on the destiny of Israel suggests radical national conversion, after the manner of the language of 6:13.³¹

Added support for the future national conversion/resurrection of Israel is found in Simeon’s prophecy that, “this Child [Jesus Christ in his arms] is appointed for the

²⁹ Morris, *Romans*, p. 410. Also Moo, Murray, so that Paul does not anticipate that he will usher in the “fullness.”

³⁰ Cranfield, *Romans*, II, p. 561.

³¹ Barrett, Cranfield, and Moo support a literal general resurrection that climaxes national Israel’s national conversion. However Murray provides more convincing proof that a figurative expression is used, *Romans*, II, pp. 82-84. Nanos comments: “Even though Paul is bringing the gospel to gentiles it is in the service of Israel’s eventual restoration, which will be incomparably superior to the present circumstances that have been benefiting the gentiles, even as life is incomparably superior to death.” *The Mystery of Romans*, p. 248. Even amillennialist Hoekema comments, “Life from the dead’ does not refer to a literal resurrection; these words are probably used as a figure to describe the happy surprise that will be ours when Jews who have been rebellious turn to the Lord,” though we do not agree with his further comment that, “[t]here is no need however to restrict this acceptance to a period of history at the end-time.” *The Bible And The Future*, p. 143.

fall and rise [resurrection, ἀνάστασις, anastasis, of many in Israel” (Luke 2:34). Furthermore, the expression “life from the dead” being descriptive of national Israel’s future spiritual resurrection is strongly suggestive of Ezekiel 37:11-14 where the vision of the valley of dry bones is interpreted.³² As Spurgeon comments: “I wish never to learn the art of tearing God’s meaning out of his own words. If there be anything clear and plain, the literal sense and meaning of this passage [Ezekiel 37:21-22] – a meaning not to be spirited or spiritualized away – must be evident that both the two and the ten tribes of Israel are to be restored to their own land, and that a king is to rule over them.”³³

So Charles Simeon comments on Ezekiel 37:15-22:

The Jews are spread in almost every part of the world. Their conversion to God being simultaneous in every country, it will attract the attention of all, and create a vast sensation through the whole world. The victories, too, which they will gain over all who shall oppose their establishment in their own land will yet further demonstrate, not only that God is with them, but that there is no other God but He. They will be struck, as Baal’s worshippers were by the fire which descended from heaven to consume Elijah’s sacrifice; and will exclaim, with wonder and amazement, ‘The Lord, he is the God! The Lord, he is the God!’ Instantly will multitudes, in every place, ‘lay hold on the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we see that God is with you of a truth [Zech. 8:23].’ In truth, it will be a signal to all mankind to acknowledge Christ as their Lord and Savior; and it will ‘be as life from the dead’ [Rom. 11:15] to the whole world.³⁴

2. God will bless the Jews through wise cultivation, vs. 16-24.

Since 9:6, the overriding concern of Paul has been the vindication of God in the face of national Israel’s continuing unbelief. While the remnant is reassuring in terms of proving God’s ongoing covenant investment, 11:1-5, yet it does not fully satisfy with regard to God’s original promise of great blessing to Abraham that is repeatedly ratified in the Old Testament. Hence, while many a man quits a difficult task, the burden of Paul is now to demonstrate God’s resolve in the saving of national Israel (Gen. 18:14; cf. Phil. 1:6) as reflected by two Old Testament images in vs. 16-24 that will stimulate the climactic declaration of vs. 25-32. So that in spite of Gomer-like spiritual adultery (Hos. 3:1), all of the vicissitudes of human history, the conflict of the centuries in which the Jew has suffered unspeakable persecution, being “for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar and without ephod or household idols” (Hos. 3:4), yet “the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days” (Hos. 3:5).

³² See Alford, *The Greek Testament*, II, p. 404, and John Gill who both make this same association.

³³ C. H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 582, pp. 536-37. W. J. Grier declares, in commenting on this chapter, that “[w]hen Ezekiel speaks of the people being restored to their own land, he gives us clear hints that we are not to take this literally.” *The Momentous Event*, p. 35. However, when the literal meaning of Ezekiel 36 becomes an indisputable necessity concerning “the house of Israel” and “the land” and “the scattering,” cf. vs. 16-20, 24-28, 33-36, the suggestion that Ezekiel 37 describes not Israel restored to the land, but believers collectively who inhabit a heavenly paradise, is hermeneutical schizoprenia.

³⁴ Charles Simeon, *Horæ Homileticæ*, IX, p. 474.

- a. The analogy of Israel as a lump of dough, v. 16a.

Translation: “So if the firstfruit [ἀπαρχή, aparchē] is holy, the lump is also holy.” The “firstfruit” is described in Numbers 15:17-21 as the offering of a cake made from the first grain obtained from the threshing floor in celebration of entering the land of promised abundance. Thus the consecration of this first production of dough meant that the whole remaining lump, the produce to follow, was likewise consecrated, as Leviticus 6:14-18 well indicates. The “firstfruit” represents the Abrahamic covenant or patriarchs³⁵ while the “lump” is the resultant Jewish nation, even as there is a parallel with the “the root” and “the branches” of the olive tree as is immediately described. Hence the “sanctification” of Abraham guaranteed the “sanctification” of the resultant nation, discipline and exile notwithstanding. Haldane puts it this way: “[A]s the lump is holy, through the offering of the first-fruits, so this is a pledge that the lump, or body of the nation, will yet be made holy.”³⁶

- b. The analogy of Israel as natural olive branches, vs. 16b-24.

This section is dominated by Paul's expansion of the olive tree analogy. He intends to provide his most compelling reasons as to why national Israel has glorious prospects in spite of ongoing obstinacy in unbelief and dispersal in the face of Gentile dominion. In a word, the reason is “grace” through sovereign promise (4:13-16; 9:8). However, while this Gentile dominance continues, such privilege for saved barbarians should stimulate humble gratitude and loving respect for the severed natural branches rather than arrogance and conceit.

- (1) The biblical analogy introduced, v. 16b.

The olive tree is symbolic of national Israel in the Old Testament, especially insofar as the members are branches united by one root and trunk, both with regard to rebellion (Jer. 11:16-17) and restoration (Hos. 14:4-6). This individual/corporate unity is similarly reflected by rocks hewn from a quarry (Isa. 51:1-2), and a holy seed that will sprout from the stump of an oak tree hewn down in judgment (Isa. 6:13). This leads us to the widely held belief that the “root” here is the patriarchs, and the Abrahamic covenant in particular, which grows natural branches, Jews, and engrafts wild branches, Gentiles.³⁷ Further, not only is the headship of Abraham through promise emphasized in 4:1, 11-13, 16-17, but 11:28 especially accentuates the fact that Israel's temporary abandonment is eclipsed by the nation being “beloved

³⁵ This is the most common understanding which is derived from the more specific parallel of the analogy of the fig tree that follows.

³⁶ Haldane, *Romans*, p. 544.

³⁷ Alford, Bruce, Calvin, Haldane, Hendriksen, Hodge, Moo, Morris, Moule, Munck, Murray, Shedd, Stott. There are two other interpretations of the olive tree representation. First, the root is Christ who engrafts both Jew and Gentile, yet even Messiah is of the seed of Abraham (Matt. 1:1; Gal. 3:16). Paul still claims to be “an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham,” 11:1, cf. v. 28, and this is his present mindset. Second, the root is the remnant of Jewish Christians, but this is unlikely since they are the remaining natural branches, v. 17. Furthermore, as Hodge points out, “[t]he Gentile Christians are not said (v. 17) to be grafted into the stock of the converted Jews, but as branches with them they are united to a common stock.” *Romans*, p. 367.

for the sake of the fathers.” Thus Murray comments: “This fact of consecration derived from the patriarchs is introduced here by the apostle as support for the ultimate recovery of Israel. There cannot be irremediable rejection of Israel; the holiness of theocratic consecration is not abolished and will one day be vindicated in Israel’s fullness and restoration.”³⁸ Surely this is the intent of Paul here in his emphasis upon the inevitable holiness of the branches. In other words, there is a prospective olive tree that shall be luxuriant in glory and splendor because of the Divine Orchardist/Cultivator.

(2) The ingrafting of the Gentiles, vs. 17-22.

Most likely Paul has in mind some Christians in Rome who have assumed that Gentile favor in the sight of God is elevation that has permanently replaced the nation of Israel, v. 19. The whole tenor of vs. 17-22 is warning to the Gentiles against vain presumption in this regard since they remain dependent upon the “root,” v. 18.

(a) Wild branches replace natural branches, v. 17.

The severing of “some of the [natural] branches,” indeed a high proportion of the branches (Isa. 6:13), portrays severe pruning by the Divine Orchardist/Cultivator due to fruitlessness (Matt. 3:7-10; 21:43; 23:38). Such destitution is the problem of Romans 9-11.

However, to magnify the grace extended to the Gentiles that ought to admit of no boasting, they are pictured as limbs of “a wild olive tree,” that is “Greeks and barbarians,” 1:14, “a nation without understanding,” 10:19, that are “grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, v. 24; they are commoners married to royalty. To graft the natural into the wild was a known practice, whereas Paul describes the reverse procedure. C. H. Dodd’s objection that here Paul exhibits the horticultural “limitations of a town-bred man,” has been adequately answered by William Ramsay.³⁹ However, the point here is that the wild branches are engrafted so as to receive rather than provide benefit, v. 18, specifically “the rich root of the olive tree,” that is “fatness,” *πιότης*, *piotēs*. Surely this lavish spiritual nourishment is that promised through Abraham who was told by God: “In you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). Here we are introduced to the vital point that the Church is not a new creation that has supplanted Israel, but rather a derivative of the same stock of Israel, that is Abraham.⁴⁰

³⁸ Murray, *Romans*, II, p. 85.

³⁹ C. H. Dodd, *Romans*, p. 180. Ramsay, quoted by Munck, *Christ & Israel*, pp. 128-130, cites instances where the grafting of an uncultivated shoot into a fruitless cultivated tree is able to stimulate regeneration and fruitfulness.

⁴⁰ Walter Kaiser well addresses this issue as follows. “The most basic problem [with the major concepts of the relation between Israel and the Church] is that each begins with the church and then considers Israel from within the church, trying to fit the Jews within this framework. Each of these . . . [concepts] . . . fails to reckon with one or more of the following three primary assertions of Scripture:

(b) Wild branches receive needed advice, vs. 18-22.

The dominant issue that now concerns Paul is *not* the attitude of the Gentiles toward the grace of their engrafting so much as their attitude mainly toward the severed limbs of national Israel, v. 19, although the remnant later represented in 14:1-15:13, most likely as the “weak,” cannot be excluded.

1) Shun arrogance before God, 18-19.

The “arrogance” of the Gentiles is κατακαυχάομαι, katakauchaomai, an intensive form of “to boast,” or “to proudly declare,” or “to assert superiority over,” hence “to be arrogant *against* [the Jews] with proud zeal.” As the Jews had earlier been warned about a distorted appreciation of their election (Deut. 7:7-8), so the Gentiles need a similar exhortation.

a) Arrogance toward the broken branches, v. 18.

Moo comments that, “Gentile believers were apparently convinced that they belonged to a new people of God that had simply replaced Israel,”⁴¹ and consequently their derisive attitude was showing. Haldane adds that here is well described, “the [overbearing] spirit that has long prevailed among the Gentiles who profess Christianity. What marvelous ignorance, folly, and vanity, are often displayed even in God’s people!”⁴² However, while Israel is under discipline in the Lord’s woodshed, Gentiles are to show them loving respect, even if the task is at times frustrating, though church history does not reflect a good record.⁴³ On the other hand the attitude of Paul, already considered in the introduction to Romans 9, becomes a model in terms of what is here commended. One scholar of this shameful period declares:

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1. The church is grafted into Israel, not Israel into the church.
 2. The new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34 was made with “the house of Judah and the house of Israel,” not with the church. It is not a covenant made with all humanity, but all humanity may be grafted into it.
 3. God has had a faithful remnant ever since the beginning of the human race. The church is that portion of the faithful remnant that was called out of the Gentiles, since Pentecost, to be grafted into the faithful remnant in Israel. There is a distinction between Israel and the church, but not a separation; there is a oneness in which distinguishable aspects of that oneness may be seen without implying or necessitating a division of identity or destiny.” “An Epangelical Response,” *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, eds. Blaising and Bock, pp. 360-361. Further read pp. 367-369.

⁴¹ Moo, *Romans*, p. 704.

⁴² Haldane, *Romans*, p. 546.

⁴³ A study of church history regarding the treatment of the Jews by Christians is vital at this point. Refer to Paul E. Grosser and Edwin Halperin, *The Causes And Effects Of Anti-Semitism*; David L. Larsen, *Jews, Gentiles, And The Church*; David Rausch, *A Legacy Of Hatred*; Clark M. Williamson, *Has God Rejected His People?*

The Holocaust was, of course, the bitter fruit of long centuries of Christian teaching about the Jewish people. From the time of the gentile Church Fathers and the legal establishment of a triumphant ecclesiastical and philosophical control system with Constantine the Great, Christendom treated the Jewish people with contempt and taught contemptuously of them. . . . [T]he baptized gentiles succumbed to that wrong-headedness against which Paul had warned: they turned in jealousy and envy against the very root that bore them (Rom. 11:18).⁴⁴

Surely the Gentile, in not being arrogant, in “continuing in the kindness of God,” v. 22, is to allow grace received to be a stimulant of graciousness that is to be directed toward the unbelieving Jews, and thus promote jealousy, vs. 11, 14. It is well worth contemplating here how a Christian, whose eschatological system denies the existence of Jews in the sight of God since 70 AD, can adequately respond here in parallel with Paul.

The role of the Christian church in relation to the Abrahamic covenant is significant and humbling here since, contrary to popular opinion down the centuries, it originates out of Judaism and does not replace it. Here is the heart of the “mystery which for ages has been hidden in God” (Eph. 3:8-10; cf. Rom. 15:8-12; Eph2:11-13, 19; 3:6; Col. 1:25-27), namely the engrafting of the Gentiles *into* the stock of Abraham. Amidst all of the illustrious saints of the Bible, including Adam, Noah, Moses, Elijah, John the Baptist, and the Apostles, Abraham rises above them all in both the Old and New Testaments because of the singular call of God and his response of faith (Gen. 15:6-7).

b) Arrogance toward Gentile ingrafting, v. 19.

“Therefore you [the Gentile] will say,” leads to a representation of proud self-importance: “But some [natural Jewish] branches were cut off for the purpose that I [even I the more evidently worthy Gentile] might exclusively be engrafted into the stock of privileged blessing in Abraham].” In view of the humble reminder of v. 18, the Gentile is now perceived as accepting his roots and yet still boasting in his replacement of the Jew. Paul did not write in vain here, as the shameful history of the main stream of thought issuing from the church fathers indicates. As Grosser and Halperin explain, Hilary, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Jerome, Cyril, Augustine, etc. are,

⁴⁴ Forward by Franklin H. Little, Chairman, Department of Religion, Temple University. Paul E. Grosser and Edwin G. Halperin, *The Causes And Effects Of Anti-Semitism*, p. xii.

not bishops and fanatical monks or mendicant preachers, they are the Fathers and Doctors of the Church. . . . Their anti-Semitism just as their other writings had widespread profound and lasting impact. They bestowed a sanctity and respectability on anti-Semitism that survived the struggle between Judaism and Christianity of their times.⁴⁵

2) Seek fear before God, vs. 20-21.

When Christians turn, ever so slightly, away from God, and focus upon their condition relative to others, there is the inevitable temptation to exude Pharisaic pride (Luke 18:11). So in Church history the Gentiles have frequently despised the Jews and sanctimoniously accused them of being “Christ-killers,” as if they were far less guilty (Acts 4:27). Chrysostom declared: “The Jews are the most worthless of all men. They are lecherous, greedy, rapacious. They are perfidious murderers of Christ. They worship the devil, their religion is a sickness. The Jews are the odious assassins of Christ and for killing God there is no expiation possible, no indulgence or pardon.”⁴⁶

a) Fear God's dealing with the Jews, v. 20.

By way of expanded translation: “In the main it is true what you say. The greater proportion of Israelites were faithless and consequently broken off from the olive tree. However, you are to stand upon faith that hopes in mercy rather than self-congratulatory posturing. Do not place yourself on a pedestal by having a high opinion of yourself, but rather fearfully consider your own status before God.” As Israel's fundamental sin was “unbelief,” 3:3; 9:32; 11:31; 15:31, so the Gentile is warned about proudly claiming immunity.

b) Fear God's dealing with the Gentiles, v. 21.

While God is partial in His elective purposes, He is impartial insofar as the requirement of faith is concerned. Hence faithlessness in Israel resulted in severance so that faithlessness amongst the Gentiles can expect identical discipline. Haldane adds that this warning, “appears to be a prophetic intimation of the apostasy of the great body of the professors of Christianity under the mystery of iniquity.”⁴⁷ In other words, the fullness of blessing for the Gentiles will

⁴⁵ Grosser and Halperin, *The Causes And Effects Of Antisemitism: The Dimensions Of Prejudice*, pp. 78-81.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁴⁷ Haldane, *Romans*, p. 547.

end in apostasy while the apostasy of Israel will end in fullness of blessing, cf. vs. 22-26.

3) Sustain gratitude before God, v. 22.

Paul contemplates how God's dealings with both Jew and Gentile should cause us to ponder the polarity of His justice which is differently viewed according to the perspective of either faith or faithlessness. Both "goodness" χρηστότης, chrēstotēs, cf. 2:4, and "severity" ἀποτομία, apotomia, cf. 1:18, were manifest to Jew and Gentile, and comprise aspects of God's righteousness, that is His judging and justifying righteousness that originate in the Old Testament (Ps. 85:10; Hab. 3:2; Is. 46:12-13) and culminate in the righteous Christ becoming the believing sinner's righteousness (Rom. 3:26; I Cor. 1:30; I John 1:9).

Thus, up to the *present*, faithlessness amongst the Jews has resulted in severity, while faithfulness amongst the Gentiles has resulted in goodness. But regarding the *future*, if the Gentiles persevere in faith there will be ongoing goodness from God, though if they become faithless there will be severity poured out upon them even as the Jews have experienced. Thus Paul stresses the responsibility of the Gentiles in Rome lest they presume upon the sovereignty of God, though the conditional "if" clause here expresses probable fulfillment.

(3) The engrafting of the Jews, vs. 23-24.

As the olive tree analogy commenced with reference to Israel, and then focused on necessary warning for the Gentiles, so now we revert to the major concern of Israel's future destiny, that is the unbelieving nation as a whole apart from the remnant.

(a) The Jews can yet be engrafted, v. 23.

"And they [the unbelieving nation], if they do not continue [same present tense of ἐπιμένω, epimenō, as in v. 22] in unbelief," is the same type of third class conditional sentence expressing probable fulfillment as was in v. 22.⁴⁸ Hence, whatever conditionality is valid for Israel is equally valid for the Gentiles, though God's underlying elective purposes are also equally valid and will not fail.⁴⁹ Thus the probability is that "they [unbelieving Israel as a nation, not the remnant, cf. vs. 19-22] will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again." Humanly speaking, Israel's condition is hopeless, even as is the case with any lost

⁴⁸ Refer to A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, IV, p. 397, also Dana and Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, pp. 289-90.

⁴⁹ It is astonishing to read the Calvinistic amillennialists who at *this* point emphasize conditionality whereas, in elsewhere vigorously upholding unconditional election especially with regard to the Gentiles, they are emphatic concerning the gift of faith and the perseverance of the saints. So Hendriksen, *Romans*, p. 375.

sinner or backslidden believer. However, “God is able to graft them [the unbelieving nation of Israel] in again [into the olive tree and root of Abraham].” That is, He has the sovereign power and covenant commitment whereby Israel as a nation can indeed be saved.

Haldane comments: “He [God] is able to make the dry bones live [Ezek. 37:1-14], and to restore the severed branches of the Jewish nation.”⁵⁰ Here then is Paul’s implicit denial that national Israel has been irrevocably cast aside, otherwise such a comment would be out of place. If God has previously determined that Israel has been permanently rejected as a nation, surely Paul would not imply the opposite in declaring that “God is able [has the power]” to save them,” unless His power could not rise to conquer their unwillingness!

(b) The Jews can lay claim to being engrafted, v. 24.

This *afortiori* argument, from the lesser to the greater, seemingly injected to accentuate the truth of God’s saving power in v. 23, also introduces a glorious prospect that will now be developed and reach a climax in vs. 26-27. Thus: “If you Gentiles were broken off from a wild olive tree and unnaturally grafted into a cultivated olive tree, then *how much more* is it likely that those severed natural branches [that is the nation as a whole] will be grafted back into their own olive tree?” Simply put, the Jews will not lose their national identity but rather return home from whence they came, that is the root of Abraham. Further, the apodasis suggests something even more glorious than that which the fullness of the Gentiles conveys. It is a future hope expressed with the future tense of ἐνκεντρίζω, enkentrizō, meaning to engraft. For this reason Paul here could not merely be referring to the remnant within Israel which has been engrafted on an ongoing basis; such a conclusion would be anticlimactic in the argument here whereas Paul anticipates something climactically, transcendently wonderful.

Thus Moo concludes concerning this exhortation for the Gentiles:

The picture Paul sketches reveals the danger of the simple and popular notion that the church has ‘replaced’ Israel. For this formula misses the stress Paul places on historical continuity in the people of God. Paul suggests that the church, defined as the entire body of believers in Jesus Christ, is simply the name for the people of God in this era of salvation history as —‘Israel’ was the name of that people in the previous age. To be sure, the dual nature of OT Israel—both spiritual and national—complicates the matter, but in neither sense does the church simply ‘replace’ Israel. As a spiritual entity, Israel is organically connected to the church; and as a national entity, as Paul has made clear (11:1-2), Israel continues to exist as the object of God’s care and attention.

What is particularly pernicious in the ‘replacement’ model is the assumption so easily made that ‘church’ = Gentiles. This assumption was apparently beginning to be made by Paul’s contemporaries. And it has

⁵⁰ Haldane, *Romans*, p. 548.

certainly been embraced by many Christians throughout history, contributing (albeit often inadvertently) to anti-Semitism that has too often stained the name of Christ. . . . The coming of Christ did not for him [Paul] involve ethnic subtraction, as if Jews were now eliminated, but addition, with Gentiles now being added to believing Jews. Paul's boundary for the people of God is a religious one—faith in Jesus Christ—not an ethnic one. We must not become so focused on the theology of Paul's teaching here that we miss its purpose: to criticize those of us who are Gentiles for arrogance toward believing and unbelieving Jews and to remind us that our own spiritual heritage is a Jewish one.⁵¹

C. Israel's hardening in unbelief is impermanent, vs. 25-32.

Since the beginning of Romans 9, the overriding concern of Paul has been the justification of God in His covenant dealings with the nation of Israel. Now a climactic thrust is reached that seals the dogmatic assertions of 11:1, 11. The emphasis upon the nation as a whole continues in large focus, especially since for Paul the Old Testament manifestation has ongoing New Testament significance. The evidence for this is best grasped by reviewing the eleven references to "Israel" in Romans 9-11, thus far in 9:6, 27, 31; 10:19, 21; 11:2, 7, here also in v. 25, and yet again in v. 26; in these the nation is always in view. Even the concept of the lesser remnant mirrors the remaining greater unbelieving portion that together comprise the nation of Israel as a whole, which is the exact meaning in verse 26.

1. The hardening of Israel will conclude, v. 25.

It is common for a too hasty attitude to focus on v. 26 because of its prophetic significance without giving sufficient weight to the preceding context. The reason for such intense and often impatient interest is that the major millennial schools of eschatology set their sails according to the place of Israel in their distinctive schemes. So Horatius Bonar writes: "[T]he prophecies concerning Israel are the key to all the rest. True principles of interpretation, in regard to them, will aid us in disentangling and illustrating all prophecy together. False principles as to them will most thoroughly perplex and overcloud the whole Word of God."⁵² Even now it is vital to carefully study v. 25 since it really establishes the course of v. 26.

a. The exhortation of the brethren.

"For I do not want you to be ignorant/uninformed [ἀγνοεῖν, agnoēn], brethren, of this mystery, so that you will not be conceited/wise according to your own perception." Paul continues the thought of v. 25 concerning the greater apodosis, the much more glorious prospect of natural branches being engrafted back into the root of Abraham. But who does he address with a note of reprimand? Surely it is the proud Gentiles, already chastised, lest they think that world history will climax with their exaltation. There is wide agreement at this point; Moo

⁵¹ Moo, *Romans*, pp. 709-10. Here, along with the brief remark of Haldane previously noted, is an honest encounter with the shameful historic ramifications of Paul's teaching at this point that is uncommon amongst commentators.

⁵² Horatius Bonar, *Prophetical Landmarks*, p. 228.

comments that Paul “leaves no doubt about what he wants his readers to learn from this mystery: to stop thinking so highly of themselves in comparison with Jews (v. 25a). We who are Gentiles should likewise take these verses as a reminder that we are only part of the great salvation-historical plan of God and that that plan has its climax in the salvation of Israel.”⁵³ They are not to act with an “elder brother” attitude (Luke 15:25-32). Trench, in expounding the Parable of the Prodigal Son, explains: “[W]e Gentiles must not forget that at the end of the present dispensation all will be reversed, and that we shall be in danger of playing the part of the elder brother, and shall do so if we grudge at the largeness of the grace bestowed upon the Jew, who is now feeding upon the husks, far away from his Father’s house.”⁵⁴

b. The revelation of the mystery.

What is this “the mystery,” τὸ μυστήριον, to mustērion, which the Gentile believers need to comprehend? It is a revelation of God, previously undisclosed during the Old Testament dispensation, that has now been made known; it especially focuses on the inclusion of the Gentiles into the root of Abraham, as 16:25-26 confirms, without the ultimate exclusion of national Israel (cf. Eph. 3:3-10, which intimates revelation from Christ; Col. 1:25-27). Hence, this mystery is not the supplanting of Israel by the Gentiles, but rather the incorporation of the Gentiles followed by Israel’s salvation, v. 26a. Thus the mystery includes the sequence of Jewish hardening, Gentile fullness, Jewish salvation.

c. The fullness of the Gentiles.

What then is this “fullness [τὸ πλήρωμα, the plērōma] of the Gentiles”? Of vital importance here is v. 12 where we saw that “the riches of gospel mercy [are] being poured out upon the world a large” (Matt. 24:14; Acts 2:17), and this is parallel with and yet outshone by the subsequent πλήρωμα, plērōma of gospel blessing that will come to the unbelieving nation. While a remnant of national Israel is presently being saved during the blessing of the Gentiles, yet there is an anticipated “much more fulfillment” that will unite and bless the nation as a whole. Luke 21:24 describes this same sequence in world history when, “Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until [ἀχρι, achri, temporal preposition indicating sequence] the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” Thus at the end of Gentile blessing through the gospel, there will follow even greater fullness of gospel blessing upon the nation of Israel. This does not mean that no more Gentiles will be saved following this transition any more than there were no Jews saved before it.⁵⁵

Hence πλήρωμα, plērōma means, “the [large numbered, but not elect totality] fullness of blessing” of the Gentiles when they “come in” to the kingdom of God’s

⁵³ Moo, *Romans*, p. 713. Also Barrett, Cranfield, Haldane, Hendriksen, Hodge, Morris, Murray, Shedd.

⁵⁴ R. C. Trench, *Notes on the Parables of Our Lord*, p. 152. Cranfield makes a similar comment: “The order of salvation thus described marks significantly an inversion of the order in which the good news is preached according to 1:16 (‘both for the Jew first and for the Greek’). *Romans*, II, p. 572.

⁵⁵ Refer to Murray, *Romans*, II, pp. 91-96 for the best consideration of this whole matter.

redeemed people. This fullness is reflected in the Parable of the Great Supper where the master, having been spurned by the initial invitees (Jews), instructs his slaves to give repeated invitations to the disreputable Gentiles: “Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them [the Gentiles] to come in, so that my house may be filled” (Luke 14: 23).

d. The partial hardening of Israel.

Thus “a large segment/part of Israel has become hardened/calloused [πώρωσις, pōrōsis].” Hence Israel here is imperfectly comprised of both “the remnant” and “the hardened part,” though this present disjunction will eventually become a perfect union when “all” Israel is saved, v. 26. Such a radical change will take place in chronological order, “until,” ἄχρι, achri, temporal preposition,⁵⁶ and hence following that time when “the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.” In other words, “I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries among which you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. When they come there, they will remove all its detestable things and all its abominations from it. And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep my ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God” (Ezek. 31:17-19; cf. 36:22-28). Then, as Spurgeon preached, “the nation of Israel . . . shall be effectually and permanently converted, the hearts of the fathers shall be turned with the hearts of the children unto the Lord their God, and they shall be the people of God, world without end.”⁵⁷

2. The salvation of Israel will come from Zion, vs. 26-29.

While Paul has already revealed that national Israel has a future day of glory which he designates as “their fulfillment,” v. 12, “their acceptance,” v. 15, their being “regrafted” into the olive tree, vs. 23-24, their hard-heartedness being ended, v. 25, now he is even more forthright that such salvation is covenantally inevitable and climactic in world history. While it is inferred that the engrafting of the Gentiles is through the saving work of Christ, the regrafting of Israel is now explicitly declared to be through “the Delivering One” (cf. I Thess. 1:10).

a. The Deliverer will save national Israel, v. 26-27.

The controversy that surrounds this verse is closely related to systems of eschatology that have espoused three main perspectives. 1. “Israel” here refers to the redeemed of the New Testament era who comprise the church, whether

⁵⁶ Consider the use by Paul in 1:13; I Cor. 11:26; 15:25; Gal. 3:19; 4:2; Phil. 1:6 where a future change of circumstances is envisaged. Moo adds, “But decisive for this interpretation is the context, for Paul has throughout vs. 11-24 implied that Israel would one day experience a spiritual rejuvenation that would extend far beyond the present bounds of the remnant (“their fullness” contrasted with “their defeat” in v. 12; their “acceptance” contrasted with “their rejection” in v. 15; the “holiness” of even the broken-off branches in v. 16; the hope that these branches might be grafted in again in v. 24).” *Romans*, pp. 717-8.

⁵⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, “The Restoration and Conversion of the Jews,” *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Vol. 10, p. 538, Sermon 582.

converted Jew or Gentile. Thus the Christian church has become the new Israel that has replaced the former Old Testament nation. This view of Calvin has diminished support because of obvious exegetical weakness. 2. "Israel" here refers to the totality of the saved remnant of national Israel 11:5, that, while being comprised of Jewish Christians, yet is merged with the church which is the new Israel. Both of the above views can admit to a larger number of Jews being converted at the end of this age, though without there being any national significance with regard to the future. Such an increase, again, merges with the church. This view is especially supported by Dutch and Reformed scholars. 3. "Israel" here refers to a future national conversion of Israel, the larger unbelieving segment in particular, that results in Israel serving under Christ in the promised land with restored glory. This view, with variations, is most widely held today.

(1) The national salvation of all Israel, v. 26a.

The meaning of $\pi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ Ἰσραήλ, *pas Israēl*, is the key here. The context of v. 25 where "Israel" must refer to the nation as a whole is decisive, as is the consistent use in the other 9 instances in Romans 9-11 that never refer to Gentiles. The "all" incorporates the implied "remnant" and the "unbelieving remainder" of v. 25. Thus Murray comments, "that it is exegetically impossible to give to 'Israel' in this verse any other denotation than that which belongs to the term throughout this chapter."⁵⁸ The remnant has not been explicitly mentioned since vs. 5, 7. Again in vs. 24-25, the regrafting is portrayed as climactic in the future, and not periodic throughout the church age.⁵⁹ If only the remnant was in mind here with regard to this age, the present tense would be more appropriate. Rather, "Israel will be saved [future tense]" parallels "will be engrafted [future tense]" in v. 24. Thus, the meaning of "and so," $\kappa\alpha\iota$ οὕτως, *kai houtōs* Added support for the future national conversion/resurrection of Israel is found in Simeon's prophecy that, "this Child [Jesus Christ in his arms] is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel" (Luke 2:34.s, is not the operative concern here. It can mean "and then" in a temporal sense, as Bruce and Barrett uphold,⁶⁰ or it can mean "and thus" in accord with the Scripture about to be quoted, or most

⁵⁸ Murray, *Romans*, I, p. 96. So Barrett, Boice, Cranfield, Haldane, Hodge, Lloyd-Jones, Moo, Morris, Moule, Stott. Roman Catholic scholar Brendan Byrne comments that equating "all Israel" with "the totality of believers, Jewish and Christian . . . is generally rejected today in favor of a reference to the whole of ethnic Israel," *Romans* (Sacra Pagina), p. 354. However, such agreement does not necessarily imply the belief that national Israel will inherit the promised land of Palestine.

⁵⁹ The suggestion that Israel here is the accumulation of the remnant over the centuries, according to Bavinck, Hoekema, Hendriksen, Palmer Robertson, is, according to Schreiner, "stunningly anticlimactic," *Romans*, p. 617. Reymond betrays this weakness in stating: "This view still allows *enough* [emphasis added!] Jewish conversions to Christianity throughout this age to meet the demand of the 'riches' (CCCCCC, *ploutos*, 11:12) and 'life from the dead' (ζωὴ ἐκ νεκρῶν, *zōē ek nekrōn*, 11:15) which Paul envisions 'all Israel's' salvation will bring to the world." *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, p. 1029.

⁶⁰ Bruce describes "the well attested use of Gk. *houtōs* ('so', 'thus') in a temporal sense." *Romans* (Tyndale), p. 222. Barrett, *Romans*, p. 223.

likely it means “in the same manner,” that is concerning how the thrust of vs. 7-25 works out, which is very much time/sequence oriented.”⁶¹ But more specifically, what is the nature of this future national conversion of Israel? Most likely it comprises the nation in general without absolute totality, as is reflected in the approximate numbering of Israel (Num. 2, 26). Further, it is paralleled by numerous Old Testament prophetic references that present a harmonious picture of the resurrected nation, v. 15, that has returned to its land and become the object of unequalled blessing and universal acknowledgment, and are not adequately fulfilled in Israel's post-exilic blessings (Deut. 30:1-10; Isa. 43:1-7; Jer. 23:3; 30:1-11; Ezek. 11:14-21; 20:39-44; 36:22-37:28; 39:25-29; Hos. 1:10-11; 2:14-23; 3:4-5; 14:1-7; Amos 9:13-15; Zech. 10:6-12).⁶² So Jonathan Edwards describes this restoration:

Without doubt, they [the Jews] will return to their own land; because when their unbelief ceases, their dispersion, the dreadful and signal punishment of their unbelief will cease too. As they have continued hitherto, with one consent, to dishonor Christ by rejecting the gospel, so shall they meet together to honor him, by openly professing of it with one mouth, and practice it with one heart and one soul, together lamenting their obstinacy, as it is said they shall (Zech. 12:11-12), and together praising God for his grace in enlightening them. And as they have hitherto continued a distinct nation, that they might continue a visible monument of his displeasure, for their rejecting and crucifying their Messiah, so after their conversion will they still be a distinct nation, that they may be a visible monument of God's wonderful grace and power in their calling and conversion. . . . But yet, we are not to imagine that the old walls of separation will be set up again. . . . For they shall look upon all the world to be their brethren, as much as the Christians in Boston and the Christians in other parts of New England look on each other as brethren.⁶³

(2) The national Deliverer of Jacob, v. 26b.

The salvation of all Israel is confirmed and explained in the Word of God, specifically Isaiah 27:9; 59:20-21a; Jer. 31:33-34, which Paul freely adapts to complement the revelation of the “mystery,” v. 25. Thus, “Out of Zion will the Delivering One come.” The future tense suggests the return of Jesus Christ, after the manner of, “Jesus, who rescues [delivers] us from the wrath to come” (I Thess. 1:10; cf. 2:4, 8), having come from the heavenly Zion and his throne of intercession (Heb. 12:22-24); this complements the other future aspects of vs. 24, 26. However, Paul's flexible manner of using the Old Testament is evident when, as distinct from the LXX declaring “the deliverer

⁶¹ Moo provides the most comprehensive study of v. 26a and comments “that *houtōs*, while not having a temporal *meaning*, has a temporal *reference*: for the manner in which all Israel is saved involves a process that unfolds in definite stages.” *Romans*, p. 720. This is the identical situation in vs. 4-5 where οὐτως, houtōs is used in a temporal context with regard to the past concerning Elijah and the “present time.”

⁶² It is surprising that Moo, Morris, Murray, but not Haldane, make no reference to this broad canvas and obvious association, even though the following quotations of Isaiah and Jeremiah draw from this pervasive Old Testament theme and reflect Paul's ongoing Jewish connection with it.

⁶³ Jonathan Edwards, *Works* (Yale), V, p. 135. Iain Murray indicates that many English Puritans were of this same opinion concerning the national conversion and restoration of Israel. *The Puritan Hope*, pp. 175-8.

shall come for Zion's sake" in basic agreement with the Hebrew, he uniquely writes that Christ shall come "out of Zion," ἐκ Σιὼν, ek Siōn, and probably with the thought in mind of Psalm 14:7, "Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When the LORD restores His captive people, Jacob will rejoice, Israel will be glad." This is further indicated since this Delivering One "will remove [future tense] ungodliness from Jacob" (Isa. 27:9; cf. vs. 6, 12-13 which, according to Paul's reference here, must transcend the return from Babylon). This scene is repeatedly eschatological, and for this reason we reject Lloyd-Jones' interpretation.⁶⁴ It is well reflected in William Cowper's poem, "Israel's Redemption."⁶⁵

On the mountain's top appearing,
 Lo, the sacred Herald stands!
 Welcome news to Zion bearing,
 Zion long in hostile lands;
 Mourning captive,
 God Himself will loose thy bands!
 Has thy night been long and mournful?
 All thy friends unfaithful proved?
 Have thy foes been proud and scornful?
 By thy sighs and tears unmoved?
 Cease thy mourning;
 Zion still is well beloved.
 Lo, thy Sun is risen in glory!
 God himself appears thy friend;
 All thy foes shall flee before thee;
 Here their boasts and triumphs end;
 Great deliverance
 Zion's King vouchsafes to send!
 Enemies no more shall trouble;
 All thy warfare now is past;
 For thy shame thou shalt have double;
 Days of peace are come at last:
 All thy conflicts
 End in everlasting rest.

(3) The national covenant of cleansing, v. 27.

The continuing quotation of Isaiah 59:21a, now incorporating the thought of covenant and cleansing from Isaiah 27:9; Jeremiah 31:31, 33-34, indicates that the basis of the aforementioned salvation of Israel will be the atoning

⁶⁴ "The Zion out of which He will come is indeed heaven itself; His influence will come from there. I am not saying that this is the Second Coming, I am simply saying that the Apostle is saying here that in this spiritual manner the Redeemer will exert this tremendous influence upon the nation of the Jews and will turn iniquity from them and will bring them to faith and salvation and bring them into membership of the Christian church." *Romans* 11, p. 191. Also note that in vs. 23-4 the Jews are regrafted into their former stock, the olive tree or root of Abraham, not the wild olive branches.

⁶⁵ James A. Begg, *Extracts on Prophecy*, pp. 343-5.

“Seed” of Abraham. The “newness” of this covenant (Heb. 8:8-13; 12:18-24) is in relation to the old covenant made at Mt. Sinai, while it is but the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant, v. 28. Cranfield rightly concludes that such unilateral deliverance, “dashes Israel’s self-centered hopes of establishing a claim upon God, of putting Him under an obligation by its merits, making it clear that the nation’s final salvation will be a matter of the forgiveness of its sins by the sheer mercy of its God.”⁶⁶

3. The salvation of Israel will be comprehensive, vs. 28-32.

The whole problem for the Gentile has been one of misplaced focus, that is self-centeredness; the overriding purpose of Paul has been to correct this narrow vision so that it encompasses the broader perspective of Jew and Gentile in God’s plan of redemption. Notice the contrast between “they” (Israelites) and “your” (Gentiles), v. 28, between “you” (Gentiles) and “their/these/they” (Israelites), vs. 30-31. By way of concluding summation, Paul now continues to address the Gentile in much the same way that God needed to address the narrow focus of Peter (Acts 10:44-11:18).

a. According to irrevocable covenant, vs. 28-29.

Here biblical covenantalism, with regard to God’s saving purposes, is brought to the forefront, and this in turn causes us to grasp that God’s gospel is rooted in His sovereign will and commitment rather than human cooperation. Hence we are constrained to view God’s dealings from His point of view rather than that of either the Gentile or Jew, and here this calls for continued emphasis on the Gentile having his vision expanded even as this thrust was introduced at v. 17. The necessity may be due to the glorious deliverance of vs. 26-27 that could easily arouse Gentile discomfort, again after the manner of the “elder brother” (Luke 15:25-32).

(1) The covenant incorporates God’s choice of Israel, v. 28.

“On the one hand, according to the gospel, they [the Israelites] are enemies for your [the Gentiles] sake, but on the other hand, according to the election, they [the Israelites] are beloved for the sake of the fathers [the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob].” The first part of this proposition would not surprise the Gentile; he would gladly accepted that according to divine purpose, v. 1, the Jew has been spurned by God on account of hostility to Christ.

However an overriding principle must be kept in mind being God’s covenant transaction with Abraham that preceded the revelation of the mystery through the church, namely the original election of Israel that was irrevocable, according to “foreknowledge,” vs. 1-2 (cf. Ps. 33:11-12; Isa. 44:1-2; Amos 3:2).⁶⁷ Deuteronomy 7:7-8 declares that God’s election of

⁶⁶ Cranfield, *Romans*, II, p. 579.

⁶⁷ Here “the election” is descriptive of “they” and thus the nation rather than a reference to the “remnant according to God’s gracious choice,” v. 5. So Cranfield, Haldane, Hodge, Moo, Morris, Murray, contra Lenski.

Israel was not on account of national merit, but rather “the LORD loved you [Israel] and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers. So here Paul brings to mind this same foundational truth, namely the fixity of the Abrahamic covenant that guarantees the salvation of national Israel. The point is well expressed by the hymn writer Thomas Olivers who wrote, “The God of Abraham praise.”

He by Himself hath sworn—
I on His oath depend—

Of course Paul is not writing here of the merit of the patriarchs which the Jews mistakenly lauded, but the faithfulness of God to them, His unilateral promise that rested solely in His holy character, His “loyal love” that is based upon elective mercy and divine integrity which results in Israel being “beloved” according to pure grace. Hence what was promised to Abraham shall certainly be accomplished. The loss of Israel would be the defeat of God; the saving of Israel is to the praise of His glorious grace (3:3; 11:1, 11).

- (2) The covenant incorporates God's immutable calling, v. 29.

“For irrevocable are the gifts and calling of God.” The emphatic position of ἀμεταμέλητος, ametamelētos, meaning something done without regret and hence not to be taken back, draws attention to Paul's passionate conviction that the details of the Abrahamic covenant have not been rescinded. Specifically, the grace gifts (τὰ χαρίσματα, ta charismata) cataloged in 9:4-5 along with the effectual calling of God intrinsic to these have not been abrogated. And witness to this is the whole history of God's dealings with Israel, not only throughout the Old Testament (Isa. 49:14-16), but also on into the New Testament era that will climax with “all Israel being saved.” In other words, fundamental to God's dealing with Israel is His immutable promise to Abraham that finds fulfillment through David and Christ that includes the engrafting of the Gentiles (Eph. 2:12-13).⁶⁸ Here we see that God's moral character, his holy integrity, is at the heart of His saving work.

- b. According to universal mercy, vs. 30-32.

It is a common quirk of human nature that we more readily focus on grace bestowed upon ourselves and at the same time sin manifest in others (Matt. 7:3-5). Likewise the Gentiles, particularly in their ascendancy, have tended to look with admiring exclusivity at themselves and disparagement toward the Jews. Hence Paul is persistent in communicating God's inclusive perspective which,

⁶⁸ Walter C. Kaiser has maintained that this is the fundamental motif of the Old Testament. He writes: “In the main, this view [promise theology] agrees with the distinction between Israel and the church. But instead of continuing to say, as classical dispensationalism did, that there are two separate peoples (Israel and the church) with two separate programs (the earthly kingdom and the heavenly kingdom of our Lord), this view stresses that there is one people (“the people of God”) with a number of discernable aspects within that one people (such as Israel and the church), and there is only one program of God (the “kingdom of God”) with numerous aspects under that single program.” “An Eptangelical Response,” eds. Blaising and Block, *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, p. 367. Also refer to Kaiser's *Toward an Old Testament Theology*.

though none the less particular, intends that Gentile and Jew should be accepting of each other even as He has been equally gracious in showing “mercy to all.”

The significance of Paul continuing to exhort the Gentiles in particular from v. 13 up to v. 32 ought not to be missed. The point is that a wider perspective is necessary concerning God's design for human history. So often we are blinded by a narrow and exclusive frame of reference, v. 18a, that requires divine enlightenment, vs. 24-29.

(1) God's mercy overcomes Gentile disobedience, v. 30.

In the form of a protasis, the Gentile as “you” is exhorted to recall his former disobedience that found present mercy at the expense of Israel's present disobedience. In other words, the Gentiles' received mercy is to be pondered in terms of past pagan unworthiness or “disobedience to God,” not relative worthiness when compared with Israel, which arrogance is reflected in vs. 18-20.

(2) God's mercy overcomes Israel's disobedience, v. 31.

In the form of an apodasis, the Gentile is exhorted not to be less merciful in attitude than God with regard to “these/they” or the Jews. Mercy received ought to beget a merciful attitude that reaches out toward those in need of mercy (Matt. 18:23-35). Thus Gentile disobedience followed by mercy received is to be paralleled with Jewish disobedience followed by mercy received. The Gentile who has received mercy ought to rejoice at such a prospect.

(3) God's mercy overcomes universal disobedience, v. 32.

So Paul's grand conclusion is that, “God has shut up together [συγκλείω, sunkleiō, cf. Luke 5:6] [the] all [both Gentile and Jew] unto disobedience for the purpose that He might show mercy to [the] all [both Gentile and Jew].” The definite article here identifies classes previously described, namely the totality of saved, engrafted Gentiles, and “all Israel” previously indicated,⁶⁹ and not “all men” in a possible universalist sense.⁷⁰ The “confinement” here, reminiscent of 1:24, 26, 28, describes these Gentiles and Jews as being hopelessly captive, without distinction, 3:9, through willful sinning and divine abandonment, so that boasting is eliminated. Yet such consignment is intended to be eclipsed by sovereign divine mercy that finds ultimate exaltation, especially in vs. 33-36.

Thus God's elect, “a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues” (Rev. 7:9; cf. 5:9) being comprised of Gentiles and Jews, has been hewn from the pit of pagan disobedience, through Abraham (Isa. 51:1-3), according to divine, magnanimous loving kindness. Thus, “where sin increased, grace abounded

⁶⁹ A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures In The New Testament*, IV, p. 400.

⁷⁰ So Origen, Dodd, Cranfield.

all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord," 5:20-21. As Frederick W. Faber has penned:

There's a wideness in God's mercy
Like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in His justice
Which is more than liberty.

For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man's mind,
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.

So this principle is true of human history as this verse also declares. Lloyd-Jones comments:

[T]he fact that you ever become Christians is entirely and solely the result of God's grace and mercy and power. There is our general philosophy of history. Man made perfect, he sins, the world becomes chaotic. Civilizations try to put things right—it is no good, they are only going round in circles, or think that there is no purpose at all. But then you come to the Bible and you see this great purpose going right through, ending in the vision of the Book of Revelation; the final deliverance, the return of Christ, the conquest and destruction of evil and the setting up of this glorious kingdom which is eternal. That is the biblical view or philosophy of history.⁷¹

That is the triumph of divine mercy.

D. Israel's salvation by God is glorious, vs. 33-36.

When the gracious saving work of God is rightly appreciated, there will be an inevitable response of worship, praise, and adoration, personality variations notwithstanding. So here Paul reflects the attitude of David who, in acknowledging that God "brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay," then responds, "He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God" (Ps. 40:2-3). But also notice the further focus of David's hymnic worship. "Behold, I will not restrain my lips, O LORD, You know. I have not hidden your righteousness within my heart; I have spoken of Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth from the great congregation. You, O LORD, will not withhold your compassion from me; your lovingkindness and Your truth will continually preserve me" (Ps. 40:9-11). So Paul cannot "restrain his lips." He must let the "fire of grace in his belly erupt." He would agree with these further lines of Faber:

My God, how wonderful Thou art,
Thy Majesty how bright!
How beautiful Thy mercy-seat,
In depth of burning light!

It is significant that Robert Haldane, whose commentary on Romans was the result of his earnest teaching of some ignorant theological students at Geneva in 1816, gives the

⁷¹ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 11*, p. 243.

following extract of a letter he wrote in 1824 to Mr. Cheneviere, the well-known Socinian, and yet Pastor and Professor of Divinity at Geneva. "There was nothing brought under the consideration of the students of divinity who attended me at Geneva, which appeared to contribute so effectually to overthrow their false system of religion, founded on philosophy and vain deceit, as the sublime view of the majesty of God presented in the four concluding verses of this part of the Epistle [11:33-36]."⁷²

But what is the context here? The weight of evidence must come down on the side of the preceding Rom. 9-11,⁷³ but especially 11:11-32. Paul is overwhelmed with a sense of the triumph of God's mercy that will crown that time when "the Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob," v. 26.

1. The praise of God's transcendent Being, v. 33.

Paul's emotional exclamation, his adoring and worshipful "C", cf. 2:1, 3; 9:20; Gal. 3:1; I Tim. 6:20, has been ignited by the concluding thought of v. 32, that is the unalloyed mercy and grace of God that has been exalted since 1:1-6, 16-17, and 3:21 onwards. It is mirrored against the futility of human law works, of boasting by the Jews, 2:17-29, and more recently that of the Gentiles, 11:13-32.

a. His depth of being, v. 33a.

"O the depth [βόθος, bathos] of [the] richness and [the] wisdom and [the] knowledge of God" suggests not simply God's character in general, but three perfections that have distinct gospel significance and all coalesce in the person and work of Christ (2:4; 9:23; 10:12; I Cor. 1:30; Eph. 2:7; Col. 2:3). Paul is reflecting wonderment more than frustration concerning "this mystery" v. 25, cf. 16:25-26; Eph. 3:2-3, 8-9; Col. 1:26-27; it is astonishing rather than incomprehensible. So Lloyd-Jones comments that because Paul has been expounding God's great plan and purpose of redemption, "he is amazed at it himself and he feels there is only one thing to do, and that is to praise God with the whole of his being."⁷⁴ Like most new believers, the Gentile and Jew had learned of the mercy of God, but Paul expounds on a quality of mercy that provokes awe.

b. His infinitude of being, v. 33b.

"How unsearchable [beyond human discovery] are His judgments [righteous decisions] and unfathomable [beyond human comprehension] are His ways [providential dealings]." The emphasis is not so much upon the unknowableness of God as the fact that what has been divinely made known would never have been understood apart from divine revelation. The whole course of Romans 9-11 has been the unveiling of God's hitherto unknown purposes regarding Gentile and Jew. Having declared that which he received by revelation (Eph. 3:2-3), Paul

⁷² Haldane, *Romans*, p. 560.

⁷³ So Cranfield, Moo, Morris, Murray. For the broader context of Rom. 1-11, Bruce, Stott.

⁷⁴ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 11*, p. 254. He also points out the fallacy of Willam Barclay at this juncture who suggests that Paul, in his struggle and difficulty in understanding what he cannot grasp, simply becomes resigned to the basic truth that God is love, pp. 253-5.

glories in the gospel plan that is God's by design and execution, as well as the impossibility of it having human origination.

2. The praise of God's infinite purposes, v. 34-35.

The sequence of three questions, drawn from the Old Testament, is intended to reinforce the source of the gospel of free grace as being exclusively divine. More recently the Gentile has been exhorted not to boast, vs. 17-20, and here he is being similarly prompted to come to an inevitable conclusion; it is that salvation is wholly of the Lord and exclusive of human distinctions.

a. What human has plumbed His mind? v. 34a.

“For who has known the mind [νοῦς, nous] of the Lord?” The quotation of Isaiah 40:13a reminds us of God's humiliating interrogation of Job, Job 38:1-41:34. The expected negative response is intended to lead to the conclusion that God is known by revelation, not discovery (I Cor. 1:19-21); even the child of God does not assist in the establishment of the divine plan by means of sanctified aptitude. As John Greenleaf Whittier has written:

Who fathoms the eternal thought?
Who talks of scheme and plan?
The Lord is God! He needeth not
The poor device of man.

Paul is not recommending mindless faith, as the broad preceding context of Romans plainly indicates. However, he does reign in the use of the intellect that either goes beyond or extrapolates from the revealed Word in a manner resulting in conclusions that God never intended.⁷⁵ This is especially so with regard to the doctrine of God's sovereignty that calls for submission rather than understanding.

b. What human has plumbed His ways? v. 34b.

“Who became His [fellow] counselor [σύμβουλος, sumboulos]?” The quotation of Isaiah 40:13b is also intended to abase the Christian, and especially the Gentile, who is convinced that his eschatology should be adopted by God. As Nathaniel West has written, “Israel, the created people of God, abides Israel, and the history of Israel is not a mere frame in which to hang pictures of the New Testament church.”⁷⁶ Even amongst Christians there is often retained an impudence that attempts to bring the Bible into conformity with a precast doctrinal system, and in so doing there is the implicit conformity of God's ways to our own so that we end up being His counselor. Job descended to this level of thinking, that is until he was humbled by God and confessed, “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. Who is this that hides counsel without

⁷⁵ By way of illustration, consider the clear biblical truth that faith is a sovereign gift of God (Matt. 16:16-17; Luke 22:32; Acts 16:14; Eph. 2:8-9) and not the ability of autonomous man. Logically speaking then, men ought to be exhorted to seek the gift of faith rather than believe. However the consistent invitation of the Bible is simply for man to believe.

⁷⁶ Nathaniel West, *The Thousand Years in Both Testaments*, p. 7.

knowledge? Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know" (Job 42:1-3).

c. What human has plumbed His grace? v. 35.

"Or who has first given to Him so that it might be repaid [as indebtedness]?" This quotation of Job 41:11 is but another means by which Paul excludes human initiative, whether in the realm of mental activity in v. 34 or human exertion here that obligates God. By implication the essential nature of grace, v. 6, 4:4-5; 6:23, is distinguished once again, and in the context of believers needing to be reminded of it as an abiding principle in relating one toward another, whether Gentile or Jew.

3. The praise of God's infinite glory, v. 36.

Paul's theocentricity reaches its apex here as a series of contrasting prepositions is used to describe God as the only independent Being! Everything and everyone else is derived and dependant. The reason that God has exclusive sovereignty that excludes the initiative of Gentile and Jew is that "all things," τὰ πάντα, ta panta, proceeding from Him, through Him, and to Him, are necessarily under his unqualified dominion. Thus the triune Jehovah has absolute sovereignty and the result is unparalleled grace and mercy according to His disposal.

Of course this declaration of praise is not a mere cerebral expression, but also a fervent and heart-throbbing exclamation that is inevitable insofar as the grasp of profound doctrine is concerned. John Stott well writes that:

It is of great importance to note from Romans 1-11 that theology (our belief about God) and doxology (our worship of God) should never be separated. On the one hand, there can be no doxology without theology. It is not possible to worship an unknown God. . . . On the other hand, there should be no theology without doxology. There is something fundamentally flawed about a purely academic interest in God. God is not an appropriate object for cool, critical, detached, scientific observation and evaluation. No, the true knowledge of God will always lead us to worship, as it did Paul. Our place is on our faces before him in adoration. As I believe Bishop Handley Moule said at the end of the last century, we must 'beware equally of an undevotional theology and of an untheological devotion'.⁷⁷

a. His triune dominion, v. 36a.

Paul, the converted Jew, testifies to the essence of monotheism. The trinitarian formula is at best inferential. What are the "all things"? Morris comments: "It may refer to the universe, the whole of creation, or Paul may be thinking of all things concerning salvation. Either way, the totality belongs to God."⁷⁸

- (1) All things are *from Him*, ἐξ αὐτοῦ, ex autou, that is they originate from Him by creation. God is the only underived Being, while everything else is derived from Him.

⁷⁷ John Stott, *Romans*, pp. 311-2.

⁷⁸ Morris, *Romans*, p. 429.

- (2) All things are *by Him*, δι' αὐτοῦ, di autou, that is they are maintained by Him according to sovereign providence. He upholds the order of things, whether directly or indirectly.
- (3) All things are *to Him*, εἰς αὐτόν, eis auton, that is they give acknowledgment to Him through refunded glory. God is the goal of all things.

b. His glorious dominion, v. 36b.

“To Him be the glory [ἡ δόξα, hē doxa], eternally through the ages. Amen [Let the truth stand].” This doxology is a prayer of holy and passionate desire, especially as v. 32 anticipates that time of consummated mercy. “The word of God has not failed,” 9:6a, as has been amply demonstrated. He has been fully vindicated, and shall be at the climax of the ages. So Jonathan Edwards summarizes this grand conclusion.

In the preceding context, the apostle observes the marvelous disposals of divine wisdom, for causing all things to be *to* him, in their final issue and result, as they are *from* him at first, and governed *by* him. His discourse shows how God contrived this and brought it to pass, by setting up the kingdom of Christ in the world; leaving the Jews, and calling the Gentiles; including what he would hereafter do in bringing in the Jews, with the fullness of the Gentiles; with the circumstances of these wonderful works, so as greatly to show his justice and his goodness, to magnify his grace, and manifest the sovereignty and freeness of it, and the absolute dependence of all on him. And then, in the last four verses, he breaks out into a most pathetic exclamation, expressing his great admiration of the *depth* of divine wisdom, in the steps he takes for attaining his end, and causing all things to be *to* him: and finally, he expresses a joyful consent to God's excellent design in all to *glorify himself*, in saying, ‘to him be glory forever;’ as much as to say, as all things are so wonderfully *ordered for his glory*, so let him *have the glory* of all, for evermore.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Jonathan Edwards *Works* (Banner), I, p. 107.