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**PAUL'S GOSPEL IN AN
INTERCULTURAL CONTEXT**
Jew and Gentile
in the Letter to the Romans



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3. *Romans III as a Key to the Structure and Thought of the Letter*

- 62 Cf W Lütgert, op cit (see note 42), 78-9.
 63 W D Davies, 'Paul and the People of Israel', *New Testament Studies* 24 (1978), 4-39, see 13f, 36.
 64 Cf H W Bartsch, 'Die antisemitischen Gegner des Paulus im Römerbrief, *Antijudaismus im Neuen Testament*, (München 1967) 27-43.
 65 Cf Marxsen op cit (see note 13), 98, and W Schmithals *Der Römerbrief als historisches Problem* (Gütersloh 1975), 83f.
 66 See note 15.
 67 See note 3.
 68 On this see Chapter 2.
 69 Op cit (see note 6), 313

Chapter 4

The Freedom and Faithfulness of God in Relation to Israel

1. *Introduction*

Since no-one today would wish to maintain that Paul writes theology in a vacuum, it is recognised that the proper exegesis of a letter can only be carried out in the light of some probable context which the exegete envisages on the basis of the text before him. (1) A basic problem in the interpretation of the letter to the Romans is the lack of explicit reference to the concrete issues to which Paul responds in the letter. Nowhere is this more obvious than in chs 9-10 (ch 11 does have a specific address to Gentiles in vv 13f). However, the peculiarity of Romans ought to be regarded more as a difference in degree than in kind. In all of Paul's letters we face the same hermeneutical circle. In order to interpret a letter we need to know the background or situation out of which it arises and to which it is addressed; this background however can only be defined through the letter. The exegete must move in a circle of inference and deduction from the letter to the situation and back. In this respect Romans is no different from Paul's other letters; (2) but to the degree that it is less explicit it is correspondingly more difficult to be precise about its interpretation.

Since those sections of the letter, ie chs 1 and 12-16, from which we might expect to derive most background information, do not of themselves provide sufficient clarification of the letter's purpose to enable us to interpret its statements in any meaningful context, (3) we are compelled to look to the body of the letter; then on the basis of our perception of what is the thrust of its main argument, we must proceed as it were in reverse order back to the situation to which such a letter is likely to have been addressed. Ideally this requires to be done for each chapter or main section of chs 1-11. (4) As this is impossible within the compass of a short study, we will devote our attention to ch 9 and its function within chs 9-11. There is now widespread agreement that chs 9-11 should be seen as an integral part of Paul's argument and given at least equal weight with the rest of the letter. (5) The view taken here is that when chs 9-11 are seen as integral, they then in fact become the climax of the argument extending throughout 1-11 (6) If this presupposition is granted then by a careful study of this section it should be possible to decipher the central theological issue in Paul's argument in Romans. From that we can then deduce what is the most crucial issue to which the letter as a whole was directed.

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A further methodological presupposition is that the reconstruction of the situation to which the letter is addressed must be based primarily on Romans - the other Paulines, deuterio-Paulines etc may also be taken into account, but if we take the particularity of each letter seriously then Romans itself must be the main witness. (7)

2. *Paul's Argument concerning Israel in Romans 9:1-29*

The chapter begins with the strongest possible assertion of Paul's grief and concern for his Jewish kinsmen. Possibly his own mission to the Gentiles had raised doubts as to whether he any longer had any real concern or hope for the salvation of Israel. (8) To obviate such suggestions, Paul designates them not as Jews, but calls them by the honoured title Israelites; (9) as such they are seen as heirs of the promised inheritance - the sonship, the glory and the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship and the promises, and to them also belong the patriarchs (v 4f). That Paul intends here to stress the election privileges of Israel becomes evident both in the assertion of his own solidarity with Israel - 'my brethren, my kinsmen by race' (v 3) and also by his climactic conclusion that the Christ of the Gospel is the promised Messiah of Israel (v 5). (10) Paul's dilemma is highlighted by the sharp contrast between the privileges of the Jews and his own acknowledged grief at their disobedience to the Gospel - implied throughout ch 9 but not explicitly stated until 9:30f.

The expression of Paul's grief is not to be interpreted as a tacit admission that God's declared purpose - his word of promise (cf vv 6 & 9) in the election of Israel has come to nought (v 6a). This half verse, as many commentators have noted, is the sign under which the whole of 9:6-29 stands. (11) Thus whatever Paul says, however critical he may be of Israel, his primary aim is to demolish any assertion that God has cast off Israel (cf 11:1, 11).

In v 6b Paul proceeds to explain his understanding of election. God's word of promise (v 9) is to Israel and He remains faithful to Israel. But the term 'Israel' is not simply an ethnic or national title, it is the title of the chosen people of God. To demonstrate this, Paul proceeds to take examples from the scriptures to show that God has always exercised His sovereign freedom in making selections *within* the covenant people. Paul's thesis is that 'not all are children of Abraham because they are his descendants' (v 7). Children of natural descent (ta tekna tes sarkos) are not necessarily identical with children of promise (ta tekna tes epangelias). Abraham's seed (sperma) are not co-extensive with his children (tekna). Children of God are those who are both descendants of Abraham and children of

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promise. This is Paul's exegesis of Gen 21:12 - 'It is thy descendants through Isaac that shall be called thy seed.' (12) - a text chosen among other reasons because it referred back to Israel's beginnings.

Paul has already discussed Abraham's faith in ch 4; Isaac typifies the children of promise in that the scripture says that he was born to aged parents because God promised Abraham a son (Gen 18:10,14). To this supplemental text Paul again adds another, Gen 25:23. Since it could be argued that the reason why Isaac was chosen as the bearer of the promise (and not Ishmael) was because the former was the son of Abraham's wife and the latter of his handmaid, Paul cites Gen 25:23 - 'The elder shall serve the younger', in order to prove that divine election is not determined by human ancestry or achievement. Since scripture says that before Rebecca's twin boys were even born, the younger was chosen, this proves that God's electing purpose (hé kat' eklogén prothesis tou theou) v 11, is determined only by the freedom of the divine choice. This is the only principle of selection. Therefore no one can make any claims upon God on grounds of ancestry or other qualification. (13)

We note in passing Paul's method of argument; he has expounded the story of Rebecca's twins in his own vocabulary and then crowned his argument with a citation from the Torah (Gen 25:23) and another from the Prophets (Mal 1:2-3, 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated') v 13. (14) The former citation contains in the same verse the words - 'Two nations are in your womb'. Thus Paul is clearly not thinking of Jacob and Esau as two individuals (15) but as nations - of Israel and of Edom and their role in salvation history.

That a watershed in the argument has been reached is indicated by Paul's use of the recurring phrase, 'Ti oun eroumen'. This indicates, we believe, the commencement of a new subsection of the argument and also that Paul is here taking up a specific issue of relevance in the situation at Rome. In ch 3 in a series of questions concerning the topics he intends to deal with later in the letter (16), Paul has asked virtually the same question as here - 'Is there injustice on God's part?' and here as there it is instantly repudiated by the formulaic phrase, 'mé genoito', (v 14). In demonstrating the independence of the divine election, Paul has left himself open to the charge that it is entirely arbitrary and in fact basically unjust. It is to repudiate this charge that Paul quotes Ex 33:19 - 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion'.

Cranfield suggests that Paul no less than Barth, thought of these words as parallel to and an explanatory paraphrase of Ex 3:14 - 'I am who I

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am'. They are thus seen as affording a specially significant revelation of the innermost nature of God. (17) We believe that Paul's meditation on Ex 33:19 provided the basis for his understanding of the freedom and faithfulness of God to Israel in Romans 9. A T Hanson sees in the citation of this text evidence that Paul was not indifferent to the historical setting of his scripture citations. God's revelation of his character as mercy in the theophany to Moses is all the more significant because it occurred at an important point in the story of Moses' part in the wilderness sojourn. (18) Leenhardt makes a similar comment. Instead of punishing the Israelites with the severity which their infidelity in the fabrication of the idol demanded, - 'He gave them a new revelation of His grace and at the same time displayed its basic principle: "My grace is utterly free..." Thus the rebellion of Israel did not have the effect of revoking the election'. (19)

It is essential to keep in mind the reason why Paul cites Ex 33:19. These words are intended not as proof that the divine election is arbitrary but as proof to the contrary. If as suggested they offer a true parallel to Ex 3:14, then Paul sees election as evidence of the innermost character of God as revealed through Moses and, in his own time, in Jesus Christ. The impossibility of divine injustice is the main theme of vv 14-18. The words 'ara ou' in v 16 indicate that Paul now gives his exegesis of the Exodus citation. (20) 'So it depends not upon man's will or exertion, but upon God's mercy.' As a supplementary citation in support of this assertion Paul turns to the account of Pharaoh in Ex 9:16.

The variations from the LXX text suggest that Paul wishes to focus on the sovereignty of the divine purpose in relation to Pharaoh's role in history. (21) Even in his rebellion as the enemy of God's people, Pharaoh is shown in scripture to have served two functions. He is raised up so that the divine power may be shown at work and the divine name proclaimed in all the earth. The latter function, especially the reference to the divine name revealed to Moses in Ex 3:14, reminds us that Pharaoh, no less than Israel, was used to reveal God's power and proclaim his character of mercy. Paul's exegetical comment on Ex 9:16 - 'So then he has mercy upon whomever he wills, and he hardens the heart of whomever he wills' (v 18), indicates why he refers to the case of Pharaoh. If the latter as well as Israel may be used in God's electing purpose then the divine action is not predetermined by anything in the human situation. But though Paul in v 18 insists on the absolute freedom of God, this verse is supplementary to the key citation in v 15. Thus God's positive or negative use of nations and their leaders is still governed by His free mercy. There is nothing that does not come under this control.

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Verse 19 marks a subdivision in which Paul turns to another scriptural passage. The emphasis is on the authority of the creator over his creatures; the diatribe style with the references to man serves to stress the transcendence of the creator and to develop this, Paul take up the image of the potter. In this image we find echoes of several passages, (22) eg 'Shall the thing formed say to him who formed it, thou hast not made me wisely?' (Isa 29:16f) and Jer 18:1f where the potter remoulds a spoiled vessel. In the latter the word of the Lord is, 'O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter has done?' (v 6). God's ways with Israel are not fixed but flexible, being conditional upon her obedience to the divine purpose. The image of the potter stresses the constructive creativity of God (and not the destructiveness). Whereas the story of Pharaoh illustrated the divine power to use even unwilling subjects, the image of the potter points to the interaction of the Lord with Israel for the eventual achievement of His design.

It is only with v 21 that Paul begins to reveal the relevance of his scriptural arguments. In vv 21-23 he combines aspects of his two illustrations to explain God's dealings with Israel in the eschatological present. (23) In v 22f Paul takes up again separate phrases of the citations concerning Pharaoh and the potter, giving his commentary upon them in view of contemporary events. (24) Just as the hardening of Pharaoh at the time of the Exodus served God's purpose in the liberation of Israel, so now it is possible for the non-believing Jews, (though they may be both targets of God's wrath and instruments of it, like Pharaoh), still to have a teleological function in the purpose of God. (25) The obvious parallels between vv 17 and 22 indicate that the twofold divine purpose in relation to Pharaoh - to reveal God's power and to make known His name - is now also considered in respect of Israel. But a third element is here introduced 'to make known the riches of his glory upon the vessels of mercy' (v 23). This represents the climax of the construction, (26) but the point of v 22, that the divine purpose may include the demonstration of both wrath and power, must not be overlooked, even though all is encompassed within the goal of mercy.

The strange structure of vv 22-24 - a conditional clause without any independent clause, indicates more the nature of the problem than Paul's lack of clarity in thought. Paul is tentatively putting forward an interpretation of the divine purpose for Israel who is at present disobedient to the Gospel. (27)

The clause commences with 'What if God?' but the 'if' here should be taken, as Barrett suggests, 'What if it were the case, as in fact it actually is?' (28) Now Paul makes explicit the goal of his argument 'what if God chooses

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to bear with unbelieving Israel in order to reveal His wrath and power and to make known the riches of His glory in the vessels of mercy? These vessels Paul forthwith identifies, in a brief parenthesis in v 24, as the Christian community composed of both Jews and Gentiles. The words 'not from the Jews only' show how alien it would be to Paul's way of thinking to suggest a simple transfer of Israel's promises to Gentiles. Although he came close to speaking of a 'true Israel' in v 6f, Paul does not think of the Church as a new Israel. (29) Nor does his view allow the Church to be described as 'eschatological Israel' or any other such title that contains within it the germ of a threatened disinheritance of the Jews. (30) Paul regards Israel as the historic people of God to whom the promises were given.

Up to this point in the discussion Paul has spoken only of selection *within* Israel. Implicit in his argument is the assumption that all the children of promise were also all descendants of Abraham. It is only in vv 23-24 that Gentiles (almost in an aside) come on to the scene. Two scriptural citations from Hosea are offered as proof that the 'not-people', the 'not-beloved' are destined to become the people of God, sons of the living God. In vv 27-29 two further citations from Isaiah are added to show that God will also save a remnant of Israel. (31) Small though this remnant may be, were it not for divine grace it would not exist at all. Only divine grace has prevented Israel from the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah. Paul consciously sets out these citations as proof also that it is God's will that the Church should be composed of both Jews and Gentiles; (32) Schoeps is wrong to interpret this to mean that Paul implies the replacement of Israel by another people. (33)

It is also unlikely that Paul intends to replace the concept of God's faithfulness to the covenant with that of faithfulness to the creation. (34) Paul universalises God's redemptive action, but this does not mean the transfer of His faithfulness from Israel as if particularism and universalism were absolutely antithetical in his theology. (35)

The argument in Romans 9 suggests the opening up of the covenant promises to include Gentiles also. If the covenant concept is regarded as somehow inadequate to include God's new revelation in Christ, (36) it may be preferable to think in terms of God's faithfulness to His own revealed name or character. Judgement as well as mercy has its place within the concept of faithfulness to the divine name, and includes the emphasis upon the preservation and display of the divine glory (37) in which Israel and her future is inextricably involved.

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3. *Summary of the Argument of Ch 9:1-29*

The section ends as it began, in stressing God's continuing grace towards Israel. Using the scriptures Paul has pointed to a pattern in God's dealings. Selection has always taken place within Israel, but even wrath and hardening have their function within the overarching theme of God's electing purpose. In His selection only one factor is determinative - that of the divine mercy acting in freedom. Thus no one, not even Israel, can make claims upon the God of Israel; conversely no one, and especially not Christians, can presume that God is determined, even by Israel's disobedience - 'He remains free as regards the disobedient just as He is free towards the obedient'. (38)

We saw that in vv 22f, Paul began to relate his scripturally based argument concerning divine freedom in unconditional election to the contemporary situation. He denoted his solidarity with Israel in the opening verses of the chapter and throughout we get the impression that Paul is speaking to the church of Rome about a third party (cf the reference to 'us' in 9:24). The purpose of Paul's argument would appear to be to persuade the Romans to interpret the facts of the contemporary situation, ie Gentiles responding to the Gospel but Jews by and large disobedient to it, in the same way as he understands it. God has, in fact, retained a believing remnant in Israel, and scripture shows that He can also use the disobedient for His glory. This indicates that Paul's aim is to show that God's promises are still valid for Israel, that she still serves His purpose even in disobedience, and that Israel (and the Church) owe their existence entirely to the grace of God. The unstated presupposition of this chapter is that a situation exists, whether in Paul's mission work or, as is more likely, within the Roman Christian community, where it is both relevant and necessary for Paul to argue for God's continuing grace to Israel.

We shall now look briefly at the continuation of Paul's argument in chs 10-11, to see whether the content of these chapters upholds this hypothesis.

4. *Paul's Argument concerning Israel in Chs 9:30-11:36*

In a concluding summary in 9:30f, Paul gives the reason for his anguish over Israel. The Gentiles have responded to the Gospel, but Israel with a zeal similar to Paul's Pharisaic zeal and equally lacking in understanding, stumbles over Christ. She fails to see that He is the goal of the law (10:4). (39) Here a number of lines of argument concerning the law at last converge. The references to unconditional election in ch 9, to 'works' in 9:32, and 'their own righteousness' in 10:3, have traditionally been interpreted in

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association with the doctrine of faith and works in chs 3-4. In this the legalistic tendency of Judaism's meticulous observance of the law has been emphasised. Recently, Sanders has charged some scholars with reading back into the New Testament a post-Reformation understanding of faith and works. (40) What Paul is actually opposing is the Jewish view that accepting and living by the law is a sign and condition of a favoured status. Paul's 'not by works of law' shows that he held a different view of 'Heilsgeschichte' from that of Judaism. It was never, he says, God's intention that one should accept the law in order to become one of the elect. Abraham is proof of this since he was chosen without accepting the law. Paul attacks the traditional understanding of covenant and election, according to which accepting the law signified acceptance of the covenant. (41) That Sanders is basically correct in this view is borne out by the references to the remnant in 11:2f; (we will not look further at ch 10 at this point since the main argument concerning God's faithfulness to Israel is continued in ch 11).

In answer to the question as to whether God has cast away His own elect people (11:1), Paul gives himself as first proof to the contrary. He is an Israelite. Moreover, Christians ought to be aware (42) that Elijah was wrong to feel that he alone was loyal - God's grace had maintained a righteous remnant of seven thousand.

Paul then applies the remnant theme to the current situation 'So too at the present time, there is a remnant chosen by grace' (v 5). The proper context of Paul's discussion of faith and works is seen in his comment in v 6, but if it (the chosen remnant) is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace would no longer be grace'. As the remainder of ch 11 will demonstrate, Paul's concern is to show that grace and the making of claims are mutually exclusive. Israel's failure results not from seeking to do enough good works to earn righteousness, but in failing to understand her own election.

To keep the course of his argument explicit, Paul pauses to give another summary to the effect that the elect obtained the goal of salvation but the rest were hardened. In v 11, he introduces another objection or devious conclusion concerning Israel - perhaps Israel was destined to fail irretrievably from God's salvation. This meets with the customary rebuttal - 'by no means'; their hardening was instrumental in the salvation of the Gentiles. But this is not of itself the final goal. (43) The Gentiles and their faith is not the only goal of Paul's own ministry (v 13). As an apostle to the Gentiles his mission has, as an indirect outcome, the salvation of some of the Jews. In a twice repeated emphasis (vv 12 and 15) Paul suggests that if the

unbelief of the Jews had the beneficial result of bringing faith to the Gentiles, their full inclusion can mean nothing less than life from the dead.

One is conscious at this point that Paul wishes to stress the likelihood of Israel's eventual salvation, as if he were aware that this was in doubt in some quarters. But for Paul, as the reality of the first fruits points to the sanctification of the total harvest, and the holiness of the roots determines the sanctity of all the branches, so Israel's salvation is something wholly to be expected and not in the least to be doubted. (44) It is not without significance that Paul now pointedly turns again to the Gentile Christians in Rome; he warns them that, as wild olive shoots grafted into the tree of God's people, they have no right to boast over the unbelieving Jews who have been excluded through lack of faith. Doubtless too, the branches analogy is designed to remind Gentile Christians that branches of themselves do not constitute a living tree.

The Gentiles are specifically commanded not to be proud but to stand in awe - 'It is not you that support the root but the root that supports you'. (vv 18-21) There could be no clearer indication that Paul is upholding the special place of Jewish Christianity and hence possibly also the links with Jerusalem. (45) That Gentiles have equal access with Jews and that there is equality within the Church is Paul's central message but this does not usurp the place of Israel to whom belongs the promise of election. Presumption of superiority on the part of Gentile Christians will lead to the same result as in the case of unbelieving Jews - they too will be broken off, (vv 21-23). Likewise the disobedient who do not persist in their error will be grafted back again because God has the power to do so (vv 23-24).

As a final blow to Gentile Christian conceit, Paul in v 25f reminds them that the hardening of Israel is both partial and temporary. God will save Israel because 'the gifts and the call of God' (as gifts of grace) are irrevocable (v 29). The Jews are still beloved on account of the election of the patriarchs even though some may have proved to be the enemies of the Gospel.

Paul takes it for granted that eventually Israel will be saved - but Dahl is probably correct in his claim that the emphasis here is on *how* Israel is to be saved. (46) What was hinted in ch 10 and elaborated in 11:11-14 is now described as the unveiling of a mystery. Paul is doubtless referring to the expected pattern of events in salvation history. The Gospel goes firstly to the Jews, the Jews believe and then the Gentiles will share in their blessings. But things have not turned out as the first Christians had expected and Paul is here describing the reversal of the sequence of events in which he had played such an important part. (47)

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'To the Jew first' for Paul does not mean a mission to Jews only until such times as Israel is won over to the Gospel. 'To the Jew first' for Paul indicates much more than this temporal priority. Paul in his evangelism possibly did go first to the synagogues, but what is much more important, Paul expects Gentiles to recognise the inalienable position of Jewish Christianity as the root on to which they, as branches, are grafted. 'To the Jew first' for Paul means a recognition of the abiding election of Israel. Presumably where the election of Israel is not recognised or in some way misunderstood, then the Gentile Christians would be failing in their function to make Israel 'jealous', and Paul as the apostle to Gentiles, appointed by the Messiah of Israel (cf 1:3f), would have a responsibility to counteract such a mistaken opinion.

The conclusion of ch 11 consists of a very precise drawing of parallels between Jews and Gentiles. (48) Just as the Gentiles were once disobedient to God but have now received mercy through the failure of the Jews to respond to the Gospel, so too the Jews will be won from their disobedience by the faith of the Gentiles. A true correspondence between the two has been established - God has consigned all men to disobedience, so that He could have mercy upon all (v 32). In sin and in God's grace to sinners, Jew and Gentile are truly equal.

In chs 10-11 we have found confirmation of the situation envisaged from our interpretation of ch 9. Paul's concern for Israel and his confidence in the validity of her election and eventual salvation have been further elaborated. Those to whom he addresses his apology for Israel are clearly designated as Gentile Christians. They show a marked tendency to boast over Israel's downfall, regarding themselves as having replaced Israel in God's favour. (49) But the faithfulness of God to Israel is established in that the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable (11:29). The mystery revealed to Paul, which he uses to admonish Gentile Christian pride, shows that the hardening of Israel is temporary and that the salvation of Jew and Gentile is inextricably interconnected. The references to the law and works are found to be best explained as part of a discussion concerning the meaning of election. Throughout the entire section we found that Paul sought to stress the positive continuity, through God's grace, of the people of God in history. (50) By this he apparently intends to oppose any separation of the Gentile Christian Church from its Jewish Christian roots and Jerusalem. We find no sign in ch 11 of a confrontation or even a dialogue between Paul and Jews or Judaism. (51) The dialogue takes place between Paul and the Roman Gentile Christians concerning Israel's role in salvation history and the attitude of the Gentiles to Israel. (52) Paul's warning to Gentile

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Christians not to boast over Israel clarifies one issue left open in our summary of ch 9. Was it Paul's situation, ie his mission work, or the situation of the Roman Christians that evoked the apology for Israel? Ch 11 is evidence that it was primarily the situation of the Roman Christians. (53)

5. *The Theme of Rom 9-11 in Relation to the Purpose of the Letter*

It now remains for us to ask how the situation which we have envisaged from the study of chs 9-11 can help us to be more precise about the purpose (or purposes) of the letter. A major problem in the history of the interpretation of Romans lies in its dual character - it is apparently addressed to Gentiles, but discusses Jewish themes in a Jewish type of argument. (54) Scholars from Luther to Barth have noted the emphasis which it lays on the proper understanding of the Old Testament. Recently Black has claimed that its main theme is 'Gospel and Law'. (55) Black and many of the older commentators seek to explain the 'Jewishness' of the letter by reference to Judaisers or a Jewish Christian majority. Schmithals explains this aspect of the letter by positing that its audience is primarily Gentile Christian God-fearers attached to or recently separated from the synagogue. (56) This is why chs 1-11 have the character of a debate with the Jewish synagogue. In this view he has been followed closely by J C Becker who sees the primary audience as those 'Gentiles' who recently abandoned the synagogue as 'God-fearers or proselytes'. They with their Jewish Christian brethren must understand that the Gospel both confirms and abolishes Israel's privilege. It is significant that Becker includes the statement that 'they are also warned against backsliding to the synagogue'. (57) Käsemann regards the combination of Rome, Jerusalem and Spain as vital to understanding the purpose of Romans. Paul presents himself and his central message to the as yet unknown Roman congregation. If he could win over the Roman Church and especially its Jewish Christian minority, or at least dispel their existing suspicions he would get rearguard protection in relation to Jerusalem too.

The latter factor explains why Paul stresses the course of salvation-history and the salvation of all Israel, why he is so mild and accommodating to Jewish Christian observance of days, and why he bases his gospel so firmly on scripture, from which too he derives his world mission. (58) Schmithals rightly questions how Paul, in a letter directed to Gentile Christians, can hope to win a Jewish-Christian minority. This, he says, remains Käsemann's secret! (59)

A weakness in several of these interpretations is that a Judaising Jewish-Christian minority or back-sliding Gentile Christian God-fearers

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have to be introduced (without any concrete evidence) to explain the Jewishness of the letter. It appears that Paul still tends to be seen as the opponent of all things Jewish. (60) But when a number of the factors noted above are related to the situation which we envisaged for chs 9-11, then a much more consistent picture can be drawn.

The dual character of the letter is explained by the fact that it is addressed to a predominantly Gentile Christian community about the role of Israel in salvation history and in relation to the Gospel. There was probably debate among the Romans about the significance of 'Jewishness' for the church; (61) this suggests that there was also a group of Jewish-Christians or Jewish-influenced God-fearers who may have needed Paul's protection against the arrogance of the strong (chs 14-15). (62) The boasting of the latter suggests they were numerically and/or theologically in the ascendancy. The 'weak' may have had some doubts as to the viability of life outside the sphere of the law and the synagogue. (chs 5 and 8). (63) The theme of election necessitated by the misconceptions of the Romans appears throughout the letter. Ch 3:21f establishes the equality of two peoples, Jews and Gentiles, by virtue of God's act in Christ. Paul views this both as the means of access to salvation for Gentiles and the confirmation of God's faithfulness to the Jews. (64) Equality of status for Jew and Gentile contradicts 'covenantal nomism' but Paul's aim in Romans 1-4 is not to refute this, but primarily to establish the full equality of Jew and Gentile in terms of divine grace. (65) Abraham in Rom 4 is thus not simply an illustration of 'the justified sinner' but stands as the first of the people of God, (66) one who is proof that the law is not necessary for salvation. Abraham is a unifying figure who can be seen as a father of Jewish, proselyte and Gentile Christians (cf the olive tree in ch 11). Ch 8:31f may be interpreted as Paul's setting forth of the Christian understanding of election in Christ in advance of his discussion of the election of Israel so as to prevent any misunderstanding of his own position. (67)

Another feature of Romans may enable us to be more specific about the problems Paul faced in Rome. We noted the parallel between 3:5f and 9:14f. It is clear also that 3:1-2 is taken up again and developed in 9:4f. We believe this indicates that Paul in 3:1-8 sets out a list of issues in Rome which he intends to discuss later in the letter. There are three questions: what is the advantage of the Jew? (vv 1-2); does the unbelief of the Jews mean that God is unfaithful or unjust? (v 3f); and why not do evil in order that good may come? (v 8). (68) The first two questions are discussed in chs 9-11 and the third in chs 6-7. Traditionally 3:7-8 are taken as Jewish or Jewish-Christian caricatures of Paul's doctrine of justification by faith. (69) But only

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in Paul's theology of the Gentile mission is there any real basis for the belief that 'through my falsehood God's truthfulness abounds to his glory'. (v 7). We conclude, therefore, that the problems among the Roman Christians focused on a debate about the place of the Jews in the light of Paul's Gentile mission. It is also possible that the beneficial outcome of Jewish unbelief for the Gentiles may have encouraged the suggestion in 3:8 and 6:1f that sin is the necessary prerequisite for grace to abound. Such thinking is typical of Gentile Christian 'enthusiasts' rather than of Jews or Jewish Christians. (70)

The total picture points to a misconception of the doctrine of grace for daily Christian life and for the future of Israel. (71) The tendency to view the Church as the successor of the old Israel suggests a radical doctrine of the two aeons. Jews and all things Jewish, including the law, are relegated to the old aeon as the sphere of sin and judgement in contrast to the new aeon where grace abounds. (72) Hence Paul's emphasis of judgement according to works in chs 1-2, and his demonstration in chs 9-11 that grace and judgement are not two mutually exclusive spheres.

Paul had to become involved in the discussion at Rome because his gospel and mission were at stake. So too was the unity of the church and the link with Jerusalem. Gentile Christians needed to understand God's grace to Israel in order to understand his grace to them. Paul's law-free gospel does not lead to a life without obligation (73) but places him under obligation to Greeks, barbarians and all men, including unbelieving Jews.

This understanding of the situation in the Roman Christian community helps to explain both Paul's use of early Christian traditional formulae (cf 1:3f, 3:22f, 4:25 etc), and his continuous dialogue with scripture in the letter. Both of these emphasise continuity, the former with Jewish Christianity and the latter with Judaism. In the scriptures and the traditions, Paul has a common basis of belief which he shared with the Romans; (74) but he uses these not to give them proper apostolic foundation nor merely to commend himself to an unknown community but to prevent them from cutting themselves off from their roots. (75) The scriptures witness to the reality and pattern of God's election in history. As such they are not simply the record of past events but a witness to the freedom and faithfulness of God in his ways with men. (76) As such they are essential for the Church's self-understanding and unity.

We have attempted on the basis of chs 9-11 to reconstruct the situation which Paul may have addressed in Romans. As Käsemann says of his own reconstruction, 'Naturally, this is a reconstruction. But history is the field of reconstruction, and whether these are right or not depends on how far they

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overcome the problem posed. This hypothesis does so to a very high degree.⁽⁷⁷⁾ This contribution is offered in gratitude for the teaching and publications of A T Hanson, whose scholarly insights have enabled me to see more clearly the unity of the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

NOTES

- 1 Cf G Eichholz, *Die Theologie des Paulus im Umriß* (Neukirchen-Vluyn 1977) III.
- 2 Cf H Gamble, *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans*, *Studies and Documents*, Vol 42, ed I A Sparks (Grand Rapids 1977) 132.
- 3 Paul Minear's study, *The Obedience of Faith: The Purposes of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans* (SCM 1971) has been criticised by C E B Cranfield for attempting to interpret the entire epistle on the basis of chs 14-16, *Romans: International Critical Commentary*, Vol II (Edinburgh 1979) 820-22.
- 4 See my doctoral dissertation 'The Purpose of Paul in the Letter to the Romans: A Survey of Romans 1-11 with Special Reference to Chapters 9-11', presented to the University of Edinburgh 1972.
- 5 Cf Cranfield op cit 446f. See also E Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (ET, SCM 1980) 253-256.
- 6 See Chapter 2 'Why Did Paul Write Romans?' Similarly J C Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Thought and Life*, (Fortress, Philadelphia 1980) 87.
- 7 See H D Betz, *Galatians: Hermeneia Series*, (Fortress 1979) p5.
- 8 Cf W D Davies' comment 'Over-conversion was a common phenomenon. Other Gentiles... like many Jews who heard him and to whom he wrote, took Paul to demand a complete rejection of the ways of Judaism and to invite messianic licence', 'Paul and the People of Israel', *New Testament Studies*, 24, (1979) 22.
- 9 'Ioudaios' occurs only at 9:24 and 10:12 in chs 9-11.
- 10 On this see N A Dahl, *The Crucified Messiah and Other Essays*, (Augsburg, Minneapolis 1974) 37-47 and W D Davies op cit 4f and 15 n3. ('The centre of gravity for Paul was the messianicship of Jesus and its implications'). Contra cf Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, (SCM 1977) 514.
- 11 Cf Cranfield op cit p473.
- 12 This is Cranfield's translation - except where otherwise stated the RSV text is quoted.
- 13 'Paul did not deny the importance of ancestry, but only man's right to use it in making claims upon God', J Munck, *Christ and Israel*, (ET Fortress 1967) 138.
- 14 Although Paul exploits Hellenistic forms and literary genres, he takes seriously the scriptures of his people and seeks to deal with the problem in their terms - employing rabbinical and other methods to do justice both to

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this new emergence, the Christian community, and its matrix, the Jewish people; W D Davies op cit p14. See F J Leenhardt, *The Epistle to the Romans* (ET Lutterworth 1961) 249f, and Munck op cit 42, 48.

16 See Chapter 3, 'Romans 3 as a Key to the Structure and Thought of the Letter'.

17 Op cit 483.

18 Hanson shows that Paul is often wrongly criticised on this score, *Studies in Paul's Technique and Theology*, (SPCK 1974), 157-8.

19 Op cit 253.

20 See also v 18 and 'tout estin' in v 8 and 10:7. E E Ellis regards 9:6-29 as a good example of the 'preem' midrash which when used in the synagogue was developed around the Pentateuchal text for the day with additional supplemental texts to interpret it. There are sufficient similarities to rabbinic discourses to suggest a common milieu. *Prophecy and Hermeneutic*, (Mohr, Tübingen 1978) 155f and 218f.

21 Paul's text has four changes from the LXX, cf Cranfield op cit 485-88.

22 See B Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic* (SCM 1961) 242, also Munck op cit 58f.

23 Cf G Bornkamm, *Das Ende des Gesetzes: Paulusstudien*, Ges. Aufs. I (München 1958) 90-92.

24 Cf C Müller, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit und Gottes Volk. Eine Untersuchung zu Römer 9-11*, (Göttingen 1964) 33n38; N A Dahl op cit 144f.

25 Cf Dahl op cit 144f.

26 Cranfield op cit 498.

27 Cf Bornkamm as in n23 above.

28 *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, *Black's New Testament Commentaries* (London 1957) 189.

29 Cf P Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church* (Cambridge 1969) 126-47 esp 131.

30 Contra E Dinkler, 'The Historical and Eschatological Israel in Rom 9-11: A Contribution to the Problem of Predestination and Individual Responsibility', *Journal of Religion*, 36 (1956) 109-27.

31 Lindars notes that the text of 9:25 has been adapted from the Hebrew. The remnant theme is the link between the texts from Hosea and Isaiah. Paul probably used an existing group of texts - what is new is the application to the Gentiles, op cit 243.

32 Cf Richardson op cit 133.

33 Paul: *The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History*, (ET London 1961) 240. Cf A T Hanson op cit 154, 234.

34 Contra Käsemann op cit 79f. Cf K Kertelge's criticisms in *Rechtfertigung bei Paulus*, (Münster 1967) 308 and M Brauch's appendix in Sanders' book, op cit 539f.

35 Cf Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, (SCM 1959) 154, 234.

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- 36 Sanders criticises W D Davies' view that Paul carried over into his interpretation of the Christian Dispensation, the covenantal conceptions of Judaism, op cit 514.
- 37 Cf J Piper, 'The Demonstration of the Righteousness of God in Romans 3:25, 26', Journal for the Study of the New Testament, 7, (1980) 2-32.
- 38 *A Shorter Commentary on Romans* (SCM 1959) 127.
- 39 Cf Cranfield's most recent suggestion on Christ as the goal of the Law in 10:4, op cit 519.
- 40 Op cit 33-59, 442f.
- 41 Sanders has developed his views and replied to some of his critics in a paper given at the SNTS meeting in Toronto 1980 entitled 'Paul and the Law: Different Questions, Different Answers'. Cf also H Hübner, *Das Gesetz bei Paulus*, (Göttingen 1978) 44f, 93f, 118f.
- 42 On Paul's use of common Christian catechesis see N A Dahl, *Jesus in the Memory of the Early Church* (Augsburg, Minneapolis 1976) 11-29 and H J van der Munde, *Schrift und Tradition bei Paulus*, (Paderborn 1976) 120f.
- 43 Cf Munck, *Christ and Israel*, op cit 123.
- 44 Cf Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, op cit 259.
- 45 Cf Beker op cit 330.
- 46 Op cit 152. Cf also O Betz 'Die heilsgeschichtliche Rolle Israels bei Paulus' Theologische Beiträge, 9 Jahrgang 1, 1978, 1-21; contra cf S Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel*, (Mohr Tübingen 1981) 83f.
- 47 Cf Munck op cit 276f.
- 48 Cf Barrett op cit 224, Richardson op cit 127.
- 49 In Justin Gentile exclusivism almost replaces former Jewish exclusivism Richardson op cit 127.
- 50 Cf W D Davies, *The Gospel and the Land*, (Berkeley 1974) 171.
- 51 Contra Beker, op cit 75-91.
- 52 Paul's intention is not 'israelkritisch' but 'kirchenkritisch', Eichholz op cit 290f.
- 53 This is where we differ from Munck's interpretation, and also from Dahl, 'The Future of Israel', op cit 78f.
- 54 Cf W Sanday and A C Headlam *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC (5th Ed Edinburgh 1902) XXXII; Schmithals op cit 9, 83f; W G Kümmel *Introduction to the New Testament*, (1975), 309.
- 55 *Romans. New Century Bible* (London 1973) 23.
- 56 Op cit 22-24, 83f Schmithals's theory of two letters to Rome has no real textual foundation, cf A G M Wedderburn, 'The Purpose and Occasion of Romans Again', Expository Times, 90, (1978-79) 137-41.
- 57 Op cit 91. Beker refers to Rom 11:20 here, but he does add a question mark!
- 58 Cf Käsemann op cit 405.
- 59 Op cit 50n40.
- 60 Cf M Barth's criticism of Käsemann's view 'Paul and Israel', *New Testament Questions of Today* (SCM 1969) 183f, that 'the apostle's essential

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- adversary is the pious Jew'. Barth also criticises U Wilckens' claim in *Rechtfertigung als Freiheit*, Neukirchen 1974, p7) that 'Paul was an irreconcilable enemy of all "Judaism" in Christianity'. 'St Paul - A Good Jew', Horizons in Biblical Theology, An International Dialogue, I (1979) 7f.
- 61 Cf W Marxsen, *Introduction to the New Testament*, (ET SCM 1968) 95f.
- 62 Cf H W Bartsch, 'Die antijudaistischen Gegner des Paulus im Römerbrief', *Antijudaismus im Neuen Testament?* hrsg W Eckert etc (München 1967) 40.
- 63 Cf E Trocmé, 'L'Épître aux Romains et la Méthode missionnaire de l'Apôtre Paul', *New Testament Studies*, 7, (1960-61) 151f.
- 64 Cf Dahl, *Studies in Paul*, op cit 123.
- 65 Cf Sanders op cit 488-91.
- 66 Cf U Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, Neukirchen-Vluyn (1978) 280-85.
- 67 'What is the nature of the discontinuity and continuity between the Jewish people and those in Christ?' Cf W D Davies 'Paul and the People of Israel' op cit 14.
- 68 Here we follow Käsemann, op cit 84-85.
- 69 Käsemann sees these as actual (not hypothetical) objections, but attributes them to Paul's (Jewish) adversaries, op cit 84.
- 70 Cf Käsemann on ch 12-3, op cit 332f, 359. It is possible that opponents of Paul were troubling the Christians at Rome, cf ch 16:17-20.
- 71 'Charis' is central in Romans, cf 4:16, 5:2, 5:15-6:23, 11:5-6, 12:3, Eichholz op cit 292, D J Doughty, 'The Priority of Charis', *New Testament Studies*, 19, (1973) 163f.
- 72 Cf ch 7:7 'ho nomos hamartia'.
- 73 Cf Eichholz op cit 5.
- 74 Cf H J van der Munde op cit 190-197.
- 75 Paul's warning is all the more serious if Christ is (also) intended in the reference to the root, cf 15:12 (Isa 11:10); the Gentiles hope is the root of Jesse who comes to rule over them. O Betz has shown that the source of Paul's thought in Rom 9-11 is Isa 6, especially v 13, Isa 11:1, 10 Gen 49:10, and Gen 17:7 linked with 2 Sam 7, 12f. R Clements notes that in the case of 'themes' such as that of the remnant the concept itself is in many respects more important for understanding the development of thought than the particular occurrence of the term, 'A Remnant Chosen by Grace', (Romans 11:5, *Pauline Studies: Essays Presented to F F Bruce*, ed D A Hagner, (Paternoster Press 1980) 107f.
- 76 Cf Hanson op cit 154 and B F Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus*, (SCM 1979) 202.
- 77 Op cit 406.