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AN EXEGETICAL
& THEOLOGICAL STUDY
OF ROMANS 9:1–23

The Justification of God

SECOND EDITION

JOHN PIPER

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An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 9:1-23

by

John Piper

Preface

Ten years have passed since I wrote the first Preface to this book. During that time I have devoted myself mainly to preaching to one congregation, Bethlehem Baptist Church. The book was written in the context of rigorous academic discipline as I was teaching Biblical Studies at Bethel College, St. Paul. But now for over ten years the thesis has been lived and preached and loved in the context of day-to-day ministry in downtown Minneapolis.

Nothing I have read in the reviews and nothing I have experienced in the ministry has convinced me that the exegesis or conclusion of this book is false. On the contrary, further reflection and experience have sent the roots of God's sovereignty deeper than ever into my soul and my ministry and the life of our congregation.

Our common theme in worship is the infinite worth of God and his purpose to "make known the riches of his glory for the vessels of mercy" (Rom 9:23). Our confidence in evangelism comes from God's freedom to "have mercy on whomever he wills" (Rom 9:18). Our commitment to world missions is fueled by the passion of God to exert his sovereign power "so that [his] name may be proclaimed in all the earth" (Rom 9:17). And the ground of our conviction that God is reliable in all of life is this: No matter what heart-wrenching perplexities we face, "it is not as though the word of God has failed" (Rom 9:6).

There is a great advantage to writing a new preface after ten years. I am able to give at least a partial answer to the question: What sort of theology and what spirit of ministry would grow out of such an exegesis of Rom 9? Not that this settles the question of truth. But often such practical questions linger as the final obstacle when argumentation has done all it can do.

The answer I have given is found in the ministry of our church and in four books: *Desiring God* (Multnomah Press, 1986), *The Pleasures of God* (Multnomah Press, 1991), *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Baker Book House, 1990) and *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Baker Book House, 1993). These books are the unfolding of the vision of God's sovereignty in Rom 9 for theology, life and ministry. For any who wonders what the fruit of *The Justification of God* tastes like, I would direct them to these

books and invite them to Bethlehem.

In the process of preparing the book for its new edition, Steve Griffith has earned my respect and gratitude for his labor of love. He took the initiative to push the book back into circulation and he took on the difficult task of reformatting a document laden with Greek and Hebrew.

Again my friend Carol Steinbach has devoted her eagle editorial eye to making the text as clean and smooth and intelligible as possible. She has also compiled fresh indexes for this second edition. Philemon Yong and Mark Reasoner helped me comb through the Greek and Hebrew, and corrected dozens of typing mistakes I had missed.

My wife Noel continues to stand by me in all the travail and triumphs of parenting four sons and shepherding the flock of God, and publishing the good news of God's delight in being God. We stand frail, needy and secure on the sovereign freedom of God's grace.

I exult once more in dedicating the book to Daniel Payton Fuller whose great work, *Unity of the Bible* (Zondervan, 1992) is now published. Almost 25 years ago I was swept into the love and labor of serious, painstaking, exhilarating exegesis by this man's classes in seminary. Everything I have preached or written is owing in great measure to the inspiration and exegetical discipline I absorbed from Daniel Fuller.

My prayer, as the book is released again, is that it might serve the great purpose of God expressed in Rom 9:23, "to make known the riches of his glory."

John Piper

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Abbreviations

ATD	Altes Testament Deutsch
ATR	Anglican Theological Review
BDB	Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Brown, Driver, Briggs)
BJRL	Bulletin of the John Rylands Library
CJT	Canadian Journal of Theology
EHAT	Exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament
EQ	Evangelical Quarterly
ET	English translation
ET	Expository Times
EvTh	Evangelische Theologie
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HNTC	Harper's New Testament Commentary
HThK	Herders theologischer Kommentar
HTR	Harvard Theological Review

ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDB	Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible
Interp	Interpretation
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
LXX	Septuagint
MK	Meyers Kommentar
MNTC	Moffatt New Testament Commentary
MT	Masoretic text
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NIC	New International Commentary
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NT	New Testament
NTD	Neues Testament Deutsch
NTS	New Testament Studies
OT	Old Testament
RB	Revue Biblique
RevExp	Review and Expositor
RGG^3	Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 3rd ed.

RSV Revised Standard Version

SBT Studia Biblica et Theologica

SJT Scottish Journal of Theology

SNTS Society for New Testament Studies

StTh Studia Theologica

TDNT Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

THAT Theologisches Handwoerterbuch zum Alten Testament

TheolBeit Theologische Beitraege

ThQ Theologische Quartalschrift

ThW Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament

ThZ Theologische Zeitschrift

TLZ Theologische Literaturzeitung

TOTC Tyndale Old Testament Commentary

WJT Westminster Journal of Theology

WUNT Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

ZNW Zeitschrift fuer die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft

ZST Zeitschrift fuer Systematische Theologie

ZThK Zeitschrift fuer Theologie und Kirche

1.
Introduction

This study was conceived as an attempt to understand how Paul defends the righteousness of God in Rom 9:14-23. It has thus involved a broader effort to grasp what Paul means by the righteousness of God, and has necessarily raised the subordinate question of election and predestination. On this latter issue I have tried to answer with as much exegetical integrity as I can two crucial questions: Does election in Rom 9:1-23 concern nations or individuals? And does it concern historical roles or eternal destinies?

I do not consider my conclusions novel from a historical viewpoint. Nevertheless, with regard to both the righteousness of God and the election of men, the conclusions are not in vogue today, and so exegetical explanation and defense are needed.

It has become evident to me over the years that one of the devices used to take the sting out of Rom 9 is the fostering of a certain stereotype. The stereotype is that if a work focuses on Rom 9 and deals with predestination, then it may be discounted as too limited in its scope and blinded by its dogmatic concerns to the larger redemptive-historical issues. When a work is thus branded, it may be safely set aside. In this way the troublesome chapter is usually spared the penetrating analysis that other less troublesome texts enjoy among scholarly monographs.

But this book bears witness to my conviction that one can, with care, deal with Rom 9:1-23 *without* losing sight of its larger textual and historical context and *without* forcing it to answer dogmatic questions for which it was never intended. In following Paul's argument here I have tried to employ the care and precision which is the mark of critical exegesis on other texts, but which often is replaced by imprecise and unsupported generalizations on this theologically explosive section of Scripture.

One may legitimately question the wisdom of limiting the monograph to Rom 9:1-23 (especially since verse 23 ends in the middle of a sentence), but I have tried to show in Chapter Ten (Section 1) the rationale for this limitation and how

it does conform to the structure of Paul's argument. And would it not mean an end to all careful scholarship if it were not possible to focus on one tree *without* losing sight of the forest?

With regard to secondary literature, I have tried at every crucial point to make the alternative interpretations clear by interacting with competent exegetes and theologians who see things differently than I do. I hope that I have not misrepresented anyone's view, for that would not only be discourteous, but would also weaken my own case. I do not offer a systematic history of the interpretation of Rom 9, but for this commend the works of K.H. Schelkle, V. Weber, E. Weber, W. Beyschlag, and J. Morison listed in the bibliography.

To understand the structure of the book's argument the following observations may be helpful. The starting point of my reflections was the question how (and if) Rom 9:15ff was intended by Paul to demonstrate the righteousness of God. Romans 9:14 asserts that there is no unrighteousness with God, and verse 15 seems to give the basis for this assertion: "For to Moses[God] says: 'I will have mercy on whomever I have mercy and I will have compassion on whomever I have compassion'" (Ex 33:19). In order to answer the question how (and if) Paul was defending God's righteousness, I had to find out what it was in Rom 9:1-13 that seemed to call God's righteousness into question (Chapters Two and Three) and what the supporting quote from Ex 33:19 meant in its Old Testament context (Chapter Four). With those questions answered, my analysis of Rom 9:14-18 could begin (Chapter Five). But to test my emerging hypothesis about Paul's argument it became necessary to ask more precisely what Paul actually meant by God's righteousness. To answer this question I devoted a chapter to the righteousness of God in the Old Testament (Chapter Six) and two chapters to Paul's understanding of divine righteousness in Rom 3:1-8 (Chapter Seven) and Rom 3:25,26 (Chapter Eight). On the basis of these analyses I returned to complete the analysis of Rom 9:14-18 (Chapter Nine). Then (in Chapter Ten) I tried to follow Paul's justification of God through to its climax in Rom 9:23. The final chapter is a concluding summary of the argument and some of its implications.

The reader who desires to know my exegetical and theological conclusions before reading the supporting arguments may consult Chapter Eleven.

2.
My Kinsmen Are Accursed! Romans 9:1-5

1. The place of Romans 9:1-5 in the argument

If the main aim of this book is to understand the defense of God's righteousness in Rom 9:14-23, why devote a whole chapter to Rom 9:1-5? The reason is that Paul's argument in the chapter is so tightly woven that understanding one stage depends on understanding the others. The justification of God in 9:14-23 can be properly understood only in light of the assertions of 9:6b-13 which have seemed to call God's righteousness into question. Then again 9:6b-13 is Paul's effort to show that the word of God has not fallen (9:6a), and this effort can be understood only when we see why and in what sense the word of God has been called into question. This is what Rom 9:1-5 tells us and that is why we must include a chapter on this unit.

Excursus—The place of Romans 9-11 in the epistle

Of course, the whole epistle is woven together so that each part is illuminated somewhat by the others. But every study has its limits. Therefore I will content myself with a brief excursus concerning the recent discussion of the relationship between Rom 1-8 and Rom 9-11, and simply align myself with the view that seems to me to accord best with Paul's intention. C.H. Dodd is often cited, but less often followed, as a representative of those who stress the independence of Rom 9-11 from Rom 1-8 (*Romans*, 161). For example, A.M. Hunter, in explicit dependence on Dodd, writes, "Paul may have written this section earlier as a separate discussion of a vexed question. It forms a continuous whole and may be read without reference to the rest of the letter" (*Introducing the New Testament*, 96).

W.G. Kuemmel has demonstrated the inadequacy of the efforts to account for the presence of Rom 9-11 in the letter on the basis of the personal situation of Paul (e.g. preparing for his defense in Jerusalem) or the concrete problems of the church in Rome (e.g. the presumptuousness of the Jewish Christians). "Why these chapters are found in Romans can only be answered when the theological meaning of the chapters both in connection with the rest of Romans and Pauline theology is explained" (Kuemmel, "Probleme von Roemer 9-11," 26). Thus the

purpose of Rom 9-11 must be explained in relation to the purpose of the whole letter. Kuemmel is right, I think, that no suggested purpose for the letter is more probable than the one implied in 1:10ff and 15:20ff: "Paul writes to this community because in spite of the existence of a Christian community there he feels *obligated* to preach the gospel there too (1:15), *and* because he desires the material help of the Romans for his mission plans in Spain and the spiritual help of the Romans for his perseverance in Jerusalem (15:24)" (Kuemmel, 27). Paul aims to lay before this church the Christian gospel which he preaches so that they can see "the grace given to me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God" (15:15f). Since the gospel that he proclaims in Rom 1-8 is the power of God unto salvation "to the Jews first" (1:16) and since the Christ is "descended from David according to the flesh" (1:3) and "there is great value in circumcision" (3:2) and "the faithlessness of the Jews does not nullify the faithfulness of God" (3:3) and a saving promise was made "to Abraham and his descendants" (4:13), the question of Israel's destiny becomes acute. It grows necessarily out of the exposition of Rom 1-8.

Leenhardt argues that between Rom 1-8 and 9-11 "there is a very close connection; furthermore a real logical necessity compels the apostle to deal with the subject which he now broaches [in Rom 9-11]." A little differently than Leenhardt, but following Goppelt, I see the necessity for Rom 9-11 in this: the hope of the Christian, with which Rom 1-8 came to a climax, is wholly dependent on God's faithfulness to his word, his call (8:28,30). But, as Gutbrod asks, "Can the new community trust God's Word when it seems to have failed the Jews?" (*TDNT*, III, 386). The unbelief of Israel, the chosen people, and their consequent separation from Christ (Rom 9:3) seem to call God's word into question and thus to jeopardize not only the privileged place of Israel, but also the *Christian* hope as well. Therefore, in Paul's view, the theme of Rom 9-11 is not optional; it is essential for the securing of Rom 1-8. This view of Rom 9-11 assumes that Rom 9:6a (God's word has not fallen) is the main point which Rom 9-11 was written to prove, in view of Israel's unbelief and rejection. What is at stake *ultimately* in these chapters is not the fate of Israel; that is penultimate. Ultimately *God's own* trustworthiness is at stake. And if God's word of promise cannot be trusted to stand forever, then all our faith is in vain. Therefore our goal in analyzing Rom 9:1-5 is to see precisely how Paul conceives of the tension between God's word and the fate of Israel. What is it precisely that makes God's word appear to have fallen, but, in fact, does not impugn God's faithfulness at all?

2. Exegesis of Romans 9:1-5

The following division of verse parts aims to highlight the text's structure and to facilitate precision of reference in the exegesis.

1. a. I speak the truth in Christ.
   b. I do not lie,
   c. my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit

2. that I have great grief and unceasing pain in my heart.

3. a. For I myself could wish to be anathema, separated from Christ
   b. on behalf of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh,

4. a. who are Israelites;
   b. whose are the sonship (ἡ υἱοθεσία)
      - and the glory (ἡ δόξα)
      - and the covenants (αἱ διαθῆκαι)
      - and the giving of the law (ἡ νομοθεσία)
      - and the service of worship (ἡ λατρεία)
      - and the promises (αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι);

5. a. whose are the fathers
   b. and from whom is the Messiah according to the flesh,
   c. who is God over all, blessed for ever. Amen.

In Rom 9:1-3 Paul avers his pain over the plight of his people. In 9:4,5 he describes the privileges of "his kinsmen according to the flesh." The glorious privileges of 9:4,5 stand in vivid contrast to the sorrow of 9:3 and account for its intensity. It is precisely this contrast between the privileges of Paul's kinsmen in 9:4,5 and their plight in 9:3 which seems to imply that God's word has fallen. What are these privileges (2.1) and this plight (2.2)?

2.1 The privileges of Paul's kinsmen, Romans 9:4,5

The structure of Rom 9:4,5 is tantalizing. It allures us to see intentional patterns, but in places eludes our desire for complete symmetry. The first characteristic of Paul's kinsmen is that "they are Israelites" (9:4a). This designation is probably intended to resonate with a richness that sums up all the other privileges in 9:4,5. Not only does it stand at the head of the list of privileges, but also grammatically the rest are subordinate to it. Its significance for Paul is unfolded through three relative clauses (ὧν... *ὧν*... ἐξ ὧν) whose antecedent in each case is Ἰσραηλῖται. Within the first relative clause (9:4b) six feminine nouns, each connected simply with mi, describe the privileges belonging to the "Israelites." The formal pattern of these six nouns is visibly (and was audibly) obvious:

ἡ υἱ**οθεσία** καὶ ἡ δόξ**α** καὶαἱ διαθῆκ**αι**

καὶ ἡ νομ**οθεσία** καὶ ἡ λατρεί**α** καὶ αἱ ἐπαγγελί**αι**

The list falls into two groups of three with endings corresponding between the first and fourth, second and fifth, third and sixth. This observation alone may be enough to account for the *hapax legomenon* νομοθεσία (instead of Paul's usual νόμος which would have matched υἱος but not υἱοθεσία) and for the unusual use of the plural αἱ διαθῆκαι to produce the assonance with αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι.

Two other implications of this structure emerge for interpretation. First, the willingness to choose some words on the basis of rhyme or assonance implies that the meaning may lie more in the total, unified impact of the sixfold group than in the separate, distinct meanings of each member. We will have to test this implication as we analyze the individual members below. Second, since such a symmetrical structure tends to resist alteration and facilitate memory, it suggests that the unit is perhaps traditional rather than created *ad hoc* for this occasion. The occurrence of the unusual νομοθεσία and the plural διαθῆκαι could also suggest that Paul is here using a traditional Jewish list of privileges. Otto Michel and Lucien Cerfaux have argued for this view.

But since Paul was one of the most creative and seminal theologians of the early church, we should consider seriously whether Rom 9:4 reflects his own selectivity, artistry and theology. This would not have to mean that Paul composed this list of privileges just for this letter. The letter clearly reflects Paul's give-and-take with Jewish and Greek listeners during his missionary

efforts. It would be likely then that if Rom 9:4 is Paul's own composition, it originated as early as his reflection on the problem of Israel's rejection (Rom 11:14,15). If this were the case, the intervening years of repeatedly handing on this teaching to various groups would justify calling Rom 9:4 both genuinely Pauline as well as "traditional."

In fact the arguments that Paul used a Hellenistic-Jewish tradition here are not persuasive. We have already shown that the poetic structure could have easily originated in Paul's preaching and that therefore the appearance of words not common in Paul need not contradict his authorship since the demands of assonance in the parallel structure can adequately account for the unusual words. Moreover it remains to be proved that the other words, e.g. υἱοθεσία, are used here in a different sense from Paul's usual usage (Michel). On the contrary, especially υἱοθεσία points to a Pauline origin since the word is used only by him in the New Testament (Rom 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5), does not occur in the LXX, and has virtually no history with a religious meaning prior to Paul. But most important of all is the observation of Ulrich Luz, which has been borne out in my own study, that there simply are no parallels in the Jewish literature of a list of the prerogatives of Israel in anything approximating this form or selection. Therefore, it is more probable that Rom 9:4 reflects Paul's own art and theology. This will have a significant bearing on the exegesis.

The second relative clause attached to "Israelites" is "whose are the fathers" (ὧν οἱ πατέρες, 9:5a). Structurally the main question here is why πατέρες is introduced with its own relative pronoun (ὧν) rather than simply being added to the list of prerogatives in 9:4b. The answer is probably that as a seventh member of the list it would have destroyed the symmetry of three rhyming pairs, especially since πατέρες, is masculine while the other members of the list are all feminine. Moreover, it refers to persons while the other members are all concepts. However, it is not as easy to say something positive about why πατέρες receives its own separate clause. There may be no other significance than what was just said, together with Paul's desire not to put the patriarchs and the Messiah together in one clause (9:5ab) and thus imply that they are privileges on the same level. But two possible implications of the structure may be suggested. Michel (*Roemer*, 227 note 2) points out how the trio, Israelites (9:4a) and fathers (9:5a) and Messiah (9:5b), may reveal an intention to move from the many through the few to the one. Another possibility is that after listing the benefits of being Israelites in 9:4b, Paul closes with a kind of structure that brackets Israel's history: the patriarchs inaugurate Israel and the Messiah brings

its history to a climax (see below pp 42-43). Or it may simply be that, in view of the theological significance Paul ascribes to the fathers (11:16,28), he felt the need to include them among Israel's benefits, and here in 9:5a is where they fit best.

One final observation of form is that the third relative clause (9:5b) differs from the first two (ἐξ ὧν instead of ὧν). The reason for this is so closely related to the *meaning* of the verse that we will postpone our discussion until the exegesis below (see pp 26-28).

2.11 "Who are Israelites"

It is of utmost importance to notice that the antecedent of οἵτινες, is Paul's kinsmen *according to the flesh* who are *anathema, separated from Christ* (9:3); and that this group of unbelievers is even *now* called Israelites (present tense: 9:4a). The tense of the verb in 9:4a as well as the relationship between 9:1-5 and 9:6a resists every effort (e.g. of Johannes Munck and Lucien Cerfaux) to relegate the prerogatives of Israel to the past. Furthermore, Paul's bold assertion that the glorious privileges of Israel belong to *unbelieving* Israel (the antecedent of οἵτινες, 9:4a) resists the effort of Erich Dinkier ("Praedestination," 88) to argue from 9:6b ("Not all those from Israel are Israel") that "the promises refer not to the empirical-historical Israel, but to the eschatological Israel" (by which he means the Church, without regard to ethnic origins). Whether the second "Israel" in 9:6b is the Church or the believing portion of empirical-historical Israel, the point there is this: the privileges given to Israel can never be construed to guarantee the salvation of any individual Jew or synagogue of Jews, and therefore the unbelief of Paul's kinsmen cannot immediately be construed to mean that God's word of promise has fallen. But in no way does 9:6b exclude the possibility that God's intention may someday be to save "all Israel" (11:26). And therefore 9:6b does not give us a warrant to construe the privileges of 9:4,5 (against the wording of the text) as the privileges of eschatological Israel (= the Church) to the exclusion of empirical-historical Israel. Why should Dinkier prefer to see a contradiction between Rom 9:1-13 and 11:1-32 than to allow God's intention for Israel's future in 11:1-32 to help him see that Rom 9:6b should not be construed to rule out a future for ethnic Israel?

Excursus—The theological unity of Romans 9 and 11

W.G. Kuemmel ("Probleme von Roemer 9-11," 30f) thinks that "the central problem in the interpretation of Rom 9-11" is whether Paul "destroys or employs conceptions of redemptive history." He cites Dinkier ("Praedestination," 97), Luz (*Geschichtsverstaendnis*, 295, 299) and Guettgemanns ("Heilsgeschichte," 40, 47, 54, 58) as representatives of the exegetes who tend to emphasize the existential dimension of Paul's meaning here to the exclusion of the historical. Over against this group Kuemmel finds an "excellent assumption for the interpretation of Rom 9-11" in the emphasis of Kaesemann ("Rechtfertigung und Heilsgeschichte," 134), Mueller (*Gottes Gerechtigkeit*, 105) and Stuhlmacher ("Zur Interpretation von Roemer 11, 25-32," 560) on the indispensably historical, linear dimension of the doctrine of justification. It seems to me also, especially in view of Rom 9-11, that the latter view is more faithful to Paul's intention. But rather than address the issue of existence vs. history in general, I aim in this excursus to treat an offshoot of it, namely, the theological *unity* of Rom 9 and 11. The question of unity is related to the larger hermeneutical question because Rom 9 seems to support the first view mentioned above, while Rom 11 seems to support the second.

Dinkier ("Praedestination," 90) argues that there is an unresolvable contradiction between Rom 9:6-13 and 11:1-32. His position is akin to Bultmann's ("Geschichte und Eschatologie," 101), though he does not say, as Bultmann does, that Paul's effort to preserve a future for historical Israel springs from his "speculative fantasy" (Bultmann, *Theology*, II, 132). In Dinkler's words: "The analysis of the three chapters shows that there is a decisive contradiction between 9:6-13 and 11:1-32. In chapter 9 the theological problem of the rejection of the elect people is resolved by means of a reinterpretation of the term 'Israel,' namely by introducing an eschatological understanding of the term. This is different from chapter 11 where the historical role of ethnic Israel continues as an enduring entity of redemptive history. *According to chapter 9 the promises belong not to the historical people of Israel but to the eschatological* ἐκλογή. *According to chapter 11 the promises are still the inalienable possession of the historical people of Israel*" (my emphasis). He grants that the contradiction is somewhat meliorated by the fact that Paul does not claim every individual Israelite has a share in the promise and that the end-time generation will be saved "only on the basis of the electing call of God." Nevertheless "there remains a theological contradiction," because it is "precisely *because* of the promise, because of the past election of the people Israel, that the historical people must be saved" (91).

I agree with Dinkier that in Rom 11:1-32 the Israel that will be saved (11:26) is historical Israel and not merely the Church as "the Israel of God" (Gal 6:16). But why this must contradict Rom 9:6ff I cannot see. His argument proceeds at two levels. *First* he argues that the second Israel in Rom 9:6b ("Not all those from Israel are *Israel*") refers not to a remnant of Jewish Christians but to eschatological Israel, the Church consisting of Jew and Gentile. His support (88 note 19) is fourfold: "1) The following verses 7 and 8 say explicitly that the promise of God, not natural descent, is decisive for sonship. 2) Already in 2:28 the term 'Jew' was interpreted dialectically, and in chapter 4 Abraham was shown to be the father of *all* believers. 3) Galatians 6:16 refers Ἰσραὴλ τοῦ θεοῦ to the church in general. 4) The dialectical use of Ἰουδαῖος and Ἰσραὴλ, is only the logical consequence of Rom 1:18-3:2 and corresponds to the thesis expressed in Gal 3:28." This is an entirely feasible view of the second "Israel" in 9:6b even though 9:7-13 does seem to restrict its focus to election within historical Israel.

So let us suppose for now that Dinkier is right about 9:6b. Then Paul would be saying that even though historical Israel for the most part is accursed (see below, Section 2.2), God's Word of promise has not fallen (9:6a) because the people to whom the promises belong are not all the Israelites but only the people whom God elects freely, both Jew and Greek (9:6b). Those who have the faith of Abraham are children of Abraham (Gal 3:7) and thus heirs according to promise (Gal 3:29). But I ask, why does this contradict the divine intention sovereignly to bring the end-time generation of historical Israel to faith and to membership in the "eschatological Israel," the Church (Rom 11:25-27)? Dinkier recognizes that this is not readily obvious and thus moves to another level of argument.

His *second* level of argument (which is really implicit in the first) is not based on an exegesis of Rom 9:1-13 but on the theological insight that "there is no partiality with God" (οὐ γάρ ἐστιν προσωπολημψία παρὰ τῷ θεῷ, Rom 2:11). But if the end-time generation of ethnic Israel is to be saved *"because* of the promise, because of the past election of the people Israel" (91), then it appears that this *past* election of Israel forces God into being partial to the future historical Israel and thus contradicting his free bestowal of righteousness on whomever he wills. This argument is indeed the heart of the problem and must be answered if we are to maintain both the prerogatives of historical Israel as well as coherence in Paul's thought. Does the salvation of the end-time generation of empirical-historical Israel in fulfillment of promises to the fathers (11:25-28) contradict God's freedom to elect whom he wills without being determined by human distinctives outside himself (9:10-13)?

The nature of a free and sovereignly bestowed promise is such that it defines and limits the activity in which God can righteously exercise his freedom; but this limitation does not originate from outside God's knowledge and ultimate intentions, and, therefore, does not jeopardize the freedom of Rom 9:11,12 by which God retains complete sway in election. Promises always limit and define part of our future behavior, but for God, who foresees all future eventualities, the decision to make a promise involves him only in those restrictions which he foresees and thus freely chooses. Therefore the fulfillment of a divine promise cannot properly be described as God's being unable to do otherwise because he is controlled by human circumstances; but rather the fulfillment of a divine promise is simply a climactic exercise of the same freedom in which God chose to make the promise in the first place. When all eventualities are seen ahead of time the inscrutable decision to make a free promise implies that all the acts performed in the fulfillment of that promise are just as free and just as inscrutable as the initial choice.

Therefore, since God's free and unconstrained election of Israel from all the nations of the earth (Deut *7:6*) embraced from the outset his intention to bless Israel for centuries in unique ways among the nations and in the last days to purify and save the whole people, his fulfillment of this intention is just as free from human constraints as the initial election of Abraham. We may infer from Rom 9:6ff that God has employed four thousand years of redemptive history to teach that he is free and not bound to save anyone because of his Jewishness nor to condemn anyone because of his non-Jewishness. Can he not at the end of the age, having demonstrated his freedom beyond the shadow of a doubt, bring his free and sovereign election of Israel to a climax by banishing ungodliness from Jacob and saving the whole people?

But, someone may say, if he saves the whole end-time generation, an Israelite will be able to boast legitimately: I was saved because I am a descendant of Abraham and so had a sufficient merit in God's eyes! There are two responses to this objection: 1) the banishing of *ungodliness* from Israel (Rom 11:26) will mean the elimination of precisely that attitude; 2) if anyone does manifest that attitude he will *not* be saved, since salvation is always on the same basis for Jew and Gentile (Rom 2:6-10; 3:21-26). This loss would not jeopardize the fulfillment of the promise, because "all Israel" need not be taken with mathematical rigidity (cf 1 Kgs 12:1; 2 Chr 12:1; Sanhedrin 10:1).

Some have also thought that the ostensible contradiction between 9:6-13 and

11:1-32 can also be seen in the tension that appears between Rom 1:16; 2:9,10; 3:1,2 on the one hand, and Rom 2:11; 3:9,22; 10:12 on the other. On the one hand, "the gospel is the power of God to everyone who believes, both *to the Jew first* and to the Greek" (1:16); and in the judgment both punishment and glory belong to "both *the Jew first* and to the Greek" (2:9,10). On the other hand, "there is no partiality with God" (2:11) and "there is no difference between Jew and Greek" (10:12; οὐ γάρ ἐστιν διαστολὴ Ἰουδαίου τε καὶ Ἕλληνος, cf 3:22).

Both Rom 3:22 and 10:12 define and limit the sense in which "there is no difference between Jew and Greek." In 3:22 there is no difference in the sense that "all have sinned and lack the glory of God" (3:23). In 10:12 there is no difference in the sense that "the same Lord is over all, rich to all who call upon him" (10:12; cf 3:29f). Therefore, Michel (*Roemer*, 105) on 3:22 and Kuss (*Roemerbrief* III, *767)* on 10:12 go beyond what the text implies when they claim these verses abolish the privileged place of Israel. Sanday and Headlam (*Romans*, 84) are more careful. On 3:22 they say, "The Jew has (in this respect) no real advantage over the Gentile; both alike need a righteousness which is not their own; and to both it is offered on the same terms." Also Heinrich Schlier (*Roemerbrief*, 314) on 10:12 says, "Between Jew and Gentile there is no difference *in reference to salvation through faith and confession"* (my emphasis). Therefore Rom 3:22 and 10:12 cannot be played off against the privilege of Israel. They limit and help define it, but do not exclude it.

Concerning 3:9, Cranfield's (*Romans*, I, 187-191) careful exegesis is wholly commendable. He argues from Paul's passage (1 Cor 16:12; 5:10) that the answer to the question, "Have we (Jews) any advantage over them (sc. the Gentiles)?" is "Not altogether" (οὐ πάντως) rather than "Not at all" (against Gifford, *Romans*, 85; Alford, III, 340; Murray, *Romans*, II, 102). Cranfield explains how this answer suits the context: "Paul has said in 3:2 that the Jew has an advantage which is great and important in every respect. He now indicates that, while the Jews have this altogether great advantage, they are not at an advantage in every respect. (These two statements are not contradictory.) There is at least one respect in which they are at no advantage—the matter of sinfulness, of having no claim on God in virtue of their merit" (190, similarly Schlier, *Roemerbrief*, 98; Kaesemann, *Romans*, 84; Lagrange, *Romains*, *69*). Therefore, neither may Rom 3:9 be used to exclude a prerogative for Israel in Paul's theology.

Now what about the assertion that "there is no partiality with God" (Rom 2:11,

οὐ γάρ ἐστιν προσωπολημψία παρὰ τῷ θεῷ; cf Eph 6:9; Col 3:25; Jam 2:1; Gal 2:6; Jude 16; 1 Pt 1:17; Mt 22:16 par; Acts 10:34)? Does this contradict the phrase "to the Jew *first* and also to the Greek" (Rom 1:16; 2:9,10)? For a good survey of the scholarly discussion see Dieter Zeller, *Juden und Heiden*, 141-45, 149-51. To see the question in its proper light we must realize that, on the one hand, the impartiality of God is an essential feature of *Jewish* as well as Pauline theology (*TDNT*, VI, 779; Deut 10:17; 2 Chr 19:7), and on the other hand it was never seen (by the Jews or Paul) to contradict the election of Israel ("The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his own possession, out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth," Deut 7:6; "You only have I known of all the families of the earth," Amos 3:2). Holding the question in this light helps us see that impartiality must be defined with great precision lest it become a kind of twentieth-century egalitarian slogan that ends up forcing God to bless equal percentages of every class and race with identical blessings.

It is crucial to notice that in the New Testament the impartiality of God is never a description of his election. In Paul it is, with one possible exception, a description of how God performs the final judgment (Rom 2:11; Eph 6:9; Col 3:25; Gal 2:6 is only a partial exception: Paul does not care about the rank of the pillar apostles because πρόσωπον θεὸς ἀνθρώπου οὐ λαμβάνει: God does not make his judgments on the basis of rank either). A judge's impartiality in the Old Testament sense (Deut 10:17; 16:19; 2 Chr 19:7) depends on the existence of an objective standard of judgment from which the judge will not deviate even for a bribe. This is the sense of Rom 2:11 also. Rom 2:6 lays down the standard: "He will render to each according to his works." Both Jew and Greek will be saved or condemned by the same standard (2:9,10). Lest anyone think that this impartiality (2:11) is contradicted by the greater revelation that the Jews had in the law, Paul affirms that "as many as sinned without the law will perish without the law, and as many as sinned with the law will be judged through the law" (2:12).

Therefore, we may say that for Paul, God's impartiality assures only that in the last judgment salvation and condemnation will not be determined by race or class or wealth or intellect but only by the "obedience of faith." This does not rule out that the Judge may deal with Jews first (in climactic fulfillment of his free election of Abraham and his seed) nor does it say anything with regard to the criteria of divine election. In fact the decisive difference between God's impartiality in judgment and his freedom in election can be clearly seen by contrasting Rom 2:6-11 and 9:11-13: *he judges* each man according to a lifetime

of good or evil works (2:6); he elects "before they have done anything good or evil" (9:11). In the one case he impartially applies the standard he has set, in the other case he chooses in inscrutable freedom ἵνα ἡ κατ᾽ ἐκλογὴν πρόθεσις τοῦ θεοῦ μένῃ οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἀλλ᾽ ἐκ τοῦ καλοῦντος, (Rom 9:11,12). Therefore, I conclude that the evidence does not require us to follow Dinkier and others who insist that Paul contradicts himself in maintaining the freedom of God in election and the hope that God will in the end save "all Israel."

In view of Paul's argument in chapter 11 that "all Israel" will someday be saved (precisely because of the "fathers"; compare 11:28 and 9:5a) we should allow the privileges of 9:4,5 to apply, as their wording suggests, to Paul's (now) unbelieving "kinsmen according to the flesh"—not, of course, to every individual Jew, but as 9:6b says, to the elect among them and, as 11:25f suggests, to "that part of the historical people in existence at the end of the age" (Dinkier, "Praedestination," 90—but admittedly we are here reaching forward to Paul's solution of a paradox which in Rom 9:1-5 is only presented and not yet resolved). A similar line of argument has been developed also by Walter Gutbrod, Martin Rese and Ulrich Luz

The first privilege of Paul's kinsmen is that they are "Israelites." The word is redolent with a blessed antiquity and a glorious future (Isa 49:3; 56:8; 66:20; Joel 2:27; 4:16 MT; Ob 20; Ps 25:22; 53:6; 130:7f). It sums up all the other privileges in its richness (see p 21). Its promissory import is evident from Paul's use of it in Rom 11:1f: "I say therefore, has God rejected his people? No indeed! For I myself am an *Israelite*, from the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew." To be an "Israelite" is to be among the people of God, and God does not reject his people. What could be more auspicious than to be called an "Israelite"!

2.12 "To whom belongs the sonship"

Most commentators relate this privilege of sonship to Ex 4:22f, which was also viewed by the rabbis as the "classic Scripture text to ground Israel's sonship": "And you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the Lord, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, Let my son go that he may serve me; if you refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay your firstborn son.'" Under appeal to this and other Old Testament texts Charles Hodge and John Murray argue that the sonship of Rom 9:4b is very different from the sonship of Christians described in Rom 8:15,23;

Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5.

Hodge (*Romans*, 298f): "As Paul is speaking here of the external or national Israel, the *adoption* or *sonship* which pertained to them, as such, must be external also, and is very different from that which he had spoken of in the preceding chapter.... So the sonship of the Israelites was an adumbration of the sonship of believers. That of the former was in itself, and as common to all the Jews, only the peculiar relation which they sustained to God as partakers of the blessings of the theocracy." Murray (*Romans*, II, 5): "'Adoption' is the filial relation to God constituted by God's grace (cf Ex 4:22f; Deut 14:1,2; Isa 63:16; 64:8; Hos 11:1; Mal 1:6; 2:10). This adoption of Israel is to be distinguished from that spoken of as the apex of New Testament privilege (8:15; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5; cf Jn 1:12; 1 Jn 3:1). This is apparent from Gal 4:5, for here the adoption is contrasted with the tutelary discipline of the Mosaic economy. Israel under the Old Testament were indeed children of God but they were as children underage (cf Gal 3:23; 4:1-3)."

The assumption at work in both of these arguments is the same one we saw earlier in Munck, Kuss and Cerfaux (see note 19); namely, that the privileges of Rom 9:4f are "theocratic" and thus oriented to the past rather than the future. That the sonship of 9:4b *must* be external and natural because the Israel of 9:3 is the historical-empirical Israel of Paul's day, is a valid argument only if one *denies* that the ethnic and religious continuity of corporate Israel enables Paul to assign to Israel now what may be experienced corporately only in the future. To be sure, Murray is right that Christian sonship is contrasted with "the tutelary discipline of the Mosaic economy," but has he disproved that it is precisely the underaged children to whom belong the full sonship? I do not think that Hodge or Murray has been able to show that the sonship of Rom 9:4b is any other than the sonship of Gal 4:5 and Rom 8:15,23, or that this sonship is not uniquely the prerogative of corporate Israel, whether they experience it now or only in the future.

To support this position we make the following observations. 1) As noted earlier (p 22f) υἱοθεσία is an unusual word: only Paul uses it in the New Testament (Rom 8:15,23; 9:4; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5), it does not occur in the LXX and it has virtually no history with a religious meaning before Paul. So the only pertinent evidence we have for υἱοθεσία used of sonship in relation to God is the evidence in Paul. Therefore only if the context absolutely demands it should we assign a different meaning to υἱοθεσία in Rom 9:4b than we find in all Paul's other uses.

Lexical considerations are all in favor of construing the sonship of Rom 9:4b with the fullest saving significance of Rom 8:15,23.

2) What Murray seems to overlook is that the olive tree analogy in Rom 11:17 implies that whatever blessings the Church enjoys, it does so because it has been grafted into the cultivated tree to share in its rich root (11:17). It is the Jews who are the "natural branches" (11:21) which, though now broken off (by a temporary hardening, 11:7,25), will be grafted in again (11:24): "all Israel will be saved" (11:26). If the Church enjoys divine sonship, it must remember that it does so by participating in the people of God which is historical Israel "by nature" (i.e. by a special act of sovereign election). It is not surprising, then, for Paul in Rom 9:4b to ascribe to Israel the very privilege of sonship which Christians now enjoy.

3) Already in the Old Testament (Isa 43:6; 45:11; 63:16,17; 64:8-12; Hos 2:1 MT; Mal 3:17) the sonship of Israel had come to imply a glorious future for Israel beyond the old theocratic blessings. The future implications of Israel's sonship were expressed also in the intertestamental literature (e.g. Jubilees 1:24f; Ps Sol 17:26f); and the rabbis discussed frequently the relationship between Israel's sonship and future salvation, with the view frequently expressed that Israel's salvation (sometimes every individual) is secured by its sonship. Therefore there is no reason in Paul's milieu to cause us to construe the sonship of Israel in Rom 9:4b as a merely past or temporary blessing (contra Cerfaux, "Privilege," 360).

I conclude, therefore, with Martin Rese (note 26), Heinrich Schlier and Ulrich Luz that the effort to distinguish the sonship of Rom 9:4b from that of 8:15,23 does not have the preponderance of evidence on its side. It is precisely because the prerogative of υἱοθεσία is so rich with saving implications that the problem of Israel's unbelief is so intense.

2.13 "And the glory"

The usual interpretation is that the "glory" which belongs especially to the Israelites refers here to the theophanies of God in the Old Testament, especially God's manifestation of his presence (the rabbinic "shekinah") in the early wilderness experience (Ex 16:10; 24:16; 29:43; 33:18; 40:34; Lev 9:23). Paul uses the term δόξα some seventy times, and only in one place (2 Cor 3:7-11) does it refer to an Old Testament theophany. This alone should give us pause in

the facile assignment of this meaning to δόξα in Rom 9:4b.

The absolute use of δόξα without any modifier (as in Rom 9:4b) refers regularly in Paul not to a past but to a future, eschatological glory (Rom 2:7,10; 8:18; 9:23; Col 1:27; 3:4; 2 Tim 2:10; 2 Cor 4:17). Especially noteworthy is Rom 2:10 where it says that God will render *"glory*, honor and peace to everyone who does good, *to the Jew first* and also to the Greek." This implies that for Paul the glory of the age to come was in a special sense the prerogative of Israel. The same thing is implicit in Rom 9:23f where Paul says that God "makes known the wealth of his *glory* on the vessels of mercy which he prepared beforehand for *glory*, whom also he called: us, *not only from the Jews* but also from the Gentiles." The phrase "not only Jews but also Gentiles" reveals that Paul expects the reader to infer naturally that *vessels prepared for glory* include Jews. Why? Probably because "to Israelites belong the (eschatological) glory!" (Rom 9:4b). Furthermore in Rom 8:18 δόξα is used absolutely (as in 9:4b) with reference to the future age; but in 8:21 it is called "the glory of the children (τέκνων) of God" which links it in an essential way with eschatological υἱοθεσία of 8:23. It seems to me, therefore, that we have no good grounds from the Pauline context to give δόξα a different historical orientation than we gave υἱοθεσία just before it. They both look to the future with roots in the past.

The Old Testament and Paul's Jewish milieu give good reason to think that Paul would view Israel's glory in this way. Isaiah 43:7 stands out for special consideration as an expression of post-exilic hope: "Bring my *sons* from afar... whom I created for my *glory.*" That the glory of the Lord is the special portion of Israel is expressed again and again (Isa 40:5; 42:8; 46:13; 48:11; 58:8, 60:1,2,7; 62:2,3; 66:11,18; Jer 13:11; Hag 2:7,9; Zech 2:5). "To an extraordinary degree... the δόξα of God is... a theme of religious hope and an established part of eschatological expectation."

Naturally the end-time manifestation of God's glory to and for Israel became an expectation of later Jewish apocalyptic writings (e.g. 4 Ezra 7:91-98; 2 Bar 21:23-26; 51:1-10; cf Ps Sol 17:32-35). In the New Testament, Lk 2:32 probably gives us a glimpse of popular messianic expectation: Simeon, having seen the Messiah, blesses God and says, "My eyes have seen your salvation which you prepared before all the peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for the *glory of your people Israel."* We may conclude, therefore, that in Paul's Jewish milieu there is more than adequate stimulus to direct his thought toward an eschatological δόξα as one of Israel's privileges. And, as we saw, his own

particular usage makes this interpretation of Rom 9:4b most probable. It is precisely this destiny of Israel that makes the problem of Israel's unbelief so intense!

2.14 "And the covenants"

There is no consensus among the commentators concerning which covenants are referred to. Murray (*Romans*, II, 5) suggests the covenants with Abraham, Moses and David. Munck (*Christ and Israel*, 31), Alford (II, 404), Schlatter (*Gerechtigkeit*, 294), and Sanday and Headlam (*Romans*, 230) refer to the covenants "from Abraham to Moses." Schlier (*Roemerbrief*, 287) includes the covenant with Noah. Barrett (*Romans*, 177f) follows a rare rabbinic reference (Strack-Billerbeck, III, 262) to "three covenants within the great covenant of the Exodus—a covenant at Horeb, a second in the plains of Moab, and a third at Mounts Gerizim and Ebal." What we may learn from this assortment of guesses is that Paul's term "covenants" in Rom 9:4b is open-ended. It does not limit itself to any group of covenants. Hence the contradictions among the commentators.

Here we should recall the observations made earlier (p 21) concerning the structure of Rom 9:4b. I suggested there that the unusual plural αἱ διαθῆκαι may well have been used to create the assonance with the structurally corresponding αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι, and that this willingness to let form influence the particular words of the text probably means that the meaning lies more in the total general impact of the list than in unique, particular meanings of each word. This is another warning against trying to specify a limited number of covenants to which Paul is referring here. In fact, the parallel with ἐπαγγελίαι inclined Lietzmann (*Roemer*, 89) to settle for the simple observation that the "covenants" are simply "synonymous with the promises."

In view of the parallel structure and the open-endedness of the term, this is probably very nearly the case. In other words, Paul probably means that Israelites are the people whose destiny has been, and will be, determined by the fact that God has made covenants/promises with them. The one other place where Paul uses the plural διαθῆκαι is in the phrase ξένοι τῶν διαθηκῶν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας (Eph 2:12). The phrase "covenants of promise" confirms the view that covenants and promises are probably indistinguishable in Rom 9:4b.

The upshot of this open-ended view of "covenants" in Rom 9:4b is that it would

be wholly arbitrary to exclude from Paul's meaning the only other covenant mentioned in Romans, namely, Rom 11:26f—"And thus all Israel will be saved just as it is written: The deliverer will come from Zion, he will turn ungodliness from Jacob; and this will be for them a *covenant* with me when I take away their sins." This appears to be a loose, composite paraphrase of Isa 59:20, 21; 27:9, and certainly refers to the "new covenant" which Paul construes as a promise of the salvation of all Israel. If we have properly determined the scope of the διαθῆκαι of Rom 9:4b it is not surprising that it should align itself with the other eschatologically promising prerogatives of Israel: sonship and glory.

2.15 "And the giving of the law"

The term νομοθεσία is taken by Gutbrod (*TDNT*, IV, 1089) and Hodge (*Romans*, 299) to refer to the content and possession of the Old Testament law rather than the stupendous events of its promulgation at Sinai, "because the possession of the law was the grand distinction of the Jews, and one on which they peculiarly relied" (Hodge). Most commentators, however, whether because that would simply be redundant with "covenants" or because the peculiar word νομοθεσία (instead of νόμος) calls for a peculiar meaning, prefer to interpret νομοθεσία as the divine act of giving the law. H.A.W. Meyer (*Romans*, II, 116) also rejects the meaning, νόμος, and asks, "Why should Paul not have written this?"

Here again I must appeal to my structural analysis on p 21 and answer: Paul probably did not use νόμος because νομοθεσία provided the rhyming balance with the word υἱοθεσία just as the unusual plural αἱ διαθῆκαι provided the rhyming counterpart to αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι. Moreover in Hellenistic-Jewish literature νομοθεσία is often virtually a synonym with νόμος (2 Macc 6:23; 4 Macc 5:35; 17:16; Aristeas, 15, 176 in reference to Old Testament; Philo, *Abr* 5; *Cher* 87; Josephus, *Ant* VI, 93). In view of these linguistic and structural observations it does not seem possible to argue persuasively that Paul intended to stress the *event* at Sinai rather than the possession and content of the law.

This does not mean we can say nothing about Paul's meaning. When one reflects for a moment, the rigid distinction between the law and its promulgation becomes artificial. The very character of the law is that it is divine revelation and was, therefore, *given.* And the giving would be empty and without effect if there were no valuable *gift.* Nevertheless Martin Rese ("Vorzuege," 216) insists that "the giving of the law at Sinai expressed God's saving purpose for Israel, while

the law itself, according to Paul, did not become the salvation of Israel." It is true that the law had not resulted *de facto* in the salvation of Israel, but neither have the promises! It is not legitimate to play off the actual (and temporary!) effect of the law against the divine intention of its content. J.W. Doeve ("Notes") has shown that "the λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ mentioned as a great privilege for Israel in Rom 3:2 refers to God's revelation in Holy Scripture" (121) including the Torah, and that the possession (cf ἐπιστεύθησαν, 3:2), not just the receiving, of this revelation is considered by Paul to be a great blessing.

The objection that the law in itself cannot be received as a blessing is generally based on the assertions that "the law is not from faith" (Gal 3:12) and that the law "increases the trespass" (Rom 5:20) and "arouses sinful passions" (Rom 7:5), and that "Christ is the end of the law" (Rom 10:4). But this objection rests, I think, on a misunderstanding of these crucial texts. Daniel P. Fuller and Charles Cosgrove have shown that, in spite of the widespread notion that the law and faith are contrary terms in Paul, in fact Christ is not the end of the law but its goal, and both Christ and the law teach faith not legalism. For this reason Paul can say, "through faith we establish the law" (Rom 3:31), and "those who walk according to the Spirit [i.e. by faith] fulfill the just requirement of the law" (Rom 8:4), and "the doers of the law will be justified" (Rom 2:13; cf Cranfield, I, *Romans*, 155; see also Rom 2:26). And for this reason too Paul can argue in Rom 9:31f that the reason Israel did not attain to the righteousness which the law commends is that they pursued it οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως ἀλλ᾽ ὡς ἐξ ἔργων—"not from faith but *as though* it were from works"—when in fact it is not from works, and the law never taught that it is.

Therefore, I conclude that, since in the law itself God expressed his saving purpose for Israel (Ex 19:6; 29:45f; 31:16f; 32:13; 33:19; 34:6f) and taught the way to life through faith (Rom 9:32), both the giving of the law and the possession of its message were a great privilege for Israel, full of grace and a window of hope toward the future.

2.16 "And the service of worship"

Paul uses the word λατρεία one other time: Rom 12:1, "I urge you therefore, brothers, through the mercies of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable *service of worship."* Elsewhere in the New Testament it is used once in John (16:2—they will think

that killing you is offering *service* to God) and twice in Hebrews (9:1,6—with reference to the priestly activities in the Old Testament sanctuary). In the LXX the term refers three times to the performance of the Passover or feast of unleavened bread (Ex 12:25,26; 13:5), once to the sacrifices at the altar built by the Reubenites, Gadites and half-tribe of Manasseh (Josh 22:27), once to the total priestly ministry in the temple of Solomon (1 Chr 28:13) and four times in the Maccabean context with reference to sacrifices to pagan deities (1 Macc 1:43; 3 Macc 4:14) as over against the true worship of the fathers (1 Macc 2:19,22). Strathmann is probably right that against the background of the LXX "the concrete idea of sacrifice seems [in the NT] always to cling to the noun no less than the verb" (*TDNT*, IV, *65*). In the context of law and covenants (Rom 9:4), λατρεία would naturally be construed to refer to the various sacrificial provisions in the Old Testament.

The benefit of these provisions is seen first in the fact that through the priestly ministry "atonement" was made for the sins of Israel (Ex 29:35-37; Lev 1:4) so that they could be "forgiven" (Lev 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 16, 18; 6:7) and enjoy "acceptance" with Yahweh (Ex 28:38). The promise that God would be Israel's God and dwell with them was secured through the establishment of the sacrificial system:

> There I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory; I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate, to serve me as priests. And I will dwell among the people of Israel, and will be their God... who brought them forth out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them; I am the Lord their God. (Ex 29:43-46)

This observation alone would justify Paul's including λατρεία among the privileges of Israel so rich with promise ("I will be their God!").

But there is reason to see even more portent in this privilege. The Passover celebration was the inaugural λατρεία (Ex 12:25-27) at the beginning of Israel's history as a nation. Paul's view is that Israel's Messiah has come and offered himself as the decisive Passover lamb (1 Cor 5:7) for the sake of his people. This sacrifice is at the heart of the Gospel (1 Cor 15:3) which is "the power of God to everyone who believes, *to the Jew first* and also to the Greek" (Rom 1:16; cf Acts 13:46). We will probably not go beyond the implications of Paul's list in Rom 9:4b in saying that since the Old Testament λατρεία was the prerogative of

Israel, therefore the fulfillment of that prerogative through the death and resurrection of the Messiah (who came "only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," Mt 15:24) is also the prerogative of Israel; and for this reason the good news of that fulfillment is preached "to the Jew first."

2.17 "And the promises"

The word ἐπαγγελία "has no preliminary history in the OT" (*TDNT*, II, 579). Of the six uses in the LXX none refers to divine promises, the use in Amos 9:6 and Ps 55 (56):9 being probable misunderstandings of the Hebrew. But the term already came to refer to divine promises before the New Testament (Test Jos, 20; Ps Sol 12:6; Prayer of Man 6; Josephus, *Ant* II, 219; III, 77) and the rabbis developed a corresponding Hebrew term. Within the Pauline corpus the word is used twenty-five times, five of which are plural (Rom 9:4; 15:8; 2 Cor 1:20; 7:1; Gal 3:16).

As with διαθῆκαι so with ἐπαγγελίαι we do best not to specify which divine promises are meant and which are not. They no doubt embrace the "promises to the patriarchs" (Rom 15:8; Gal 3:16), but the use of the plural in 2 Cor 7:1 with reference to a collage of *prophetic* promises (2 Cor 6:16-18) and the absolute use in 2 Cor 1:20 ("all the promises of God are Yes in him") forbid that we limit its meaning in Rom 9:4b.

With regard to the content of the promises, Paul does not limit himself to looking for precise one-to-one fulfillments. In Rom 4:13 he says that the promise to Abraham and his seed was that he is to be "heir of the world." The Old Testament does not make this promise in just these words, though Gen 18:18 and 22:17 ("possess the gates of their enemies") point in this direction. Cranfield (*Romans*, I, 239JE) is probably right that Paul's meaning is best expressed in 1 Cor 3:21-23, "All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's." Possessing or being heir of all things surely means that all things will work for the benefit of Abraham and his seed (cf Rom 8:28,32). But is this not implied in a promise like "I will be their God and they shall be my people" (2 Cor 6:16; 7:1)? If all that God is in his sovereign majesty over the world belongs to Israel for her benefit, then the hope of "inheriting the world" (Rom 4:13; cf Mt 5:5) is not arbitrary. So we can see that for Paul the promises of God flow together into a summation of all the good that God can

possibly offer his people. "The content of the promises... is always messianic salvation" (*TDNT*, II, 583).

Today it is Christians—Jew and Gentile—who enjoy the "blessing of Abraham" (Gal 3:14): "If you are Christ's then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise" (Gal 3:29). The enjoyment of this blessing and this promise is the enjoyment of salvation. But Paul's word to the Gentiles is: Do not become proud; remember "you do not support the root, but the root supports you" (Rom 11:18). Ephesians 3:6 reminds us of the "mystery" that Gentiles may become συμμέτοχα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας. They become fellow beneficiaries of promises which already belong to the "saints," the "household of God" (Eph 2:19). Only by being grafted into the cultivated olive tree do the Gentiles become heirs of the promise (Rom 11:17). Therefore the salvation which Gentile believers enjoy as beneficiaries of the promises of God is a salvation which belongs to Israel because "theirs are the promises" (Rom 9:4b).

Let us make some summary remarks now about the six-member list of Israel's privileges in Rom 9:4b. The analysis has shown that Paul's intention is missed if these privileges are described as mere antiquarian, theocratic distinctives or as simply passing over from Israel to the Church. Rather, the privileges are in some sense still the prerogative of historical Israel. And each one, more or less clearly, is laden with saving implications and eschatological promise. "The gifts and call of God are irrevocable" (Rom 11:29). To miss this combined impact of the unit is to fail to see the intensity of the tension between Rom 9:3 and 9:4,5 which Paul devoted three chapters (9-11) to resolving.

2.18 "To whom belong the fathers"

This now is the second of three relative clauses which unfold the significance of the designation "Israelites" in Rom 9:4a. For the grammatical and structural considerations see p 21. Paul uses the term "father" often in reference to God and occasionally in normal reference to a child's parent (Col 3:21; Eph 6:2,4). In the singular it can also refer to Abraham (Rom 4:11, 12, 16, 17, 18) and Isaac (Rom 9:10) and in the plural it can refer to all the early Israelites (1 Cor 10:1) or to the earliest patriarchs (probably Rom 11:28; 15:8; cf Ex 3:13,15; 13:5). The reference in Rom 9:5a is probably to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob since the privilege would lose its point if "fathers" meant all the ancestors, and since these three patriarchs are alluded to in 9:6-13.

The decisive text for clarifying how Paul conceives of the fathers being a benefit to Israel is Rom 11:28f. Just after announcing that all Israel will be saved when the deliverer comes to banish ungodliness and forgive sins, Paul says, "According to the gospel they are enemies for your [i.e. the Gentiles'] sake; according to election they are loved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and call of God are irrevocable."

We may dismiss the suggestion that Paul shares the conception of some rabbis and probably many common folk that the merits of the patriarchs were so great that they are transferred to the descendants, guaranteeing their salvation. This is excluded, first, by the logic of 9:1-13: belonging to historical Israel is no guarantee of salvation because God elects freely (9:11) from among the "seed of Abraham" who will be the "children of God" (9:7,8). But it is also excluded by the logic of Rom 11:28f: Paul *grounds* his claim that Israel is "loved for the sake of the fathers" with the argument that "the gifts and call of God are irrevocable." In other words, the fathers are significant not as those who merited such great blessing but as those to whom the free and irrevocable promises were made. This is the point of the words κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἐκλογήν in 11:28. The saving intention of God for "all Israel" accords with God's *election* of Abraham and his seed, which according to 9:11,12 is based on no merit of the fathers at all.

Therefore when Paul mentions the fathers as one of Israel's privileges in Rom 9:5a, he is not referring to the distinction that is associated with being the descendants of notable men highly favored by God. He is referring to a theological fact which guaranteed the salvation of "all Israel"—albeit in a "mysterious" (Rom 11:25) way unexpected by any of Paul's contemporaries. The privilege of having "the fathers" is, therefore, almost synonymous with the privilege of the "covenants" and the "promises" in 9:4b. This confirms our suggestion that Paul is not assembling in Rom 9:4, 5 a set of precisely distinct prerogatives of Israel but rather is piling up overlapping privileges all of which point to the surety of Israel's salvation and together create a total impact which puts the condemnation of Paul's kinsmen (9:3) into a very paradoxical perspective.

2.19 "And from whom is the Messiah according to the flesh, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen."

This is the third and final relative clause describing what it means to be

"Israelites" (9:4a, see note 11). Grammatically it differs from the first two (9:4b and 9:5a) in that the relative pronoun (ὧν) is preceded by the preposition, ἐξ. Paul does not say explicitly that the Messiah belongs to the Israelites, but that he is "from" them. The analogies to this construction with ἐξ show that what Paul means is that the Messiah is an Israelite, he was born of Jewish stock.

Why does Paul change the grammar to say "from whom is the Messiah" instead of "whose is the Messiah"? It is not because the latter is theologically demeaning to the Christ, for then Paul would surely not have been able to say that the δόξα of God belongs to Israel either (9:4b). He would simply have meant that the Christ belongs to Israel in the sense that he comes from Israel and for the sake of Israel (cf Rom 15:8). In fact, Paul probably does not want us to repudiate this meaning but to see more. But what more? It seems banal for him to switch from a grammatical construction which would stress significantly that the Christ belonged to Israel for her benefit, to a bland construction which merely denotes the Christ as an Israelite. The most likely explanation of Paul's intention is that Paul saw "the fathers" standing at the beginning of Israel's history and "the Christ" standing at the culmination of that history. Since he did not want merely to coordinate "the fathers" and "the Christ" (*"whose axe* the fathers *and whose* is the Christ") but rather wanted to highlight the climactic character of Christ's coming, he employed a grammatical construction which indeed does have a climactic ring to it ("and *from* whom"). The fathers, at the beginning, give rise to the people of Israel; the Christ, at the end, comes *from* the people. Therefore Paul is saying far more than that the Messiah is a Jew. He is stressing that, with the coming of Christ, the privileges of Israel have reached their decisive climax. And this is true not only temporally, but also as we shall see, in a theologically qualitative sense.

The final and decisive emergence of the Christ from Israel is qualified by the phrase τὸ κατὰ σάρκα (Rom 9:5b). Nowhere else in the New Testament does this phrase occur with τό. The effect of the τό, according to Blass-Debrunner (section 266), is to strongly emphasize the limiting effect of the phrase. Another effect of the τό is to prevent us from making κατὰ σάρκα an adjectival modifier of the masculine Χριστός. The phrase is adverbial and has "the same import as the similar expression in Rom 1:3" (Murray, *Romans*, II, 6; I, 9). The Christ has sprung from Israel only in a physical, earthly sense.

It is important to detect the different accent that κατὰ σάρκα carries here than it did in Rom 9:3b ("my brothers, my kinsmen *according to the flesh*"). In 9:3b the

phrase means that Paul's fellow Jews are physically his kinsmen, but spiritually they are alienated from him through their unbelief. But between 9:3 and 9:4,5 a shift takes place from viewing Paul's kinsmen as unbelievers under God's curse to viewing them as the privileged "Israelites" under God's blessing. The antecedent of ὧν in 9:5b "from whom" the Christ has sprung is not Paul's unbelieving contemporaries in 9:3b but "Israelites" (9:4a), described in the most positive terms in 9:4,5a. Therefore, unlike κατὰ σάρκα in 9:3b the τὸ κατὰ σάρκα in 9:5b does not aim to say that the Christ is akin to Israel physically but spiritually alien (due to Israel's sin). The Israel from which the Christ originated is not being viewed as sinful and unbelieving, but as the privileged and blessed people of God. There is no theological necessity for Paul to qualify Christ's descent from Israel viewed in this way. Therefore a very different line of thought must have prompted the use of κατὰ σάρκα in 9:5b.

Why then does Paul add τὸ κατὰ σάρκα? Surely the best clue to his line of thought is found in Rom 9:5c ("who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen"). The climactic privilege of the Israelites is that their Messiah is vastly greater than they had ever dreamed. Paul knows him now from the standpoint of Christian revelation as the universal Lord. He may have his human origin in Israel (τὸ κατὰ σάρκα), but he is God over all and his blessed life is eternally indestructible. The privileges of Israel could not come to a higher climax: the long-awaited deliverer (11:26), the savior (Lk 1:68-79) of Israel has come and he can be resisted by no one, for he is God *over all.* His saving purpose for his people cannot be frustrated. This is the ultimate meaning of the promise, "I will be their God and they will be my people" (cf Gen 17:7; Lev 26:12; Jer 31:33; 32:38; Ezek 37:27). The sovereign God himself (cf "Emmanuel," Mt 1:23) comes for his own. Can Israel then be lost? Romans 9:1-3 gives the answer.

2.2 The plight of Paul's kinsmen: Romans 9:1-3

Among the various problems in Rom 9:1-3 the only one we are concerned with here is the plight of Paul's kinsmen alluded to in 9:3a. It is only expressed indirectly, but it is the main point of verses 1-3. "I could wish that I myself were anathema, separated from Christ." In the LXX ἀνάθεμα (or ἀνάθημα, a classical, earlier form with no difference in meaning, *TDNT*, I, 354) almost always translates חֵרֶם. It can mean positively "a thing devoted to the Lord as holy" (Lev 27:28; Judith 16:19; 2 Macc 9:16; 3 Macc 3:17; cf Lk 21:5), or negatively "a thing devoted to destruction" (Num 21:3; Deut 7:26; 13:16,18; 20:17; Josh

6:17,18; 7:1,11,12; Zech 14:11). Deuteronomy 13:18 is especially helpful for showing how the meaning of ἀνάθεμα shifts from "votive offering" to "accursed thing doomed to destruction." Paul always uses the term in its negative sense of "accursed" (1 Cor 12:3; 16:22; Gal 1:8,9).

The gravity of ἀνάθεμα in Rom 9:3a is specified with the words ἀπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ. In the New Testament, ἀπό can at times have an instrumental meaning (Lk 7:35; 22:45; 6:18; Acts 15:4; 20:9) in which case Paul would here be expressing his willingness to be "accursed *by* Christ." But three observations stand in the way of this interpretation and point to another. 1) Ἀνάθεμα is not a verbal noun and so does not explicitly contain action which must be performed by anyone. 2) The closest parallel in Paul to ἄνάθεμα εἶναι... ἅπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ is 2 Thess 1:9 where those who do not know God and do not obey the Gospel will pay the penalty of ὄλεθρον αἰώνιον ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ κυρίου. The Semitic προσώπου shows that the "destruction" (which corresponds to ἀνάθεμα in Rom 9:3a) involves separation from the Lord (not excluding, of course, that the Lord himself is the avenger). 3) Our artificial chapter and verse divisions obscure the fact that, when Romans was read in the churches, 9:3 would have been heard only seconds after 8:35 which asks, "Who will separate us *from the love of Christ?"* Therefore, Paul's statement in 9:3 must be taken to mean that he "could wish" to experience what 8:35-39 said the Christian never would experience: to be separated from the love of God in Christ and left under his eternal (2 Thess 1:9) wrath (Rom 5:9).

All agree that Rom 9:3 is an intense expression of Paul's love for his kinsmen according to the flesh—a love which forms the repeated backdrop of Rom 9-11 (cf 10:1; 11:14). But Paul's emotion is not the main point of Rom 9:1-5. Paul's response in 9:6a to 9:1-5 is, "But it is not such that the word of God has fallen." Therefore, the point of 9:1-5 must appear to call God's word into question. But Paul's affection for Israel and Israel's privileged status do not appear to jeopardize God's word at all. Romans 9:6a demands, therefore, that we construe Paul's expressions of love in 9:1-3 as vehicles which are carrying some tremendously heavy theological and historical freight, namely, the ominous assertion: my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh are anathema, cut off from Christ! Paul's willingness to be cut off from Christ ὑπὲρ τῶν ἄδελφῶν makes sense only if Paul believes his brothers are in a plight as serious as the one he is willing to enter for their sake. Thus the words Paul chooses with which to express his love are chosen also because they express (albeit indirectly and thus sensitively) the precise condition of his unbelieving kinsmen: they are

anathema, separated from Christ.

2.3 Summary

Romans 9:1-5 falls into two units: 9:1-3 and 9:4,5. The first describes the plight of Paul's unbelieving Jewish kinsmen; the second describes their divinely given privileges. The analysis of 9:4,5 showed that the privileges have not simply been transferred to the Church but apply in a real sense to the Israel of Paul's own day, most of whom are unbelieving. The analysis also showed that the privileges taken as a whole are redemptive and eschatological, not merely theocratic and historical. They appear to guarantee the salvation of Israel. But how?

The plight of Paul's kinsmen is as dark as their privileges are bright. They are accursed, separated from Christ and thus doomed to eternal destruction (2 Thess 1:9) under the wrath of God.

Now it is clear what is at stake in Rom 9-11. Romans 9:1-5 states the problem: it appears that what God has guaranteed is in fact not happening—the end-time salvation of Israel. Has then the word—the reliability—of God fallen, and with it the Christian hope as well?

3.
The Purpose that Accords with Election: Romans 9:6-13

1. Orientation

In the preceding chapter we clarified the question Paul is trying to answer in Rom 9-11: Since Israel is the real heir of God's promises which include personal, eternal salvation (9:4,5), how is it that most of the Israelites of Paul's day are accursed and cut off from Christ (9:3)? Why are only "some" being saved (11:14)? Has God's word fallen? We must stress very heavily that the problem Paul is grappling with is the condemnation of many *within* Israel. Most of his kinsmen are incurring "the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord" (2 Thess 1:9; see Chapter Two, pp 44-45), while only "some," the remnant of 11:5, have the hope of sharing the eternal blessings of Christ. The reason this must be stressed is that correctly understanding Paul's question in Rom 9:1-5 will guard us from impertinent and imaginary reconstructions of the first part of his answer in 9:6-13. Many commentators give little evidence that they are holding Paul's precise question in view as they interpret the first part of his answer in 9:6-13. One common result is that Paul is made to prove things that are of no use in answering his precise question. Consequently the discussion of God's righteousness (9:14ff) which springs out of 9:6-13 gets skewed in the wrong direction and the whole theodicy (9:14-23) is enveloped in a fog.

The goal of this chapter, therefore, is to keep the problem of Rom 9:1-5 (as well as other contextual considerations) clearly in view as we try to construe Paul's response in 9:6-13. I hope in this way to discover as precisely as possible what Paul said or implied in 9:6-13 which brought on the accusation that he makes God out to be unrighteous (9:14). By this means our subsequent discussion of God's righteousness will avoid an inappropriate dogmatic orientation and will be rooted in the historical situation and biblical context.

Following is the division of verses I will use in referring to the different parts of Rom 9:6-13.

6. a. But it is not such that the word of God has fallen.
   b. For all the ones from Israel, these are not Israel;

7. a. neither, because they are seed of Abraham, are all children;
   b. but in Isaac shall your seed be called [Gen 21:12].

8. a. That is, the children of the flesh, these are not children of God;
   b. but the children of promise are counted as seed.

9. a. For the word of promise is this: at this time I will come
   b. and Sarah will have a son [Gen 18:10,14].

10. a. And not only [does Sarah illustrate the point]
    b. but also Rebecca,
    c. who became pregnant by one man, our father Isaac.

11. a. For, although [Jacob and Esau] had not yet been born
    b. and had not done anything good or evil,
    c. in order that the purpose of God according to election might remain,

12. a. not from works
    b. but from the one who calls,
    c. it was said to her: the elder will serve the younger [Gen 25:23];

13. a. just as it is written: Jacob I loved
    b. but Esau I hated.

2. Romans 9:6a

An unacceptable "solution" to the paradox of 9:1-5 would be: God's word has fallen. Paul denies this "solution" without stating it explicitly: "It is not such that the word of God has fallen!" (Rom 9:6a). The "word of God" has been variously construed as God's promises to Israel (cf ἐπαγγελίας ὁ λόγος, Rom 9:9a), or more broadly as all God's words of revelation (cf τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ, Rom 3:2; Schlier, *Roemerbrief*, 290), or more narrowly as "the proclamation of the Gospel" in Paul's ministry, or as "an expression of the intention and will of God."

If we were on the right track in our interpretation of Rom 9:1-5, each of the benefits listed in 9:4,5 has saving, eschatological implications for Israel. Therefore, it is not just one of these things that seems to have fallen but all of them, including the work of the Messiah. Therefore, Paul does not assert that *one* of them (e.g. the promises, or the covenants) has not fallen but rather he chooses a broader term, namely, "the *word of God* has not fallen." This is the reality which establishes or is embodied in each of the preceding privileges or benefits. The intention of God, the plan of God, the revelation of God, we might say, which found expression in all these benefits—*this* has not fallen.

This interpretation of "the word of God" finds support in the probability that Rom 9:11c says positively what 9:6a says negatively. In Rom 9:11c Paul says that God elected Jacob and not Esau "in order that the purpose of God according to election might remain." The *remaining* of God's *electing purpose* is the opposite of the *falling* of God's *word.* If this is so then the λόγος of God is parallel to the πρόθεσις of God and should be understood as an expression of God's intention or will. In the Greek Old Testament both the will and word of God are said "to remain" forever: Prov 19:21, πολλοὶ λογισμοὶ ἐν καρδίᾳ ἀνδρός, ἡ δὲ **βουλὴ** τοῦ κυρίου εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα **μένει**. Isaiah 40:8, τὸ δὲ **ῥῆμα** τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν **μένει** εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα (cf Isa 14:24). This use of μένειν is substantially, if not explicitly, the opposite of the "falling" of God's word or will (cf the use of ἐκπίπτειν of God's word with Josh 23:14; 1 Kgs 8:56; 1 Sam 3:19). Also in the New Testament, the opposite of ἡ ἀγάπη οὐδέποτε πίπτει is νυνὶ δὲ μένει... ἄγάπη (1 Cor 13:8,13). Therefore, what has "not fallen" but has "remained" active and effectual is God's purpose which has come to expression throughout redemptive history in manifold communications which may be summed up as "the word of God."

Romans 9:6b-13 is written to support this assertion. The support consists therefore in showing what in fact the purpose of God has always been in his communications with Israel. If Paul can show that God's ultimate "purpose according to election" never included the salvation of every individual Israelite, then the situation described in Rom 9:1-5 would not so easily jeopardize God's reliability (though, of course, it might open him to other serious charges which Paul deals with in Rom 9:14ff).

3. The purpose of God which remains

Our aim now, therefore, is not to discuss all the exegetical problems of Rom 9:6b-13 but to answer the question: How does Paul conceive of this "purpose" (9:11c) or "word" (9:6a) of God which, in spite of the damnation (ἀνάθεμα 9:3; Cranfield, *Romans*, II, 457) of many in Israel, has not fallen? Not only is this the key exegetical question forcing itself on us from the context; it is also of tremendous doctrinal significance. The issue of how Paul understood divine election and predestination is inescapable, and it surfaces precisely in the interpretation of ἡ κατ᾽ ἐκλογὴν πρόθεσις (Rom 9:11c). What exactly is this purpose which "remains" and has not "fallen"?

It would be fitting in one sense to give a brief sketch of the argument in Rom 9:6b-13 at this point, so that our discussion of 9:11c could be oriented within the near context from the outset. But I opt not to do this because such a brief sketch would have to assume the results of numerous smaller exegetical decisions and would thus prejudice the reader too quickly for or against the conclusions of the following discussions. I will assume instead that the text has been carefully read and that the gist of the argument relating to Isaac/Ishmael and Jacob/Esau is in mind.

3.1 God's means of maintaining his purpose: predestination

Romans 9:11-13 is one sentence. The clauses in 11ab are genitive absolutes which stand in an adversative relation to the main clause of 12c: "although they had not yet been born, nor had done anything good or evil... it was said to [Rebecca]: The elder [Esau] will serve the younger [Jacob]." The clause in 9:11c, on the other hand, gives the aim or purpose of God in making this prediction before the birth of Esau and Jacob, namely, "in order that the purpose of God according to election might remain." The divine words "The elder will serve the younger" (from Gen 25:23), must, therefore, be more than a wish or even a statement of foreknowledge. If these words have as their *aim* (ἵνα) to secure and establish God's purpose, then they must express a decision on God's part to intervene in the lives of Jacob and Esau in such a way that those words come true. The word *pre-destine* is an apt description of the divine act expressed

in the words "The elder shall serve the younger." It is an act of predestination because it happened "before Esau and Jacob had been born or had done anything good or evil" (9:11ab). It is an act of *predestination* (rather than pre-*recognition)* because *by means of it* (ἵνα) the purpose of God according to election remains rather than falls (9:11c). No matter how one conceives of the distinction God will actually make between Esau and Jacob, it is clear that he has pre-determined what that distinction will be; that is, he has decided and promised so to act that the distinction will definitely come about.

That the destinies of Esau and Jacob were *pre*determined was sufficiently proven by the words μήπω γὰρ γεννηθέντων (Rom 9:11a). But Paul wants to say more about this determination than that it took place *before* the birth of Esau and Jacob. Hence he adds μηδὲ πραξάντων τι ἀγαθὸν (9:11b). With this additional clause Paul is not stressing that God's determination of Esau's and Jacob's future is *prior* to their behavior (that was already said in 9:11a), but rather that it is *not based on* their behavior.

That this is the point of 9:11b is confirmed by the phrase οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἀλλ᾽ ἐκ τοῦ καλοῦντος in 9:12ab. G. Stoeckhardt argues that this twofold phrase modifies the *following* clause: "it was said to her not from works but from the one who calls." H.A.W. Meyer, on the other hand, argues that the twofold phrase must modify the *preceding* μένῃ: "that the purpose of God according to election might remain not from works but from the one who calls." Alford (II, 407) and Sanday and Headlam (*Romans*, 245) reject the dilemma and make the phrase "a general characteristic of the whole transaction." The differences among the three views are not substantial. The sentence, "The elder will serve the younger" (Rom 9:12c), is a historical expression of the purpose of God according to election (9:11c). Therefore, if one (9:12c) is οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων, the other (9:11c) must be also. What we have then in the phrase "not from works but from the one who calls" (9:12ab) is an enlargement of the point made in 9:11b: "though they had not done anything good or evil."

It enlarges on this point in two ways. First, with the use of the preposition ἐξ Paul makes explicit that God's decision to treat Esau and Jacob differently is not merely *prior* to their good or evil deeds but is also completely *independent* of them. God's electing purpose (Rom 9:11c) and his concrete prediction (9:12c) are in no way *based on* the distinctives Esau and Jacob have by birth or by action. This rules out the notion of the early Greek and Latin commentators that election is based on God's foreknowledge of men's good works. Second, Rom

9:12b enlarges on 9:11b by going beyond the *negation* of human *distinctives* as the ground for God's predestining of Esau and Jacob. It makes the *positive affirmation* that the true ground of this election is God himself, "the one who calls." The intended force of the phrase "not from works but from the one who calls" is felt most strongly when one *contrasts* it with the similar Pauline phrase "not from works but from faith." In Paul's thinking the latter phrase describes the event of *justification* (Rom 9:32; Gal 2:16), never the event of election or predestination. Paul never grounds the "electing purpose of God" in man's faith. The counterpart to works in conjunction with election (as opposed to justification) is always God's own call (Rom 9:12b) or his own grace (Rom 11:6). The predestination and call of God precede justification (Rom 8:29f) and have no ground in any human act, not even faith. This is why Paul explicitly says in Rom 9:16 that God's bestowal of mercy on whomever he wills is based neither on human *willing* (which would include faith) nor on human running (which would include all activity).

So far then we may say that the prediction of Rom 9:12c ("the elder will serve the younger") is an expression of God's predetermination of (at least some aspect of) the destinies of Jacob and Esau. Moreover this predetermination is not *based on* any actual or foreknown distinctives of the brothers. It is based solely on *God* who calls. This act of predestination is an instance of the means (ἵνα, 9:11c) God uses to maintain μένῃ, 9:11c) his purpose in history—a purpose which we can now see is very aptly defined as κατ᾽ ἔκλογήν (9:11c). The phrase κα᾽ ἐκλογήν is in the attributive position in relation to πρόθεσις and therefore functions like the κατὰ φύσιν in Rom 11:21 (Kaesemann, *Romans*, 264): it defines God's purpose as an electing purpose, a purpose to be one who selects on the basis described in 9:11ab and 9:12ab, namely, freely, with no constraint from or ground in human distinctives. In short God's purpose is to be free from all human influences in the election he performs.

Excursus—The time of God's choice

Johannes Munck (*Christ and Israel*, 424) represents those exegetes who are so eager to protect Paul from a doctrine of predestination "as commonly understood" that they come within a hair of explicitly contradicting Rom 9:11,12. Munck argues as follows, "God's choice of a founder for his people is made in the midst of history and not before the creation. In the example of Isaac's sons it is in fact emphasized that the word of promise was spoken before

the two children were born in order that God's selective purpose might stand, based not upon deeds but upon him who called. This election does not presuppose predestination as commonly understood, a choice by God prior to creation. If that were the case, the time at which knowledge of the choice was made known would be of no significance. The announcement of the choice must be made immediately after the decision; God's choice is determined in the midst of history. God acts in history, decides, and—as we shall see—makes new decisions, because, while his intention of salvation stands, it is achieved by constant interventions into the changing circumstances of history."

Munck's single *argument* here is that if God's choice of Jacob over Esau was made before creation "the time at which knowledge of the choice was made known would be of no significance." Therefore, since Paul does ascribe significance to the time of the announcement, the choice must have been made "immediately" before this announcement and not before creation. My *answer* to this argument is that even if God's choice was made before creation, the time of its announcement *is significant in Paul's context* because he does not assume that his opponents agree that God's decision to bless Jacob over Esau was prior to their birth and their deeds. Whether or not Paul thought God's choice was made before creation he *must* make clear to his Jewish opponents that the decision was before the birth of Jacob and Esau and therefore independent of their works. To do this he pointed out that the *announcement* of God's decision happened before they were born. Therefore, even if Paul conceived of God's predestining choice as taking place before creation, the timing of its announcement *is significant* in the present context.

But we can say more about Munck's position. There is no reason to agree with him that "the announcement must be made immediately after the decision." In fact on close inspection Munck's view implies a relationship between God and history which at least implicitly (if not explicitly) contradicts Paul's meaning in Rom 9:11,12. Munck admits that the choice of Jacob over Esau (to be founder of Israel) was prior to their birth and therefore undetermined by their own character and deeds. But for some reason he will not allow that God's choice of Jacob for this role was made before creation: "God's choice *is determined* in the midst of history" (my emphasis; this seems also to be the position of H.H. Rowley in *The Biblical Doctrine of Election*, 130). This must mean that, while the "willing and running" (Rom 9:16) of Jacob and Esau did not determine God's choice, the "willing and running" of some other person or persons did. The "good or evil deeds," i.e. the works, of some persons or societies must have maneuvered

history into the condition which *resulted* in God's choice *being determined* in favor of Jacob. I can see no other way to construe Munck's words without forcing him ultimately to put God's choice prior to creation, which he is loath to do.

But does this conception of God's relationship to history accord with Paul's meaning in Rom 9:11,12? Surely Paul does not intend to say that God's electing purpose will remain so long as God's choices are based not on the works of the persons chosen but on the works (the willing and running) of their predecessors in human history! For the opposite of "not from works" (Rom 9:12a) is *not* "but from the ebb and flow of historical circumstance" (which is nothing but the complex sum of men's willing and running); but rather the opposite of "not from works" is "but from the one who calls," namely God alone. This seems to me to be a clear antithesis to Munck's view implied in the sentence, "God's choice *is determined* in the midst of history."

To be sure Paul is not trying to prove that God's decision was made before creation. He wants to prove that it is *free* from and not determined by the will and acts of men. The *time* of God's choice is significant only as it affects the *ground* of his choice. Paul established the latter (God's free, *self*-determination) and left the former, so far as it is necessary to discuss, for his readers to infer. I would probably not quarrel with a theologian who found a way to put the time of God's electing decision within history while keeping it wholly free from human determination.

3.2 Predestination of whom to what? Individuals versus nations, eternal destinies versus historical tasks

We may now take the next step in clarifying how Paul conceives of the "purpose" (Rom 9:11c) or "word" (9:6a) of God which has not "fallen" but "remains" in spite of the fact that many of Paul's kinsmen according to the flesh are accursed and cut off from Christ (9:3). The clarifying question that must now be posed is this: If, as we have seen (p 53), God's purpose is to perform his act of election freely without being determined by any human distinctives, *what* act of election is intended in Rom 9:11-13—an election which determines the eternal destiny of individuals, or an election which merely assigns to individuals and nations the roles they are to play in history? The question is contextually appropriate and theologically explosive. On one side, those who find in Rom

9:6-13 individual and eternal predestination are accused of importing a "modern problem" (of determinism and indeterminism) into the text, and of failing to grasp the corporateness of the election discussed. On the other side, one sees in the text a clear statement of "double predestination" of individuals to salvation or condemnation and claims that "the history of the exegesis of Rom 9 could be described as the history of attempts to escape this clear observation" (Maier, *Mensch und freier Wille*, 356). The exegetical and theological controversy on how to interpret the election of Rom 9:11 is as early as the art of New Testament exegesis. K.H. Schelkle has gathered relevant material from the early church fathers. We will not rehearse that discussion here. Erasmus on one side, Luther and Calvin on the other, represent the Reformation controversy. Among modern scholars the list of those who see no individual predestination to eternal life or death is impressive. Sanday and Headlam (*Romans*, 245), for example, take the position that "the absolute election of Jacob... has reference simply to the election of one to higher privileges, as head of the chosen race, than the other. It has nothing to do with their eternal salvation. In the original to which St. Paul is referring, Esau is simply a synonym for Edom." Similarly G. Schrenk (*TDNT*, IV, 179) says on Rom 9:12, "The reference here is not to salvation, but to position and historical task, cf the quotation from Gen 25:23 in v 12: 'The elder shall serve the younger.'" And finally J. Munck (*Christ and Israel*, 42) argues that "Rom 9:6-13 is therefore speaking neither of individuals and their selection for salvation, nor of the spiritual Israel, the Christian church. It speaks rather of the patriarchs, who without exception became founders of peoples."

The list of modern scholars on the other side is just as impressive. For example, John Murray (*Romans*, II, 19) argues that "the interpretation which regards the election as the collective, theocratic election of Israel as a people must be rejected and the 'purpose of God according to election' will have to be understood as the electing purpose that is determinative of and unto salvation and equivalent to that which we find elsewhere (Rom 8:28-33; Eph 1:4; 1 Thess 1:4 *et al*)." On the larger context (including Rom 9:16) Henry Alford (II, 408f) writes, "I must protest against all endeavors to make it appear that no inference lies from this passage as to the *salvation of individuals.* It is most true that the *immediate subject* is the *national rejection of the Jews:* but we must consent to hold our reason in abeyance if we do not recognize the inference that the sovereign power and free election here proved to belong to God extend to *every exercise* of his mercy—whether temporal or spiritual... whether national or individual."

It is a remarkable and telling phenomenon that those who find no individual predestination to eternal life in Rom 9:6-13 cannot successfully explain the thread of Paul's argument as it begins in Rom 9:1-5 and continues through the chapter. One looks in vain, for example, among these commentators for a cogent statement of how the corporate election of two peoples (Israel and Edom) in Rom 9:12,13 fits together in Paul's argument with the statement, "Not all those from Israel are Israel" (9:6b). One also looks in vain for an explanation of how the pressing problem of eternally condemned Israelites in Rom 9:3 is ameliorated by Rom 9:6-13 if these verses refer "not to salvation but to position and historical task." I have found the impression unavoidable that doctrinal inclinations have severely limited exegetical effort and insight—not so much because the answers of these exegetes are not my own, but because of the crucial exegetical questions that simply are not posed by them. In what follows, therefore, I will try to keep before me the crucial contextual questions of how Rom 9:6-13 hangs together both in itself and with what precedes (9:1-5) and follows (9:14-23).

3.21 Restating the argument for corporate election to historical tasks

The basic argument against seeing individual, eternal predestination in Rom 9:6-13 is that the two Old Testament references on which Paul builds his case do not in their Old Testament contexts refer to individuals or to eternal destiny, but rather to nations and historical tasks. The argument carries a good deal of force, especially when treated (as it usually is) without reference to the logical development of Paul's argument in Rom 9:1-13. In describing this interpretation of Rom 9:6-13 we will keep the Old Testament contexts before us.

In Rom 9:6b-9 Paul cites two Old Testament texts: 6b) "For all the ones from Israel, these are not Israel; 7a) neither, because they are seed of Abraham, are all children; 7b) *but in Isaac shall your seed be called* [Gen 21:12]. 8a) That is, the children of the flesh, these are not children of God; 8b) but the children of promise are reckoned for seed. 9a) For the word of promise is this: *At this time I will come* 9b) *and Sarah will have a son* [Gen 18:10,14]." The quotation of Gen 21:12 is identical to the LXX which renders the Hebrew literally (cf also Heb 11:18). The quotation in verse 9 is a combination of Gen 18:10 and 14.

The two texts come from the story of Isaac's relationship to Ishmael as

Abraham's seed. In Gen 12:1-3 and 13:15f, God promised Abraham that he would have innumerable descendants who would be a "great nation." In Gen 15:4 God told Abraham that Eliezer his slave would not be his heir but "your own son shall be your heir" and "Abraham believed the Lord" (15:6). But in Gen 16 Abraham undertakes to solve the problem of his wife's barrenness by having a son by Hagar, her Egyptian handmaid. When Hagar was pregnant with Ishmael the Lord promised her, "I will so greatly multiply your descendants that they cannot be numbered for multitude.... Behold you are with child, and shall bear a son; you shall call his name Ishmael; because the Lord has given heed to your affliction. He shall be a wild ass of a man, his hand against every man and every man's hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen" (Gen 16:10-12).

Then in Gen 17 God makes a covenant with Abraham, the essence of which is, "I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants [seed] after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants [seed] after you... and I will be their God" (Gen 17:7,8). Then, to Abraham's dismay, God says that Sarah will have a son to inherit this covenant promise. Abraham pleads, "O that Ishmael might live in thy sight!" (17:18). But God answers, "No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants [seed] after him. As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him and make him fruitful and multiply him exceedingly; he shall be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. *But I will establish my covenant with Isaac*, whom Sarah shall bear you at this season next year" (Gen 17:19-21).

This promise concerning Isaac is reaffirmed in Gen 18:10,14 in spite of Sarah's skepticism about her own and Abraham's age: "Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, in the spring, and Sarah shall have a son" (= Rom 9:9). Later, after the birth of Isaac, Abraham is distraught at Sarah's intention to banish Hagar and Ishmael. But God reassures him with the words, "Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for in Isaac shall your seed be called" (Gen 21:12 = Rom 9:7b).

Concerning Ishmael God promises again in 21:13,18 to make him a great nation. In Gen 21:20 we read that "God was with the lad, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow." Finally, in Gen 25:12-18 Ishmael's descendants are listed to show that the promises concerning him were

fulfilled: twelve princes had come from him (Gen 25:16 = 17:20) and "he dwelt over against all his people" (25:18 = 16:12).

In general the commentators who find no predestination to eternal life in Rom 9:6-13 interpret Paul's use of Gen 21:12 and 18:10,14 as follows. Genesis 21:12, introduced in Rom 9:7b with ἀλλά, gives the Old Testament alternative to the view denied by Paul in Rom 9:7a, namely, that because a person is a physical descendant of Abraham he is by virtue of that descent a "child" who will benefit from the covenant promises. It is evident, Paul says, from the patriarchal narrative that even though Ishmael was just as much a physical descendant of Abraham as Isaac, nevertheless God chose Isaac (even before he was born) and not Ishmael to be the beneficiary of the covenant promises (Gen 17:21). God did promise to make Ishmael a great nation (Gen 16:10; 21:13,18), but never said to him, "I will be your God" (Gen 17:7,8), or "I will give you the land of your sojournings" (Gen 17:8). By this election of Isaac instead of Ishmael God shows that physical descent from Abraham does not guarantee that one will be a beneficiary of the covenant made with Abraham and his seed. *Something more* must be true about a physical descendant if he is to be an heir of the covenant.

What that something more is is described in Rom 9:8,9. One must be a "child of promise" (9:8b) not just a "child of the flesh" (9:8a). A child of promise is a descendant of Abraham whom God freely designates by his own sovereign design to be a beneficiary of the covenant promises. The miraculous birth of Isaac by the Lord's free exercise of power ("Is anything too hard for the Lord!... *I* will come!" Gen 18:14 = Rom 9:9) illustrates that God is free in designating the beneficiaries of his promises; he is never trapped into making any particular physical descendant (like Ishmael) the heir of his covenant.

But, the interpretation continues, the covenant blessings for which Isaac is freely chosen (before his birth) and from which Ishmael is excluded (in spite of descendancy from Abraham) do not include individual eternal salvation. One cannot legitimately infer from Rom 9:7-9 that Ishmael and his descendants are eternally lost nor that Isaac and his descendants are eternally saved. What God has freely and sovereignly determined is the particular descendant (Isaac) whose line will inherit the blessings of the covenant: multiplying exceedingly, fathering many nations, inhabiting the promised land and having God as their God (Gen 17:2-8). This benefit, not eternal salvation, is what is not based on physical descent from Abraham, but on God's unconditional election.

Before criticizing this interpretation we will follow it on through Rom 9:10-13. Romans 9:10-13 is necessary to buttress the argument for God's freedom in 9:7-9 because of a possible loophole in that argument. It is possible that Paul's opponents (who apparently think physical Jewishness is the basis for being blessed by God) would say: Of course Ishmael was excluded from the covenant; for one thing his mother was an Egyptian (Gen 21:9) and for another the promises made about Isaac in Gen 17:21; 18:10,14; 21:12 were all made after the birth of Ishmael so that God could see what sort of person he was. So since he was a "wild ass of a man" (Gen 16:12) and had an Egyptian mother, God rejected him and chose Isaac. Now *we* are all legitimate, full-blooded heirs of Isaac and so may count on God's covenant blessing.

Therefore, to demonstrate that they have not yet grasped the significance of God's free and sovereign election, Paul presents his opponents with another Old Testament illustration to close the loophole in the first one. The birth to Isaac and Rebecca of their twin sons, Jacob and Esau, was announced to Rebecca in Gen 25:23, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples, born of you, shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the elder shall serve the younger." How it became possible for Jacob and his descendants to gain the ascendancy over Esau and his descendants, even though the right of primogeniture belonged naturally to Esau, is described in Gen 25:29-34 and Gen 27:18-29. In the first passage Esau "despised his birthright" (v 34) and sold it to Jacob for a bowl of pottage. In the second passage Jacob tricks Isaac into giving him the blessing of the first-born—a blessing which included the words, "Be lord over your brothers and may your mother's sons bow down to you" (27:29). Thus in the lives of Jacob and Esau the conditions were met for the fulfillment of the promise concerning their descendants, the nations Israel and Edom.

Paul's purpose in referring to God's choice of Jacob over Esau is to show that there is no way to evade the implications of God's unconditional election here. Unlike Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau had the same parents who were both Jews ("From *one* man Rebecca became pregnant," Rom 9:10c). Also unlike Isaac and Ishmael, when the determining promise was made concerning Jacob and Esau (Rom 9:12c = Gen 25:23), both were yet unborn and had done nothing good or evil (Rom 9:11ab). Moreover they were twins in the same womb at the same time and by all human standards the elder Esau should have received the blessing of headship over his brother. Here there are no loopholes. God's choice of Jacob over Esau cannot be due to any human distinctives possessed by birth (like Jewishness) or action (like righteousness). It is based solely on God's own

free and sovereign choice.

But again, as with the election of Isaac, it is argued that "the absolute election of Jacob... has reference simply to the election of one to higher privileges as head of the chosen race, than the other. It has nothing to do with their eternal salvation" (Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 245). In fact "the story of the reconciliation of Esau with Jacob [Gen 33] makes the strong impression that Esau had now taken the right attitude toward God" (Stoeckhardt, *Roemer*, 430). The stress in this interpretation falls very heavily on the fact that in Gen 25:23, which Paul cites in Rom 9:12c, *peoples* not individuals are chosen. One cannot therefore, it is argued, infer anything about the election of individuals from God's unconditional election of Israel over Edom to be his covenant people.

The quote from Mal 1:2 ("Jacob I loved but Esau I hated," Rom 9:13) is taken to confirm this view, since the hate of Esau is illustrated in Mal 1 by God's historical judgments upon *Edom* the people, not by God's eternal condemnation of Esau the individual. The context of Mal 1:1-4 is important:

> 1) The burden of the word of Yahweh to *Israel* in the hand of Malachi. 2) "I loved you," says Yahweh. Yet you say, "Wherein did you love us?" "Was not *Esau Jacob's* brother?" says Yahweh, "but I loved *Jacob*, 3) and *Esau* I hated. And I made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance to the jackals of the wilderness. 4) For *Edom* says, 'We are beaten down but we shall return and rebuild the waste places.'" Thus says the Lord of hosts, "They shall build but I will throw down, and they shall be called the border of wickedness and the people with whom the Lord is angry forever."

The prophet's logic is very similar to Paul's. God's love for Jacob/Israel is not grounded in Jacob's or Israel's superiority over Esau/Edom. Rather Yahweh asks rhetorically: "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" The implication of this question is that there was no basis in human distinctives for Yahweh to love Jacob and hate Esau. His choice was made solely on the basis of free grace. This is what makes the quotation of Mal 1:2 so apt in Rom 9:13. Some take the term "hate" in a softened sense of "loved less" or "did not prefer." Others argue from Mal 1:4 that it must involve real animosity and opposition. But what is crucial for this interpretation is not the meaning of hate but the meaning of Esau as Edom and the fact that the different destinies for Jacob/Israel and Esau/Edom are historical and not necessarily eternal. Therefore, Paul teaches the sovereign freedom of God in determining which of Isaac's sons will be the beneficiary of the covenant

promises and procreate the nation which will enjoy so many of God's earthly privileges. But Paul does not teach here that God exercises that same unconditional election toward individuals and eternal life.

3.22 Critique of the foregoing position and argument for an alternative

A plausible case can be made for the position that "Paul is no longer concerned with two peoples and their fate but rather in a permanent way with the election and rejection of two persons [Jacob and Esau] who have been raised to the level of types" (Kaesemann, *Romans, 264*). I think this is probably true and that there is warrant in the patriarchal narratives themselves for drawing conclusions about the individual salvation of Isaac and Jacob. But I will not try to prove this because the decisive flaw in the collectivist/historical position is not its failure to agree with Kaesemann's contention. Its decisive flaw is its failure to ask how the flow of Paul's argument from 9:1-5 on through the chapter affects the application of the *principle* Paul has established in Rom 9:6b-13. The principle established is that God's promised blessings are never enjoyed on the basis of what a person is by birth or by works, but only on the basis of God's sovereign, free predestination (Rom 9:11,12). The ultimate decision of who will experience God's grace or mercy is never based on a person's "willing or running" (Rom 9:16). We may grant, for the sake of the argument, that in the demonstration of this principle of God's freedom in election Paul uses Old Testament texts that do not relate explicitly to eternal salvation. What cannot be granted without further argumentation is that Paul intends for this principle of God's predestining freedom to be limited to God's choice of persons or nations for historical roles. Paul establishes from Old Testament texts that God chooses the beneficiaries of his promised blessing apart from all human distinctives. But it is an unwarranted leap to infer *against the context of Rom 9* that this principle applies when the promised blessing at stake is "theocratic blessing" or a "historical role" but does not apply when the promised blessing is personal, eternal salvation (as Paul views it in Rom 4:13; Gal 3:14,16). To show that in fact this inference is against the context of Rom 9 is the goal of what follows.

3.221 The significance of Romans 9:1-5

As we said at the beginning of the chapter, to understand Paul's precise intention

in Rom 9:6-13 we must keep in view that these verses are an initial attempt to solve the problem raised in 9:1-5, namely that many within the elect nation of Israel are accursed and cut off from Christ. Many *individual* Israelites within the chosen people are not saved (cf Rom 11:14). Paul is not moved to constant grief (9:2) because corporate Israel has forfeited her non-salvific "theocratic privileges" while another people (the Church or the remnant) has taken over this "historical role." He is grieved because all the privileges of Israel listed in Rom 9:4,5 imply the eschatological, eternal salvation of this people (see Chapter Two) but many individual Israelites—his kinsmen according to the flesh—are damned in their unbelief (see Chapter Two, note 59). Therefore the solution which Rom 9:6-13 develops in response to this problem, *must* address the issue of individual, eternal salvation. John Murray and E. Weber see this most clearly of all the commentators I have read. Murray argues as follows:

> The thesis that Paul is dealing merely with the election of Israel collectively and applying the clause in question ["the elder shall serve the younger"] only to this feature of redemptive history would not meet the precise situation. The question posed for the apostle is: how can the covenant promise of God be regarded as inviolate when the mass of those who belong to Israel, who are comprised in the elect nation in terms of the Old Testament passages cited above [Deut 4:37; 7:7,8; 10:15; 14:2; 1 Kgs 3:8; Ps 33:12; 105:6,43; 135:4; Isa 41:8,9; 43:20-22; 44:1,2; 45:4; Amos 3:2], have remained in unbelief and come short of the covenant promises? His answer would fail if it were simply an appeal to the collective, inclusive theocratic election of Israel. Such a reply would be no more than an appeal to the fact that his kinsmen were Israelites and thus no more than a statement of the fact which, in view of their unbelief, created the problem. Paul's answer is not the collective election of Israel but rather "they are not all Israel, who are of Israel." And this means, in terms of the stage of discussion at which we have now arrived, "they are not all elect, who are of elect Israel." (*Romans*, II, 18)

3.222 The significance of Romans 9:6b

The force of this argument is increased when we turn our focus from Rom 9:1-5 to the assertion in 9:6b οὐ γὰρ πάντες οἱ ἐξ Ἰσραήλ, οὗτοι Ἰσραήλ, which I translate, "For all those from Israel, these are not Israel." For two reasons I have construed the οὐ to modify the clause οὗτοι Ἰσραήλ rather than πάντες. In the

first place the demonstrative οὗτοι refers to a definite group of people, but the negation οὐ πάντες, is very indefinite. It does not work to say, "Not all the ones from Israel, these are Israel." In the second place Rom 7:15, a very close parallel to the grammatical *structure* of Rom 9:6b, has οὐ in the same anterior position as here but there it definitely modifies the second clause: οὐ γὰρ ὃ θέλω τοῦτο πράσσω, ἀλλ᾽ ὃ μισῶ τοῦτο ποιῶ. The οὐ in Rom 7:15 cannot modify θέλω because that would make Paul say: "I practice what I do not will." But this is tantamount to what Paul says in the next clause ("what I hate this I do") which is intended to be a contrast (ἀλλ᾽) not a repetition. Therefore the only feasible construction of Rom 7:15 is, *"What I want, this I do not do*, but what I hate this I do." Therefore, the similarly positioned οὐ in Rom 9:6b very probably negates the clause "these are Israel."

Also the demonstrative pronoun οὗ τοι has its parallel in the τοῦτο of Rom 7:15. The force of this redundant pronoun is to put heavy emphasis on what is being negated. Hence: "What I want, *this very thing* I fail to do." And in Rom 9:6b the stress can be shown by the translation, "For all those from Israel, *these are* certainly not Israel." The impression created is that πάντες οἱ ἐξ ᾽Ισραήλ was a popular catch-phrase designating those who would be the beneficiaries of the Messianic salvation, namely, all Israelites. If this were true then the word of God *has* fallen, since many Israelites are accursed and cut off from the Messiah. So Paul asserts emphatically *these* are not Israel, that is, πάντες οἱ ἐξ ᾽Ισραήλ are *not* the group to whom salvation was assured by God's word.

This confirms Murray's argument that Paul's main goal in Rom 9:6b-13 was *not* to prove that God freely elected the *nation* of Israel, but rather his goal was to establish a *principle* by which he could explain how individual Israelites were accursed and yet the word of God had not fallen. What Rom 9:6b proves is that in Paul's mind the election of Isaac over Ishmael and Jacob over Esau established an *ongoing principle* whereby God elects unconditionally the beneficiaries of his blessing not only in the establishment of the nation Israel by Jacob and his sons, but also within that very nation so that "all those from Israel, these are *not* Israel." Since the unconditional election of Israelites from within (physical) Israel to be (true, spiritual) Israel cannot be construed as an election to "theocratic privileges" (for all physical Israel has those), and since the immediately preceding distinction made between some Israelites and others (Rom 9:3-5) was that some are accursed and cut off from Christ, therefore we must conclude that Paul views "the purpose of God according to election" (9:11c) as a purpose to be free from human influence not only in the

determination of historical roles but also in the determination of who within Israel are saved and who are not.

3.223 The vocabulary and structure of Romans 9:6b-8

Further contextual evidence that Paul is thinking in terms of election unto eternal salvation is found in the vocabulary and structure of Rom 9:6b-8. The corresponding elements in the structure become clear when printed as follows:



- 6b. For all the ones from Israel, these are not Israel;
- 7a. neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are all children
- 7b. but in Isaac shall your seed be called (Gen 21:12)
- 8a. That is, the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God
- 8b. but the children of promise are counted as seed.

The "that is" of 8a introduces Paul's clarification of what he argued in 6b-7. Verse 8 is not simply an interpretation of the Old Testament reference in 7b (as in Rom 10:6-8), but is a restatement and interpretation of all of 6b-7. The evidence for this is the way 8b corresponds to 7b, and 8a corresponds to 6b and 7a. The reason we know 8a corresponds not only to 7a but also to 6b is that the distinctive grammatical structure of 8a is identical to the structure of 6b (note the anterior negative particle and the redundant demonstrative pronoun):

6b οὐ γὰρ οἱ ἐξ Ἰσραήλ οὗτοι Ἰσραήλ

8a οὐ τὰ τέκνα τῆς σαρκὸς ταῦτα τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ

The intended paralleling of "all those from Israel" with "the children of the flesh," and "these are not Israel" with "these are not children of God" is unmistakable. The implication of this interpretative paralleling is that Paul is not abandoning his initial concern expressed in 6b, namely, a concern with distinctions *within* Israel. Therefore it goes against Paul's intention to construe

"children of God" in 9:8a to refer to persons who are "bound to God by all those ties which have been the privilege and characteristic of the chosen race" (Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 242). This view not only contradicts the parallelism that exists between "children of God" in 9:8a and a limited group *within* the chosen race in 9:6b; it also contradicts Paul's uniform usage of τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ. Everywhere else the term occurs in Paul (Rom 8:16, 17, 21; Eph 5:1; Phil 2:15) it refers to believers. The same is true for the synonymous phrase υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ (Rom 8:14, 19; 9:26; 2 Cor 6:18; Gal 3:26; 4:5). Therefore, whether Paul sees the election of Isaac (Rom 9:7b) as the election of an individual to salvation or as the election of his posterity for a historical task, the *principle* of unconditional election is immediately *applied* by Paul to the present concern, namely, who in reality does constitute true, spiritual "Israel" (9:6b), whose salvation is guaranteed by God's word? If not all physical descendants of Abraham, who are the "children of God"?

The answer Paul gives in Rom 9:8b is "the children of the promise are reckoned as seed." Besides the immediate context, three other texts in Paul (Gal 3:26-29; 4:21-31; Rom 2:25-29) offer valuable evidence for interpreting this sentence. It is clear from the parallelism of "children of God" and "seed" in 9:8 that "seed" here (unlike 9:7a) refers to the same spiritual group within Israel as "children of God" in 9:8a and the second "Israel" of 9:6b. The sequence of thought in Gal 3:26-29 confirms this identification of "children of God" and "seed of Abraham." In Gal 3:26 Paul argues that "in Christ Jesus you are all *sons of God* through faith" and concludes in 3:29, "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's *seed*, heirs according to promise." This text confirms, therefore, not only the identity of "children of God" and "seed of Abraham" but also confirms our contention earlier that Paul's reference in 9:8 is not to a group with *theocratic* or merely *historical privileges* (i.e. physical Israel) but rather to persons who are heirs of *eternal salvation.*

Such persons are called "children of promise" (9:8b) as opposed to "children of flesh" (9:8a). The term "children of promise" occurs only one other place in Paul, Gal 4:28. Since the subject matter of the Galatians context, like the Roman context, is the implication of the births of Isaac and Ishmael for Paul's contemporaries, it would be very unlikely that the rare term "children of promise" would carry significantly different meanings in these two contexts. In Gal 4 Paul sees an allegorical (4:24) lesson for his contemporary situation in the ancient fact that Ishmael "the son of the slave [Hagar] was born according to the flesh, but [Isaac] the son of the free woman [Sarah] was born through promise"

(4:23). Paul's application goes as follows: "Now we, brothers, like Isaac are *children of promise* (κατὰ Ἰσαὰκ ἐπαγγελίας τέκνα ἐστέ). But just as the one born according to the flesh persecuted the one born according to the Spirit, so it is also now" (4:28f).

The meaning of the term "children of promise" becomes clear when we compare Gal 4:23 and 4:29. In 4:23 the contrast is between the child born "according to the flesh" (κατὰ σάρκα) and the child born "through promise" (δι᾽ ἐπαγγελίας). In 4:29 the contrast is between the child born "according to the flesh" (κατὰ σάρκα) and the one born "according to the Spirit" (κατὰ πνεῦμα). Note that "according to the Spirit" stands in the place of "through promise." Two inferences may be drawn: first, the term "children of promise" does not mean "promised children" or "children who are heirs of the promise," but rather "children born by or through promise." A "child of promise" is a child whose existence is owing to "the creative power of the divine promise." Second, the term κατὰ πνεῦμα in Gal 4:29 signifies that the power of the promise is the power of the Spirit. To be born "through promise" involves being born "according to the Spirit." Thus, as Luz argues. Paul understands God's promise as a word which effects its own purpose (see note 28).

Note that in Gal 4:28 Christians are "children of promise" (κατὰ Ἰσαάκ). That is, the correspondence is not exact. The birth spoken of concerning Isaac was his actual physical (though miraculous) birth; the birth spoken of concerning Christians (Gal 4:29) is their conversion (their adoption through the Spirit to be sons of God, Rom 8:14). In a similar way the "children of promise" in Rom 9:8b need not correspond exactly to Isaac (9:7b). But there is a real and decisive correspondence: just as Isaac was a child of promise in that God willed in advance for him to be the heir of the covenant promises and then worked sovereignly ("*I* will come!" 9:9) to fulfill his will, so also God wills in advance for particular individuals within Israel to be his "children" and then by his Spirit sovereignly begets them anew. Thus the *principle* of unconditional election, evident in God's choice of Isaac to be heir of the covenant, is applied now to Paul's contemporaries to explain how it can be that only "some" (Rom 11:14) Israelites are saved and yet the promissory word (9:6a) or purpose (9:11c) of God has not fallen. God's promissory word has not fallen precisely because it is an "electing purpose" which does not depend at all on human "willing" or "running" and which therefore irresistibly accomplishes its goal by itself alone.

Besides the immediate context and the analogous texts in Gal 3:26-29 and 4:21-

29, we will look at one other text to confirm our interpretation of Rom 9:8. Romans 2:25-29 is linked to Rom 9:8 in three ways: subject matter, vocabulary and grammatical structure. Each text refers in its own terms to the fact that not all Israel is Israel (9:6b) or not every Jew is a Jew (2:28). The vocabulary link is the word λογίζομαι. Romans 9:8b says that "children of promise are *counted as* seed." Romans 2:26 says, "If the uncircumcised man keeps the just requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be *counted as* circumcision?" It is the same paradox in both texts: being (truly) circumcised does not depend on being circumcised; being a (true) seed does not depend on being a seed. The saving spiritual reality depends on a "counting" or "reckoning" which God performs, not man. One final confirmation that Paul is in fact thinking along the same lines in Rom 2:25-29 and in Rom 9:6-8 is found in the similar distinctive grammatical constructions:

Rom 2:28a	οὐ	γὰρ	ὁ ἐν τῷ φανερῷ (Ἰουδαῖος)	Ἰουδαῖός ἔστιν
28b	οὐδὲ		ἡ ἐν τῷ φανερῷ ἐν σαρκὶ (περιτομὴ)	περιτομή (ἐστιν)
9:6b	οὐ	γὰρ	οἱ ἐξ Ἰσραήλ	οὗτοι Ἰσραήλ
7a	οὐδ᾽		ὅτι εἰσὶν σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ	πάντες τέκνα
8	οὐ		τα τεκνα της σαρκὸς	ταῦτα τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ

We may conclude, therefore, from the logical structure of Rom 9:6b-8, its vocabulary and other analogous texts in Paul, that Paul is by no means concerned only with nations or merely with the *historical* destinies of persons and peoples. The evidence is overwhelmingly in favor of the view that Paul's concern is for the *eternal* destinies of those *within* the nation Israel who are saved and who are accursed.

3.224 The significance of Romans 9:14-23

Erich Dinkier ("Praedestination," 88) is right when he says, "In the following section, Rom 9:14-23, Paul defends the divine election and makes clear that its real meaning is to be seen not in the election of an empirical people as a whole, but in the election of individuals." Similarly Ernst Kaesemann says concerning the view that only peoples and not individuals are in view, "The example of Pharaoh [9:14-18] will absolutely not allow such an understanding" (my translation of *Roemer*, p 253). The detailed verification of these contentions will be presented in Chapters Nine and Ten.

3.225 Jewish antecedents of Paul's teaching

Gerhard Maier has provided a very helpful analysis of the issue of predestination and free will in a key segment of Paul's Jewish milieu. His book is entitled *Mensch und freier Wille nach den juedischen Religionsparteien zwischen Ben Sira und Paulus* (1971). On pages 351-81 he argues successfully for the position 1) that Paul stands within a tradition of predestination rooted in Old Testament teachings which developed through Sirach (33:7-15) to its most radical form embracing individuals and salvation in Qumran (1 QS 3:15-4:26; 11:10f) which offers the closest analogies to Paul's own statements; and 2) that Paul formulates his own position in Rom 9 in conscious opposition to the pharisaic insistence (expressed, e.g., in Ps Sol 9:4,5 but going back also to Sirach 15:11ff) that free will is a prerequisite of accountability if God is to be righteous (see note 16).

Another brief and helpful overview of the teaching on predestination and human accountability in Paul's environment is an excursus on pp 98-101 of Erich Dinkler's essay, "Praedestination bei Paulus." Like Maier, Dinkier is impressed with the similarity between Rom 9 and Qumran on the issue of predestination. (He cites 1 QS 3:15-21; 11:7f, 10f, 15-22.) But Dinkier also raises the question whether perhaps the teachings of Jesus may also have given direction to Paul on this issue: "The thought of election and predestination together with an assumption of individual responsibility is found also in the proclamation of Jesus. To be sure Jesus speaks in pictures and parables and not in abstract concepts and so does not present the paradox as sharply as Paul does. Yet, as K. Stendahl ['The Called and the Chosen'] has impressively demonstrated, it can be found in sayings like Mt 22:14, 'Many are called, but few are chosen'" (101).

What is important to stress at this stage of our study is that Dinkler's survey and Maier's very plausible historical orientation of Paul's view within his own

religious setting show that the interpretation of Rom 9:6-13 which I have argued for in this chapter should not be faulted as a *modernizing* distortion or as the result of a dogmatically tendentious exegesis which ignores the original contextual and historical realities.

4. Conclusion

In answer to the question how it can be that many individuals within Israel are accursed, cut off from Christ (Rom 9:1-5), Paul says it is not because the word of God has fallen (9:6a); on the contrary, God's expressed purpose remains firm (9:11c). The reason this situation does not mean the failure of God's word is that his purpose expressed in that word never has been to guarantee the salvation of every Israelite. It is an "electing purpose" by which God aims to preserve his complete freedom in determining who will be the beneficiaries of his *saving* promises, who will be the "Israel" within Israel (9:6b). It is therefore a purpose maintained by means of the predestination of individuals to their respective eternal destinies.

The interpretation which tries to restrict this predestination or unconditional election to nations rather than individuals or to historical tasks rather than eternal destinies must ignore or distort the problem posed in Rom 9:1-5, the individualism of 9:6b, the vocabulary and logical structure of 9:6b-8, the closely analogous texts elsewhere in Paul, and the implications of 9:14-23. The position is exegetically untenable.

Paul's solution to the problem of 9:1-5 is that "all those from Israel are not Israel" (9:6b). Within the context of Rom 9 this means that God maintains his sovereign purpose of election by determining before they are born who will belong to the "saved" among Israel. And this determination is not based on what any man is or wills or does (9:11,12,16), but solely on God whose word or call effects what he purposes (9:12b). For this reason Paul is confident that God's word has not fallen but is in fact working out God's sovereign purpose even in the unbelief of Paul's kinsmen.

4.
Exodus 33:19 in Its Old Testament Context

1. The problem

Before analyzing in detail the structure of Rom 9:14-18 (see Chapters Five and Nine) it is necessary to make a foray into Old Testament exegesis. In Rom 9:14 Paul denies that anything he has said implies unrighteousness in God. Then in 9:15 he writes, "For to Moses [God] says, 'I will have mercy on whomever I have mercy and I will have compassion on whomever I have compassion.'" There is a lot of disagreement about how Paul understands this quotation from Ex 33:19.

M. Lagrange (*Romains*, 233) argues that Paul construes the quotation as a particular act of mercy toward Moses rather than a general principle about God's activity: "The authentic reading, τῷ Μωϋσεῖ γὰρ λέγει, puts the person of Moses in stronger relief than if Paul had said, τῷ γὰρ Μωϋσεῖ λέγει, which could have passed for a simple citation. According to Juelicher and Kuehl, Moses is viewed as the legislator to whom God revealed his plan. But the contrast with Pharaoh [Rom 9:17] shows rather that Moses is of interest here for his own person. If anyone would be able, by his admirable virtues, to weigh heavily in the divine balances, it would be Moses. But it is precisely to him that God says: ἐλεήσω ὃν ἂν ἐλεῶ...." On the other side Heinrich Schlier (*Roemerbrief*, 295) contends that "Paul ignores the [OT] context and... raises the sentence to a general self-expression of God concerning the fact and right of his own decision." Others, of course (e.g. Calvin, *Romans*, 204), agree that the quotation is a general principle but deny that this ignores the Old Testament context. Finally some argue that the point of the quotation for Paul is that in it he found "the proclamation of Yahweh's name" —a fact which takes on special importance when one notices that the word to Pharaoh in Rom 9:17 also aims at proclaiming God's "name." In deciding which, if any, of these interpretations is how Paul understands Ex 33:19, a necessary first step is to try to understand the Old Testament text on its own terms. This, together with a subsequent analysis of Paul's own context, will, we hope, enable us to decide how Paul used this Old Testament quotation in Rom 9:15 and whether that use accords with the Old Testament meaning itself.

Since I want to interpret the same text Paul did, my focus will not be on the history of the traditions behind the canonical text, but rather on the final form of the text in its present context. But I also want to avoid, as far as I can, reading Paul's theology into Ex 33:19. Thus I agree with August Dillmann (*Exodus*, 385)

when he says, "The use of the expression ['I will have mercy on whom I have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion'] in Rom 9:15 cannot determine its meaning in its original [OT] context." Accordingly my primary goal in this chapter is to discover the meaning of Ex 33:19 in its present Old Testament context.

2. The text

The context of Ex 33:12-34:9 is crucial for understanding Ex 33:19 and therefore merits a careful reading at the outset. Following is my own translation of the Hebrew with the most significant renderings of the LXX in parentheses.

33:12a And Moses said to Yahweh, "Behold, you say to me, 'Cause this people to go up' [from Sinai to the promised land, cf 33:1],

12b but you do not make known to me whom you will send with me [cf 32:34; 33:2; 23:20].

12c And you said to me, 'I know you by name [MT: בְּשֵׁם; LXX: παρὰ πάντας, cf 17c]

12d and also you have found favor in my sight.'

13a Now, please, if I have found favor in your sight,

13b then cause me to know, please, your way [MT: דְּרָכֶךָ; LXX: σεαυτόν]

13c so that I will know you,

13d in order that I might go on finding favor in your sight.

13e And behold that this nation is your people" [LXX: ἵνα γνῶ ὅτι λαός σου τὸ ἔθνος τὸ μέγα τοῦτο].

14a And he [Yahweh] said, "My presence [MT: פָּנַי; LXX: αὐτός = I myself] will go,

14b and I will give you [singular] rest."

15a And [Moses] said to him, "If your presence [LXX: αὐτὸς σύ] does not go,

15b then do not cause us [LXX: με] to go up from this place.

16a For how shall it then be known [LXX: adds ἀληθῶς] that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people?

16b Is it not in your going with us that we, I and your people, are distinguished [MT:וְנִפְלִינוּ; LXX: ἐνδοξασθήσομαι] from every people which is on the face of the earth?" [cf 34:10].

17a And Yahweh said to Moses, "Even this word which you spoke I will do,

17b because you found favor in my sight

17c and I know you by name" [cf verse 12c].

18 And he [Moses] said, "Cause me to see your glory."

19a And he [Yahweh] said, "I will cause to pass before your face all my goodness [MT: טוּבִי; LXX: δόξῃ μου];

19b and I will proclaim the name Yahweh before you [cf 34:5f].

19c And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious [MT: וְחַנֹּתִי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר אָחֹן; LXX: καὶ ἐλεήσω ὃν ἂν ἐλεῶ];

19d and I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful" [MT: וְרִחַמְתִּי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר אֲרַחֵם; LXX: καὶ οἰκτιρήσω ὃν ἂν οἰκτίρω].

20a And he [Yahweh] said, "You will not be able to see my face

20b because a man will not see me [LXX: πρόσωπον μου] and live."

21 But Yahweh said, "Behold there is a place by me and you shall stand on the rock.

22 And it shall be that as my glory passes by I will put you in the cleft of the rock and will cover you with my hand until I have passed by;

23 and I will remove my hand, and you will see my back, but my face shall not be seen."

34:1-4 [Omitted: Moses ascends Mount Sinai with newly cut tablets to meet Yahweh.]

5a And Yahweh descended in a cloud and he stood with him there,

5b and he proclaimed the name of Yahweh [MT: = 33:19b וַיִּקְרָא בְשֵׁם יהוָה; LXX: ἐκάλεσεν τῷ ὀνόματι κυρίου].

6a And Yahweh passed before his face [cf 33:19a,22]

6b and proclaimed, "Yahweh, Yahweh [LXX: only one κύριος], a God merciful and gracious [cf 33:19cd], slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness [MT: וְרַב־חֶסֶד וֶאֱמֶת; LXX: πολυέλεος καὶ ἀληθινὸς],

7a keeping steadfast love [MT: חֶסֶד; LXX: δικαιοσύνην] unto thousands,

7b forgiving iniquity, rebellion and sin.

7c But he shall not leave completely unpunished [MT: וְנַקֵּה לֹא יְנַקֶּה; LXX: οὐ καθαριεῖ τὸν ἔνοχον],

7d visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the sons and upon the sons' sons, upon the third and upon the fourth" (LXX: adds γενεάν].

8 And Moses hastened and bowed his head to the ground and worshipped.

9a And he said, "If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord,

9b then may the Lord go in our midst.

9c For [MT: כִּי; LXX: γάρ] it is a stiff-necked people [cf 33:5].

9d But you shall forgive our iniquities and our sins,

9e and you shall take us for an inheritance" [MT: וּנְחַלְתָּנוּ; LXX: ἐσόμεθα σοι].

It is probably pointless to try to decide whether Paul was familiar with this passage in the Hebrew or the Greek, for he no doubt "knew both the Massora and the Greek translation." To be sure Rom 9:15 is identical to the Greek version of Ex 33:19cd, but as S.R. Driver (*Exodus*, 363) says, "The quotation (from the LXX) in Rom 9:15 expresses the sense [of the Hebrew] exactly." What this sense is I will examine more closely below, but first let us orient ourselves in the wider context.

3. The context of Exodus 32-34

Brevard Childs (*Exodus*, 557f) provides a concise description of the larger literary unit in which our text is found. Concerning Ex 32-34 he writes,

> First of all, the chapters have been placed within an obvious theological framework of sin and forgiveness. Chapter 32 recounts the breaking of the covenant [the golden calf incident]; ch 34 relates its restoration. Moreover, these chapters are held together by a series of motifs which are skillfully woven into a unifying pattern. The tablets [of the ten commandments] are received, smashed in ch 32, recut, and restored in ch 34. Moses' intercession for Israel begins in ch 32, continues in ch 33, and comes to a climax in ch 34 [verses 9, 10]. The theme of the presence of God which is the central theme of ch 33 joins, on the one hand, to the prior theme of disobedience in ch 32, and, on the other hand, to the assurance of forgiveness in ch 34 [verses 6, 9].

In Ex 32:9f God accused Israel of being a stiff-necked people and told Moses, "Let me alone that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them." Moses pleads with God not to destroy the people because, on the one hand, the Egyptians would then gloat over their demise and ascribe evil intent to Yahweh (32:12, cf Num 14:15f) and, on the other hand, God swore by his own self to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel that their descendants should inherit the promised land (32:13). So God relents from the intention to fully destroy Israel (32:14) and chastises them with slaughter by the sons of Levi (32:25-29).

Then again Moses pleads with God to forgive the sin of Israel: "...and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written" (32:32). God responds that each man will bear his own sin (32:33) and that Moses should go ahead and lead the people to the promised land (32:34; 33:1). But Moses still did not have from God the promise he wanted, for God said, "I will not go up with you, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people... if for a single moment I would go up with you, I would consume you" (33:3,5). Instead of his own presence in their midst God promises that his angel will go before them (32:34; 33:2). Moses is still not satisfied with Yahweh's concession. After the reference to Moses' communion with Yahweh in the tent of meeting outside the camp (33:7-11), Moses takes up his intercession for the people again in 33:12,

where our text begins.

4. The context of Exodus 33:12-34:9

Exodus 33:12-34:9 has a twofold theme. On the one hand there is Moses' prayer that God himself go up to the promised land in the midst of Israel his people (33:12b,13e,15-16; 34:9). On the other hand there is Moses' prayer to know God and to see his glory (33:13a-c,18)—a prayer which is answered in 34:5-7 with the theophany atop Mt. Sinai. The relationship between these two themes in 33:12-34:9 is the key to understanding this literary unit.

Moses had pursued God relentlessly on behalf of idolatrous Israel ever since the incident of the golden calf. Now in 33:16 we see what he is truly seeking. His aim is that God himself go up with the people, but not only that. He desires that the people be restored to God's full favor (16a) and that God distinguish Israel as his own unique people from all the peoples on the face of the earth (16b). In the end God does restore the covenant and he promises to do just what Moses asked (34:10; 33:17).

Moses was aware of what a positive response to his request would involve. He was asking that a stiff-necked and idolatrous nation be distinguished above all the nations as God's own people! It was, in a sense, an unthinkable request in view of what God had said in 33:5—"You are a stiff-necked people; if for a single moment I should go among you, I would consume you." It is precisely the apparent presumption of Moses' prayer which demanded the second theme of 33:12-34:9, namely, Moses' desire to know God's way and his glory (33:13,18). In other words, the magnitude of his request drives Moses to probe into the very heart of God, as it were, to assure himself that God is in his deepest nature the kind of God who could "pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for [his] inheritance" (34:9de). Moses is not yet content with God's promise in 33:17a, "Even the word which you spoke I will do." He responds with the plea, "Cause me to see your glory." In view of 1) the following verse, which relates the revelation of this glory to God's goodness and his mercy, and 2) its fulfillment in 34:5-7 in terms of God's moral character, and 3) the inference which Moses draws in 34:9, it is impossible to construe Moses' request in 33:18 as an expression of a desire mystically to enjoy God's essence. Rather the request to see God's glory should be understood in this context as a desire to have God confirm his astonishing willingness to show his favor to a stiff-necked, idolatrous people (33:16f). The confirmation is to consist in a revelation of that

glory which is the ground or source of such great mercy (cf Section 6.3).

It is clear then that the theme of God's accompanying Israel and distinguishing her above all the nations and the theme of God's personal revelation to Moses are intimately related. The final proof of this is in 34:9 where, after having received the revelation of God's name (34:5-7), Moses repeats his earlier request that God would go up in their midst. Then, as if to stake everything on the mercy that had just been revealed, he grounds this request with the words "for it is a stiff-necked people." In view of the mercy, grace, love, faithfulness and forgiveness declared in 34:6, Moses is emboldened to call on God to demonstrate his great mercy on Israel precisely because she is in need of mercy as a stiff-necked people. Moses exploits the grace of God to the full and lets it shine in all its freedom in that he appeals to no merit in the people or in himself and to no extenuating circumstances; but rather he expresses his certainty that on the basis of God's promise (33:17) and his revealed nature (34:6-7), the sins of Israel will be forgiven and God will make Israel his own personal inheritance (34:9de). Moses' anxiety, therefore, about the future of Israel is resolved through a personal revelation of God as a God who is merciful and gracious. *Who* God is grounds the assurance of *how* he will act. With this general picture of the Old Testament context before us we may now attempt to determine the specific meaning of Ex 33:19cd.

5. The grammar and vocabulary of Exodus 33:19cd

J.P. Lange (*Exodus*, 141) translates Ex 33:19c "I have been gracious (or) am gracious to whom I will be gracious" and comments on the sentence thus: "It distinguishes two periods of time.... Accordingly the Hebrew expression affirms: 'My grace is in such a sense consistent and persistent that wherever I show it, it is based on profound reasons belonging to the past.'" Lange's translator quite rightly calls this translation and comment "singularly infelicitous," for "the two verbs [וְחַנֹּתִי and אָחֹן] in the Hebrew are both future [i.e. imperfect] (the first made such by the Vav Consecutive), so that Lange's statement, that the text 'distinguishes two periods of time'... conveys a misrepresentation." It is not necessary that there be any particular reference to time in the imperfect and converted perfect tenses of 33:19cd. This "tense" in Hebrew can refer to past, present or future action; the emphasis falls not on the time but on the incompleteness of the action. Whether we construe the verbs to refer, on the one hand, to a specific act of grace in the future—say, to Moses in the theophany of 34:5-7—or, on the other hand, to the general principle by which God always dispenses grace, will depend on how we relate verse 19cd to 19b. (See Section 6.)

Brevard Childs (*Exodus*, 596), J.P. Hyatt (*Exodus*, 317) and S. R. Driver (*Exodus*, 362), among others, have pointed out that to understand the intention of Ex 33:19cd one must recognize that it is an example of the Hebrew formula called *idem per idem*. Other examples of the idiom are Ex 4:13 ("I pray, Lord, send now by the hand you will send"); Ex 16:23 ("Bake what you will bake, boil what you will boil"); 1 Sam 23:13 ("They went about where they went about"); 2 Sam 15:20 ("Shall I make you go with us while I go where I go"); 2 Kgs 8:1 ("Sojourn where you sojourn"). By leaving the action unspecified the force of this idiom is to preserve the freedom of the subject to perform the action in whatever way he pleases. By simply repeating the action without adding any stipulations the *idem per idem* formula makes clear that the way the action is executed is determined by the will of the subject within the limits of prevailing circumstances. Therefore when God says, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful," he is stressing that there are no stipulations outside his own counsel or will which determine the

disposal of his mercy and grace. As Childs (*Exodus*, 596) says, "The circular *idem per idem* formula of the name—I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious—is closely akin to the name in Ex 3:14—I am who I am—and testifies by its tautology to the freedom of God in making known his self-contained being."

This understanding of the grammatical construction of 33:19cd coheres with the vocabulary of the propositions, namely the basic meaning of grace and mercy. Against K.W. Neubauer, Walther Zimmerli argues that God's graciousness (חֵן) is always a free gift rather than a kind of social obligation between lord and servant. H.J. Stoebe (*THAT*, I, 595) confirms this view of God's freedom in being gracious by pointing out that while grace is often a response to man's plight and plea (cf Ps 4:2; 6:3; 9:14; 27:7; 30:11; 41:5 etc) nevertheless (as the "perhaps" of Amos 5:15 and 2 Sam 12:22 shows) God remains sovereignly free in his decision to bestow grace or not.

Given the nature of Hebrew parallelism and the stereotyped character of the pair, "be gracious (חנן) and show mercy (רחם)" (Ex 34:6; Joel 2:13; Jon 4:2; Ps 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; 145:8; 2 Chr 30:9; 2 Kgs 13:23; Isa 27:11; 30:18 etc), we should not demand a major distinction in meaning between the two halves of Ex 33:19cd.

Nevertheless, by way of confirmation, one could note the following use of רחם ("show mercy"). In Isa 54:8,10 and Lam 3:32 "the proclivity of God to show חֶסֶד ('loving kindness') is apparently the precondition of his actual bestowal of mercy (רחם)" (*THAT*, II, *766*). Now this might seem to diminish the freedom of God in the bestowal of his mercy since the concept of חֶסֶד is often construed to grow out of the covenant between God and Israel and thus express mutual obligations of both partners. For example, Bultmann (*TDNT*, II, 479) says, "In the OT חֶסֶד denotes an attitude of man or God which arises out of a mutual relationship.... The reciprocity of the חֶסֶד obligation is the content of the covenant (1 Sam 20:8)." But in his article on חֶסֶד in *THAT*, I, 615, H.J. Stoebe argues from Deut 7:7-9 as follows: "The observation that *hesed* is behavior that results from the covenant is formally correct, but too narrow. Precisely in the older parts of Deuteronomy *berīt* is subordinated to God's oath to the fathers and is thus anchored in a *free decision* of Yahweh and has a promissory character. Even here in Deut 7:8 the love of God is given precedence and in general *ʾhb*, 'love,' has become equivalent to *hesed*...." Therefore God's חֶסֶד (and the "mercy," רחס, which flows from it), understood in its most fundamental sense,

precedes and grounds the covenant rather than vice versa. It is that which moved God in his sovereign freedom to graciously initiate a relationship with Israel. If this חֶסֶד is the only precondition of God's "bestowing mercy" (רחם) then it too, along with the bestowal of grace (חנן), is owing solely to the sovereignty of God.

Therefore both the grammar (*idem per idem*) and the vocabulary (grace and mercy) of Ex 33:19cd cohere to stress that in dispensing mercy and grace God is dependent on nothing but his own free and sovereign choice.

6. The glory, goodness and name of Yahweh in relation to Exodus 33:19cd

6.1

We turn now to the relationship between Ex 33:19cd and the preceding clauses of verses 18 and 19: "And [Moses] said, 'Cause me to see your glory.' And [Yahweh] said, 'I will cause to pass before your face all my goodness (טוּבִי; LXX: δόξῃ), and I will proclaim the name of Yahweh before you, and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful.'" The commentators are divided on how to construe the relationship between the revelation of God's name (19b) and the declaration that he will be gracious to whom he will be gracious (19c). Keil and Delitzsch (Pentateuch, II, 237) represent one group when they assert, "The words... וְחַנֹּתִי [19cd] although only connected with the previous clause by the copulative waw, are to be understood in a causative sense, as expressing the reason why Moses' request was granted, viz that it was an act of unconditional grace and compassion on the part of God, to which no man, not even Moses, could lay any just claim" (so Noth, *Exodus*, 258 and Beer, *Exodus*, 159). Brevard Childs and George Bush argue persuasively against this interpretation, replacing it with the view that 19cd does not ground the revelation of God's name to Moses but rather interprets the essence of the name. There are basically two arguments. First, Childs (*Exodus*, 596, 563) points out the parallel between the *idem per idem* formula here and the same formula in Ex 3:14 where it interprets the name of Yahweh. Second, and this seems to me decisive, Bush points out that the very same pair of words ("be gracious" and "show mercy") used in 19cd is used in 34:6 as an explication of the name of Yahweh: "And Yahweh passed before his face and proclaimed: 'Yahweh, Yahweh, a God *merciful* and *gracious*....'" Bush (*Notes*, I, 239) is therefore correct in concluding that "the meaning [of 33:19b-d] is: 'I will proclaim myself in passing by thee as the Lord whose prerogative it is to be gracious to whom I will be gracious and to have mercy upon whom I will have mercy. This shall be the substance of what I will proclaim respecting the import of that great and fearful name.' The clause [verse 19cd] thus understood is therefore a mere brief compend of the more expanded declaration in ch 34:6, 7."

The parallels between the promise of theophany in 33:19ff and its fulfillment in 34:5-7 can be taken a step farther. Not only does the pair, "grace" and "mercy," define Yahweh's name in 33:19 and 34:6, but even the indefiniteness of the *idem per idem* formula of 33:19 is preserved in the peculiar content of the formulation of God's character in 34:6, 7. Its peculiarity and indefiniteness are seen when we contrast it with its close parallel in Ex 20:5, 6.

Ex 20:5, 6	Ex 34:6, 7
I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of *those who hate me*, but showing steadfast love to thousands, *to those who love me and keep my commandments.*	Yahweh, Yahweh, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in loving kindness and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love to thousands, forgiving iniquity and rebellion and sin, but he shall not leave completely unpunished, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the sons and upon the sons' sons, upon the third and upon the fourth generation.

The two basic differences between these two versions are ones that link 34:6, 7 very closely to 33:19cd. First the order: unlike Ex 20:5,6, in Ex 34:6,7 the declaration of grace *precedes* that of judgment and is expanded sixfold. Thus the stress is put on grace. This recalls 33:19cd where *only* grace and mercy are mentioned (it does not say "I will visit iniquity upon whom I will visit iniquity"). Second, 34:6, 7 omits all reference to the character of those who are shown mercy and those who are punished. Exodus 20:5,6 specifies these as "those who love me" and "those who hate me," but 34:6,7 remains indefinite (cf Ps 99:8). This indefiniteness corresponds perfectly to the indefiniteness of the *idem per idem* formula of 33:19cd. These parallels thus provide further confirmation of Bush's comment above that Ex 33:19cd "is a mere brief compend of the more expanded declaration in ch 34:6,7." Accordingly there is good ground for construing 33:19cd as an explication of the name of Yahweh (verse 19b), that is, of "his self, his real person."

6.2

Continuing our effort to understand the relationships between the propositions in Ex 33:18, 19 we now pose the question how the name of Yahweh (19b), which

has been defined as his sovereign freedom in dispensing grace (33:19cd; 34:6f), relates to the "goodness" of Yahweh in 19a and the "glory" of Yahweh which Moses asked to see (18) and which Yahweh promises will pass by (22a). The texts we must keep before us are the following:

Ex 33:18,19	Ex 34:5,6
And [Moses] said, "Cause me please to see your glory." And [Yahweh] said, "I will cause to pass before your face all my goodness, and I will proclaim the name of Yahweh before you, and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful."	And Yahweh descended in a cloud and stood with him there and he proclaimed the name of Yahweh. And Yahweh passed before his face and proclaimed: "Yahweh, Yahweh, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love unto thousands, forgiving iniquity, rebellion and sins...."

At least two facts suggest that the "goodness" of Yahweh in 33:19a is a moral rather than an aesthetic ("goodliness") term and that as such it is virtually tantamount to Yahweh's name in this context. First, the immediate sequence between "I will show my goodness" and "I will proclaim my name" leads us to think that God's "goodness" is part of this "proclamation" and thus not a visible manifestation. Second, there is a very close parallel between the promise of 33:19 and the fulfilment of 34:6:

Ex 33:19ab	Ex 34:6ab
I will cause to *pass before* your *face* all my goodness and I will *proclaim* the name of *Yahweh*...	Yahweh *passed before* his *face* and *proclaimed Yahweh*, Yahweh...

In this parallel, Yahweh himself has taken the place of the promised goodness, but nothing is said here of a visible appearance of Yahweh. Instead he "passes by" in the sense that his character or essential nature is made known to Moses in a personal encounter (34:5) and in the proclamation of his name. Herein then consists the "passing by" of God's goodness, namely in the revelation of his person or his name in terms of mercy, grace, steadfast love and forgiveness (34:6). This is confirmed by numerous texts where God's "goodness" consists in

his steadfast love (חסד) and mercy (רחם): Ps 86:5; 145:9; Isa 63:7 and many others cited in *THAT*, I, 663.

6.3

How then, we may ask next, does the name of God revealed in the "passing by" of his goodness and the revelation of his free grace, relate to his glory which Moses asked to see in 33:18? I have argued earlier (pp 80-81) that Moses' request in 33:18 was prompted by the amazing willingness of God, expressed in 33:17, to take a stiff-necked, idolatrous people and distinguish them as those on whom his favor rests (33:16). Therefore, while Moses' plea to see God's glory probably included a hope for some visible manifestation (cf 33:20-23) nevertheless what was clearly at the heart of Moses' request was a longing to know the glory of God's character from which flowed the mercy which he had just been promised. As the succeeding verses show it is precisely this moral aspect of God's glory which is revealed to Moses (33:19; 34:6,7) while the visible aspect is minimized (33:20-23). Therefore, when we consider carefully the larger context of Ex 33:12-34:9, we are inclined to construe the manifestation of God's glory as embracing the "passing by" of his goodness and the proclamation of his name.

A broad lexical study of the name (שֵׁם) and glory (כָּבוֹד) of God in the Old Testament supports this conclusion. Jonathan Edwards in his *Dissertation Concerning the End for Which God Created the World* (first published in 1765) demonstrated clearly that "God's *name* and his *glory*, at least very often, signify the same thing in Scripture." A.S. van der Woude in his article on שֵׁם (name) in *THAT*, II, 958, comes to the same conclusion.

7. Conclusion

Exodus 33:19cd ("I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion"), as a brief, preliminary declaration of the verbal theophany which follows in 34:6,7, constitutes a manifestation of God's *glory* (33:18), a "passing by" of his *goodness* (33:19a) and a proclamation of his *name* (33:19b). These three realities overlap in the present context so that we can say God's glory and his name consist fundamentally in his propensity to show mercy and his sovereign freedom in its distribution. Or to put it more precisely, *it is the glory of God and his essential nature mainly to dispense mercy (but also wrath, Ex 34:7) on whomever he pleases apart from any constraint originating outside his own will. This is the essence of what it means to he God. This is his name.*

Therefore, with regard to the varying views referred to in Section One of this chapter we may say the following. In its Old Testament context, Ex 33:19 is not merely a description of how God acted in any particular instance toward Moses in granting him a theophany or toward Israel in renewing the covenant. Rather it is a solemn declaration of *the nature of God*, or (which is the same thing) a proclamation of his *name and glory.* So the view of Luz, Mueller and Maier (see note 2) that Paul saw in Ex 33:19 a paraphrase of God's "name" is surely most in accord with the Old Testament context. Does the *Pauline* context bear this out? And if so, how does Rom 9:15 argue for the righteousness of God?

5.
The Justification of God: Romans 9:14-18 (Part I)

1. The text and the problem

14. a. What then shall we say?
    b. There is no unrighteousness with God, is there?
    c. By no means!

15. a. For to Moses he says, "I will have mercy on whomever I have mercy,
    b. and I will have compassion on whomever I have compassion."

16. a. Therefore, it is not of the one who wills nor of the one who runs
    b. but it is of God who has mercy.

17. a. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "For this very thing I raised you up:
    b. that I might demonstrate by you my power
    c. and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."

18. a. Therefore, on whom he wills he has mercy
    b. and whom he wills he hardens.

The surface structure of Rom 9:14-18 is fairly simple. In his customary manner Paul raises a possible objection to what he has just said, denies the objection and gives reasons for the denial. The reasons for his denial of the conclusion that God is unrighteous are given in two Old Testament quotations, each introduced by γάρ (15,17). After each of these quotations an inference is drawn (ἄρα οὖν, 16,18) about the way God acts in his righteousness. But as soon as a reader probes beneath this surface structure to the inner logic of Paul's thought, things are not so readily clear. The main problem is *how* the quotations of Ex 33:19 (Rom 9:15) and Ex 9:16 (Rom 9:17) help Paul answer the objection that God is unrighteous. As we shall see, numerous commentators think that, in fact, these quotations do not provide any argument for 9:14 and that, therefore, Paul was not even trying to answer the objection. But before we can address this chief issue, we must clarify for ourselves just what objection is raised in Rom 9:14. What had Paul said that for his opponent implied that God is unrighteous? And what view of righteousness lay behind the opponent's objection? Does Paul share this view of God's righteousness?

2. "There is no unrighteousness with God, is there?" (Romans 9:14b)

The grammatical form of this question creates a difficulty and yet signals a solution for understanding the word "unrighteousness." The question is expressed in a form which expects a negative answer (μή instead of οὐκ). Therefore, the difficulty is created that, on the one hand, the question is supposed to reflect an opponent's objection (why else even raise the problem?) but, on the other hand, *Paul's* opinion rather than the objector's comes to expression in the question. *Paul*, not the opponent, expects the negative answer. In the closest analogy to Rom 9:14 Paul does the very same thing: Rom 3:5, "If our unrighteousness confirms the righteousness of God, τί ἐροῦμεν; μὴ ἄδικος ὁθεὸς...;... μὴ γένοιτο." Here again the ostensible objection to Paul's theology is phrased in words which reflect his own attitude rather than the opponent's. In fact every place in Paul where μὴ γένοιτο answers a question stated in a negative form, the negative used in the question is μή (Rom 3:3f, 5f; 9:14f; 11:1, 11). We may conclude, therefore, that a typical rhetorical device of Paul is to introduce his opponent's objections in a form which already contains Paul's denial. Perhaps by this means Paul aims to keep his lips free from words which he considers blasphemous and thus avoids having to always insert κατὰ ἄνθρωπον λέλω after stating an opponent's view.

The recognition of this formal device helps us now to understand the meaning of ἀδικία (9:14b). It alerts us to the possibility that ἀδικία is carrying two meanings: the opponent's and Paul's. In other words, since Paul has not recorded the opponent's objection with stenographic fidelity but has expressed it in a form revealing his own position, we would not be surprised if the ἀδικία which Paul denounces in 9:14 involves aspects of his own concept of divine righteousness which may be different from his opponent's.

The safest way to decide what in Rom 9:6-13 had appeared unrighteous to Paul's opponent is to determine the link between 9:6-13 and Paul's response to the opponent in 9:14-18. That is, if Paul is responding to an objection to something he said in 9:6-13, we would expect that in his response he would refer to whatever it was that caused the offense. In fact this is just what he does. In 9:16 Paul draws the conclusion from Ex 33:19 that when a person receives mercy he

owes it neither to his willing nor his running, but wholly to God who has mercy. This virtually restates the assertion of 9:11,12, that the divine choice of Jacob over Esau was before they were born or had done any good or evil so that God's electing purpose might remain not from works, but wholly from God who calls. Nor is this the only link; also 9:18 ("he has mercy on whomever he wills and he hardens whomever he wills") unmistakably recalls, "Jacob I loved and Esau I hated" (9:13). We will not be far off, therefore, if we infer that the offense in 9:6-13 which evoked the charge of divine unrighteousness is Paul's assertion that God, in determining the beneficiaries of his mercy, does not base his decisions on any human distinctives that a person may claim by birth or effort. Therefore, the view of divine righteousness which the objection presupposes is that a righteous God must elect persons on the basis of their real and valuable distinctives, whether racial (Jewishness) or moral (keepers of the law). On this assumption God would indeed be unrighteous to elect Jacob over Esau "before they were born or had done anything good or evil."

If Paul shares his opponent's conception of divine righteousness, then no defense is possible. He can protest as he wills, but by definition the radical freedom Paul ascribes to God in election is in fact unrighteous. But on the face of it, at least, Paul does seem to try to defend the righteousness of God (cf γάρ in 9:15,17). Thus we recall an earlier point, namely, that in framing the question, "there is no unrighteousness with God, is there?" Paul may well ascribe to ἀδικία a meaning different from his opponent's. If so the peculiar references to Ex 33:19 (= Rom 9:15) and Ex 9:16 (= Rom 9:17) might have more integrity as *arguments* than is often thought. Can we find help here by analyzing the wider use of ἀδικία in Paul?

*Excursus—*Ἀδικία *in Paul*

The word occurs in Rom 1:18, 29; 2:8; 3:5; 6:13; 9:14; 1 Cor 13:6; 2 Cor 12:13; 2 Thess 2:10, 12; 2 Tim 2:19. What appears from these texts is that ἀδικία is not merely the opposite of δικαιοσύνη (Rom 3:5) but is also the opposite of "truth" (ἀλήθεια). Ἀδικία, therefore, is a disposition and conduct which contradict truth, particularly the truth about God, namely, that he is glorious above all creation and worthy of all honor, thanks, and trust. The person whose life does not conform to this truth is in the grip of ἀδικία.

The term appears twice in 2 Thess 2:9-12 where the final appearance of the

"Lawless One" and of Christ is described. The Lawless One will come "in all deception of *unrighteousness* [ἐν πάσῃ ἀδικίας] to those who are perishing, because they did not receive a love of the *truth* that they might be saved. On account of this, God sends to them a working of deceit that they might believe a lie in order that all who do not believe the *truth* but delight in *unrighteousness* [εὐδοκήσαντες τῇ ἀδικίᾳ] might be judged." Here the opposite of "believing the truth" is "taking pleasure in *unrighteousness."* And the "deceit" of the Lawless One which draws men away from a love of the truth is called "deceit of unrighteousness." We may infer, therefore, that ἀδικία necessarily includes deception and thus contradicts truth (about God in the Gospel, cf 2:13).

According to Rom 1:18 "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and ἀδικίαν of men who hold down the *truth* in ἀδικίᾳ." Unrighteousness is a disposition to reject and conceal the truth that God is worthy to be glorified and thanked above all creation (1:21). It is the power that inclines a person "to exchange the *truth* of God for a lie and worship and serve the creature above the creator" (1:25).

In Rom 2:6-8 the last judgment is described: "God will render to each according to his works: to those who in the patience of good work seek glory and honor and immortality (he will give) eternal life; but to those who from vain ambition disobey the *truth* but obey ἀδικία he will give wrath and fury." Here again ἀδικία is the opposite of truth—the truth that selfish ambition is folly and that a happy future can be found only in the glory and honor of the creator. In the grip of ἀδικία a person "holds down" this truth, and exalts himself, thus dishonoring his maker. His conduct contradicts the truth about God.

In 1 Cor 13:6 Paul says that love "does not rejoice in ἀδικία but rejoices together in the *truth*." Love is humble and is not driven by the "selfish ambition" (Rom 2:8) which distorts and "holds down the truth" (Rom 1:18). Therefore, love is a friend to truth and delights to bring its own actions into accord with reality. But this means it can take no pleasure in "unrighteousness" because unrighteousness, as we now see, is a disposition and conduct which contradict reality—the reality of God.

Finally, the parallel sentences of Rom 3:4-7 confirm this understanding of ἀδικία and provide us with a bridge to move from the human to the divine righteousness. Verses 5 and 7 are parallel. Verse 5 begins, "If our ἀδικία confirms the δικαιοσύνην of God..." while verse 7 begins, "If the *truth* of God

abounds to his glory in my falsehood...." Therefore, the person who is guilty of ἀδικία is living a lie (ψεύσματι, 3:4,7). And the righteousness of God is his truth, his unswerving commitment always to bring his actions into accord with the reality of his infinitely worthy glory (see Chapters Six-Eight). Precisely in this context the closest New Testament parallel to Rom 9:14b is found, namely Rom 3:5b: μὴ ἄδικος ὁ θεός. This is virtually synonymous with μὴ ἀδικία παρὰ τῷ θεῷ (9:14b).

I conclude, therefore, that the particular usage of ἀδικία seen in 2 Thess 2:10,12; Rom 1:18; 2:8, 3:5; 1 Cor 13:6 is very probably the one Paul has in view in Rom 9:14. If so, his assertion would be that God cannot be faulted with a disposition or conduct that contradict the truth of who he is. This truth is that he is infinitely glorious and worthy of all honor and thanks (Rom 1:21). God is totally devoted to uphold and display this truth in all his actions. If he failed to act in this way he would be unrighteous. This, I suggest, is what Paul asserts when he says, "There is no unrighteousness with God."

3. The defense of God's righteousness in predestination

We concluded in Chapter Three that in Rom 9:6-13 Paul teaches that God predestines individuals to their respective eternal destinies. The unconditionality of this election is judged by Paul's opponent to be unrighteous because when a righteous God makes his choices he must take into account the things that distinguish one person from another. As we have just seen, Paul does not share the opponent's narrow view of God's righteousness. If he did, he would indeed have to acknowledge that there is unrighteousness with God. But instead, it appears that Paul undertakes in 9:14-18 to exonerate God from the charge of unrighteousness. But is this in fact his intention?

It may be more a symptom of our own anti-rational age than the result of sound exegesis that an outcry against "Theodicy" echoes through the contemporary treatments of Rom 9. The titles of the books by Beyschlag, Kuehl, and Weber are virtually unthinkable today. One of the most forceful spokesmen against construing Rom 9:14ff as a theodicy is Anders Nygren (*Romans*, 365):

> The whole matter under discussion is how the righteousness of God... is manifested; and in such there is no place for unrighteousness. But in Paul's "By no means!" there is a more fundamental fact. Paul does not merely answer the question with a negative. He denies the propriety of the framing of the question.
>
> The question asked comes quite close to the traditional issue in theodicy. It is of interest to see how Paul by his answer completely rejects the issue. Otherwise we should have expected that, when the question was raised, he would have presented an array of arguments to defend the righteousness of God. But there is not a trace of that in Paul. We get the impression that the problem of theodicy does not even exist for him—and that for good reasons. For there is a basic fault in all that concerns theodicy: it measures God by human standards. But when man sets out to judge God's dealings by man's own standards, the results cannot be other than the conclusion that God's goodness is faulty.

> Paul proceeds in a wholly different manner. When he is faced with the question of the justice or injustice of God's dealings, he does not enter at all on any argument on the level of that issue. He simply disallows the question.

For Nygren, then, the γάρ introducing Rom 9:15 merely connects Paul's "rejection of the issue" (9:14) with an Old Testament text which shows that the unconditional election of 9:11-13 "is in entire harmony with the way God has always acted" (366).

Following in his train are Althaus, Plag, Kaesemann, Kuss, Kuemmel , and others. Among this group Johannes Munck (*Christ and Israel*, 44) makes the most sweeping statement:

> Paul answers by pointing out that God's procedure here is witnessed to in Scripture which says that God has mercy on whomever he wills. Therefore, it cannot be said that Paul gives a negative answer to the question in v 14[!]. Both here and later Paul rejects the objections made by his opponents. It is therefore incorrect to designate the following passages as Paul's theodicy. A defence of God cannot be drawn up within early Christian theology, not even in answer to Jewish opponents.

In all these protests against theodicy two factors seem to be at work: 1) the exegetical difficulty of construing Rom 9:15-18 as a compelling ground for 9:14; and 2) the theological conviction that all attempts by men to justify God are wrong because, as the Reformation stressed (*RGG*^{3} VI, 742), it is man, not God, who is in the dock, and God should not be measured by human standards.

First some brief comments on the second factor: yes and no. Yes, man is in the dock as a guilty sinner before God. But a guilty man does not and should not cease to exercise his judgment concerning the various advocates who offer him their help. To be sure, he is in no position to be arrogant or presumptuous, but if he is to act as a man (and as the Scripture expects him to act) he must *think* about the reliability of the different lawyers and make a judgment as to who is most trustworthy. Therefore, the propriety of raising the question of God's righteousness is not excluded by man's dire condition as a sinner.

Also yes, God should not be measured by human standards, if by "human standards" is meant standards distorted by sin or standards which derive their

appropriateness from man's creatureliness. To be sure, some of the guiding values which men have are evil through the deceitfulness of sin, and some attitudes and actions are appropriate for creatures but not for the creator (and vice versa). But the very fact that we are aware of this and agree with it shows that man is capable of approving standards which are not typically "human." He is capable of recognizing that God is not a creature and that this may have radical consequences for the meaning of righteousness in his case. In other words, it is not unthinkable or unbiblical that a humble, honest person, through a process of sober reflection on the realities observable in the world and through Scripture, should conclude that God has done what he should do in the act of unconditional election. It is of little concern to me whether one calls this process of humble, sober reflection "theodicy." What is of great concern is that in our haste to deny that Paul was a Leibniz we not distort him into an anti-rational twentieth-century existentialist. For in doing this we may blind ourselves to the exegetical realities of the text.

This leads us to the other factor at work in the frequent protests against theodicy, namely, the difficulty of construing Rom 9:15-18 as a compelling argument for 9:14. At least on the surface of 9:14-18 there is no evidence for Nygren's and Munck's assertion that Paul "disallows the question" or "rejects the issue." Mueller (*Gottes Gerechtigkeit*, 84) is right that "Paul does not forbid the Jew... the right to speak; nor does he rebuke him for presumptuous-ness." The frequent denial that in 9:15ff Paul aims to defend the position taken in 9:14 fails to do justice to the text, at least to the surface structure of the text in which 9:15 is joined to 9:14 by γάρ.

However the real stumbling block is not the surface structure, but the content of the verses. How is it an argument to say: God is not unrighteous in election *because* he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whomever I have mercy? Varying attempts have been made to make the argument work. Origen's view, in which he was followed by Diodore, Theodore of Mopsuestia and Chrysostom, was that 9:15-18 were the words of Paul's opponent who used the Old Testament quotations in 9:15,17 to deduce assertions (9:16,18) which Paul then rejected in 9:19ff. This is no longer taken seriously since it is scarcely discernible from the text and contradicts Paul's normal technique (see note 17). Pelagius gave the γάρ its full force but threw away the Pauline meaning of 9:11-13 so that there was no reason to object in the first place. Following some early rabbinic exegesis (see note 3) he translates 9:15 "I will have mercy on the one whom I foreknow will deserve mercy, so that I have already had mercy on him" (Schelkle, *Lehrer der*

Vaeter, 344). Charles Hodge (*Romans*, 312) represents a much more widely held view (cf Stoeckhardt, *Roemer*, 434) when he appeals simply to the authority of Scripture:

> It will be remarked that these arguments of the apostle are founded on two assumptions. The first is, that the Scriptures are the Word of God; and the second, that what God actually does cannot be unrighteous. Consequently any objection which can be shown to militate against either an express declaration of Scripture or an obvious fact in providence, is fairly answered. And if, as is almost always the case, when it militates against the one, it can be shown to militate against the other, the answer is doubly ratified.

Ulrich Luz (*Geschichtsverstaendnis*, 74) registers a legitimate protest that this use of the Old Testament flies in the face of Paul's normal use of Scripture. To be sure, the Old Testament is authoritative for Paul, but do we not expect him to use it to render more intelligible his denial of the conclusion that God is unrighteous, rather than using it to offer an authoritative repetition of the stumbling block? Therefore, we are inclined to probe more deeply to see whether Paul's use of Ex 33:19 (in Rom 9:15) does in fact illuminate and support Paul's claim that God is not unrighteous when he uses his free sovereignty in unconditional election.

The conclusion of our exegesis of Ex 33:19 in its Old Testament context was that the words, "I will have mercy on whomever I have mercy and I will have compassion on whomever I have compassion," are a proclamation of God's *name* or a manifestation of his glory which consists in his propensity to show mercy and his sovereign freedom in its distribution (Chapter Four, p 88). There is a *prima facie* case, then, for thinking that Ex 33:19 carried this same meaning for Paul and was of use to him here for that reason. The case is strengthened by Rom 9:17 (= Ex 9:16): "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this very thing I raised you up: that I might demonstrate by you my power; and that my *name* might be proclaimed in all the earth.'" The inference Paul draws from this text is, "Whom God wills he hardens" (Rom 9:18). Why did he not cite one of the numerous texts from Exodus in which it is actually said that God "hardened" Pharaoh's heart? Why choose a text in which the very word "hardening" is missing? The probable answer will show how far off Hodge was in saying that these Old Testament texts are cited simply to show from an authoritative record that God did in fact act in such and such a way. For the answer seems to be that Paul chose this text from Exodus because his chief interest lay in the purpose clauses: "to demonstrate my power and proclaim my name" (Räisänen,

Hardening, 31). As Mueller (*Gottes Gerechtigkeit*, 31 note 25) observes, "It is no accident that the key word ὄνομα appears also in verse 17." It is no accident because in both Ex 33:19 and Ex 9:16 Paul has found Old Testament texts in which the exercise of God's sovereign freedom, in mercy and in hardening, is the means by which he preserves and displays the glory of his *name.*

This suggests strongly, then, that in Rom 9:15-18 Paul is defending the righteousness of God in predestination by referring to two Old Testament texts which reveal that God proclaims his name (i.e. his character) and demonstrates his glorious power in the world by exercising his sovereign freedom to show mercy and to harden. The unstated premise of this argument is that when God acts righteously he must use his freedom in this way; or, to put it another way, God's righteousness consists in his unswerving commitment always to act for the glory of his name—a name which according to Ex 33:19 implies a propensity to show mercy and a freedom from all human distinctives in determining its distribution. So the crucial exegetical question at this point (and the test of our emerging interpretation) is: Does Paul in fact hold to this unstated premise? That is, does he conceive of God's righteousness as his unswerving faithfulness always to preserve and display the glory of his name? The earlier excursus on ἀδικία in Paul pointed precisely in this direction (cf p 95). But since the importance of this question can scarcely be exaggerated I will devote the next three chapters to an effort to try to answer it.

In Chapter Six I will explore the most likely source of (or influence upon) Paul's conception of divine righteousness, the Old Testament. The reason for this broad effort is that any interpretation of the Pauline conception of divine righteousness will gain intelligibility and credibility if it can be shown to have its roots in the Hebraic-Biblical soil. Then in Chapters Seven and Eight I will examine in detail two of the most important texts in Paul where the righteousness of God is at issue: Rom 3:1-8 and 3:25,26. In these two chapters we will test whether the conception of divine righteousness which seems to be assumed in the logic of Rom 9:14,15, is in fact a conception which Paul embraces. After this necessary three-chapter detour we will return to Rom 9:14-18 and try to see the integrity of the whole unit and its relation to the rest of the chapter.

6.
The Righteousness of God in the Old Testament

1. The question and method

Our analysis of Ex 33:19, the logic of Rom 9:14,15 and Paul's use of ἀδικία have conspired to suggest that Paul presupposed that God's righteousness is his unswerving commitment to preserve and display the glory of his name. If this is the case the quotation of Ex 33:19 in Rom 9:15 as an argument for the righteousness of God in his unconditional election becomes more intelligible; for, as we saw, Ex 33:19 is a proclamation of God's *name* and a manifestation of his *glory*—the glory of his sovereign freedom in having mercy on whomever he wills. The question to be answered here, then is whether or not the Old Testament pictures God's righteousness in such a way as to support the probability that Paul, who bases so much of his thought on the Old Testament, could have had such an understanding of God's righteousness.

At the outset a number of methodological considerations are in order. First, over ninety percent of the places in the LXX where δικαιοσύνη translates a Hebrew equivalent, the equivalent belongs to the צדק word group. Therefore, the usage of this word group in the Hebrew Old Testament has provided the basis of my research. Second, Hans Schmid (*Weltordnung*, 1) said in 1968, "Only a few concepts in Old Testament language have been treated in monographs as often as the concept of 'righteousness.'" This creates an acute problem for a person who is not an Old Testament specialist. But fortunately the most recent treatments provide useful references to and interactions with the major positions being taken. My own approach will be to present the major positions and their representatives and to discuss the work of others at those points where it is especially helpful in answering my particular question.

Third, I will avoid making literary-critical distinctions within the Old Testament text itself which would have been foreign to the way Paul read the text. For example, it may be of historical interest to try to determine the semantic development of the word צְדָקָה within the so-called Isaiah ("Deu-tero-Isaiah" and "Trito-Isaiah"), as H. Schmid and F. Cruesemann have done (see note 2), but this would be irrelevant and misleading for my present question. As Brevard Childs ("Prophetic Literature," 54) contends, "Much of the problem of understanding the New Testament's use of the Old Testament prophets lies in the failure to take seriously the canonical perspective common to both Jews and Christians in the first century." Instead of looking for what distinguishes the

different Old Testament traditions I will have an eye to what they have in common when they discuss righteousness.

Fourth, I will not assume with N. Snaith and K. Koch that צֶדֶק and צְדָקָה mean the same thing, nor with F. Cruesemann that צְדָקָה is always a deed while צֶדֶק is an abstract quality. Neither will I assume with von Rad that "No radical transformation or development of the ancient Israelite idea of Jahweh's righteousness is discernible." Rather my method will be as far as possible to allow the immediate context to determine the meaning of the term each time it is used. For my purposes it is not required that all the uses of "righteousness" fit into one precise mold. All that is necessary is to demonstrate an understanding of God's righteousness in the Old Testament sufficiently well-attested as to render plausible its influence on Paul. There is little certainty and a good deal of disagreement about what the original meaning of the stem צדק was in Hebrew. This is probably not as great a loss as it may at first seem, since it is precarious to interpret a concept on the basis of its etymology: "Often a word will move so far away from its original sense that the etymology is more of a hindrance than a help to interpretation." Therefore my interpretation of the concept of righteousness will proceed from usage, not from etymology.

2. Norm versus relationship

If we leave to the side many popular notions about righteousness in the Old Testament and consider only the scholarly debate on this concept over the past century the basic disagreements seem to be ones of emphasis rather than mutually exclusive ideas. Most modern studies refer to the work of E. Kautzsch in 1881. His emphasis was that the cluster of words built on צדק refer to "adherence to a norm" (*Normgemaessheit*): צדקה/צדק signify "the state of corresponding to an objective norm" (*Derivate*, 28ff, 41ff). This insight has not been abandoned by many contemporary exegetes. But with Hermann Cremer's book *Die paulinische Rechtfertigungslehre* (1899) a new emphasis emerged. Cremer argued that "the concept of righteousness is in fact a concept of relationship (*Verhaeltnisbegriff*). It does not have to do with a relationship to an ideal norm, but refers to a relationship between two persons who bring to the relationship their own claims. Righteousness is the mutual fulfilment of these claims" (53). This insight has found agreement among most contemporary scholars. Gerhard von Rad gives Cremer the tribute of breaking through to a new way of thinking (less Western and more Hebraic) "which has so far been rightly accepted as proven.... As we now see, the mistake lay in seeking and presupposing an absolute ideal norm, since ancient Israel did not in fact measure a line of conduct or an act by an ideal norm, but by the specific relationship in which the partner had at the time to prove himself true."

The reason I say that this disagreement among scholars is mainly one of emphasis and that the two sides do not exclude each other is that most of the scholars who refer to the idea of a norm today do not mean by it an "absolute ideal norm." David Hill, for example, who thinks that the basic idea of righteousness is "conformity to a norm" goes on to say, "but not an absolute ethical norm by which all behavior is measured nor an ideal standard of 'rightness' for objects. The norm is furnished by the objective standard of the thing itself." One of the reasons (besides etymology) many exegetes do not abandon the idea of norm is the usage of "righteousness" exemplified, for example, in Lev 19:36, "You shall do no wrong in judgment, in measures of length or weight or quantity. You shall have *just* balances (literally: 'balances of righteousness,' מֹאזְנֵי צֶדֶק), *just* weights, a *just* ephah and *a just* hin...." (cf Ezek 45:10; Prov 17:15). Here the meaning of a "righteous weight" seems to be a weight that conforms to a standard measure, i.e., an objective norm.

But the emphasis on righteousness as faithfulness to the particular claims of a relationship (*Gemeinschafistreue*) has provided a helpful corrective to the view that righteousness is merely conformity to the norm of distributive justice in which each person is rewarded according to his merits. Many texts simply rule out the idea of "just recompense" and clearly imply *unmerited* faithfulness. After David has allowed his enemy Saul to escape unhurt, Saul confesses, "You are more righteous (צַדִּיק) than I, for you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil" (1 Sam 24:17). David is righteous not because his behavior conformed to the ideal ethical norm of a *iustitia distributiva* but because, out of respect to "the Lord's anointed" (24:10), he treated Saul mercifully and thus did his part to maintain a sound relationship. Later in David's famous psalm of contrition (51:14) he prays,

> Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation,
>
> And my tongue will joyfully sing of thy *righteousness*.

Here it appears that God's righteousness is his "deliverance" (RSV) in spite of David's guilt. This element of mercy is even clearer in Ps 143:1,2.

> Hear my prayer, O Lord,
>
> Give ear to my supplication!
>
> Answer me in thy faithfulness, in thy righteousness;
>
> And do not enter into the judgment with thy servant,
>
> For in thy sight no man living is righteous.

Here the psalmist virtually equates God's righteousness with his faithfulness to him even though he himself is not righteous. It necessarily implies mercy. Thus is ruled out the idea that God's righteousness is an impartial conformity to a norm by which each man gets his due. Again in Ps 69:27 the psalmist appeals to God against his enemies,

> Do thou add iniquity to their iniquity
>
> And may they not come into thy *righteousness.*

If God's righteousness were a strict conformity to distributive justice, the second line would be just the opposite. But again God's righteousness here involves mercy and salvation for undeserving men by which they enter into a right relationship with him. The psalmist did not want his enemy to experience this. This same aspect of divine righteousness is evident in the association of the term "righteousness" with other relational and salvific terms in Ps 33:4; 36:5,6,10; 40:10; 88:11,12; 116:5; 145:17; Hos 2:19.

Another feature of righteousness in the Old Testament that distinguishes it from the more Greek or Western concept is that the term "righteousness" (צְדָקָה) occurs fifteen times in the plural. This fact accents the functional and, as we shall see in the following examples, the salvific aspect of righteousness. Probably the oldest usage of the plural צִדְקוֹת occurs in the song of Deborah and Barak (Judg 5:11). After "the Lord routed Sisera" (4:16) and "subdued Jabin the King of Canaan" (4:23) Deborah and Barak say,

> Sing, you who ride on white donkeys,
>
> You who sit on rich carpets
>
> And you who walk by the way.
>
> At the sound of those who divide flocks among the watering places,
>
> There they shall recount the *righteous deeds* of the Lord,
>
> The *righteous deeds* of his peasantry in Israel.

The RSV translates these two occurrences of צִדְקוֹת as "triumphs," for the reference is surely to the deeds God has just performed for and through the peasants of Israel, saving them from their enemy in war. Along the same lines, in 1 Sam 12:6-8 Samuel says to the people,

> It is the Lord who appointed Moses and Aaron and who brought your fathers up from the land of Egypt. So now take your stand that I may plead with you before the Lord concerning all the *righteous acts* of the Lord which he did for you and for your fathers. When Jacob went into Egypt and your fathers cried out to the Lord, then the Lord sent Moses and Aaron who brought your fathers out of Egypt and settled them in this place.

Here the צְדָקוֹת (RSV "saving deeds") of the Lord are all the mighty acts by which he faithfully brought his chosen people out of Egypt, preserved them in the wilderness and gave them the promised land. The same usage is found in Mic 6:5. Noteworthy in these three instances are not only the *plural* צְדָקוֹת and the *saving* character of the concept but also that here the relationship at stake is not between God and an individual (as in Ps 143:1f etc) but between God and Israel.

Accordingly God's righteousness in the Old Testament is often referred to as his "covenant faithfulness" (*Bundestreue*). The comment by David Hill (*Greek Words*, 88) is representative of this viewpoint:

> Not only is the norm by which the nation's צְדָקָה is determined provided by the covenant-relation and its responsibilities, but in fact these are regarded, to some extent, in Israel's thought as normative for Yahweh's צְדָקָה. In other words, when both Yahweh and his people are fulfilling their covenant-obligations to one another, things are ideally "as they should be"; and the state of affairs indicated by צְדָקָה obtains.

Some, however, understand this covenant faithfulness as a strictly saving gift, while others argue that it embraces the *punitive* acts of God toward Israel as well. As we shall see both of these views omit a very significant Old Testament emphasis which Paul seems to pick up.

3. Is God's righteousness always a saving gift?

From texts like those we have just examined some scholars have concluded that there is no *punitive* divine righteousness in the Old Testament. Von Rad is usually quoted in this regard because he states the position so forcefully:

> From the earliest times onwards Israel celebrated Yahweh as the one who bestowed on his people the all-embracing gift of his righteousness. And this צדקה bestowed on Israel is always a saving gift. It is inconceivable that it should ever menace Israel. No references to the concept of a punitive צדקה can be adduced—that would be a *contradictio in adiecto*.

I am not alone in disagreeing with von Rad on this point. H. Schmid in his book *Gerechtigkeit als Weltordnung* (1968) has a section entitled "Is there a 'punitive righteousness' in the Old Testament?" Here he surveys the works on both sides, citing L. Diestel, G.H. Dalmann, E. Kautzsch, H. Cremer and F. Noetscher among those who answer his question in the affirmative. His own conclusion, which I will cite further on, is also affirmative. Among English-speaking scholars David Hill states his conclusion as follows:

> Thus within the action of the divine righteousness, there is a place for deliverance and for condemnation, a place for salvation and for punishment.... Time after time this righteous action effected deliverance, but at other times, it could mean the opposite, condemnation and resulting captivity (cf Isa 10:22). At Lam 1:18, the city of Jerusalem, defeated, looted and destroyed, is made to exclaim, not "The Lord is unjust," but "The Lord is in the right (צַדִּיק): I have rebelled against his word."

Besides Lam 1:18, Hill cites Isa 10:22 in support of a punitive divine righteousness. F. Cruesemann ("Jahwes Gerechtigkeit," 448 note 105), who agrees with von Rad, refers to this text as the one which "again and again is referred to as the most important evidence for an ostensible punitive righteousness." Thus we should examine it carefully in its context (Isa 10:20-23):

> 20. In that day the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no more lean upon him that smote them, but will lean upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. 21. A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. 22. For though your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return. Destruction is decreed, overflowing with *righteousness* (שׁוֹטֵף צְדָקָה). 23. For the Lord, the Lord of hosts will make a full end, as decreed, in the midst of all the earth.

Cruesemann maintains rightly that the preservation of a remnant in verse 20 is a saving act. The word "only" in verse 22, which might suggest the contrary, is not in the Hebrew original. But he goes on to say that the phrase "overflowing with righteousness" (verse 22) refers precisely to this saving act of God in preserving a remnant and thus *contrasts* with the phrase, "Destruction is decreed." Three exegetical considerations stand in the way of this interpretation. First, taken literally, the two phrases are in apposition: "Destruction decreed! Overflowing righteousness!" This simple juxtaposition of destruction and righteousness suggests no contrast but rather that the destruction is a manifestation of overflowing righteousness.

Second, verse 23 is given as a ground (כִּי) for what precedes. But verse 23 refers only to what has been "decreed" (חרץ in verses 22,23), namely the destruction (cf כָּלָה in verse 23 and כִּלָּיוֹן in verse 22). This would suggest that only destruction is referred to in verse 22b since only destruction is supported in verse 23. Third, of the seven other occurrences of the verb שׁטף ("overflow" in Isa 8:8; 28:2,15,17; 30:28; 43:2; 66:12) all but one (66:12) refer to a menacing destructive stream of some kind. Therefore, Otto Kaiser (*Prophet Jesaja*, 118) is, I think, justified in saying of Isa 10:22b, "Yahweh's righteousness will pour itself out over the whole earth like a river that destroys all sinners." Contrary, then, to Cruesemann and von Rad this text very probably does refer to "a swell of the *penal* righteousness of God" (Keil and Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, I, 273).

It is not surprising, therefore, to find another reference to God's penal righteousness in Isa 5:16. In 5:13,15-17 God announces,

> 13. Therefore my people go into exile for lack of knowledge; and their honorable men are famished, and their multitude is parched with thirst.... 15. Man is bowed down and men are brought low, and the eyes of the haughty are humbled. 16. But the Lord of hosts is exalted in judgment and the holy God shows himself holy in *righteousness.* 17. Then the lambs will

graze as in their pasture, and aliens shall eat the ruins of the rich.

There is no sign at all in these verses that God's action "in righteousness" means less than the desolation of Jerusalem (verse 14). Peter Stuhlmacher (*Gerechtigkeit Gottes*, 135 note 8, cf 131 note 7), who wants to preserve the "basically positive" sense of צדקה as "saving might" (*heilschaffende Macht*), nevertheless admits that "according to the present wording the character of צדקה in Isa 5:16; 10:22, namely as dividing judgment, can scarcely be disputed."

Another instance of punitive righteousness occurs in Neh 9:33. Ezra intercedes for the people in prayer (Neh 9:6-37) to God, recounting how faithful God had been to Israel from Abraham on, but how stiff-necked the nation had been so that more than once God had "given them into the hands of their enemies" (verse 27). Now in view of the present distress he prays (verses 32f),

> 32. Now therefore, our God, the great and mighty and terrible God, who keepest covenant and steadfast love, let not all the hardship seem little to thee that has come upon us, upon our kings, our princes, our priests, our prophets, our fathers and all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria until this day.
>
> 33. Yet thou hast been righteous (צַדִּיק) in all that has come upon us, for thou hast dealt faithfully but we have acted wickedly....

Von Rad (*Theology*, I, 377 note 17) of course draws attention to the statement, "for thou hast dealt faithfully," and says that this is the meaning of God's righteousness here. But this seems to overlook that it is "in all that has come upon us," namely, in all this "hardship" that Yahweh is righteous. The ground (כִּי) clause of verse 33b supports God's punitive righteousness in that it shows how deserving Israel was of punishment: *even though* Yahweh had repeatedly rescued and blessed her, *nevertheless* Israel was wicked; *therefore* Yahweh is righteous to bring hardship on Israel. This interpretation takes into account both the reference to God's faithfulness and the words "in all that has come upon us." Other texts which refer with more or less certainty to God's punitive righteousness are 2 Chr 12:6 and Dan 9:14 (cf Ps 119:75; 141:5).

4. An alternative interpretation

It is evident from David Hill's position (see quotes on pp 108 and 109) that to view divine righteousness as "covenant faithfulness" does not necessarily involve one in a strictly salvific view of righteousness. The terms of the covenant can be understood so as not to commit God to act savingly regardless of Israel's behavior. But rather than try to buttress such a view of divine righteousness, I would like to raise the question whether this whole emphasis on covenant faithfulness does not overlook a deeper dimension of God's righteousness and thus obscure what is ultimate by focusing on the penultimate.

K. Koch (*THAT*, II, 516) and F. Cruesemann ("Jahwes Gerechtigkeit," 430) have pointed out how seldom the concept of God's righteousness is found in context with the term "covenant." Cruesemann can cite only five places (Ps 50:6/5,16; 89:15,17/4,29,35,40; 111:3/5,9; 132:9/12; 103:6/17,18). Moreover Koch (*THAT*, II, 520) draws attention to several references in the Old Testament where God's righteousness is related to the work of creation prior to any covenant with Israel: "The arrival of צֶדֶק on the earth had happened first, without any preconditions, in the event of creation (Ps 33:4-6; 89:11-17)." These two observations at least sound a warning against too easily defining the righteousness of God in the Old Testament solely in terms of "covenant faithfulness."

But the most important evidence for an alternate interpretation is the array of texts in the Old Testament in which we find men appealing to God's righteousness as something basic to, rather than equivalent to, covenant faithfulness. It is on the basis of these texts that I want to argue that, while God's allegiance to the covenant is a real manifestation of God's righteousness, nevertheless the most fundamental characteristic of God's righteousness is his allegiance to his own name, that is, to his honor or glory. His commitment to Israel is penultimate. His commitment to maintaining the glory and honor of his name is ultimate. His saving acts are "righteous acts," not merely because they uphold the covenant promises, but because they preserve and display the honor of God's name. As R. Gyllenberg (*Rechtfertigung*, 59) puts it in describing the covenant relationship: "The two partners are not equal. Yahweh is God, the Israelites are men. Therefore *his honor* must determine the relationship between them." Therefore, the maintenance and display of God's honor is the most fundamental determination of his righteous relations with Israel.

In support of this thesis we may first look at Ps 143 which, we have already seen, establishes beyond doubt that God's righteousness is not a mere distributive justice but manifests itself often in mercy to the unrighteous (verses 1b, 2):

> Answer me in Thy faithfulness, *in Thy righteousness;*
>
> And do not enter into judgment with Thy servant,
>
> For in Thy sight no man living is righteous, [NASB]

To what is the psalmist really appealing—to God's allegiance to Israel? Verse 11 makes plain, I think, how the psalmist conceived of God's righteousness in saving the unrighteous:

> For the sake of Thy name, O Lord, revive me.
>
> In Thy righteousness bring my soul out of trouble.

The parallelism here suggests that, for the psalmist, an appeal to God's righteousness was most basically an appeal to God's allegiance to his own name. God's commitment to revive his servant (verse 11) who trusts in him (verse 8) is a penultimate commitment and is grounded in the ultimate commitment to his name. It is apparently with *this* commitment that the psalmist identifies God's righteousness. "If God cared nothing for his name... we might have doubts of His salvation" (Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, 476).

A similar thought connection is found in Ps 31:1-3:

1. In Thee, O Lord, I have taken refuge;
   Let me never be ashamed;
   In Thy righteousness deliver me!

2. Incline Thine ear to me, rescue me quickly;
   Be Thou to me a rock of strength,
   A stronghold to save me!

3. For Thou art my rock and my fortress;

4. *For Thy name's sake* Thou wilt lead me and guide me. [NASB]

The thought-parallel between verses 1 and 3 provides the connection between the righteousness of God and his acting for his own name's sake: in verse 1 the psalmist declares that he has taken refuge in God and appeals to *God's righteousness* for deliverance; in verse 3 he confesses that God is his rock and fortress (i.e. refuge) and then expresses his confident hope that God will act on his behalf *for his own name's sake.* Thus in the psalmist's mind the righteous deeds of God are deeds done out of respect to his own honor and glory. We turn now to a very instructive passage in Daniel (9:7,13-19) where Daniel confesses the sins of Israel, ascribes righteousness to God, and appeals to him for his anger to turn away from the exiles and his holy city:

> 7. *Righteousness* belongs to Thee, O Lord, but to us open shame, as it is this day.... 13. As it is written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come on us; yet we have not sought the favor of the Lord by turning from our iniquity and giving attention to Thy truth. 14. Therefore, the Lord has kept the calamity in store and brought it on us; for the Lord our God is *righteous* with respect to all His deeds which He has done, but we have not obeyed His voice. 15. And now, O Lord our God, who hast brought Thy people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and hast *made a name for Thyself,* as it is this day—we have sinned, we have been wicked. 16. O Lord, *in accordance with all Thy righteous acts,* let now Thine anger and Thy wrath turn away from Thy city Jerusalem, Thy holy mountain; for because of our sins and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Thy people have become a reproach to all those around us. 17. So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Thy servant and to his supplications, and *for Thy sake,* O Lord, let Thy face shine on Thy desolate sanctuary. 18. O my God, incline Thine ear and hear! Open Thine eyes and see our desolations and the city which is called by Thy *name;* for we are not presenting our supplications before Thee on account of our *righteousness* but on account of Thy great compassion. 19. O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! *For Thine own sake,* O my God, do not delay, because Thy city and Thy people are called by *Thy name.* [NASB]

Concerning the meaning of God's righteousness in this text H. Schmid (*Weltordnung,* 143) says, "Yahweh is in the right; what he has brought upon Israel it deserved. The nation is not צדיק, it has no צדקה. The connection here with juridical ideas is clear.... What is remarkable is that in the same context, after Yahweh's צדקה designates his 'right' (*Recht*) in verse 7, it refers to 'divine mercy' in verse 16 and is used parallel to רחם (verse 18b)." In other words, here

we have in a single prayer a capsule of the contrast we saw earlier between a punitive and a merciful righteousness. But Daniel apparently does not feel any tension. One could argue that the tension is resolved in the concept of covenant loyalty, if God's punishment is seen as an expression of his loyalty to the conditionality of the covenant, and his future mercy is seen as an expression of his loyalty to his promise to forgive the repentant. But in fact when Daniel asks that God's anger be turned away "in accordance with all Thy righteous acts" his explicit and repeated ground for this is that *the honor of God's name is in jeopardy* (verses 15,17,18,19).

This, I would suggest, is the aspect of God's righteousness that provides the unity between its punitive and merciful manifestations. By punishing Israel he magnified his glory by showing that idolatry is a dreadful evil worthy of destruction. One need only think of the awful theme of coming judgment running through the early chapters of Ezekiel—a judgment whose purpose is to reassert the Lordship of Yahweh which the people have so grossly dishonored: "Then you will know that I am the Lord, when their slain are among their idols around their altars.... I will make the land more desolate and waste than the wilderness toward Diblah; thus they will know that I am the Lord" (Ezek 6:13f). On the other hand, since Jerusalem and Israel are "called by his name" (Dan 9:17,18,19), to save them and restore their prosperity after a time of punishment will magnify God's name and remove the reproach into which it has fallen among the nations (verse 16). Thus "the Lord is righteous in *all* his deeds" (verse 14): he has never swerved from acting for his own name's sake, even when the people have acted as if his name were worthless. When Daniel prays that Israel's deliverance accord with God's "righteous acts" (verse 16) and that it be "for Thine own sake" (verses 17,19), he implies that the most fundamental characteristic of divine righteousness is God's unswerving allegiance always to act for his own name's sake.

It is generally recognized that in the second half of Isaiah the righteousness of God signifies God's "predicted new and eschatological saving act." God's righteousness and his coming salvation seem almost interchangeable:

> I bring near my *righteousness*, it is not far off;
>
> And my *salvation* will not delay. (46:13a)

My *righteousness* is near,

My *salvation* has gone forth,

And my arms will judge the peoples. (51:5)

Do not fear the reproach of man...

For the moth will eat them like a garment...

But my *righteousness* shall be forever

And my *salvation* to all generations. (51:7b,8)

Hermann Cremer (*Rechtfertigungslehre*, 80) grapples with the problem: On what ground can this coming righteousness/salvation be expected? His answer is that the hope of salvation rests only in Israel's "free divine election." "Not the fulfilling of God's commandments is the final reason that God upholds his election (בחר עוֹד; ἔτι ἐκλέγεσθαι, Isa 14:1), but rather only the election itself. For its sake God forgives his people at the decisive hour, Isa 43:20-44:2..." The reaffirmation of God's election is alluded to in Isa 41:8,9; 43:7; 44:1; 49:7. Cremer is right, I think, but more can be said about the ground or reason for the election of Israel and its maintenance. This will lead to a deeper understanding of divine righteousness. In Isa 43:6,7 God declares to the dispersed people:

I will say to the north, "Give them up!"

And to the south, "Do not hold them back."

Bring my sons from afar,

And my daughters from the ends of the earth:

Everyone who is called by my name,

And *whom I have created for my glory*,

Whom I have formed, even whom I have made.

Again in 49:3 the same purpose is stated:

And he said to me, "You are my servant, Israel,

In whom *I will show my glory."*

According to these texts and others (43:21; 44:23; 46:13, etc), God was moved to create or elect Israel *for the sake of his glory.* But what so often goes unmentioned in the discussions of God's saving action, or his righteousness, in Isaiah is that this fundamental motive of God's initiating a relationship with Israel also governs the continuation of that relationship. It is a distortion of large portions of the Old Testament when the impression is given that the ground of God's saving action and the touchstone of his righteousness is his allegiance to Israel's welfare. Note, for example, the following:

For the sake of my name I delay my wrath,

And for my praise I restrain it for you,

In order not to cut you off.

Behold I have refined you but not as silver;

I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.

For my own sake, for my own sake I will act;

For how can (my name) be profaned?

And *my glory* I will not give to another. (Isa 48:9-11)

I, even I, am the one who wipes out your

transgressions *for my own sake,*

And I will not remember your sins. (Isa 43:25)

I would suggest from these texts that if in Isaiah Israel's salvation is an expression of God's righteousness (see above p 115), then his righteousness is an

expression of his unswerving commitment to act for his own glory. God's faithfulness to Israel is real and sure, but it is so only because it is grounded in the more profound faithfulness of God to the preservation (Isa 48:11) and display (Isa 49:3) of his own glory. In discussing the concept of God's righteousness in Isa 40-66, Walther Eichrodt expresses what has not been given sufficient emphasis in the scholarly discussions of God's righteousness:

> The close connection between God's righteousness and his holiness, of which the righteousness is a revelation, anchors Yahweh's intervention for the restoration of the covenant-people firmly in the nature (*Wesen*) of God as Lord of the universe. In this way Yahweh's [righteous] intervention is freed from all egoistic limitations of national self-interest and is given its proper place within the world-wide purposes of the divine sovereignty (*Walten*).

In passing we should observe also that this way of thinking about God's saving activity is typical of other Old Testament writers while it may not always be explicitly related to the term "righteousness." According to Jeremiah, "The Lord declares, 'For as the waistband clings to the waist of man so I made the whole household of Israel cling to me *that they might be for me a people, a name, a praise and a glory*'" (13:11; cf Isa 43:7; 49:3). Thus the purpose of God in binding this people to himself is that his name might be exalted and his glory displayed. That this purpose of God grounds his saving intervention for Israel is shown in two ways. First, Jeremiah quotes God as saying, "I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against me and I will pardon their iniquities... and thus *this city will be to me a name of joy, a praise and a glory before all the nations* of the earth which shall hear of all the good that I do for them..." (33:8,9). In other words, the ground of God's initial binding relationship to this people (13:11) *continues* to be the ground or motive of his commitment to restore and maintain that relationship (33:8f). Second, Jeremiah prays in 14:7,9,20f:

> Although our iniquities testify against us,
>
> *O Lord act for Thy name's sake!*

Why art Thou like a man dismayed,

Like a mighty man who cannot save?

Yet Thou, O Lord, art in our midst,

And we are called by *Thy name;*

Do not forsake us!

We know our wickedness, O Lord,

The iniquity of our fathers, for we have sinned against Thee.

Do not despise us, *for Thy name's sake;*

Do not dishonor Thy glorious throne;

Remember, and do not break Thy covenant with us. [NASB]

Here it is clear that God's *covenant*-faithfulness is a penultimate, not the ultimate, ground for God's saving intervention. Israel was chosen to be a name, a praise and a glory for God (13:11). Therefore it is precisely this deepest faithfulness of God to which Jeremiah appeals for salvation, namely, God's faithfulness to his name, to the honor of his glorious throne. A contemporary of Jeremiah expressed it similarly as he saw the defiled temple and Jerusalem in ruins:

Help us, O God of our salvation, *for the glory of Thy name*

And deliver us, and forgive our sins, *for Thy name's sake.* (Ps 79:9)

What about another major prophet, Ezekiel? How does he present the ground of God's covenant-keeping faithfulness? That he sees the promised restoration of the exiled people in terms of God's covenant-keeping is shown by Ezek 16:59-63:

For thus says the Lord God: I will deal with you as you have done, who

> have despised the oath in breaking the covenant, yet *I will remember my covenant with you* in the days of your youth, and I will establish with you an everlasting covenant.... *I will establish my covenant with you*, and you shall know that I am the Lord, in order that you may remember and be confounded and never open your mouth again because of your shame, when I forgive you all that you have done, says the Lord God.

The "new covenant" by which God will forgive Israel for her sins has a very clear and remarkably theocentric ground in Ezek 36:20-32. Speaking of exiled Israel, God says:

> When they came to the nations where they went, they profaned my holy name.... But *I had concern for my holy name*, which the house of Israel caused to be profaned among the nations to which they came. Therefore, say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: *It is not for your sake*, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations... and the nations will know that I am the Lord, says the Lord God, when through you *I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.* [Here the "new covenant" is described—verses 24-30.] Then you will remember your evil ways, and your deeds that were not good; and you will loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominable deeds. *It is not for your sake that I will act*, says the Lord God. Let that be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel.

It could scarcely be more strongly expressed that the reestablishment of the covenant and its accompanying salvation are grounded most fundamentally in God's allegiance to the holiness of his name. This motif is employed to account not only for the mercy of the new covenant but also for all the past merciful acts of deliverance from the exodus onwards. One can see this most clearly in the fourfold repetition in Ezek 20 of the words "I acted for the sake of my name" (verses 9,14,22,44).

While on the one hand Isaiah, Daniel and the psalms which we looked at brought the righteousness of God and his allegiance to the honor of his name into direct connection, Ezekiel and Jeremiah on the other hand do not make this connection explicit, because explicit reference to divine righteousness is seldom found in Jeremiah, and in Ezekiel not at all. But the idea of God's covenant-faithfulness and his saving acts, to which divine righteousness is elsewhere so closely

connected, are in these prophetic writings grounded likewise in God's commitment to always act for the sake of his glorious name.

Therefore these prophetic writings, along with many other texts, impress upon the careful reader of the Old Testament that all God's saving deeds spring ultimately from his loyalty to his own name. This impression then functions to confirm for the reader the insight derived elsewhere from numerous explicit connections that the *righteousness of God* consists most basically in God's unswerving commitment to preserve the honor of his name and display his glory. Thus if God ever abandoned this commitment and no longer sought in all things the magnifying of his own glory, then there indeed would be unrighteousness with God.

Excursus—Implications for human righteousness

To treat adequately the implications of this thesis for the righteousness of man in the Old Testament would require too much space here. So I will only cite several texts which provide pointers and, I think, indirect confirmations of my argument. The basic implication as I see it is that man's righteousness will be seen now as radically God-centered. The relational accent is in no way diminished, but it receives a distinct orientation: the righteousness of man in relation to God is (reflecting God's righteousness) to love the honor of God's name, to esteem above all things God's glory (especially as it has been mercifully experienced in his saving deeds), and, finally, to do only those things which accord with this love and esteem. Thus human actions may be described as righteous not because they conform to an "ideal ethical norm" (like impartial distributive justice, though this may often be righteous), but rather because they are fitting expressions of man's complete allegiance to maintain the honor of God's name and display his glory.

> But let all who take refuge in thee rejoice,
>
> Let them ever sing for joy;
>
> And do thou defend them,
>
> That *those who love thy name* may exult in thee.
>
> For thou dost bless *the righteous,* O Lord,

Thou dost cover him with favor as with a shield.

In this passage from Ps 5:11f "the righteous" and "those who love thy name" are interchangeable. The righteous man esteems God as a trustworthy refuge (Ps 34:21f; 37:39f; 64:10) and loves his name. Thus one might conclude that to do righteousness is to act out of love to God's name, out of a desire that his name be honored. This would be confirmed by Ps 23:3 where the psalmist confesses, "He leads me in paths of *righteousness for his name's sake."* This verse expresses what we would expect from our discussion of God's own righteousness: since a fundamental characteristic of it is his commitment to act always for his own name's sake, then it is only natural that the righteousness into which he would lead his people would have the same orientation. To walk in righteousness is to seek in everything to honor God's name because one loves it so much and esteems it so highly.

Human righteousness is the fitting response to a true knowledge of God. Jeremiah indicates this in 22:15f:

Do you become a king because you are competing in cedar?

Did not your father eat and drink,

And do justice and *righteousness?*

Then it was well with him.

He pled the cause of the afflicted and needy;

Then it was well.

Is not that what it means to know me?

Declares the Lord.

The "knowledge of God," as is well known, means much more in the Old Testament than mere cognitive awareness. It is "almost identical with the fear of God" and implies that God is "recognized and respected" (*TDNT*, I, 698). It is out of a recognition of and respect or esteem for God that true human righteousness flows. They are so connected that if one does not do righteousness (in this case, plead the cause of the poor) then it can be said that he does not

know God. The same theocentric thrust appears in 2 Sam 23:3f in the parallelism:

> He who rules over men *righteously*,
>
> Who rules *in the fear of God*,
>
> Is as the light of the morning when the sun rises.

In 1 Sam 24:17 and 26:23f where David is described as more righteous than Saul (see p 106), it is stated that David acted as he did "because of the Lord" (24:6). Out of respect for "the Lord's anointed" (24:6,10; 26:23) David spared Saul's life. His righteous deed derives from his high esteem of the Lord and his anointed. Finally, one could consider Mal 3:16-18 where the righteous are the ones "who fear the Lord and esteem His name" (cf also Isa 51:1; Prov 18:10).

In short then, the effect upon human righteousness of construing divine righteousness as God's faithfulness to his own name is that human righteousness is seen as radically God-centered and consisting fundamentally in valuing God above all and acting for his name's sake.

5. Conclusion

The conclusion reached earlier in Chapter Four ran as follows: as a preliminary declaration of the verbal theophany to follow in Ex 34:6, 7, the divine words,

> I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious
>
> And I will show compassion on whom I will show compassion,

are a manifestation of God's *glory* (33:18), a "passing by" of his *goodness* and a proclamation of his *name.* Thus God's glory and his name consist fundamentally in his propensity to show mercy and his sovereign freedom in its distribution. Or, to put it more precisely still, it is the glory of God and his essential nature mainly to dispense mercy (but also wrath, Ex 34:7) on whomever he pleases apart from any constraint originating outside his own will. This is the essence of what it means to be God.

The conclusion I have reached in this chapter is that there is a broad basis for understanding the righteousness of God as his unswerving commitment to preserve the honor of his name and display his glory (p 119). The connection between Ex 33:19 and divine righteousness, therefore, seems to be this: Ex 33:19 in its Old Testament context defines the nature of God's glory and the essence of his name and thus specifies what God must preserve and display in order to maintain his righteousness. If the righteousness of God is most basically his commitment to act unswervingly for his own name's sake and thus display his glory, and if the name and glory of God consist in his sovereign freedom from all external constraints in showing mercy, then God must preserve and display his sovereign freedom from all human claims in the bestowal of his mercy. He must always act out of a full allegiance to the infinite value of his own glorious and sovereign freedom: therein consists his unimpeachable righteousness and therein does the contrite heart who flees to him for refuge find hope (Ps 71:1-5; 143:1f, 11).

This connection of thought in the Old Testament offers a key to the understanding of Paul's argument in Rom 9:14,15. When Paul said that God chose to bless Jacob over Esau apart from any basis in their actions but simply on the basis of his choice (ἐκ τοῦ καλοῦντος, Rom 9:12), his opponent objected

that this would call God's righteousness into question (9:14). Paul denies this and in support of his denial he cites Ex 33:19 (Rom 9:15). If we assume that Paul's thinking here (unlike his opponent's) is based on an Old Testament concept of divine righteousness like the one developed in this chapter, then the argument (γάρ "for") of Rom 9:15 is not only a real and valid argument, but it is virtually the only one possible. If we paraphrase and bring out the implicit understanding of righteousness, the argument runs like this: since God's *righteousness* consists basically in his acting unswervingly for his own glory, and since his glory consists basically in his *sovereign freedom* in the bestowal and withholding of mercy, there is no unrighteousness with God (Rom 9:11f). On the contrary, he must pursue his "electing purpose" apart from man's "willing and running," for only in his sovereign, free bestowal of mercy on whomever he wills is God acting out of a full allegiance to his name and esteem for his glory.

In answer to the question raised at the beginning, the picture of divine righteousness we have found in the Old Testament does indeed support the probability that in Rom 9:14,15 Paul is arguing in the manner just described. But in order properly to confirm this interpretation we must try to show that in the key texts outside of Rom 9 Paul does in fact hold to a view of God's righteousness like the one described in this chapter. The next two chapters are devoted to this effort.

7.
The Righteousness of God in Romans 3:1-8

1. Purpose and orientation

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate whether in fact Paul had an understanding of God's righteousness like the one we discovered in the Old Testament (Chapter Six)—an understanding which would confer on the argument of Rom 9:14,15 much more coherence and force than it is often thought to have (Chapter Five).

The more recent discussion of Paul's understanding of the righteousness of God can be surveyed conveniently in the articles by Guenther Klein (*IDB, Supplement*, 750-2) and Manfred Brauch ("Perspectives on God's Righteousness," 523-42). It is clear from this discussion that the recovery of a more Biblical-Hebraic concept of righteousness in Old Testament studies (Chapter Six, Section 2) has influenced the way Paul is understood. Accordingly, the righteousness of God in Paul, Leonhard Goppelt (*Theologie*, II, 468) argues, does not refer to any sort of "distributive justice" but rather to God's saving "covenant faithfulness." On the other hand, a group of German scholars influenced in part by Ernst Kaesemann understand Paul's debt to the Old Testament and Jewish apocalyptic differently. Christian Mueller (*Gottes Gerechtigkeit*, 112) argues that "Paul replaced the concept of covenant with the concept of creation," so that, as Wolfgang Schrage ("Roemer 3:21-26," 86) puts it, the righteousness of God is "the faithfulness of the creator to his creation." My own effort to understand Paul's conception of God's righteousness will involve an interaction with this recent discussion.

Romans 3:1-8, though it has not received much detailed attention outside the commentaries, commends itself for special attention for at least three reasons. First, the "righteousness of God" in 3:5 clearly does not refer to God's gift or imputation to man, but rather to his *being* righteous and thus parallels the concept in Rom 9-14. Second, the terminology of Rom 3:1-8 (with references to God's πίστις, ἀλήθεια, δικαιοσύνη, δόξα) makes the passage a very auspicious source of insight into Paul's understanding of God's righteousness. Third, the μὴ ἀδικία παρὰ τῷ θεῷ ("there is no unrighteousness with God, is there?") of Rom 9:14 has its closest parallel in the μὴ ἄδικος ὁ θεός ("God is not unrighteous, is he?") of Rom 3:5. Both reject, with the words (μὴ γένοιτο, the idea that God could be unrighteous. The specific goal of this investigation of Rom 3:1-8 is, therefore, not to elucidate every part of it but to grasp, if possible, Paul's concept

of God's righteousness which finds expression here. An effort will be made to avoid the errors which I think have misled many interpreters: 1) the failure to define precisely how Paul's rhetorical opponents are arguing, and 2) the failure to distinguish Paul's view of God's righteousness from the view of his Jewish interlocutors.

2. The text

1. What advantage then does the Jew have, or what profit is circumcision?

2. a. Much in every way.
   b. First, they were entrusted with the oracles of God.

3. a. For what if some disbelieved?
   b. Their unbelief does not abrogate the faithfulness of God, does it?

4. a. No indeed! Let God be true, and every man a liar!
   b. As it is written, "So that you might be justified in your words, and conquer when you enter into judgment."

5. a. If our unrighteousness shows the righteousness of God, what shall we say?
   b. God is not unrighteous who inflicts wrath, is he? (I am speaking like a mere man.)

6. a. No indeed!
   b. Otherwise how would God judge the world?

7. a. For if the truth of God abounds to his glory in my falsehood,
   b. then why am I still judged as a sinner,

8. a. and shall we not do evil in order that good may come (as we are blasphemed and as some claim that we say)?
   b. Their condemnation is just.

Throughout the passage Paul is arguing, as it were, with Jewish objectors whom he no doubt encountered in many synagogues as he disputed with his kinsmen about the Gospel. What gave rise to this particular dialogue in Rom 3:1-8 was the apparent leveling out of all distinctions between Jews and Gentiles in Rom 2. The unbelieving Jew precedes the Gentile into God's judgment (2:9); the Gentile who keeps the law will judge the Jew who does not keep it (2:27); in fact, it is the Gentile who may be the true Jew (2:28f). Such ideas naturally give rise to the question that leads into our text: "What advantage then does the Jew have?" (3:1).

In answer Paul begins a list of advantages which he picks up and completes only in Rom 9:1-5. The only advantage he names here is that the Jews were entrusted with the words (λόγια), that is, the promises of God. In verses 1-4 Paul argues that the unbelief of some Jews (an understatement in view of 11:14) does not abrogate God's faithfulness to these promises (cf 11:29). Then in verses 5-8 Paul deals with objections which his dialog partners raise because of the things Paul says. My concern is not primarily with the advantages of Israel in this text but with Paul's understanding of God's righteousness as it emerges in the argument of the dialog.

It is helpful to note the parallels in the terminology of this passage. They are as follows:

verse 3	our ἀπιστία	does not abrogate	God's πίστιν
verse 4	every man is ψεύστης	but	God is ἀληθής
verse 5	our ἀδικία	shows up	God's δικαιοσύνην
verse 7	my ψεύσματι	causes to abound	God's ἀλήθεια

3. The position of the opponents

With these data before us the most fruitful place to begin our analysis is in verse 5 with an attempt to reconstruct as precisely as possible how Paul's opponents were arguing. The rhetorical question suggests that the opponents think they have trapped Paul in a contradiction. Literally verse 5 reads, "If our unrighteousness shows (συνίστησιν) the righteousness of God, what shall we say? God is not unrighteous, who inflicts wrath, is he? (I speak like a mere man)." The second question expects the answer, No (interrogative with μή). Commentators generally recognize, rightly, that this is not the way Paul's opponents would have formulated their question. Theirs would have been: "Then, on your grounds, surely God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us, isn't he?" But Paul, even though he admits that he is speaking as a mere man ("whose mental horizon takes in only what is human"), nevertheless cannot bring himself to pose a question which seems to impugn the righteousness of God. (See p 92.) But the basic outline of the opponents' argument is still clear. They are saying: "If our unrighteousness shows up God's righteousness, then God is unrighteous to inflict wrath upon us for our unrighteousness."

The question that needs to be answered with more precision than is usually found in the commentaries is: What did the *opponents* mean by "the righteousness of God" in Rom 3:5? The most common answer is that the righteousness of God in 3:5 refers to God's distributive justice (according to which he renders to each his due). The support for this view is at first glance fairly strong. It could be sketched as follows.

The opponents' rhetorical question (3:5) is most naturally construed as a response to what Paul just said in 3:4b. He has just quoted Ps 51:4 (LXX 50:6):

> Just as it is written,
>
> So that you might be justified in your words,
>
> And conquer when you judge.

The "so that" (ὅπως) of the Psalm quote shows that God's (= "you") vindication is the *result* of the preceding statement in the psalm:

Against you and you only have I sinned,

And done what is evil in your sight,

So *that* you might be justified in your words,

And conquer when you judge.

"Your words" refer to God's expected words of judgment on David, and the middle voice of κρίνεσθαι ("when you judge") is to be preferred to the passive voice ("when you are judged") because of the poetic parallelism and the general sense of the following verses, which refer to God's judgment. Therefore it is fair to conclude that Paul is using this Psalm quote in 3:4b to show that man's sin vindicates God's judgment upon it. Accordingly, since the opponents' response to Paul follows immediately, one could easily conclude that *for them* the righteousness of God in 3:5 refers to God's "activity of judging" and thus includes punishment or retribution towards his people.

But I would like to argue that this is a premature conclusion, for if this is the meaning of divine righteousness which the opponents have in mind in 3:5, then their objection loses all its plausibility. (I assume that while a rhetorical objection need not be—indeed cannot be—entirely valid, yet it must, at least on the face of it, have a measure of plausibility.) I will try to show in the following why this view of divine righteousness depletes the opponents' objection of all plausibility and rules itself out. In the process a different view of the opponents' conception of righteousness will emerge.

Let us try to reconstruct the opponents' argument on the assumption that by "the righteousness of God" in 3:5 they meant a punitive, retributive justice. They would be saying, "If our unrighteousness shows up God's *punitive* righteousness (by giving him a just cause to judge us), then he is unrighteous to punish us for our unrighteousness." That is so obviously self-contradictory that it has no plausibility. It is like saying: "Since my sin justified God's judgment upon me, therefore he is unjust to judge me." Surely this cannot be the argument of the opponents. Therefore it is wrong to construe the meaning of "the righteousness of God" in 3:5 as the distributive justice of God manifest in his act of judging. There must be a measure of plausibility in the opponents' objection.

The same thing emerges when we reconstruct the opponents' argument in verse 7. Literally the text reads, "If by my falsehood the truth of God abounds to his

glory, why am I still judged as a sinner?" The similarity to verse 5 is clear from the following table of parallels.



"My falsehood" stands in the place of "our unrighteousness"; God's "truth" and "glory" stand in the place of God's "righteousness"; and being "judged" stands in the place of incurring "wrath." The change to first person singular ("my falsehood") from first plural ("our unrighteousness") is not significant as far as I can see, especially since the singular phrase ("I am judged") of verse 7 is recalled in verse 8b by "their [plural] judgment." The argument is thus virtually the same as that of verse 5 except that it is strengthened: my falsehood does not just *"show"* God's truth but more—it causes God's truth to "abound" to his glory; therefore he would be unjust to punish me as a sinner. (This is the force of the rhetorical question, "Why am I still judged as a sinner?")

This confirms that the meaning of God's righteousness in verse 5 is not mere retributive justice, since the "truth" (ἀλήθεια) of God (verse 7a) is parallel to his "righteousness" (verse 5a) but in all likelihood refers to his "truthfulness... in keeping his promises" (Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 73). Thus, as Peter Stuhlmacher (*Gerechtigkeit*, 83) argues, the *faithfulness* of God in verse 3 which man's unbelief does not abrogate, the *righteousness* of God in verse 5 which the unrighteousness of man highlights, and the *truth* of God in verse 7 which the falsehood of man causes to abound all refer basically to the same thing. Since the "faithfulness" of God in verse 3 is that which grounds the "advantage" (verse 1) of Judaism, its primary meaning in this passage is something mainly positive and gracious rather than punitive. This then is probably the main force which each of the three parallel terms (πίστις, δικαιοσύνη, ἀλήθεια) carries throughout (but as we shall see, we must be prepared to allow for differences between Paul's definitions and those of his opponents).

This receives added confirmation when we examine the third and final argument of Paul's opponents in verse 8. They claim that Paul's teaching leads to the untenable conclusion: "Let us do evil that good may come." In conjunction with the preceding arguments of verses 5-7 this would mean: "Let us be as 'unrighteous' and as 'false' as we can so that God's righteousness and truth might abound to his glory." But the opponents would never say this (even hypothetically) if "the good" they hoped for (i.e. the glorification of God's righteousness and truth) included their own judgment. Therefore the truth and

righteousness of God which would abound through "doing evil" is something beneficial, not punitive. This is supported by Rom 6:1 where Paul cites the same slander, but with the words, "Shall we continue in sin that *grace* may abound?" We may be reasonably sure, then, that *Paul's opponents construed the righteousness of God in Rom 3:5 as saving and gracious, not retributive.*

Now let us test this conclusion by trying again to reconstruct their argument in verse 5. It would apparently run like this: "If our unrighteousness shows up God's *saving* righteousness (in that it gives him an occasion to be more gracious), then God is unrighteous to inflict us with wrath (for that would mean that he fails to take advantage of an opportunity to magnify his grace)." Similarly the opponents' argument in verse 7 would be: "If the truth of God (which is manifest in his saving me in spite of my falsehood) thus abounds to his glory by my falsehood, then God should not judge me as a sinner but save me and thus magnify his gracious truth." That this argument is indeed plausible further validates our conclusion that for Paul's opponents the righteousness of God in Rom 3:5 refers to God's gracious saving action which should guarantee their salvation (escape from God's "wrath") even if they are "false" toward God.

Therefore, when Paul's opponents react to his reference to judgment in 3:4b (= Ps 51:4) they are claiming to have caught Paul in a contradiction. On the one hand they agree with 3:1-4a that the unbelief of some does not abrogate the faithfulness (= the righteousness) of God and that even if all become liars (= unbelievers) God would remain true to his promises. But, on the other hand, as Bornkamm ("Teufelskunst," 143) keenly points out, they draw the false conclusion that "the faithfulness of God would completely exclude any judgment at all upon the covenant people." And, therefore, when Paul says in 3:4b that God would be righteous (δικαιωθῇς) in judgment even upon David, the opponents think Paul has contradicted himself.

That this is the sequence of the opponents' thought can also be shown by pointing out the parallels between verse 4 and verse 7.

Verse 4	Verse 7
Let God be *true*	If the *truth* of God abounds to his glory
and every man a *liar.* As it is written, "So that you might	

be justified in your words and conquer when	by my *lie*,
you judge."	why am I still *judged* as a sinner?

These parallels show how the Jewish opponents construe Paul's words. On the one hand, they see a claim that man's falsehood, i.e. unbelief, does not abrogate God's truthfulness but magnifies it. They take this to guarantee their own security even if they themselves should be the ones who are false. But, on the other hand, they hear Paul say that Jews can be judged for what they thought magnified his truthfulness. Therefore, their accusation that Paul is contradicting himself finds expression in the rhetorical question: If our unrighteousness shows up God's *saving* righteousness (= truth) as you imply in 3:1-4a, then God is unrighteous to inflict wrath as you suggest he could do in 3:4b.

We may conclude then that when the opponents use the term "righteousness of God" in 3:5 they mean by it a strictly saving commitment of God to his covenant people. It excludes a punitive or retributive dimension, at least in relation to themselves.

4. Paul's position and the function of Romans 3:4b

What has become evident now is that the validity of the opponents' objection hangs on the twofold assumption that the righteousness of God in Rom 3:5 is his strictly saving commitment to Israel and that it was Paul's intention in 3:1-4a to enunciate such a commitment, which then contradicted his use of Ps 51:4 in 3:4b. The fault with this assumption is that 3:1-4a does not necessarily imply that for Paul the righteousness of God is strictly saving for Israel. To find out how Paul *does* conceive of the righteousness of God we should ask how 3:1-4a and the Psalm quote in 3:4b cohere, rather than assuming (with the opponents) that we already know Paul's view and then finding a contradiction to it in 3:4b. Therefore we must now try to give an account of how the Psalm quote functions for *Paul* in this context—a problem the solution of which will help clarify more precisely Paul's underlying concept of God's righteousness. I call it a problem because the logical relationships of verses 2-4 are not readily obvious. To show this let us paraphrase the four steps of the argument:

Step 1: the Jews have been blessed with the promises of God (verse 2)

Step 2: the unbelief of some does not abolish God's faithfulness to keep those promises (verse 3)

Step 3: for nothing man can do will abrogate God's truthfulness (verse 4a, see note 17)

Step 4: just as Scripture says: the sin of man justifies God's judgment upon it (verse 4b)

The problem here is how Step 4 functions in the argument. Since Paul is stressing in Steps 1-3 God's gracious faithfulness to his promises in spite of man's sin, why does he introduce an Old Testament quote (Step 4) that asserts God's righteousness in punishing sin? It does not seem to fit. I have already given the reasons why I cannot follow Kaesemann who solves the problem by seeing in the Psalm quote not a reference to punishment but to the justification of the ungodly (see note 14). Such a view seems to smooth out the logic of verses

1-4 but it makes the references to wrath and judgment in verses *5-7* (and thus the opponents' objections) inexplicable as far as I can see.

How then shall we understand the relationship between Step 4 and the preceding steps? The phrase "as it is written" is used by Paul ten times in Romans, always to refer to an Old Testament text which supports the point he is making. What Paul wants to support in Rom 3:2-4a is that man's sin of unbelief *does not* abrogate God's faithfulness. The unusual way Paul chooses to support this is by citing an Old Testament text which shows what effect man's sin *does* have on God. Far from impugning God's faithfulness and truth, it highlights the righteousness of God's punitive judgment. In other words Ps 51:4 is a support for what sins do *not* do to God (abrogate his faithfulness) by showing what in fact they *do* do to God (justify his judgment).

But here we get a crucial insight into *Paul's* understanding of God's righteousness. *Paul's* Old Testament support has force only if the righteousness of God embraces both his merciful faithfulness and his punitive judgment. *Only if God's judgment because of sin and his merciful faithfulness in spite of sin cohere in one concept of divine righteousness, can Paul argue that the righteousness of judgment, highlighted by the gravity of sin, supports the merciful faithfulness of God to his promises in spite of man's sin.* The sequence, "God is faithful" (verse 3), "God is true" (verse 4a), just as it is written, "God is shown righteous" (verse 4b), indicates that God's righteousness embraces his truth and faithfulness. But since the way he is "shown righteous" is through the gravity of sin vindicating his judgment, therefore, we should conclude that in Paul's mind God's righteousness also embraces his punitive judgment. Paul found himself thus in conflict with a Judaism whose erroneous view of its own solidarity and of God's faithfulness contradicted the Pauline message of justification by free grace through faith alone. Consequently, I cannot follow the scholars who maintain that *for Paul* the righteousness of God is the opposite of his wrath and is always a saving, never a punitive, reality. They have, in my judgment, failed to distinguish in Rom 3:5-8 between Paul's view and the view of his opponents. The view of divine righteousness which they ascribe to Paul is precisely the one upon which his opponents base their argument and which Paul rejects on the basis that it excludes punitive judgment.

What then is Paul's understanding of the righteousness of God reflected in Rom 3:1-8? The reference to the glory of God in verse 7 indicates that Paul's opponents had probably heard Paul defend God's actions as righteous in that they

displayed God's glory. So they responded: "If the truth of God by my lie abounds to his glory then God would be *unrighteous* to judge me" (verse 7). The truth in this argument is that God's righteousness is manifested when his truthfulness abounds to his glory. The error is the twofold assumption: 1) that God's truthfulness would abound to his glory even if he indefinitely spared persistent unbelievers from judgment, and 2) that his glory would not abound if God judged unbelieving Israel.

It emerges from Rom 3:1-8, therefore, *that for Paul* God's righteousness is neither a strict distributive justice nor a merely saving activity. It is more fundamental to God's nature than either of these and thus embraces both mercy and judgment. It is God's inclination always to act so that everything abounds to his glory.

In accord with the logic of 3:2-4 God's righteousness embraces both his gracious faithfulness to his promises and his punitive judgment upon sin. As far as individual man is concerned, what determines whether he glorifies God one way or the other is not his belonging to Israel, as the opponents thought, but his faith in the promises of God. Thus God manifests his righteousness in keeping his promises to those who believe, for in this he displays the value of his glory by blessing those whose stance of faith renders his glory most conspicuous (Rom 4:20). But he also manifests his righteousness in punishing those who remain in unbelief because unbelief is the gravest assault on God and to bless it indefinitely would be to deny the infinite value of his glorious trustworthiness.

In conclusion, then, our first exegetical effort to test whether Paul had a conception of righteousness like the one we discovered in the Old Testament (Chapter Six) has turned up a positive answer. God's unswerving commitment to preserve and display his own glory in salvation and judgment is precisely the conception of righteousness which accords best with *Paul's* view in Rom 3:1-8 and which renders the argument here most intelligible.

8.
The Righteousness of God in Romans 3:25,26

1. The text and the thesis

Romans 3:21-26 is "the center and heart" of the book of Romans. Accordingly, "the central concept of Pauline theology" (Kaesemann, *Romans*, 320), the righteousness of God, is used here in a unique concentration (verses 21,22,25,26). But "the concept of God's righteousness in Rom 3:25,26 carries a new and special accent as over against verses 21,22" (Kuss, *Roemerbrief*, I, 117). It is not to be equated with the gift of God received by the believer in justification but rather is a description of God's character manifest in the way he acts. Therefore, Rom 3:25,26, along with Rom 3:1-8, offers another close analogy to Paul's usage in Rom 9:14. It will not be surprising, then, if the understanding of the righteousness of God which emerges from these verses is the same as the one we found in Rom 3:1-8 (Chapter Seven). This is in fact the thesis of the chapter, namely that the righteousness of God in Rom 3:25,26 refers most basically to the characteristic of God's nature or the unswerving inclination of his will (see note 29) which precedes and grounds all his acts and gifts. It is his inviolable allegiance to act always for his own name's sake—to maintain and display his own divine glory. I will use the following subdivision of the verses:

21. a. But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been manifested,
    b. being attested by the law and the prophets,

22. a. that is, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.
    b. For there is no distinction,

23. a. for all sinned b and lack the glory of God,

24. being justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

25. a. whom God put forth as a propitiation through faith, in his blood, for a demonstration of his righteousness
    b. on account of the passing over of sins done beforehand

26. a. in the forbearance of God;

b. for a demonstration, I say, of his righteousness in the present time,
c. in order that he might be righteous even in justifying the man who believes in Jesus.

2. The use of tradition in Romans 3:24-26

Since the rise of form-criticism we have been much more sensitive to the so-called "deep dimension of Scripture," that is, the traditions out of which the Scriptures grew. It is generally recognized that Paul's disclaimer in Gal 1:12 does not mean that he rejected all tradition. On the contrary, he preserved, handed on, and adapted much early Christian tradition in various forms (cf 1 Cor 15:3, 11:2,23; 2 Thess 2:15; 3:6). The form-critical judgment that in Rom 3:24-26a Paul is using a "traditional statement which perhaps can be traced back to the earliest church" begins with Rudolf Bultmann. He reckons the following to be pre-Pauline (with Pauline additions in parentheses):

> (24)... justified (by his grace as a gift) through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, (25a) whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood (to be received by faith); (25b) this was to show God's righteousness, because he passed over former sins (26a) in his divine forbearance.

His arguments for this judgment are that 1) the designation of Christ as the ἱλαστήριον occurs only here in Paul; 2) it is not Paul's habit elsewhere (except Rom 5:9 and the traditional passages, 1 Cor 10:16; 11:25,27 [if one rejects Eph 1:7; 2:13; 6:12; Col 1:20 as non-Pauline]) to speak of "the blood" of Christ but rather of the cross; 3) "the idea found here of the divine righteousness demanding expiation for former sins is otherwise foreign to him" (*Theology*, I, 46).

It was Ernst Kaesemann's development of Bultmann's position in a 1951 article entitled "Zum Verstaendnis von Roemer 3, 24-26" which caused this form-critical judgment to prevail in German scholarship. Here and in his commentary he supplements Bultmann's arguments with the following. 1) The participial construction in verse 24 is such a "harsh breaking off" from the syntax of verse 23 that "it can be explained only by assuming Paul is now quoting a hymnic fragment" (*Romans*, 96f; "Roemer 3, 24-26," 96). 2) This assumption accounts for the piling up of terminology which is not characteristic of Paul: πάρεσις, προγεγονότα, ἁμαρτήματα, προτίθεσθαι in the sense of manifesting, δικαιοσύνη as a divine attribute (verse 25), and ἀπολύτρωσις; as a designation for an

accomplished redemption (Rom 8:23 refers to the future; 1 Cor 1:30 and Col 1:14 are traditional) ("Roemer 3, 24-26," 96). 3) The "overladen style of the verses with their genitive constructions and prepositional connections... is the characteristic of hymnic, liturgical tradition" ("Roemer 3, 24-26," 96). 4) In verse 25, διὰ πίστεως interrupts the How of the sentence and reveals itself as a Pauline insertion (*Romans*, 97f).

5) The fifth argument to support a traditional formula in Rom 3:24-26a is, for Kaesemann, decisive: a different conception of the righteousness of God is found in this unit than we have in verse 26b, where Paul, through the parallel construction beginning with πρὸς τὴν ἔνδειξιν, "corrects" the tradition. In the tradition "one sees oneself standing in continuity with the people of God, holding to the history of Israel as one's own, and counting the new covenant as the restitution of the old one" ("Roemer 3, 24-26," 99). Thus the righteousness of God is here (verse 25) God's faithfulness to his covenant. But this is precisely what moves Paul to add his "correction," since "for him the righteousness of God is not primarily, if at all, the restitution of the old covenant.... The present καιρός (verse 26b) is not viewed in relation to the redemptive history begun by Moses but rather over against the fallen world which is under God's wrath.... Since he is thinking universalistically and no longer in terms of the covenant people, he speaks immediately at the end of verse 26 of the individual believer" ("Roemer 3, 24-26," 100). In this way Paul gives his own interpretation to the "righteousness of God": "it becomes God's faithfulness to his whole creation and his right which is established in this relationship."

It is precisely this fifth argument of Kaesemann that makes the whole form-critical issue relevant for my specific question concerning the righteousness of God. If Kaesemann is right, then verses 25-26a cannot be used, as they have been traditionally, to interpret Paul's own understanding of the demonstration of God's righteousness, since Paul's own view is given in a "correcting addition" in verse 26b. So we turn now to an assessment of this form-critical position.

First, the inclusion of verse 24 in the traditional unit has been widely rejected. Eduard Lohse pointed out that not only the words δωρεὰν τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι were from Paul (which Kaesemann recognizes) but also the designation Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, since this phrase is not found prior to Paul." Gerhard Delling (*Kreuzestod Jesu*, 12) argues further that δικαιούμενοι is a good Pauline word and need not come from the tradition. That leaves only the un-Pauline character of ἀπολυτρώσεως and the awkward syntactical connection with verse 23 as

arguments for including verse 24 with the tradition. But Klaus Wengst (*Christologische Formeln*, 87), in explicit opposition to Kaesemann, argues that the coordination of participles with finite verbs (as in verses 23,24) is something Paul "loves" to do. Heinrich Schlier (*Roemerbrief*, 107) in support of this, gives 2 Cor 5:6; 7:5; 8:18 as examples. Finally Wengst (*Christologische Formeln*, 87) argues that ἀπολύτρωσις; is not *so* unusual for Paul (Rom 8:23; 1 Cor 1:30; Eph 1:7,14; 4:30; Col 1:14) that it can definitely be ascribed to the tradition; nor has Kaesemann proven that Paul's use of it in 1 Cor 1:30 is a "gepraegte Formel." I regard these arguments as weighing heavily in favor of not counting verse 24 as part of the early Christian "traditional formulation."

But the traditional character of Rom 3:25,26a has been much more widely accepted, though not universally. While sporadic voices try to solve the syntactical unevenness and parallel structure of these verses by reference to later glosses or interpolations, a number of scholars have seen good reasons for reckoning all of Rom 3:24-26 as Paul's own work. First of all, Heinrich Schlier (*Roemerbrief*, 109) argues that the relative clause which begins verse 25 *could* (as in Rom 4:25; Phil 2:6; Col 1:13) signal a traditional unit, but that one ought not draw this conclusion in the absence of clear stylistic and rhythmic features which set the unit off from Paul's own way of writing. This corroborating evidence is missing here. The quotation is too short to reveal any rhythm and the grouping of prepositional phrases is not so distinctive as to argue strongly against Pauline origin.

Secondly, with regard to the argument from non-Pauline terminology, since πάρεσιν and προγεγονότων are *hapax legomena* in the New Testament and ἱλαστήριον occurs only here and in Heb 9:5, it is an argument from silence that they belonged to the earliest Christian tradition. Moreover, other important terms in these verses are not foreign to Paul. Delling (*Kreuzestod Jesu*, 13) points out that the key term ἔνδειξις is found in the New Testament *only* in Paul (Rom 3:25,26; 2 Cor 8:24; Phil 1:28) and with a sense similar to the one here. The word ἀνοχή is found only here (verse 26a) and in Rom 2:4. Ἁμάρτημα is genuinely Pauline in 1 Cor 6:18 and, while προέθετο has a meaning in verse 25 different from its use in Rom 1:13 and Eph 1:9, this is also true of προγράφω in Gal 3:1 (in contrast to Rom 15:4; Eph 3:3) which no one denies to be Paul's. In short, the argument from non-Pauline terminology is not as strong as some have thought. Word statistics are too ambiguous to settle the issue. And even if we grant the presence of traditional terms that are not *uniquely* Pauline, this would not betray the quotation of a pre-Pauline formulation but only the adoption of

familiar traditional terminology (Schlier, *Roemerbrief*, 109).

Thirdly, and most decisive in my judgment, Otto Kuss and C.E.B. Cranfield have objected that it is highly unlikely that in this "vital and central paragraph" Paul would have proceeded in the way Kaesemann suggests. Cranfield (*Romans*, I, 200 note 1) argues that

> to accept Kaesemann's account of these verses requires a very great deal of credulity. In the construction of a paragraph as vital and central to his whole argument as this paragraph is, Paul is scarcely likely to have gone to work in the way Kaesemann would have us envisage. It is very much more probable that these verses are Paul's own independent and careful composition reflecting his own preaching and thinking (cf Cambier, *L'Evangile de Dieu*, 784) and that the overladen style is the result, not of the incorporation of a *Vorlage* and the need to provide it with connectives, but of the intrinsic difficulty of interpreting the Cross at all adequately and perhaps also, in part, of the natural tendency to fall into a more or less liturgical style when speaking of so solemn a matter.

Otto Kuss (*Roemerbrief*, I, 161) shows even more precisely why Kaesemann's "purely hypothetical construction" is to be rejected. "Absolutely nothing in the context points up an intention in verse 26b to correct verses 25-26a." How are we to imagine that Paul intended his Roman readers (lacking contemporary form-critical tools, like concordances and other New Testament documents for comparison) to discover that Rom 3:25-26a is corrected in verse 26b? The issue at stake in these verses (the ground of justification) is simply too important for Paul to have omitted some kind of adversative particle in verse 26b if he intended his readers to *contrast* it with verses 25-26a. As it stands, it is far more probable that εἰς ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων ἐν τῇ ἀνοχῇ τοῦ θεοῦ (verses 25,26a) gives the reason in the past why such a demonstration was necessary (see below p 149) and verse 26b (πρὸς τὴν ἔνδειξιν...) gives the present purpose of the demonstration. There is no need to assume that Paul is correcting a limited Jewish-Christian view of righteousness. Therefore I conclude with Kuss and others that even if Paul was using tradition here "doubtless in this central text he presents theological sentences which to an especially high degree he has made his own." Accordingly, in the rest of this chapter I will not assume that the righteousness of God in Rom 3:25 has a different meaning from the same term in verse 26b.

3. Critique of the prevailing view

There are two *fundamentally* different views of the demonstration of God's righteousness in Rom 3:25,26. The one is associated with Anselm's satisfaction view of the atonement (*Cur Deus Homo?*). It distinguishes between the righteousness of God in verses 21,22 and the righteousness of God in verses 25,26. The latter is an attribute of God's nature (usually equated with his strict distributive justice); the former is the imputed divine righteousness appropriated by the believer in the event of justification or the action of God in justifying. For the other view, which rejects any identification with Anselm and which claims to have more Biblical-Hebraic presuppositions than he, the demonstration of the righteousness of God is his eschatological *saving action* in accomplishing redemption through the death of Jesus.

While this second view has, to be sure, gained the ascendancy in recent decades, the dispute is by no means at an end. By way of example: Herman Ridderbos argues in his book on Paul that the righteousness of God in Rom 3:25f refers to "the vindicatory righteousness of God." And, on the other side, Stuhlmacher ("Roemer 3, 24-26," 317) takes him to task for "brushing aside not only any attempt at an analysis of the tradition but also the whole newer discussion of the Semitic background of the expression 'righteousness of God.'" My aim is not to defend Ridderbos, even though I think his view is not as wrong as Stuhlmacher does. But, while avoiding the criticisms leveled against Ridderbos, I do want to argue for an alternative to the prevalent view of the righteousness of God in Rom 3:25,26.

One of the most seminal studies of Rom 3:25,26 which interprets God's righteousness as his saving action in justification is W.G. Kuemmel's "Πάρεσις und ἔνδειξις, ein Beitrag zum Verstaendnis der paulinischen Rechtfertigungslehre" (1952). Subsequent studies regard this work as foundational. Therefore I will examine Kuemmel's arguments in some detail and allow my alternative position to emerge as the evidence points in that direction.

Kuemmel's interpretation may be summed up as follows: the demonstration of the righteousness of God in Rom 3:25, 26 is "an exact exposition" of the manifestation of God's righteousness in verses 21,22 (160). The twofold ἔνδειξις of verses 25, 26, which refers to an active showing (*Erweis*) rather than to a

factual proof (*Beweis*), corresponds exactly to the active manifestation (πεφανέρωται) of God's righteousness in verses 21,22 and to the justification (δικαιούμενοι) of verse 24 (160f). In keeping with this view the prepositional phrase διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν... is rendered not as a causal phrase (*"on account of the* passing over of sins done beforehand"), but rather as an instrumental phrase (*"through* the pardon of sins done beforehand"). Therefore, we are not to think that the passing over of sins calls God's righteousness into question so that he now must prove himself righteous by punishing sin in the death of Jesus; on the contrary, God's righteousness is shown forth precisely in the pardon (*Erlass*) of those sins (165). Accordingly, the righteousness of God in verses 25f refers not to a quality or attribute of God which must be preserved but rather to the saving action of God which justifies sinners. "Therefore the satisfaction theory of Anselm does not even have a starting point in Paul's teaching" (166).

Now let us examine Kuemmel's key arguments in support of this interpretation. After doing a lexical study of the key words πάρεσις and ἔνδειξις outside Rom 3:21-26, Kuemmel concludes with regard to both words that "only the context can decide" which of the possible meanings Paul intends here (158f). Thus all his arguments are based on grammatical and theological considerations of the immediate and wider Pauline context.

Kuemmers first and main argument is that up to this point in Romans, and most importantly in the near context of 3:21,22, the righteousness of God has referred to the *action* of God in justifying sinners—to "Gottes recht-fertigendes, Gerechtigkeit schaffendes, den Menschen gerecht sprechendes Handeln" (to "the justifying, righteousness-creating, human-acquitting action of God," 161). Therefore to construe the righteousness of God in 3:25, 26 as an *attribute* of God would be "contrary to the preceding usage" (161). A serious flaw in this argument is Kuemmel's omission of any reference to the meaning of God's righteousness in Rom 3:5 and his consequent assumption that the term δικαιοσύνη has a uniform meaning throughout. Bultmann ("ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣΓΝΗ" 12) and others have warned against the contemporary tendency to limit this term to only one meaning. Moreover, in Chapter Seven I tried to show that *Paul's* understanding of the righteousness of God in Rom 3:5 does *not* refer simply to the action of God in justifying sinners. Therefore Kuemmel's argument from the uniformity of the meaning of God's righteousness in Rom 1-3 is weak, since the meaning of the term in 3:25 may be more similar to the meaning in 3:5 than it is to the meaning of 3:21f.

The rest of Kuemmel's arguments are attempts to show the error of the alternative *"Anselmsche"* interpretation. But I question whether the precise form of that interpretation which he defeats is really his strongest opponent. He argues that the interpretation of ἔνδειξις as "proof" (*Beweis*) is untenable "because it is not at all clearly expressed to whom God should want to prove his righteousness" (161). Moreover "in view of Rom 9:19f, it is foreign to Paul's theology that any man could put God's action into doubt and that God could see himself obligated to *prove* that such doubt is unfounded" (162f). Here he is arguing against the view which says, in the words of John Murray (*Romans*, I, 119f), that "the forbearance exercised in past ages [3:25b,26a] tended to obscure in the apprehension of men the inviolability of God's justice" and this "passing over" of sin "made it necessary for [God] to demonstrate his inherent justice" by punishing sin in the death of Jesus.

In response to Kuemmel one could argue, in view of Rom 2:23 where Paul picks up the Old Testament theme of how God's name is held in derision among the nations (cf Ezek 36:20; 22:16; Isa 52:5), that it would accord perfectly with God's holy zeal for his own name if he should act to clear his name and *prove* that such derision is folly. This would not contradict Pauline theology at all.

But such an argument is unnecessary because the alternative to Kuemmel's interpretation does not necessarily involve the concept of *proof* which he chides. One could translate ἔνδειξις as "a showing forth" or "an expression" and not lose anything essential to the "satisfaction theory" which he is opposing. One would simply argue that what was showing itself in the death of Christ is God's exacting demand of a recompense for sin. Therefore, Kuemmel does not strengthen his view by trying (unsuccessfully I think) to eliminate the idea of "proof" from the term ἔνδειξις in Rom 3:25f.

Perhaps the best response to Kuemmel's argument comes from C.E.B. Cranfield, who draws attention to the very important grammatical fact that the ultimate object of God's "showing" his righteousness is given with the words "in order that he himself might be righteous" (3:26c). Cranfield (*Romans*, I, 213) argues that "The words εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν δίκαιον mean not 'in order that He might show that He is righteous' [contra Barrett (*Romans*, 80)], but 'in order that He might be righteous.'... Paul recognizes that what was at stake was not just God's being seen to be righteous, but God's *being* righteous." If the purpose of God in the ἔνδειξις of his righteousness is that he might be righteous then the ἔνδειξις is not a mere "proof" or a mere "showing" but an *establishment* of righteousness.

Without the death of Christ as a propitiation for sins, the problem would not have been the false accusations of men but the real unrighteousness of God. (More on this below, pp 149f)

The next argument, which has to do with the meaning of πάρεσις (verse 25b), seems also to miss the target. Kuemmel rejects the meaning "passing over" or "letting go" (*hingehenlassen*) or "over-looking" (*uebersehen*) and opts for "pardon" or "forgiveness" (*Erlass*)—a forgiveness granted in the death of Christ for the sins of old. He argues, "It is in no way the opinion of Paul that during the time of God's ἀνοχή [verse 26a] he overlooked sins" (163). Rather from Rom 1:24; 2:4; 6:23; and 7:13 he concludes, "The ἀνοχή of God in the period before the sending of Christ consisted not in over-looking (*uebersehen*) of sins but in a punishment which did not destroy but aimed to bring about repentance (Rom 2:4)..." (163).

With this criticism Kuemmel does not weaken his opponent at all. For these reasons: Kuemmel's and Kaesemann's insistence that Paul views the time before Christ not as a time of leniency but a time of wrath (1:18-3:20) is an oversimplification of Pauline theology. To be sure, in Rom 2:4,5 (the only other use of ἀνοχή in the New Testament) men are storing up wrath for themselves in the patience of God, but Paul still calls this period a period of the "kindness of God" (χρηστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, 2:4). Kuemmel himself refers to the sins of this period as "not completely punished" (*nicht endgueltig gestraft*, 165). This concession is all that is required to validate the interpretation he is opposing. For the scholars who hold to a "satisfaction theory" do not claim that the period of God's ἀνοχή was all leniency and that sins were ignored. What is argued, in the words of Leon Morris (*Apostolic Preaching*, 278), is that "God had not always punished sin with full severity in the past." The "kindness" of withholding full judgment (not to mention the blessings given, cf Acts 14:16; 17:30; Mt 5:45) was not deserved by sinful man and precisely this provides the basis of the satisfaction theory which claims that God's apparent injustice must be rectified.

But even more can be said to show the weakness of Kuemmel's argument. Suppose πάρεσις does mean "pardon" or "forgiveness" in verse 25. Even this does not contradict, but accords with, the satisfaction theory. The Old Testament is replete with the mercies of God "who forgives iniquity and transgression and sin" (Ex 34:7) and, for example, angers his prophet Jonah with his mercy toward Nineveh. It may well be the justifying forgiveness shown to the Old Testament saints which constitutes the πάρεσις of 3:25. Paul certainly thought that men of

faith like David (Rom 4:6-8) and Abraham (Rom 4:9) had received forgiveness before Christ. But this remitting of sins creates the same problem for justice that leniency of punishment does. Therefore the "satisfaction theory" cannot be refuted by showing that πάρεσις means pardon. One would have to go further and demonstrate that διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν does not have its usual causal force ("on account of [past] pardon") but rather has a rare instrumental force ("through the [present] pardon [in Christ]"). I will discuss this problem further on (see pp 147-150).

The *basic reason* why Kuemmel and others view the righteousness of God in Rom 3:25, 26 as God's saving action is not any exegetical detail or contextual clue. The factor that weighs most heavily in their exegesis is the conviction that has been growing ever since Hermann Cremer enunciated it in his book *Die paulinische Rechtfertigungslehre* (1899), namely, that the righteousness of God in the Old Testament is not his conformity to an ideal ethical norm (like strict retributive justice) but is his faithfulness within the dictates of a given relationship, especially his covenant with Israel. This view has been supported by most Old Testament scholars (see Chapter Six). Together with the proper conviction that the Pauline doctrine of righteousness can be understood only against an Old Testament background, this conviction has exerted tremendous power in the interpretation of the righteousness of God in Paul. Accordingly, Anselm and all his contemporary followers are accused of importing Greek (Stuhlmacher, *Gerechtigkeit*, 88 note 6) or Germanic (Goppelt, *Theologie*, II, 424) concepts of law into the Hebraic-Biblical view of God's righteousness.

Since Kuemmel's 1952 article, in which he treated this relational view of God's righteousness as a "presupposition" (*Voraussetzung*, 162) for the interpretation of Rom 3:25,26, Kaesemann has provided the foremost illustration of how strongly the findings of history-of-religions research influence the interpretation of Paul. He has stressed that late Jewish apocalyptic had a profound influence on Paul. It is "the mother of Christian theology" ("Christian Apocalyptic," 137) and it is "the driving force of Pauline theology and practice" (*Romans*, 306). The specific concept of righteousness out of which Rom 3:25f grew, he claims, is summarized in two key texts. The first is from Qumran (1 QS 11:12-15):

> And if I stagger, God's mercies are my salvation forever; and if I stumble because of the sin of the flesh, my justification is in the *righteousness of God* which exists forever.... He has caused me to approach by His mercy. And by His favors He will bring my justification. He has justified me by

> *His true justice* and by His immense goodness He will pardon all my iniquities. And by *His justice* He will cleanse me from the defilement of man and of the sins of the sons of men, that I may acknowledge *His righteousness* unto God and His majesty unto the Most High.

The second text providing a summary statement of the Jewish-apocalyptic background of Paul's understanding of God's righteousness is 4 Ezra 8:31-36:

> For we and our fathers have passed our lives in ways that bring death: but thou because of us sinners art called compassionate. For if thou hast a desire to compassionate us who have no works of righteousness then shalt thou be called "the gracious One." For the righteous who have many works laid up with thee, shall out of their own deeds receive their reward. But what is man that thou shouldest be wroth with him? Or what is a corruptible race that thou canst be so bitter towards it? For in truth there is none of the earth-born who has not dealt wickedly, and among those who exist who has not sinned. For in this, O Lord, shalt thy *righteousness* and goodness be declared, if thou wilt compassionate them that have no wealth of good works.

It is fairly obvious from these texts as well as many in the Old Testament (cf Chapter Six) that the righteousness of God in Jewish literature does not always mean strict retributive justice: it embraces mercy. This view of righteousness as *iustitia salutifera* has come to be seen as the peculiarly Jewish-Biblical view and thus functions for many scholars as an *assumption* in dealing with Pauline texts.

More than a few scholars, however, have seen the hermeneutical pitfalls of such a use of the history of a concept. Kaesemann and Stuhlmacher especially have come in for methodological criticism on this point. In reaction to the Kaesemann-Stuhlmacher interpretation of God's righteousness, Hans Conzelmann and Guenther Klein have both stressed "the priority of interpretation over any deductions from history-of-religions research or history-of-tradition research.... Decisive is not the history of a concept but the Pauline context" ("Gottesgerechtigkeit," 227; *IDB, Supplement*, 751). "The evidence in Paul should be assessed on the basis of his own usage" (Conzelmann, *Theology*, 218). Because of his doubt that the righteousness of God is a technical term in the late Jewish literature (as Stuhlmacher maintains, *Gerechtigkeit*, 175) and because he is alert to a peculiar, Pauline usage of the term, Conzelmann admits that in Rom 3:25f the righteousness of God "can (as in the Jewish usage) mean

the covenant faithfulness of God. But that is not certain. It can also be understood as *iustitia distributiva*.

Thus the interpretation of God's righteousness in Rom 3:25,26 which Kuemmel and others espouse is, in my judgment, based mainly on the assumption that Paul stands in the stream of the Old Testament-Jewish tradition and that the Old Testament-Jewish view of God's righteousness, as a relational term embracing mercy, rules out the satisfaction theory of the atonement in which God's righteousness demands punishment for sins. The implicit danger here of minimizing Paul's originality has already been mentioned. But the greatest objection to Kuemmel's supposedly Biblical-Hebraic conception of God's righteousness is that it does not go to the heart of divine righteousness which the Old Testament itself reveals. I have argued in Chapter Six (p 112) that to focus on "covenant faithfulness" as the fundamental meaning of righteousness in the Old Testament obscures a deeper dimension of God's righteousness, namely his faithfulness in upholding the honor of his name. His commitment to Israel is penultimate; his commitment to maintain his own glory is ultimate. His saving deeds are "righteous" not merely because they uphold the covenant promises, but basically because they preserve and display the honor of God's name. If this is the way Paul read his Old Testament, then the major bulwark of Kuemmel's exegesis falls. So we must ask: Does the logic of Rom 3:25, 26 confirm or contradict our thesis that Paul does work with a concept of divine righteousness like the one just sketched?

4. An alternative interpretation of Romans 3:25,26

There are two pivotal phrases in Rom 3:25,26 which receive their most coherent and least strained interpretation against the Old Testament background I have developed. The first is διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων: "on account of (or through) the passing over (or pardon) of sins done before." One can at least say from this phrase that man's sins have created the need for God to put Christ forth as a propitiation by his blood.

What is the essential character of these sins? Romans 1:21-23, together with 3:23, gives the best answer to this question: "All sinned and are lacking the glory of God" (3:23). Most recent commentators are probably right that this loss of glory reflects the Jewish tradition according to which Adam was divested of his glory when he sinned. How *Paul* conceives of this loss is seen in Rom 1:21-23. "Although they knew God they did not glorify him as God or thank him... they exchanged the *glory* of the incorruptible God for the likeness of the image of corruptible man and birds and fourfooted beasts and reptiles." One can hear an echo of Jer 2:11, "Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit" (cf Ps 106:20). Not to glorify him as God and thank him is the primal sin: the esteeming of the creature above the creator and the consequent belittling of the creator's glory. This "foolish" exchange results, as 1:24ff shows, in a swell of dishonorable and demeaning attitudes and acts. Thus, according to Rom 1:24ff all sins are an expression of dishonor to God, stemming as they do from the evil inclination of man's heart to value anything above the glory of God.

For God to condone or ignore the dishonor heaped upon him by the sins of men would be tantamount to giving credence to the value judgment men have made in esteeming God more lowly than his creation. It is not so much that he would be saying sins do not matter or justice does not matter; more basically, he would be saying that *he* does not matter. But for God thus to deny the infinite value of his glory, to act persistently as if the disgrace of his holy name were a matter of indifference to him—this is the heart of unrighteousness. Thus if God is to be righteous he must repair the dishonor done to his name by the sins of those whom he blesses. He must magnify the divine glory man thought to deny him.

It is pointless to object here that God never is trapped in a situation where he *must* do something. This is pointless because the only necessity unworthy of God is a necessity imposed on him from causes not originating in himself. To say that God *must* be who he is, that he must value what is of infinite value and delight in his infinite beauty, this is no dishonor to God. On the contrary, what would dishonor God is to deny that he has any necessary identity at all and to assert that his acts emerge willy-nilly from no essential and constant nature.

Nor is it a legitimate objection here to say that "Greek" or "Germanic" ideas of justice are being brought in and that the Semitic background is being ignored. The point is not that God is somehow forced to conform to an ideal ethical norm. The point—in good Old Testament fashion—is simply that God must be God and will brook no belittling of his glorious name.

In view of the nature of sin as dishonor to the glorious name of God and in view of the most basic Old Testament aspect of God's righteousness as his unswerving faithfulness to act always for his own name's sake in preserving and displaying his glory, there is no reason whatever to construe the prepositional phrase beginning with διά (verse 25b) any way but in its usual causal sense. Given this perfectly Jewish thought connection we need not follow Kuemmel ("Πάρεσις," 164) and Kaesemann (*Romans*, 99) in the unlikely view that here διά with the accusative is instrumental and means "through." Thus the sense of the prepositional phrase is that since God has not required from all individual sinners a loss of glory commensurate with their debasement of God's glory, therefore to preserve and display the infinite value of his own glory, God set forth Christ as a propitiation whose death for sinners so glorified God (Rom 15:7-9) that God's righteousness was preserved and made known.

The second pivotal phrase in Rom 3:25f is verse 26c, εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν δίκαιον καὶ δικαιοῦντα τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ. The interpretation by Kaesemann (*Romans*, 101), following C. Blackman ("Romans 3:26b," 203f), to the effect that the mi here is explicative (or intensive) and that God is δίκαιος precisely as he is ὁ δικαιῶν, is very awkward in view of what precedes. The awkwardness of this interpretation stems from its failure to distinguish clearly 1) the *demonstration* (ἔνδειξις, verse 26b) of God's righteousness, 2) his *being* (εἶναι, 26c) righteous, and 3) his justifying believers (verse 26c). According to Kaesemann, the first and third of these—the demonstration of God's righteousness at the present time and the justification of the one who trusts Jesus—refer to the same thing: "the eschatological saving *action"* of God. But

Kaesemann does not say how we are to understand God's *being* righteous in distinction from this active demonstration. It may be that he sees no distinction. But that would involve not taking Paul's purpose construction (εἰς τό plus the infinitive εἰναι) seriously. For Paul the demonstration of God's righteousness and God's being righteous are not the same; the latter is the outcome and *purpose* of the former. But this means that the *action* of God in justifying believers (verse 26c) is also not interchangeable with God's *being* righteous. Therefore the mi is not intensive and one should not construe verse 26c to mean that God is "just" *insofar as* he is "justifier" or that his righteousness consists in justifying.

If we grant full force to the purpose construction (εἰς τὸ εἶναι) and thus to the distinction between demonstration and being, a coherent interpretation emerges against the backdrop of the Old Testament view of divine righteousness sketched above. In putting Christ forth as a propitiation, God acts for the sake of his glory, i.e., he actively demonstrates inviolable allegiance to the honor of his name *in order that* his inexorable love of his own glory may not be weakened, i.e., in order that he might remain and *be* righteous.

In this context the justification of sinners through faith (verse 26c) and the passing over (or pardoning) of former sins (verse 25b) both *seem* to imply that God is disregarding his glory (and would indeed imply this if it were not for God's setting Christ forth as a propitiation by his blood). "Therefore the καί [of verse 26c] must be understood... as an adversative and is to be translated 'it was to prove at the present time that he himself is just and *yet* the justifier of him who has faith in Jesus'" (Ladd, *Theology*, 432). Or as Cranfield (*Romans*, I, 213) translates it: "that God might be righteous even in justifying." Understood in this way this pivotal purpose clause at the end of verse 26 is a fitting and perfectly clear climax to verses 25,26a. God has accomplished his twofold purpose of sending Christ: he has manifested and preserved his own righteousness and yet has justified the ungodly merely through faith. The glorification of God and the salvation of his people are accomplished together.

In conclusion, therefore, I find confirmed that in Rom 3:25,26 the concept of God's righteousness as his absolute faithfulness always to act for his name's sake and for the preservation and display of his glory provides the key which unlocks the most natural and coherent interpretation of this text.

9.
The Justification of God: Romans 9:14-18 (Part II)

In Chapter Five the first steps were taken in trying to understand how Paul intends to defend the righteousness of God in predestination. The suggestion put forward tentatively there was that on the basis of Ex 33:19 (= Rom 9:15) and Ex 9:16 (= Rom 9:17) Paul argues that God's name or his glory consists in the sovereign exercise of his freedom to show mercy and to harden. This insight, however, could function for Paul as a defense of God's righteousness in predestination only if Paul's conception of divine righteousness was such that it consisted basically in God's unswerving commitment always to act for the glory of his name. As Chapters Six-Eight have shown, this is in fact the case.

What must be done now is to pursue our analysis of Rom 9:14-18 to see whether or not the parts which we have not yet examined confirm and cohere with our emerging interpretation, and also to see how this unit fits into the flow of Paul's argument in the rest of the chapter. (For my verse divisions of the text see p 91.)

1. "It is not of the one who wills or runs" (Romans 9:16)

Paul uses the word "run" (τρέχω) in 1 Cor 9:24, 26; Gal 2:2; 5:7; Phil 2:16; 2 Thess 3:1. The usage is not uniform in meaning. "Running" can refer to the normal good progress of daily Christian living (Gal 5:7); to the successful spread of the Gospel as the word runs and is glorified in reaching the goal of faith (2 Thess 3:1); and to Paul's apostolic ministry with all the spiritual effort it involves (1 Cor 9:24-26; Gal 2:2; Phil 2:16). In the latter case it parallels the sport of boxing on the one hand (1 Cor 9:26), and the toil of labor on the other (Phil 2:16)—the former stressing Paul's reward for finishing his course (cf 2 Tim 4:8) and the latter stressing the happy completion of the thing he was laboring on.

The explicit allusion to the sport of running in 1 Cor 9:24-26 inclines most commentators to construe the "running" of Rom 9:16 as a similar allusion with the focus being on the exertion required to run. But Adolf Schlatter raised a question whether in fact Paul intends any reference to the stadium here (*Gerechtigkeit*, 300), and Bent Noack ("Celui qui court," 113-16) and Gerhard Maier (*Mensch und freier Wille*, 368-70) have developed compelling arguments against an athletic, Hellenistic background and in favor of a Jewish one. Their arguments may be summarized as follows.

1) The immediate and wider context of Rom 9:16 is marked by a distinctly Jewish concern (cf 9:1-5) and there is no hint (excepting the one word "run") of an athletic metaphor. 2) The phrase, "not of the one who wills neither of the one who runs," translates back into Hebrew as לא ביד הרוצה ולא ביד הרץ and reveals a possible word play or alliteration between הרוצה and הרץ, which suggests that we do well to consider the use of רוץ in the Old Testament as the background for Rom 9:16. 3) Psalm 119:32 (LXX 118:32) commends itself readily as an indication of how Paul may have understood "running" here: "I will run the way of your commands." In other words, not the physical effort of the Greek games, but the moral resolve to keep the law may well be the background of Paul's metaphor. 4) The allusion to "running the way of the commandments" would cohere very closely with Rom 9:30f where the similar word διώκω appears: "the Gentiles who did not *pursue* righteousness attained righteousness, the righteousness from faith; but Israel, though *pursuing a law* of righteousness, did

not reach the law" (cf also Phil 3:14-15). 5) Noack (115) gives two rabbinic references to confirm the Jewish usage: b. Ber. 28b: "I run and they run; I run toward the life in the world to come, they run toward perdition"; b. Pes. 112a: "Be courageous as the panther, swift as the eagle, run like the deer, and be strong like the lion to do the will of your Father who is in heaven." 6) Maier (p 53f) argues that Paul expresses himself in conscious opposition to the widespread Pharisaic viewpoint expressed in Ps Sol 9:4f (quoted in Chapter Three, note 59) and Sir 15:14f: "It was [the Lord] who created man in the beginning and he left him in the power of his own inclination." The substance of Paul's response falls within the line of thought developed to its logical conclusion in Qumran: "For is man the master of his way? No, a man does not establish his steps, for his justification belongs to God and from his hand comes perfection of way. By his knowledge all things are brought into being, by his purpose every being established, and without him is nothing done" (1 QS 11:10f; cf Chapter Three, notes 57, 58). That Paul's mind is moving in this thought-world lessens the probability that with the word "run" he has reached for a Greek athletic metaphor rather than a Jewish metaphor of moral attainment. 7) Finally, Maier (368) correctly observes that verse 16 is "a sharpened repetition of the thesis of predestination in 9:11f." More specifically, the "not from works but from him who calls" in 9:12 corresponds precisely to "not of him who wills or of him who runs but of God who has mercy" in 9:16. Therefore, we are to understand "willing and running" as an expression of "works" which, according to Rom 9:32, is the way Israel was "pursuing" (i.e., running after) the law. I conclude, therefore, with Noack and Maier that Paul draws his metaphor from a Jewish background in which, for some, human willing and acting in pursuit of the law were regarded as finally decisive in determining God's merciful blessing.

But we must be careful not to place an unintended limitation on Rom 9:16 as if Paul wanted to say merely that only *some* willing and running (i.e., "works") do not initiate God's decision to show mercy while another kind of willing and running (e.g., the "work of faith"; cf Gal 5:7; 1 Thess 1:3) *do* initiate God's decision to show mercy. There are at least three reasons why not just some but *all* human willing and running are excluded here as determinative in God's decision to show mercy. First, the fact that, as we have seen, 9:16 repeats the point of 9:11f proves that all willing is intended in 9:16 since in 9:11 God's decision to show a special mercy to Jacob and not Esau happened *before they were born.* Neither the bad willing/running of "works" nor the good willing/running of faith had any influence at all on God's decision to show mercy.

Second, 9:16 is an inference from Ex 33:19 ("I will have mercy on whomever I have mercy"), but one cannot infer from this text that God's decision to have mercy is determined by some acts of human willing/running but not others. Such an interpretation would have to be read into the text by those who have already decided that Paul *must* leave room here for human self-determination. What really follows from "I will have mercy on whomever I have mercy" is precisely what Paul says: not *any* attitude or act of men, but God alone determines his bestowals of mercy. Third, the closest analogy in Paul to the phrase οὐ τοῦ θέλοντος οὐδὲ τοῦ τρέχοντος in Rom 9:16 is Phil 2:13: "God is the one who works in you both the willing and the working" (τὸ θέλειν καὶ τὸ ἐνεργεῖν). This text gives the positive counterpart to our text and confirms our interpretation. Man's willing and running do not determine the bestowal of God's mercy (9:16); on the contrary, God's mercy determines man's willing and working (Phil 2:13). And since the "willing and working" referred to in Phil 2:13 is not evil "works" but the obedience of faith, it follows that the assertion of Rom 9:16 cannot be limited to only some kinds of willing and running. For these three reasons Rom 9:16 should be construed so as to sweep away forever the thought that over against God there is any such thing as human self-determination in Pauline anthropology.

We may be able to refine our understanding of the juxtaposition of θέλειν and τρέχειν still further. In answer to the question why Paul should mention both of these words one might naturally suggest that "willing" is viewed as the *inception* of an action (running) and "running" is viewed as the *consummation* in behavior of a decision or attitude (willing). Thus Paul aims to say that no processes at all in the psycho-physical life of man determine God's decision to bestow mercy or not. This, I think, is an accurate statement of Paul's intention. But there may be an added nuance of meaning suggested by Paul's analogous uses of θέλω elsewhere. In Rom 7:15 Paul says, "What I will this I do not practice, but what I hate this I do" (οὐ γὰρ ὃ θέλω τοῦτο πράσσω, ἀλλ᾽ ὃ μισῶ τοῦτο ποιῶ; cf Gal 5:17). Here it is evident that Paul knows θέλειν does not always give birth to a deed. This is a common experience and no surprise to us. But in 2 Cor 8:10, where Paul is urging the believers to lay aside money for the poor saints in Jerusalem, he says, "This is best for you who began a year ago not only to do but also to will" (οὐ μόνον τὸ ποιῆσαι ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ θέλειν). We might have expected just the reverse order. Here Paul treats θέλειν as something over and above ποίειν, something more that makes the ποίειν even better. Evidently θέλειν here stands not for that initial act of will by which all human action is generated but for the *cheerful* and *hearty* consent commended in 2 Cor 9:7. Therefore, it is

possible that one could be "running" (i.e., doing good deeds) but not "willing" (i.e., consenting cheerfully to the deed). If Paul is thinking in these terms in Rom 9:16 then the nuance of meaning not to be overlooked would be: it does not matter whether you perform your deeds with cheer or begrudgingly; God's decision to bestow mercy or not lies wholly within himself. But the progression from willing to running ("neither of the one who wills nor of the one who runs") makes this interpretation less than certain.

2. The scope of God's freedom in Romans 9:16

I have been assuming so far in the discussion of Rom 9:16 that the implied subject of the sentence is "God's bestowal of mercy": "God's bestowal of mercy is not of the one who wills nor of the one who runs but of God who has mercy." The justification and specification of this assumption must now be given. There are two reasons why virtually all commentators agree that *in general the* subject is "God's bestowal of mercy." The first is that 9:15 (= Ex 33:19), from which 9:16 is inferred, refers only to *God's showing mercy* on whomever he wills. It follows from God's freedom in showing mercy on whomever he wills that his *bestowal of mercy* is not dependent on man's willing or running. The second reason is that verse 16 does not say "not of one who wills nor of one who runs, but of *God*." Instead it adds a defining participle (of God *who shows mercy)* which suggests clearly that the subject is "God's bestowal of mercy."

But there the agreement among the commentators ceases. When an attempt is made to specify what bestowal of mercy Paul has in mind, the ranks divide along the same issue that we addressed in Chapter Three, Section 3.2. Some want to limit the application to God's favors granted only on the plane of history with no one's eternal destiny at stake. Others see no reason for such a limitation and acknowledge that also the mercy of eternal salvation is "not of one who wills or one who runs" (see Chapter Three, notes 25, 26).

It is very misleading for Forster and Marston (note 5) to argue that since Moses' eternal destiny was not at issue in Ex 33:19, therefore Paul is not concerned in this context with the salvation of individuals. Our exegesis of Ex 33:19 in its Old Testament context (Chapter Four) showed that Ex 33:19 is not a description of how God acted in any particular instance toward Moses in granting him a theophany or toward Israel in renewing the covenant. Rather it is something far more fundamental and far-reaching, namely, a solemn proclamation of God's name and glory. In other words, Ex 33:19 means that an essential feature of God's glorious character is his propensity to show mercy and his absolute freedom in bestowing it on whomever he wills apart from any constraints originating outside his will. Furthermore, I have argued, along with U. Luz, C. Mueller and G. Maier (Chapter Four, note 2), that Paul employed Ex 33:19 with

precisely this meaning (see pp 100f). In turn this was confirmed by the intelligibility and coherence it lends to the argument of 9:14,15.

Therefore, it is irrelevant to discuss whether Paul thinks Moses was predestined to salvation, because what Paul draws from the Old Testament in Rom 9:15 is not a comment about the condition or treatment of Moses but a declaration of God's character, namely, his sovereign freedom in dispensing mercy. Therefore, the issue of whether Rom 9:15,16 has anything to say about the determination of individuals to their eternal destinies must be decided on the basis of the *scope of God's freedom* implied in *Paul's* context. The crucial question is: To what problem does Paul apply this fundamental principle of divine freedom? Or: How does Rom 9:15,16 fit into the flow of Paul's argument developed from 9:1 to 9:14?

My answer here depends in large measure on the exegesis of Rom 9:1-13 in Chapters Two and Three. So I will only summarize the line of reasoning which I defended there. The basic problem described in 9:1-5 is that many Israelites, to whom, as a nation, saving promises had been made, are now accursed and cut off from Christ (9:1-3). The condemnation of so many Israelites to eternal destruction raises the question whether God's word has fallen. Paul denies it (9:6a) and defends his denial in 9:6b-13. In defense of God's faithfulness to his word, in spite of many Israelites being accursed, Paul argues that God's "purpose" from the beginning of Israel's history was a purpose "according to election" (9:11), that is, a purpose not to save every individual Israelite, as though descent from Abraham guaranteed that one would be a child of God, but rather a purpose to "call" a true Israel (9:6b) into being by choosing some Israelites and not others "before they were born or had done anything good or evil" (9:11). It is *this* Israel for whom the promises are valid. The unconditional election of Isaac and Jacob over Ishmael and Esau (whether to eternal destinies or only to historical roles) reveals the *principle of God's freedom in election* which is the ultimate explanation why many of Paul's kinsmen according to the flesh are accursed and cut off from Christ. As he says in Rom 11:7, "the elect obtained it [salvation], but the rest were hardened." For this reason it cannot be said that God's expressed purpose has fallen (9:6a).

That God, in determining the beneficiaries of his mercy, does not base his decisions on any human distinctives that a person may claim by birth or effort, evokes from Paul's rhetorical conversation partner the charge that God would then be unrighteous (or Paul must be wrong). Paul denies this (9:14) and in 9:15

cites Ex 33:19 as support for his denial. I have tried to explain and render plausible the logic of this support in Chapters Four-Eight. In a nutshell it goes like this: Paul's conception of God's righteousness is that it consists basically in his commitment to act always for his own name's sake, that is, to preserve and display his own glory (cf Chapters Seven and Eight). Therefore, since according to Ex 33:19 God's glory or name consists basically in his sovereign freedom in the bestowal of mercy (cf Chapter Four), there is no unrighteousness with God when his decision to bless one person and not another is based solely on his own will rather than on any human distinctive. On the contrary, he *must* pursue his "purpose of election" in this way in order to remain righteous, for only in his sovereign, free bestowal (and withholding) of mercy on whomever he wills is God acting out of a full allegiance to his name and esteem for his glory.

Since Rom 9:15 is brought in to support the righteousness of God which was seemingly jeopardized by his unconditional election in 9:11-13, and since Rom 9:16 is an inference from 9:15 and a virtual restatement of 9:11f, therefore the *scope of God's freedom* in 9:16 must correspond to the exercise of that freedom in 9:11-13. This means that if our argument developed in Chapter Three and summarized here is right, then the scope of God's freedom in bestowing mercy *does* embrace his predestination of individuals to their eternal destiny. This conclusion is not based on any conviction about God's dealings with the individual Moses, but rather on the fundamental truth of God's freedom expressed in Ex 33:19 and on the scope of this freedom required by the context to render the sequence of Paul's thought from 9:1 to 9:16 coherent. This conclusion also corresponds to the conclusion of Section 1 (pp 151-55) that "willing and running" cannot legitimately be limited in such a way that *some* willing, like the act of trusting Christ, does ultimately determine God's bestowal of mercy, namely, the mercy of salvation. Faith is indeed a *sine qua non* of salvation; Rom 9:16, therefore, necessarily implies that the act of faith is ultimately owing to the prevenient grace of God. But this is a theological inference, however true, beyond Paul's explicit concern here. There is no reference at all to faith in Rom 9 until verse 30.

One other question needs to be answered at this point: If Rom 9:15-18 is really intended by Paul to be a coherent and compelling argument for God's righteousness in unconditional election, why is 9:16, which as an inference (ἄρα οὖν) from Ex 33:19 seems to have logical primacy, simply a *reassertion* of the action of God in 9:11f which called God's righteousness into question in the first place? Would we not rather expect in a unit defending the righteousness of God

a series of arguments rather than two Old Testament quotations (9:15,17) and two restatements of the initial problem (9:16,18)? Perhaps we would. But we must not insist that Paul carry through his justification of God's election the same way we would, especially when a plausible explanation of his procedure is available.

What we should recall is the nature of the opponent's objection. It must have had a double prong: on the one hand, Paul is accused of making God out to be unrighteous; on the other hand, since the opponent no doubt believes God *is* righteous, the objection implies that Paul is wrong about unconditional election. Is it not plausible, then, that Paul's response will not only supply the evidence which supports the righteousness of God (as he understands it) in unconditional election (9:15,17), but will also reassert what is really being challenged by the objector, namely, the sovereign freedom of God manifested in that election (9:16,18)?

3. The γάρ of Romans 9:17

In Rom 9:17 Paul quotes Ex 9:16 as his second Old Testament support for the righteousness of God in unconditional election: "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: 'For this very thing I raised you up that I might show in you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.'" Commentators do not agree on how the verse relates to what precedes. One group sees the γάρ of 9:17 as parallel to the γὰρ of 9:15 and thus connected as a support to 9:14. The other group argues that γάρ attaches 9:17 directly to 9:16 as a ground. Both groups seldom give reasons for their interpretation. But the first group could point to the structure of the paragraph: just as the ἄρα οὖν of 9:18 corresponds to the ἄρα οὖν of 9:16, so the γάρ of 9:17 corresponds to the γάρ of 9:15. The second group could argue that it is illegitimate to leap back over two verses to make the γάρ of 9:17 attach to 9:14 when it makes good sense to attach it as usual to what immediately precedes. The sense of this second interpretation, as expressed by Sanday and Headlam (*Romans*, 225), is: verse 17 is "additional proof showing that the principle just enunciated (in 9:16) is true not merely in an instance of God's mercy, but also of his severity." Hence 9:17 would argue that also in the matter of divine *hardening* "it is not of one who wills nor of one who runs but of God."

On the basis of grammatical rules alone no resolution is likely to be reached. It seems to me from the logical structure of Paul's argument that 9:17 relates to both 9:14 and 16. This will become clearer if we paraphrase 9:14-16. Verse 16 asserts that God is free in the bestowal of his mercy: his choices of its beneficiaries are not conditioned by a man's willing or running. Verse 14 asserts that God is righteous to act in this way. Standing in between these two assertions, verse 15 supports them both by showing from Ex 33:19 that God does in fact exercise such freedom (support for 9:16), and that this is an essential aspect of his glorious name which it is righteous to exalt (support for 9:14). In all probability Paul intends the quotation of Ex 9:16 in Rom 9:17 to provide the negative counterpart (hardening) to 9:15 (mercy) and to function in the same way, namely, to support both the assertion of God's freedom in election (9:16,18) and the assertion that he is righteous to act this way (9:14). The way 9:18 correlates mercy (from 9:15) and hardening (from 9:17) is in favor of this interpretation. If it is correct, then the debate over whether the γάρ in 9:17 relates to 9:14 or 9:16 is not so crucial, since basically it relates to both.

I am suggesting, therefore, that Paul employs Ex 9:16 (= Rom 9:17) as he did Ex 33:19—to further support his initial claim in 9:14 that God is not unrighteous in the absoluteness of his unconditional election. To see precisely how this Old Testament quotation functions in Paul's argument we should now examine the Old Testament context in which he read the text. This is all the more necessary since many commentators, precisely on the basis of the Old Testament context, construe Paul's meaning in a way quite foreign to the intention evident in the context of Rom 9.

4. The hardening of Pharaoh in the Old Testament context

In Ex 4-14 the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is designated by three different Hebrew words. It will be helpful to list the occurrences of these with their Hebrew parsing, grammatical subjects and equivalents from the LXX.

	חזק		כבד
4:21,	pi imp, God, σκληρυνῶ	7:14,	q perf, heart, βεβάρηται
7:13,	q imp c , heart, κατίσχυσεν	8:11(15),	hiph inf abs, Pharaoh, ἐβαρύνθη
7:22,	q imp c, heart, ἐσκληρύνθη	8:28(32),	hiph imp c, Pharaoh, ἐβάρυνεν
8:15(19),	q imp c, heart, ἐσκληρύνθη	9:7,	q imp c, heart, ἐβαρύνθη
9:12,	pi imp c, God, ἐσκλήρυνεν	9:34,	hiph imp c, Pharaoh, ἐβάρυνεν
9:35,	q imp c, heart, ἐσκληρύνθη	10:1,	hiph perf, God, ἐσκλήρυνα
10:20,	pi imp c, God, ἐσκλήρυνεν		קשׁה
10:27,	pi imp c, God, ἐσκλήρυνεν	7:3,	hiph imp, God, σκληρυνῶ
11:10,	pi imp c, God, ἐσκλήρυνεν	13:15,	hiph perf, Pharaoh, ἐσκλήρυνεν

14:4,	hiph perf, God, σκληρυνῶ
14:8,	pi imp c, God, ἐσκλήρυνεν
14:17,	pi ptcp, God, σκληρυνῶ

In our day critics explain the diverse vocabulary from the narrator's use of diverse sources. Paul, on the other hand, probably read the account with its varying vocabulary as a literary unit with a unified intent. Therefore, it will be enlightening to survey Ex 4-14 to see what impact it offers such a reading.

Excursus—The vocabulary of hardening in Exodus 4-14

In all likelihood when Paul uses the word σκληρύνει in Rom 9:18 he is adopting the word from the LXX which corresponds to not just one of the three main Hebrew words, but to the synonymous import of each. Σκληρύνειν translates חזק everywhere except once in Ex 4-14, כבד in 10:1 and קשׁה in 7:3 and 13:15. Moreover the wider usage of each of these Hebrew words shows that they can all refer to the metaphorical "hardness" that makes a person insensible to promptings and inflexible in his will. For example, קשׁה regularly refers to the "hard" or "stiff" neck (Neh 9:16,17,29; Jer 7:26; 17:23; 19:15; Deut 10:16; 2 Chr 30:8; 36:13; 2 Kgs 17:14; Prov 29:1) but can also refer to the hardening of spirit (Deut 2:30), heart (Ps 95:8; Ezek 3:7), face (Ezek 2:4) and the whole person (Isa 48:4).

The basic lexical meaning of כבד is "be heavy." Five times in Ex 4-14 the LXX renders it with βαρύνειν. But the usage here shows that the meaning is similar to that of Isa 6:10: "Make the heart of this people fat and make their ears heavy (הַכְבֵּד) and their eyes shut, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears." The point is that to be heavy is to be insensible, unresponsive, deadened, which signifies virtually the same thing as "hardened." Similarly Zech 7:11,12: "But they refused to listen and gave a stubborn shoulder, and made their ears *heavy* so as not to hear (הִכְבִּידוּ מִשְׁמוֹעַ). And their heart they made *adamant* so as not to hear (וְלִבָּם שָׂמוּ שָׁמִיר מִשְׁמוֹעַ)." Note here how the "adamant heart" and the

"heavy ear" correspond and both refer to a willful inability to hear.

The word חזק very often means "be or grow strong," a meaning which Forster and Marston (*God's Strategy, 155-77)* argue is to be preferred throughout this context, against the LXX. From wider usage and from the theological premise that Pharaoh's evil choice must be autonomous, they argue that to harden means to strengthen someone in his chosen course. But it is clear from Jer 5:3 that חזק can mean "harden" and not just "strengthen": "O Yahweh, do not your eyes look for truth? You struck them but they felt no pain; you consumed them, but they refused to take correction. *They made their faces harder than rock* (חִזְקוּ פְנֵיהֶם מִסֶּלַע)." The comparison with rock proves that the metaphorical import of חזק can be virtually the same as that of קשׁה. This is confirmed by the alignment with קשׁה in Ezek 3:7-9: "The house of Israel is not willing to listen to you, for they are not willing to listen to me. For all the house of Israel are of a hard forehead and a hard heart (חֲזֵקֵי־מֵצַח וּקְשֵׁי־לֵב).... But I have made as adamant, harder than flint (כְּשָׁמִיר חָזָק מִצֹּר), your forehead. Do not fear them." The same alignment with קשׁה also occurs in Ezek 2:4 but here חזק refers to the heart as in the Exodus context: "And the sons are hard of face and hard of heart (קִשֵׁי פָנִים וְחִזְקֵי־לֵב)." The idea of strengthening has fallen aside in such uses of חזק.

That this is the sense of חזק in Ex 4-14 is shown by two facts. 1) It will become clear in the following pages that 7:13, 8:15(19) and 9:12,35 in which חזק appears are understood by the narrator as specific fulfillments of the prediction in 7:3 in which קשׁה appears. Therefore, since it was of no concern of the narrator to coordinate the vocabulary more closely, we may infer that he understood קשׁה and חזק to be synonymous. Thus the LXX is fully justified in rendering both by σκληρύνειν (except once—7:13). 2) In 7:13,14 and 9:34,35 the words חזק and כבד occur twice back to back so as to require virtually the same meaning.

I conclude, therefore, that the narrator of Ex 4-14 does not see in קשׁה, חזק and כבד terms with fundamentally different meanings. They all point to a condition of heart which renders it insensible to promptings and inflexible of will, and thus, in Pharaoh's case, adamantly opposed to God's demands. Hence in the following survey I will render each of the terms by the English "harden."

Already in God's conversation with Moses at the burning bush the note of God's sovereign freedom in dealing with men is sounded. Before getting angry with Moses' unwillingness to go to Pharaoh (Ex 4:14), God gives Moses one last argument why he should be confident in speaking God's word to the king: "Who

made man's mouth? Who makes him dumb or *deaf* or seeing or blind? Is it not I, Yahweh?" (4:11). To be sure, this refers to God's readiness and power to enable Moses to speak. But the divine claim is far more extensive than that and reveals a God who will work so that "Pharaoh will not *listen* to [Moses]" (7:4).

After Moses gets his release from Jethro and heads for Egypt, God says in Ex 4:21, "When you go to return to Egypt, behold all the wonders which I have put in your hand, and do them before Pharaoh, and I will *harden* his heart, and he will not send the people away." In Ex 5:1, therefore, Moses and Aaron approach Pharaoh and say, "Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, send away my people...." But Pharaoh's response concludes with, "I *will not send Israel away"* (5:2). The result of this first encounter with Pharaoh is thus probably intended to be read as a fulfillment of God's predicted action in Ex 4:21: "I will *harden* his heart and *he will not send the people away."* The narrator confirms this interpretation to us by showing us that Moses perceives God's hand in this first act of resistance by Pharaoh. For when Pharaoh, instead of sending Israel away, compounds the burden of their labor (5:7-9), Moses says to Yahweh, "Why have *you* done evil to this people? Why did you then send me?" (5:22). Moses sees the inevitable conclusion, namely, God said he would harden Pharaoh's heart so that he would not send Israel away (4:21); he does just that (5:2), and, therefore, the worsened plight of the Israelites is an "evil" from God.

This makes very unlikely the interpretation of the third-century rabbis which in our day is espoused by Forster and Marston and others. This interpretation argues that, since until after the sixth plague (Ex 9:12) we read only of Pharaoh's heart "being hardened" (7:13, 14, 22; 8:15[19]; 9:7) or of Pharaoh's hardening his own heart (8:11 [15]; 8:28 [32]), therefore God's hardening activity did not commence until after Pharaoh had shown himself deserving of this punitive measure through his own self-hardening. A precise analysis of the verb forms (see table on pp 159-60) reveals that before the first active assertion of God's hardening in Ex 9:12 there are two assertions that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (כבד) and after 9:12 there are two assertions that he hardened his own heart (כבד and קשׁה). What follows from this is that Pharaoh's "self-hardening" is equally well-attested before *and after* the first statement that God has hardened him. From this it cannot be inferred that Pharaoh's "self-hardening" represents his prior, independent sin for which God's hardening is the punishment. In view of the subsequent "self-hardenings" (9:34; 13:15) it is just as probable that "the hardening of man by God appears as self-hardening."

Concerning the six passive references to Pharaoh's "being hardened," five occur before Ex 9:12 and one (9:35) afterwards. But the most important question here is: Who *is* doing the hardening? Forster and Marston *assume* it is Pharaoh and not God. But in view of the prediction of 4:21 ("I will harden") this assumption loses its plausibility. This will be confirmed in what follows.

Exodus 6:28ff reads like a fresh start after Pharaoh's initial rebuff. As in 4:21 so in 7:2-4a God commissions Moses, "You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to send away the children of Israel from his land. And I will harden the heart of Pharaoh, and I will multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt; but *Pharaoh will not listen to you*." So in Ex 7:8-13 Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh and perform a miracle for him, but the section ends with the words, "The heart of Pharaoh was hardened *and he did not listen to them* just as Yahweh had said." The explicit connection between 7:13 and 7:3,4a confirms our critique of Forster and Marston's view mentioned above. In 7:3,4a God says he will harden Pharaoh's heart so that Pharaoh will not listen to Moses and Aaron. Then in 7:13 the narrator observes that Pharaoh's heart was hardened so that he would not listen to them, *"just as Yahweh had said."* The words, "just as Yahweh had said," prove that the refusal of Pharaoh to listen in 7:13 is a fulfillment of the prediction in 7:3,4a; and since this refusal is the intended result of *God's* hardening in 7:3,4a it would be unwarranted to construe 7:13 as anything other than a fulfillment of *God's* hardening of Pharaoh's heart. Therefore, Otto Kuss (*Roemerbrief*, III, 724, following M. Noth) is fully justified in saying, "Since already in Ex 7:3 it was announced that Yahweh intended to harden Pharaoh's heart, one must assume that in the narrator's opinion Yahweh is the one who was at work in this from the beginning."

Also at this point in the story God's *purpose* in hardening Pharaoh begins to emerge: "I will harden the heart of Pharaoh and *I will multiply my signs and my wonders* in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh will not listen to you; and I will lay my hand on Egypt and will bring my hosts, my people, the children of Israel, out from the land of Egypt *with great judgments.* And *the Egyptians shall know that I am Yahweh...*" (7:3-5). God's intention apparently is that, by hardening Pharaoh's heart, there be an extended occasion for the multiplication of God's "signs and wonders" and then a mighty act of deliverance with "great judgments." In all of this the name of Yahweh is to be exalted as the one who has sway over Egypt.

Now after two introductory interplays between Moses and Pharaoh in which the double prediction of God (4:21; 7:3f) has been doubly fulfilled (5:2; 7:13) in God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart, the prerequisite for the demonstration of God's power ("the multiplying of signs and wonders") in the ten plagues has been met. This seems to be the force of Ex 7:14,15a, "And Yahweh said to Moses: 'The heart of Pharaoh is hardened; he refuses to send away the people. Go to Pharaoh in the morning.'..."

So the plagues begin: all the water is turned to blood; but "the magicians of Egypt did so by their secret arts, and the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not listen to them *as Yahweh had said"* (Ex 7:22). Again the narrator reminds us that this hardening is owing to what Yahweh said he would do (7:3f). The second plague (frogs) comes without even a mention of Pharaoh's refusal to obey God (between 8:4 and 5; in Hebrew between 7:29 and 8:1). But then Pharaoh entreats for deliverance and lies about letting Israel go (8:8, Hebrew 8:4). Moses (like Elijah) goes an extra mile in making the plague marvelous by letting Pharaoh choose when the frogs will be gone. His purpose echoes the one in 7:3-5: "Be it as you say, so that you may know that there is none like Yahweh" (8:10, Hebrew 8:6). "But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite he hardened his heart and did not listen *just as Yahweh had said"* (8:15, Hebrew 8:11). The third plague (gnats or lice) comes upon Egypt with no specific warning (8:17, Hebrew 8:13) and this time the magicians cannot imitate the wonder but instead confess that "this is the finger of God." But "the heart of Pharaoh was hardened and be did not listen to them, *as Yahweh had said*" (8:19, Hebrew 8:15). Pharaoh lies again to rid himself of the fourth plague (flies). So the flies are removed. "But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and he did not send the people away" (8:32, Hebrew 8:28). After the fifth plague (death of cattle) no remorse or deceit is mentioned; only: "But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened and he did not send away the people" (9:7).

The sixth plague brought boils on all the Egyptians and again with no interaction between Moses and Pharaoh the narrator simply observes (for the first time in this verbal form), "Yahweh hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not listen to them *as Yahweh had said"* (9:12). The effect of this phrase, "as Yahweh had said," is to unite 9:12 with the prediction in 7:3,4 as well as with the previous fulfillments in 7:13,22; 8:11 (15), 15 (19), where this phrase has occurred. The unity of 9:12 (where God *explicitly* does the hardening) with 7:13,22 and 8:15(19) (where the passive voice is used) and with 8:11 (15) (where Pharaoh hardens his own heart) is another confirmation that for the narrator these three

expressions *all* represent the results of *God's* initial, expressed intention to harden Pharaoh's heart.

In Ex 9:13-21 God instructs Moses how to prepare for the seventh plague (hail) and what to say to Pharaoh. It is from this unit (9:16) that Paul takes his quotation in Rom 9:17. Through Moses God says to Pharaoh in Ex 9:14-16, "For at this time I am going to send all my plagues upon your heart and on your servants and on your people so that you may know that there is none like me in all the land. (15) For now I could have stretched forth my hand and smitten you and your people with pestilence and you would have been destroyed from the earth. (16) But for this reason I raised you up: in order to cause you to see my power and to declare my name in all the earth." In trying to judge how Paul construed this text it will be helpful to put his quotation alongside the Hebrew and the LXX of Ex 9:16.

Hebrew Ex 9:16	LXX Ex 9:16	Rom 9:17
וְאוּלָם בַּעֲבוּר זֹאת	καὶ ἕνεκεν τούτου	εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο
הֶעֱמַדְתִּיךָ	διετηρήθης	ἔξήγειρά σε
בַּעֲבוּר הַרְאֹתְךָ	ἵνα ἐνδείξωμαι ἐν σοὶ	ὅπως ἐνδείξωμαι ἐν σοι
אֶת־כֹּחִי וּלְמַעַן	τὴν ἰσχύν μου καὶ ὅπως	τὴν δύναμίν μου καὶ ὅπως
סַפֵּר שְׁמִי	διαγγελῇ τὸ ὄνομά μου	διαγγελῇ τὸ ὄνομά μου
בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ	ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῇ	ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῇ

Before discussing the differences here we must attend to Ex 9:15 because it appears that the LXX of 9:16 results from its peculiar understanding of 9:15. Kautzsch (*Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, Section 106 p) cites Ex 9:15 as an example of perfect tense used "to express actions and facts, whose accomplishment in the past is to be represented, not as actual, but only as possible (generally corresponding to the Latin imperfect or pluperfect subjunctive)." This is how the English translations thus render the verse: "For by now *I could have* put forth my hand... and *you would* have been cut off" (RSV). But the LXX construes the verbs of 9:15 as futures and the verse as a

continuation of the *prediction* from 9:14 of what God *will do* instead of a statement of what he *could have done:* νῦν γὰρ ἀποστείλας τὴν χεῖρα πατά ξω σε καὶ τὸν λαόν σου θανάτῳ καὶ ἐκτριβήσῃ ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς. This understanding of 9:15 probably accounts for the LXX's substitution of καί (at the beginning of 9:16) for the "strong adversative" (*BDB*, 19) אוּלָם. For if 9:15 is a prediction that God will strike Pharaoh there is no adversative relationship between 9:15 and Pharaoh's being "preserved" (διετηρήθης, 9:16) for this demonstration of power. It follows from this interpretation by the LXX that the words ἕνεκεν τούτου (9:16) probably look *backward* to the predicted blow in 9:15: "And on account of my intention to strike you... and drive you out... you were preserved."

Paul, on the other hand, departs from the LXX and, with the telic phrase είς αὔτὸ τοῦτο, removes the ambiguity of the LXX and leaves no doubt that he construes τοῦτο to look *forward* in Ex 9:16 to the demonstration of God's power. That Paul is probably construing Ex 9:16 somewhat differently than the LXX is confirmed by his use of ἐξήγειρά σε instead of the LXX διετηρήθης to translate הֶֽעֱמַדְתִּיךָ. Paul's translation has a closer lexical correspondence to the Hebrew word and probably shows that the point he wanted to make with the quotation was implied more clearly by the Hebrew text. However, since Paul is not a purist elsewhere in sticking to the Hebrew text, Luz (*Geschichtsverstaendnis, 77)* is probably right that ἐξήγειρά σε is not simply a reversion to the Hebrew text but rather reflects "a dependence on the general Biblical usage [of ἐξεγείρω]." The usage of ἐξεγείρω to which Luz refers is that found, for example, in Num 24:19 (a conqueror shall be raised up from Jacob); 2 Sam 12:11 (God promises to raise up evil for David out of his own house, i.e., Absalom); Hab 1:6 ("I will raise up against you the Chaldeans"); Zech 11:16 ("I will raise up a shepherd in the land"); Jer 27(50):41 ("many kings shall be raised up from the end of the earth"). To these could be added the identical use of the simple ἐγείρω in such texts as Judg 2:16; 3:9,15; Acts 13:22. On the basis of these texts there is a fairly large consensus that by ἐξήγειρα Paul means that God raised up Pharaoh onto the scene of history and brought him to his place of power.

Generally it is assumed that this does not however render the precise meaning of the Hebrew text of Ex 9:16. G. Bush (*Notes*, I, 116), Keil and Delitzsch (*Pentateuch*, I, 490) and B. Childs (*Exodus*, 158) construe העמדתיך to mean "let live" or "preserve safe." In other words, the sense is: "I could have struck you and cut you off, but instead I *preserved you alive*." What Paul did, then, in choosing the word ἐξεγείρειν was, according to Meyer (*Romans*, II, 138), to *"expand* the special sense of [העמדתיך] to denote the whole appearance of

Pharaoh, of which general fact the particular one was a part." This interpretation of the Hebrew of Ex 9:16 and what Paul has done with it is not impossible, but there is another plausible way of looking at Paul's interpretation of Ex 9:16.

It is not at all certain that Paul would have construed העמדתיך as "preserve alive." There is no such equivalent usage of the hiphil of עמד in the Old Testament. The closest analogies would be 1 Kgs 15:4; 1 Chr 16:17; 17:14; Prov 29:4; Ps 105:10. But the very common meaning of the hiphil of עמד is to "appoint" to a task or to "set up." This meaning also gives a quite intelligible sense to Ex 9:15,16. Exodus 9:14, in spite of its ambiguities (see M. Noth, *Exodus*, 61f), announces that there are plagues yet to come and that their purpose, like the purpose of those gone before (Ex 8:10; Hebrew 8:6), is "that you may know that there is none like [Yahweh] in all the earth." Then in accord with this purpose (and as a confirmation of it; cf כִּי, 9:15) God says that by now he could have destroyed the Egyptians from the land but that such an early destruction is not the purpose for which Pharaoh had been appointed. The purpose rather, in accord with 9:14, is to cause Pharaoh to see an *extended* display of God's power and to exalt his name in the earth. In other words, it is not necessary to assume that Paul understood Ex 9:16 to refer merely to Pharaoh's being preserved alive, a meaning which he then "expanded." Lexically and contextually it is just as likely that he construed העמדתיך to refer to God's initial historical act of raising up Pharaoh to be king of Egypt, and that his ἐξήγειρά σε thus honors the Old Testament context. We will return later to the questions: What significance do the purpose clauses of Ex 9:16 have for Paul? and, In illustrating hardening (Rom 9:18), why does he choose a text in which the term "hardening" does not even occur? But for now let us continue our survey of the Old Testament context.

The seventh plague (hail) strikes. After getting a promise from Pharaoh to release the people Moses says, "When I go out of the city I will spread out my hands to Yahweh; the thunder will cease and there will be no more hail, so that you may know that the earth is Yahweh's" (9:29). Moses keeps his word. "But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned again, and hardened his heart, he and his servants. And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened and he did not send away the children of Israel, as Yahweh had said by the hand of Moses" (9:34f). Three things call for attention here. 1) The purpose of exalting Yahweh's right and power over all the earth is achieved not only in the plagues themselves (9:14) but also in the removal of the plagues. Not just the act of final deliverance or the plagues themselves are the

means by which God declares his name and shows his power, but the whole complex of events from Ex 4 through 14. 2) In hardening his heart Pharaoh is said to sin (לחטא). This prepares the way for the next question of Paul's opponent in Rom 9:19, "Why then does God still find fault?" The objector knew well that God did find fault with Pharaoh, because he finds fault with sin. 3) In 9:35 we encounter for the last time (in these chapters) the phrase "as Yahweh had said." It has occurred six times since the predictions in 4:21 ("I will harden his heart and he will not send the people away") and in 7:3f ("I will harden the heart of Pharaoh... and he will not listen to you"). *The repeated reference back to these predictions has shown that the hardening of Pharaoh's heart was understood by the narrator to be God's work from the beginning.* Thus behind the passive voice in 9:35 stands Yahweh. But since the hardening of 9:35 is parallel to the self-hardening in 9:34 we are shown again (pp 162f) that for the ancient writer these three events (self-hardening, being hardened, and God's hardening) are not three, but one.

Before sending Moses to threaten Pharaoh with the eighth plague (locusts) God confides to Moses what he has done and why: "Go in to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, so that I may set these signs of mine in their midst, and so that you may relate in the ears of your son and your son's son how I have made sport of the Egyptians, and my signs which I have performed among them, and that you may know that I am Yahweh" (10:1,2). This is the clearest statement yet of the purpose of God's hardening. It has significance for Paul's context in at least two regards, 1) It shows that the purpose of God in hardening Pharaoh is virtually the same as the purpose in 9:16 of "raising him up." Paul quoted 9:16 (in Rom 9:17) in which the word "harden" does not occur, and yet in Rom 9:18 he drew the inference from it that God "hardens whom he wills." It is probably the parallel between 9:16 (he raises up Pharaoh to show his power) and 10:1 (he hardens Pharaoh to display his signs) which justifies Paul's inference in Rom 9:18. Since the whole sequence of signs would not have happened apart from God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart (10:1) and since God's raising Pharaoh up was for the purpose of demonstrating his power through those very signs, it follows that in all likelihood the ἐξήγειρά σε of Rom 9:17 necessarily implied (for Paul and all who were familiar with the Old Testament context) the accompanying divine activity of hardening. This does not yet answer why Paul chose to quote Ex 9:16 instead of 10:1. This will be handled later. 2) Unlike the statements of purpose in 7:5; 8:10(6); 9:14, 16, 29, the one in Ex 10:1-3 says that God's revelation of his power is aimed at *Israel* and not only at the Egyptians ("that *you* may tell your sons... that you may

know I am Yahweh"). This, as we shall see later, corresponds in Paul's context to the revelation of God's glory to the *vessels of mercy* (Rom 9:23).

After the eighth plague (locusts) Pharaoh beseeches that his "sin be forgiven" and that "this death" be taken away (10:17). But when the locusts were gone, "Yahweh hardened the heart of Pharaoh and he did not send away the children of Israel" (10:20). After three days of darkness when Pharaoh was about to release the Israelites (10:24), "Yahweh hardened the heart of Pharaoh and he was not willing to send them away" (10:27). The final warning of the tenth plague (the death of all firstborn) is given by Moses in 11:4-8 and is followed by a word of God to Moses: "'Pharaoh will not listen to you in order that I might multiply my miracles in the land of Egypt.' And Moses and Aaron did all these miracles before Pharaoh, but Yahweh hardened the heart of Pharaoh and he did not send away the children of Israel from his land" (11:9,10). The purpose of the hardening is the same as in 10:1 ("I have hardened his heart... so that I may set these signs of mine in their midst"). But note that not just the tenth plague is in view here; the text functions as a summary: "Moses and Aaron *did all these miracles*...." Both the vocabulary and the content of 11:9,10 recall the predictions at the beginning of our story (4:21; 7:3f).

Ex 4:21	Ex 11:9,10	Ex 7:3,4
And Yahweh said to Moses:	And Yahweh said:	
As you return to Egypt	*Pharaoh will not listen to you*	*I will harden the heart of Pharaoh*,
see *all the miracles*	in order *to multiply my miracles*	and I will *multiply my... miracles*
which I have put in	*in the land of Egypt.*	*in the land of Egypt.*
your hand	And Moses and Aaron	
and *do them*	*did all these miracles*	
before Pharaoh.	*before Pharaoh.*	

But I will harden	*But Yahweh hardened*	
his heart,	*the heart of Pharaoh,*	
and he will not send away	*and he did not send away*	And *Pharaoh will not listen to you.*
the people.	the children of Israel from his land.	

The italicized portions of 11:9,10 have parallels in either 4:21 or 7:3,4. The implication of this summary is that "all the miracles" of Yahweh (not just half of them, as some say) from the first plague to the last did not move Pharaoh to release Israel because *Yahweh* was hardening Pharaoh's heart.

The plagues are over now and the Israelites have been released. But the purpose of God's hardening of Pharaoh is not yet complete. He tells Moses to have the people camp between Migdol and the sea so that "Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel: 'They are entangled in the land, the wilderness has shut them in.' And I will harden the heart of Pharaoh, and he will pursue you; and *I will get glory over* Pharaoh and over all his armies. And the Egyptians shall know that I am Yahweh" (14:3,4). Thus when we read in 14:5, "The heart of Pharaoh... *was turned* against the people," we should see at least the beginning of the fulfillment of God's promise (in 14:3) to harden him. Then when the chariots and army are gathered, "Yahweh hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt and he pursued the children of Israel" (14:8). The Israelites cry out to God and against Moses for fear of the Egyptians but God steadies Moses with these words: "And I, behold I, am hardening the heart of the Egyptians, and they will go after them. And I will get glory over Pharaoh and over all his armies and over his chariots and over his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am Yahweh when I get glory over Pharaoh and over his chariots and over his horsemen" (14:17,18). And thus the Egyptians were routed, "and Israel saw the great hand with which Yahweh worked against Egypt; and the people feared Yahweh, and they believed in Yahweh and in his servant Moses" (14:31).

That was God's aim: to so demonstrate his power and glory that his people fear him and trust him always (cf Ps 106:12). But his aim was wider than that: it was also "that his name be declared in all the earth" (9:16). Hence in the song of Moses *this* achievement is also celebrated: "Now are the chiefs of Edom

dismayed; the leaders of Moab seized by trembling. All the inhabitants of Canaan are melted; terror and anguish have fallen upon them. By the greatness of your arm they are silent as a stone, until your people pass through, O Yahweh, until the people whom you have bought pass through" (15:15,16). Thus God's purpose to magnify his name had succeeded far and wide; the demonstration of his glory in Egypt lifted the voices of generations of his own people in praise (Ps 78:12,13; 105:26-38; 106:9-11; 136:10-15) and the news of it went before them into Canaan (Josh 2:9,10; 9:9).

5. "Whom he wills he hardens" (Romans 9:18b)

The inference Paul draws from his quotation of Ex 9:16 is: "Whom [God] wills, he hardens" (ὃν δὲ θέλει σκληρύνει). On the surface, it is not clear how this inference follows from the assertion, "I *raised you up* to show my power...." But I have already tried to show (pp 168f) how Paul can legitimately infer the "hardening" in Rom 9:18 from the "raising up" in Ex 9:16. In short, the divine purpose (ὅπως, Rom 9:17) to be achieved through "raising Pharaoh up" could, according to the Old Testament narrator, be achieved only by repeated hardenings of Pharaoh's heart. Therefore, the raising up of Pharaoh implies, as its necessary accompaniment, God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart. But now we must ask more precisely what the relative clause, ὃν δὲ θέλει σκληρύνει, means.

5.1 The freedom of God to harden

The two halves of Rom 9:18 (not counting the conjunctions) are grammatically identical: ὃν θέλει ἐλεεῖ—ὃν θέλει σκληρύνει. There would have to be a strong contextual warrant (which I cannot see) for construing these relative clauses differently. What is said in 18a about mercy is also said in 18b about hardening. This is helpful in determining the point of 9:18b.

It is generally agreed that 9:18a (ὃν θέλει ἐλεεῖ) *restates* the assertion of 9:16 (the bestowal of God's mercy is not of one who wills or runs but of God who shows mercy). Nothing new was said about mercy explicitly in 9:17, and therefore the summary statement (ἄρα οὖν) in 9:18 reaches back to 9:15,16 for its inference about mercy (18a) and back to 9:17 for its inference about hardening (18b). The point then of 18a ("On whom he wills, he has mercy") is, according to 9:16, that God is wholly free in determining the beneficiaries of his mercy: his decisions are not ultimately conditioned by man's will or actions. It follows, therefore, from the identical form of 18b ("Whom he wills, he hardens"), that God asserts the same sovereign freedom in determining whom he will harden: his decisions are not ultimately conditioned by man's will or acts.

At this point in our exposition the controversy becomes impassioned—and

rightly so, for the theological issue at stake (double predestination or the *decretum absolutum reprobationis*) reaches to the heart of our understanding of God and man. Therefore, every effort should be made to respect the object of our research and thus let Paul have his say. There is no value in calling all expositors to a disinterested neutrality (even if such a thing were possible), but there is great value in being willing, if the grammatical and historical evidence demands it, to let Paul say something different from what we would initially prefer.

We may look first at the construction of Paul's meaning which J. Munck offers:

> The word given to Moses is a continuation of the examples of Isaac and Jacob: God chooses whom he wishes and it is not the will or the actions of man but solely God's mercy that decides whether the *Heilsgeschichte* shall be carried on through one part of a people or another, for this is a matter of peoples and parts of peoples, and not of individuals; God chose Jacob (Israel) and not Edom. Nor is Moses conceived of as an individual; he here represents Israel, whom God chooses and saves in its affliction in Egypt. Over against Moses stands Pharaoh, an adversary who like Ishmael and Edom is a threat to the continuance of the *Heilsgeschichte*. But God's sovereign will also rules Pharaoh the representative of Egypt. (*Christ and Israel*, 44f)

Munck cites Lagrange (*Romains*, 234) approvingly, who writes, "To Moses as an example of grace, Paul adds the case of Pharaoh his adversary, who is a type of all those who resist God and refuse to obey his commands." This interpretation seems to me to produce a good deal more smoke than it does light. By focusing on factors outside Paul's immediate concern it obscures the crucial issues.

I have argued in Chapter Three that in Rom 9:6-13 Paul is *not* just concerned with peoples instead of individuals; and in Chapters Four and Five (Section 3) I argued that Ex 33:19 (Rom 9:15) is not cited because of Moses' significance either as an individual or as a representative of Israel, but rather because the words constitute a declaration of God's name. These criticisms of Munck's view need not be repeated here. What needs attention here is Munck's view of Pharaoh. He wants to see Pharaoh as "like Ishmael and Edom" (in 9:6-13), namely, as a "threat to the continuance of *Heilsgeschichte*," and "a type of those who resist God and refuse to obey his commands." Thus his overthrow reveals God's sovereign ability to secure his saving purposes in redemptive history and to turn all opposition to his own glory. The best clue that these ideas (no matter

how true theologically) are *not* Paul's point is that the correspondence between Pharaoh, on the one hand, and Ishmael and Edom, on the other, is not what Munck says it is. Ishmael and Edom are not cited by Paul either as threats to redemptive history or as those who disobediently resist God. On the contrary, their purpose is to represent the sovereign freedom of God who rejected them *"before they were born or had done anything good or evil"* (9:11). To be sure, Esau was a threat to Jacob later in life, but that later history is beside the point in Rom 9:10-13 where the whole transaction concerns God's unconditional choice of one son over the other *before* they offered any "resistance" or posed any "threat" to God's saving plan. I agree that there is a correspondence between "Jacob I *loved* and Esau I *hated"* (9:13), on the one hand, and "He has *mercy* on whom he wills and he *hardens* whom he wills" (9:18), on the other hand (Michel, *Roemer*, 241). But for Paul the implication that must then follow is that God's act of hardening is just as unconditional as the loving and hating of 9:13, which God determined "before they were born or had done anything good or evil." It is irrelevant and misleading to focus on Pharaoh's disobedience and his threat to God's people, for neither of these receives any attention at all by Paul. Both the correspondence between mercy and hardening in 9:18, and the correspondence between the hardening of 9:18b and the hating of 9:13b, show that *Paul's* point is the unconditional freedom of God in determining whom he will harden.

It is a theological premise, not an exegetical insight, when Lagrange (*Romains*, 234) says, "It is certain that the verb σκληρύνω (verse 18) supposes an antecedent evil disposition," and when Murray (*Romans*, II, 29) says, "The hardening... presupposes ill-desert and in the case of Pharaoh, particularly the ill-desert of his self-hardening." Sometimes support for this assertion is sought in the Exodus narrative which, it is argued, describes God's act of hardening as a reaction to Pharaoh's self-hardening (Stoeckhardt, *Roemer*, 438). But in Section 4 (pp 163f) I have argued that this is not at all the intention of the Old Testament narrator. Not once in Ex 4-14 is the assertion of God's hardening of Pharaoh *grounded* in any attitude or act of Pharaoh. Instead, again and again the reason given for the hardening is God's *purpose* to demonstrate his power and magnify his name. Paul picks up precisely this theme in Rom 9:17 and heightens it by altering the ambiguous LXX (ἕνεκεν τούτου, Ex 9:16) to the more telic εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο in 9:17: "for this very purpose (and for nothing else) I raised you up." With this selection and adaptation of Ex 9:16 Paul indicates his understanding of the Exodus context: the action of God in Pharaoh's life is determined ultimately by the *purposes* of God, not Pharaoh's willing or running. This understanding of

God's treatment of Pharaoh is the basis of the inference about hardening in 9:18: since God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart (which is implied in his "raising up" of Pharaoh, cf pp 168f) is ultimately determined by God's *purposes* (and not by Pharaoh's willing or running), therefore, God evidently always acts this way and thus chooses to harden not simply "those who have met the condition" but "whom he wills." In 9:11f God chose to love Jacob and hate Esau, not on the basis of any good or evil done by them, but ἵνα ἡ κατ᾽ ἐκλογὴν πρόθεσις τοῦ θεοῦ μένῃ, i.e., to accomplish a *purpose.* In 9:17 the two ὅπως clauses serve the same function as the ἵνα clause in 9:11 not on the basis of any good or evil done by Pharaoh did God raise him up and harden him, but rather it was to accomplish a *purpose*. I conclude, therefore, with U. Luz (*Geschichtsverstaendnis*, 78 note 211) that "an exegesis which looks to Pharaoh's life for the grounds of his being hardened fails to give heed to the scope of Paul's statement."

In sum then I have tried to demonstrate with three arguments that the phrase, "Whom he wills he hardens," describes God's freedom to choose the recipients of his hardening apart from any ground in their willing or acting. First, the parallel between 18a and 18b shows that the freedom of God to harden is parallel to his freedom to show mercy, which according to 9:16 has no ground in a person's willing or running. Second, the correspondence between the pairs, mercy/hardening (9:18) and love/hate (9:13), shows that Paul does not intend for us to view the hardening as a "divine reaction" to sin, since the divine decision to "hate" Esau was made "before they were born or had done anything good *or evil*" (9:11). Third, Paul's selection and adaptation of Ex 9:16, which summarizes the theme of Ex 4-14, show that he understands God's activity to be grounded in *his own purposes*, not in the plans or actions of men.

5.2 The meaning of "hardening"

The next question to be answered is: What does Paul have regard to in his own context when he asserts God's free and unconditioned hardening? The commentators generally divide along the lines that have been set in their exegesis of Rom 9:6-13. Munck (*Christ and Israel*, 45), Lagrange (*Remains*, 235), Zahn (*Roemer*, 452), and Beyschlag (*Theodicee*, 48) all agree that it is exegetically unjustified and theologically blasphemous to say that Paul has regard to the eternal destinies of individuals. On the other side, Michel (*Roemer*, 241f), Luz (*Geschichtsverstaendnis*, *77* notes 207, 208), Maier (*Mensch und freier Wille*, 370), Kaesemann (*Romans*, 268f), and Kuss (*Roemerbrief*, III, 723)

all agree that the connection of thought and alignment with "mercy" require that "hardening" refer to eternal reprobation. The evidence is decisively in favor of the latter view.

Generally, the approach taken to refute the view that "hardening" refers to an individual's eternal destiny is that this cannot be proved from the Old Testament in the case of Pharaoh. There is even a rabbinic tradition based on Ex 9:15f and 15:11 that Pharaoh was saved from the debacle at the sea and repented (Strack-Billerbeck, 1,647). In short, Ex 4-14 is concerned with God's guiding events within history, not with God's determining anyone's eternal destinies. As a description of the meaning of Ex 4-14, this objection is basically sound. It would probably be more accurate to say that in reality the hardening of Pharaoh *could* have consigned him to eternal punishment but that this is an argument from silence since the eternal destinies of individuals were not a consideration of the Old Testament narrator. He did not express himself one way or the other on this issue. But to infer from the narrator's concern with God's work within history that *Paul* does not mean something more by hardening is not valid. Whether he does and how it is justified must be decided mainly from considerations within the Pauline context.

Romans 9:18 is the only place Paul uses the verb σκληρύνω. The noun σκληρός he does not use at all. The only other etymologically related word in Paul is σκληρότης used once in Rom 2:5: "According to your *hardness* and unrepentant heart you are storing up for yourself wrath on the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Here hardness (of heart) represents a condition of will that is unresponsive to God's (Rom 2:4) call, and thus bound for final judgment under the wrath of God. Ephesians 4:18 shows that πώρωσις is a synonym of σκληρότης "...alienated from the life of God on account of the ignorance which is in them on account of the *hardness* of their heart." In Eph 2:1-4, persons in this condition are described as "dead in sins" and as "children of wrath" whose only hope is a revivifying act of God who is rich in mercy (πλούσιος...ἐν ἐλέει, cf Rom 9:23). The verb πωρόω in 2 Cor 3:14 signifies basically the same thing: "The minds [of the Israelites] were hardened" so that they could not apprehend that which would overcome their alienation from God and keep them from "perishing" (cf 2 Cor 4:3f). What is evident from this survey of Paul's vocabulary for "hardening," as Beyschlag (*Theodicee*, 47) and Schmidt (*TDNT*, V, 1030) point out, is that σκληρύνω and πωρόω are synonyms.

Πωρόω and πώρωσις are each used one other time in Paul (Rom 11:7,25).

According to Rom 11:25: "A *hardening* has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles comes in." This hardening is a condition that leaves part of Israel unresponsive to the Gospel and so excludes them from salvation, as Rom 11:5-8 shows:

> There is in the present time a remnant according to the election of grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer by works since then grace would no longer be grace. What then? What Israel was seeking, this it did not obtain; the elect obtained it, but the rest *were hardened* (ἐπωρώθησαν), just as it is written:
>
> > God gave them a spirit of stupor,
> >
> > eyes so as not to see
> >
> > and ears so as not to hear,
> >
> > unto this very day.

Paul speaks here of a hardening given by God which prevents Israel from obtaining what it sought. What they sought, according to Rom 9:30, was the righteousness which would allow them to stand in the judgment. What is at stake, therefore, in Rom 11:5-8 is clearly salvation and destruction. The "remnant" referred to are the "saved" in Israel (cf 11:14), and their status as such accords with an election based on grace not works. Thus "the elect obtained [the righteousness that leads to salvation] but the rest were hardened [i.e. shut up in a condition which excludes them from salvation]"(11:7; cf 11:25,32).

There is good reason to think that, when Paul says "God hardens whom he wills" in Rom 9:18b, he is describing an act just like the hardening of 11:7. In the first place, hardening is the counterpart to mercy, a word (ἐλεέω/ ἔλεος) which characteristically for Paul refers to the decisive, eschatological salvation of God rather than to non-salvific historical beneficence (Rom 9:23; 11:30,31,32; 15:9; 2 Cor 4:1; Eph 2:4; 1 Tim 1:13,16; 2 Tim 1:16,18). It is likely then that ἐλεέω in Rom 9:18a has this sense and that σκληρύνω thus means the opposite. In the second place, four verses after coordinating "mercy" and "hardening," Paul coordinates "vessels of mercy" and "vessels of wrath." Since the vessels of wrath are "prepared for destruction" (ἀπώλεια) it is clear that they are excluded from salvation (cf Chapter Ten). Consequently, hardening appears to constitute one as a vessel of wrath as opposed to a vessel of mercy. Romans 2:5 confirms this

connection: "According to your *hardness* and unrepentant heart you are storing up *wrath* for yourself on the day of wrath and the revelation of the *righteous judgment* of God."

In the third place, and most importantly, the flow of Paul's thought in the chapter up to this point demands that being hardened refer to a condition outside salvation. If Paul were concerned, as so many say, to show only that God rules the historical affairs of men, raising one king for his purposes and casting down another, then why should he choose to use the word "harden" at all? It did not even occur in the text he cited from Ex 9:16 ("For this very purpose *I raised you up*..."). Why did he not say, "Whom he wills he raises up"? One answer commends itself above all others: he had never lost sight of the problem he posed at the beginning of the chapter (9:1-5), nor of the solution he had begun to give in 9:6-13. The word "harden" serves the flow of this argument far better than "raise up" would have.

Briefly, the problem posed in 9:1-5 was that God's word of promise, his saving purpose with Israel, seems to have fallen because many of Paul's kinsmen according to the flesh are accursed and cut off from Christ. The first stage of Paul's solution to this apparent problem is to argue that not all those from Israel are (true) Israel. For God's purpose was never to guarantee salvation to every individual child of Abraham, as if human descent made one a "child of God." Rather his purpose was an *"electing* purpose" (ἡ κατ᾽ ἐκλογὴν πρόθεσις) which has not "fallen" but "remains" (9:11c). Hence the explanation for the unbelief and condemnation of so many of Paul's kinsmen is not the failure of God's purpose but, as typified by Jacob and Esau, the explanation is God's sovereign and unconditional election of "some" (cf 11:14) Israelites while (to use the words of 11:7) "the rest were hardened."

In 9:14-18 Paul is answering an objector who says that if God acts this way he is unrighteous. The thread of Paul's thoughts, therefore, requires that 9:14-18 concern itself with the divine action described in 9:6-13, namely with God's choosing to save some within Israel while rejecting others, or as 9:13 puts it, with his loving some and hating others. Nothing else but the demands of this flow of thought explains so clearly why Paul in 9:14-18 treats the two sides of God's sovereign activity and why he chooses to use the word "harden" in 9:18. Must we not conclude, therefore, that the hardening in Rom 9:18 has reference, just as the hardening in 11:7, to the action of God whereby a person is left in a condition outside salvation and thus "prepared for destruction" (9:22)?

One final objection to be dealt with is that this view of hardening cannot be legitimately inferred (ἄρα οὖν 9:18) from Ex 9:16 (= Rom 9:17). My answer is basically the same as the one I gave in Chapter Three to a similar objection concerning Paul's use of Jacob and Esau. What Paul infers (rightly) from the Exodus story is the *principle of God's freedom* to harden whom he wills, i.e., unconditionally, guided only by his purposes not by man's running or willing (cf Section 5.1). Since the *principle* is established in the case of Pharaoh's recalcitrance, Paul applies it to his immediate concern, namely the recalcitrance and condemnation of his kinsmen according to the flesh. Paul may or may not have thought that Pharaoh was eternally condemned. But the legitimacy of his application hangs not on that, but on whether the principle of God's freedom from determination by human autonomy applies only to certain areas of divine action and not to others. Paul apparently saw no grounds for restricting the principle.

6. The justification of God

The one task remaining in this chapter is to complete our exposition of *how* Paul intends for Rom 9:15-18 to defend the claim that God is not unrighteous in unconditionally predestining some Israelites to salvation and some to condemnation. This we began to do in Chapter Five, Section 3, and pp 157f of this chapter. Up through Rom 9:16 the defense goes like this: Paul's conception of God's righteousness is that it consists basically in his inclination to act always for his own name's sake, that is, to maintain and demonstrate his glory (cf Chapters Six-Eight). In accord with its Old Testament intention, Paul understands Ex 33:19 (= Rom 9:15) as a solemn declaration of God's name, or a pronouncement of the essence of his glory (cf Chapter Four). The function of Rom 9:15, therefore, is to prove that God's glory or name consists in his sovereign freedom to bestow mercy on whom he wills. It follows then that, since God's righteousness is his unswerving allegiance to his own name, and since that name consists in his sovereign freedom to show mercy on whomever he wills, therefore, God is not unrighteous when his decision to have mercy on one person and not another is based solely on his own will rather than any human willing or running. On Paul's premises, then, the quotation of Ex 33:19 is indeed a penetrating defense of God's righteousness against the objection of his opponent in 9:14.

In Chapter Five, pp 100f, I suggested how the quotation of Ex 9:16 (= Rom 9:17) is integral to Paul's line of defense. At this stage in our exposition the role of 9:17 merits somewhat more development. A question that came up in Section 4 but which was not answered was: If Paul wanted to infer from an Old Testament quotation that God *hardens* whom he wills, why did he choose to cite Ex 9:16 in which the word "harden" is missing? The partial answer suggested was that Paul's inference about God's freedom in hardening is based on the purpose clauses of Ex 9:16 which show that God's actions are determined by his own sovereign designs, not by the autonomous willing or running of men. This is only a partial answer because in Ex 4-14 (cf Section 4) there are numerous other statements of the purpose of Pharaoh's being hardened which Paul might have quoted but did not. To complete the answer we must show what makes the purpose clauses of Rom 9:17 especially apt in the flow of Paul's argument.

One observation that makes 9:17b apt is that it is exploited again in 9:22.

Rom 9:17b	Rom 9:22
ὅπως ἐνδείξωμαι	θέλων... **ἐνδείξασθαι** τὴν ὀργὴν
ἐν σοὶ τὴν δύναμίν μου	καὶ γνωρίσαι **τὸ δυνατὸν αὐτοῦ**

We will probe this parallel more fully in the next chapter, but the least we can say here is that these purpose clauses (in Rom 9:17) are not taken over unthinkingly; they were the object of deep reflection and are made to carry a tremendous theological load.

A second observation that makes 9:17 an apt quotation in the flow of Paul's argument is made by C. Mueller (*Gottes Gerechtigkeit*, 31 note 25), who argues as I do that Ex 33:19 is a declaration of God's name. He observes, "It is no accident that the key word ὄνομα appears also in verse 17." This may well be the chief reason why Ex 9:16 commended itself so strongly to Paul at this place in his argument. It can scarcely be overemphasized that, for the sake of Paul's defense of God's righteousness, in Rom 9:15 and 17, Paul employs Old Testament texts in which *the exercise of God's sovereign freedom, in mercy and in hardening, is the means by which he declares the glory of his name!* This is the heart of Paul's defense: in choosing unconditionally those on whom he will have mercy (love) and those whom he will harden (hate) God is not unrighteous, for in this "electing purpose" he is acting out of a full allegiance to his name and esteem for his glory.

In summary, Paul has answered in Rom 9:14-18 the two-pronged objection of his opponent (cf p 158). The objection sprang from the unconditional election and rejection taught in 9:6-13. The objector says in effect: If you are right, Paul, then God is unrighteous (that is one prong). But God is not unrighteous, so you are wrong about God's freedom (that is the other prong). Paul responds that God is not unrighteous (9:14) and defends this assertion, as I have tried to show, by quoting two Old Testament texts (9:15,17) which show that God's freedom from human "willing and running" is at the very heart of what it means to be the all-glorious God. This Old Testament revelation is a justification of God because the divine righteousness consists in God's answering commitment to preserve and display his glory. That is Paul's answer to the first prong. In 9:16 and 18 Paul restates in different words the freedom of God which was implied in 9:11-13. That is the answer to the second prong: since unconditional election does not at all imply that God is unrighteous, God does elect unconditionally: "He has

mercy on whom he wills and he hardens whom he wills." Or: "Jacob I loved and Esau I hated."

10.
The Rights and Purposes of the Creator: Romans 9:19-23

The basic concern of this chapter is to inquire whether the thought of Rom 9:19-23 coheres with the interpretation of Rom 9:1-18 which I have developed, or if it requires a revision of that interpretation. In the course of this inquiry I will explain why I conclude the study at 9:23 (Section 1), offer a preliminary summary exposition of 9:19-23 (Section 2) and then in Sections 3-5 interact with those who construe these verses differently. I conclude in Section 5.4 with a summary explanation of how Paul brings his *justification of God* to a close in a way which accords with the concept of divine righteousness developed in the preceding chapters.

1. Delimiting the text

The final unit to be examined is Rom 9:19-23, to which I will refer in accord with the following verse divisions. Peculiarities of the translation will be discussed in the exegesis.

19. a. You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault?
    b. For who has ever resisted his will?"

20. a. O man, on the contrary, who are you to dispute with God?
    b. Shall the thing made say to its maker, "Why did you make me thus?"

21. Or does not the potter have authority over the clay to make from the same lump one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

22. a. So then what if God, in order to fulfil his desire to demonstrate wrath
    b. and to make known his power,
    c. sustained and tolerated with much patience the vessels of wrath made for destruction,

23. also for the purpose of making known the wealth of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he prepared beforehand for glory?

The assumption of this monograph is that Rom 9:14-23 is a distinct unit with its own unique function within Rom 9-11. Romans 9-11 in general (beginning with 9:6) aims to render an account of how God can be reckoned faithful to his word of promise when most Israelites in Paul's day are "accursed and cut off from Christ" (Rom 9:3). Paul's answer comes in three steps. Step one: Paul answers in Rom 9:6-13 that the promise was never intended to guarantee salvation to every individual Israelite and that physical descent from Abraham offers no security. Step two: in chapter 11, Paul answers further that nevertheless there is a remnant of ethnic Israel in the church (11:1). And finally, step three: at the end of the age Christ will banish ungodliness from Jacob and "all [corporate, ethnic] Israel will be saved" (11:26). Within the first step (9:6-13) of this three-step defense of God's faithfulness to his word of promise, Paul reaches for the *ultimate* explanation of why some Israelites are "children of God" (9:8) and some are not (9:3). The explanation he gives is the *unconditional election* of some and not

others (9:11-13). What makes Rom 9:14-23 distinct as a unit is that here Paul's justification of God deals *specifically* with *this* issue—not *generally* with the issue of God's faithfulness to his promise to Israel. To be sure, the two issues are not separate in reality, for God's unconditional election is always the foundation of the fulfillment of his promises. But it is legitimate and fruitful at times to examine a foundation for itself, and that is the reason for my limited focus in this book on Rom 9:14-23 (with 9:1-13 providing the necessary setting; cf Chapters Two and Three).

A legitimate question may be raised as to why I close the unit at 9:23 instead of 9:24, especially since 9:24 is a relative clause attached to 9:23. According to my construction, the relative clause of 9:24 would begin, "These he also called..." (οὕς καὶ ἐκάλεσεν). "In substance the relative clause becomes a main clause" (Schlier, *Roemerbrief*, 303). My rationale for this is as follows. While the καί in 9:24a probably correlates "he called" with "he prepared beforehand" in 9:23 (ἃ προητοίμασεν εἰς δόξαν, οὓς καὶ ἐκάλεσεν), nevertheless the masculine οὕς does not agree in gender with its antecedent ἅ (which had the neuter σκεύη as its own antecedent). This grammatical disjunction reveals that there is a shift here in Paul's thought away from the metaphor of "vessels" to a new application, namely, the assertion that these vessels of mercy are "us" (ἡμᾶς), the church "from Jews and from Gentiles" (9:24). The following verses (9:25-29) are Old Testament texts cited precisely to ground this assertion in 9:24, so that this verse gains a kind of independent weight over against what precedes and should be kept closely attached to 9:25-29. I thus follow Meyer (*Romans*, II, 153) and numerous others who argue that "the interrogative conditional sentence forming an aposiopesis [having begun in verse 22] terminates with verse 23 and is not to be extended to verse 24 since all that follows from verse 25 onward belongs to the topic started in verse 24."

Romans 9:24 arches back, as it were, to 9:6-8 (where it was asserted that not all, but only some, from Israel are children of God); but then 9:24 goes further and makes explicit that Gentiles too are included among the "called" (compare ἐκάλεσεν, 9:24, with καλοῦντος, 9:12, and κληθήσεται, 9:7). It seems to me, therefore, that Paul concludes his justification of God's *unconditional election* with the unfinished sentence of 9:23, and then with 9:24 returns to the level of 9:6-8 which had given rise to the issue of unconditional election. Since every study must end somewhere, it seems less unjust to Paul's intention to close our detailed analysis with 9:23 than to sever 9:24 from its Old Testament support in 9:25-29.

2. Preliminary exposition of Romans 9:19-23

Lest we get lost among the many disputed points of Rom 9:19-23, I propose in this section to outline Paul's meaning as I see it without stopping to give detailed arguments or discuss alternatives. Then in the following sections all the important objections to this interpretation will be discussed and its exegetical support will be presented in detail.

In 9:19 Paul anticipates the next objection to what he has just said in 9:15-18. The objector reasons like this: If, as you say, a person's hardness is owing ultimately to God's will and not to a man's "willing or running," then it is unrighteous of God to condemn a man for that very hardness. In your view, Paul, nobody has ever successfully resisted the divine will, because even when they *are* resisting God's commands (as Pharaoh did), they are still fulfilling God's secret purposes. So God is wrong to find fault with men, since without the freedom of self-determination men cannot justly be condemned for their choices.

The extended reflection on this problem which Paul offers in 9:21-23 shows that he does not reject a humble inquiry into the ways of God. But in 9:20 he does reject the attitude of presumption which he perceives in the objection of 9:19. The objection was not a humble "How can these things be?" (cf Lk 1:34), but an indignant declaration that these things *ought* not to be. This is the generally accepted meaning of ἀνταποκρινόμενος in 9:20a (*TDNT*, III, 945; cf Lk 14:6). Paul's emphatic "O *man*" at the beginning of 9:20a and his emphatic "to *God"* at the end of 9:20a assign to the objector his proper place: "As a mere man you have no right to accuse God of unrighteousness." Paul has no objection when a person seeks to understand as much of God's dealings as possible, but he objects strenuously when a person criticizes and rejects the truth which he discovers.

The rhetorical question of 9:20b gives the reason why a person like Pharaoh (or his advocate in 9:19) should not question God's ways: man is creature; God is creator. For man to advise God about how he ought to act is as out of place as for a statue to advise a sculptor how to chisel. The presumption that a man's sense of values is ultimate and can prevail against God's sense of values is as ludicrous to Paul as a ranting figurine.

The rhetorical question of 9:21 ("Or does the potter not have authority over the clay...?") expects a positive answer and thus aims to introduce something obvious enough to render the point of 9:20b even more certain. The obvious thing is that in a relationship between potter and vessel, that is, between creator and creature, the sole authority for determining what sorts of vessels it is right to make belongs to the potter-creator. It is the right, perhaps even the duty, of a great and gifted craftsman and artist to display the full range of his powers in the various sorts of vessels he makes and the purposes for which he designs them. He has the right to take a single lump of clay, which in itself is no more suitable for one purpose than another, and by his own free choice make vessels for honorable use and vessels for dishonorable use. Because the creator has this unassailable right (9:21), no creature has the right to oppose the sovereign choices of God (9:20b), and, therefore, the objector of 9:19 has no grounds for disputing God's righteousness in "hardening whom he wills."

Paul could have concluded his defense at this point. But since he does not, we see that he is not averse to reflecting even more deeply on the problem of God's sovereignty in hardening some and having mercy on others. Romans 9:22,23 is Paul's final insight into the whys and wherefores of unconditional election, and (together with 9:15-18) it is probably the closest that the Bible ever comes to offering us a justification of the mysterious ways of God with man. The if-clause that begins in 9:22 and continues through 9:23 has no explicit then-clause. This need not mean that Paul lost his train of thought, because there are analogous instances where a rhetorical question begins with an if-clause, then breaks off with the expectation that the reader can supply the inference (cf Jn 6:62; Acts 23:9; Rom 2:17ff). The inference to be supplied in this case would be something like, "Will you then still contest God's rights?" (Bornkamm, "Anakoluthe," 90). In other words, Paul intends in 9:22,23 to give insight into God's way of acting which will show that man cannot legitimately dispute God's right to act the way Paul says he acts in Rom 9:18: "He has mercy on whom he wills and he hardens whom he wills," that is, he makes from one lump vessels for honor and vessels for dishonor (9:21).

Grammatically the main assertion of 9:22,23 is, "God sustained and tolerated in much patience vessels of wrath made for destruction" (9:22c). Since "vessels" is plural here, the reference is not only to Pharaoh; yet he serves as the type of all other vessels of wrath. God tolerated, as it were, a tenfold recalcitrance from Pharaoh and sustained him alive instead of bringing destructive judgment on him right away. He did this even though he himself had hardened Pharaoh and

destined him for destruction.

Most important for Paul, however, is God's purpose in acting this way. This purpose finds expression in the θέλων clause with its two subordinate infinitive phrases in 9:22ab, and in the ἵνα-clause of 9:23. To be precise, θέλων is a causal participle: *"Because* God desires... he sustained and tolerated...." *What* he desires is to accomplish a *purpose*, namely, "to demonstrate wrath and to make known his power." Therefore, by revealing a twofold purpose which God desires to accomplish, Rom 9:22ab answers the question why God sustains and tolerates vessels of wrath. Evidently, by doing this, God's sovereign power and terrible wrath can be demonstrated even more vividly than if God were to bring down final judgment on vessels of wrath at the very outset of their disobedience.

It behooves every great artist to demonstrate in the variety of his work the full range of his skill and power. And, according to Paul, it is God's right and his great desire to manifest the full range of his character in the things that he does. This includes wrath and tremendous power in its execution. Since God is the absolutely sovereign creator, his creatures cannot legitimately find fault with him if he so disposes all things that there are, in fact, persons set for destruction on whom God can fulfill his will to demonstrate almighty wrath. For a man to argue that this is wrong for an eternal, sovereign creator to do, he must also argue that it is right for the creator never to reveal to his creation certain aspects of his personhood. But for Paul, God's righteousness, as we have seen, consists most fundamentally in his unswerving will to preserve and display his glory. To argue that God should not give open display to his wrath is to imply that it is not in fact glorious, that God is not in fact as he *should* be. But how can a creature advise the eternal, never-becoming, always-perfectly-being God what he should be like? He cannot. It is unthinkable (9:20).

Therefore, the only way Paul can even attempt to justify God's sovereign hardening is not to show that it accords with *normal* human values, nor that it follows from the ways humans *regularly* employ their reason, but rather that it follows necessarily from what it means to be God. It is precisely the incomprehensible distinction between the never-having-begun givenness of the infinite God and the utterly dependent brevity of human life that makes it so hard for us, especially with our incorrigible bent toward self-exaltation, to affirm the ways of God. But I do not doubt that Paul cherished the hope that, perhaps not many, but some would see what it means to be God and would "justify him" (cf Lk 7:29,35) in all lowliness and trust.

Now in 9:23 Paul takes one last step into the divine mystery. There is another, final purpose which God aims at in patiently tolerating vessels of wrath made for destruction. By this he aims "to make known the wealth of his glory on vessels of mercy which he prepared beforehand for glory." Paul's great hope as a believer is, that at the day of Christ, the glory of God will open upon his view with a power and beauty that so completely transform and satisfy his soul forever that the troubles of this life will seem as nothing (Rom 2:10; 8:17,30; 2 Cor 4:17; Col 1:27; 3:4; 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Tim 2:10). This is the revelation of glory referred to in Rom 9:23. The remarkable thing is that the revelation of this treasure of glory which the church (cf 9:24) will experience as mercy, is accomplished, at least in part, by God's patiently sustaining and tolerating vessels of wrath set for destruction.

The mi at the beginning of 9:23 seems to *coordinate* this third purpose with the first two purposes expressed in the infinitives of 9:22ab (cf the grammar of 1 Cor 14:5). But its position as the last of three purposes and its distinct introduction with ἵνα (and not an infinitive) suggest that the purpose clause in 9:23 is *ultimate* and that the two purposes of 9:22ab are subordinate to this ultimate one. Therefore, Cranfield (*Romans* II, 496) is right to argue as follows:

> There is no question of an equilibrium between God's will to show His wrath and God's will to manifest the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, as though He sometimes willed the one thing and sometimes the other. The former purpose must be understood as subordinate to the latter. The ἵνα clause indicates the one ultimate, gracious purpose of God, for the sake of which He also wills to show His wrath. The relations between the statement ὁ θεὸς... ἤνεγκεν... and the three statements of purpose may therefore be expressed as follows: God has endured... for the sake of purpose 3, and also (since the fulfillment of purpose 3 requires the fulfillment of the two other purposes) for the sake of purposes 1 and 2.

Therefore, Paul's justification of God does not stop with the demonstration that God, as God, must display the whole panorama of his character in order to be righteous; he goes on to assert that there is a *unity* in this display in that the various manifestations of all God's attributes stand in the service of his mercy, and thus function to heighten the revelation of glory for the vessels of mercy and to intensify their appreciation of it. The revealed character of God has integrity: it is not fragmented or contradictory. The acts of God come forth not in continuous reaction to autonomous external stimuli but from a unified, sovereign

purpose. They cohere to achieve one great end—the magnification of God's great glory for the eternal enjoyment of his chosen people. The fact that this purpose "requires" (as Cranfield says) the demonstration of wrath upon vessels of wrath will no doubt be disputed by men to the end of the age. But for Paul it was beyond dispute. (See below Section 5.4.)

3. Has the objector in Romans 9:19 interpreted Paul correctly?

I have assumed with most commentators that the objection in Rom 9:19 is based on a sound interpretation of 9:18. That is, Paul agrees with the objector that no one can resist God's will and that nevertheless God still finds fault (as God did with Pharaoh, Ex 7:16; 10:3; etc). What Paul rejects is the presumptuous objection which the opponent registers to this divine action. But there are a few scholars who do not agree that the objection of 9:19 is based on a correct interpretation of 9:18.

In 1888 James Morison (*Exposition*, 149) argued that the objector "fails to discriminate" and thus reads into Paul's theology a meaning for hardening which Paul did not intend. Morison counters, "God, it is true, has to do with men's hardness of heart. Insofar as the hardness is penal, it is right that God should take to do with it. But if it be penal, it must come after transgression. And if it come after transgression, surely... it is right." In other words, the objection of 9:19 is without force because it fails to realize that "he hardens whom he wills" (9:18) really means: "he punitively hardens those who first commit transgression." Before we respond to Morison's interpretation let us get before us a more recent but similar explanation.

In 1973 R. T. Forster and V.P. Marston published an exegetical critique of the Augustinian-Calvinistic explanation of *God's Strategy in Human History.* Their interpretation of Rom 9:19 goes as follows (*God's Strategy*, 80):

> Paul's critic had willfully misunderstood the gospel of grace in Romans 3. Likewise he makes out in Romans 9 that Paul is saying that God's will for an individual is irresistible. Paul has pictured God as moving in history: He has mercy on whom He will and whom He will He hardens. Yet Paul does not say here (or anywhere else) that God's plan or will for an individual is irresistible—and Luke in his inspired text plainly says they are not. We have seen that the Exodus story to which Paul alludes is far from implying any "irresistible will." It is true that God will ultimately achieve his plan for the world in spite of those who resist it, but the individual still has his own moral choice of whether or not to reject God's plan for him. "The question

> of Paul's critic in Romans 9:19—"Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?"(RSV)—is based on a flagrant misunderstanding of Paul's teaching.

One would suppose that, if Rom 9:19 represented as blatant a misunderstanding of 9:18 as Morison and Forster and Marston claim, Paul would very simply have set the objector straight and removed the bogus stumbling block. Thus Murray (*Romans*, II, 32, following Calvin) is right to argue that, "If in the matter concerned, the determinative will of God were not ultimate, if the differentiation of verse 18 were not due solely to God's sovereign will, then the apostle would have to deny the assumption on which the objection is based. This he does not do." Forster and Marston are pressed by the weight of this argument to give a unique and wholly improbable interpretation of Paul's response in 9:20. They argue in the following way:

> Yet Paul's angry reply: "Nay, but O man, who are you that replies against God?" itself demonstrates the stupidity of such a misrepresentation. How could the man reply against God if, as he supposed, he could not resist God's will? Therefore, Paul says, "Nay, rather, you yourself are resisting it now!"

What is evident from this remarkable construction is that the objector of Rom 9:19 understands Paul much better than Forster and Marston do. For when they ask rhetorically, How could a person reply against God without resisting God's will? the objector could very simply answer, Because my reply is a fulfillment of the hardening will of God. In other words, Forster and Marston have not grasped as well as the objector that Paul sees Pharaoh's "resistance" of God's commands as a fulfillment of God's hardening decree. They view God's will in such a way that, if God says to Pharaoh, "Let my people go," and Pharaoh says, "No," then we have proof that men can and do resist God's will, and the objector has erected a bogus difficulty that does not really exist in Paul's theology.

Against this interpretation stands first, as we have seen, the fact that Paul, unlike Morison and Forster and Marston, does not give the slightest trace of disagreement with the objector's interpretation of Rom 9:18. On the contrary, his response in 9:20-23 not only affirms but heightens (if that is possible) the absoluteness of God's sovereign will in disposing all things. Secondly, the conclusion of our own exegesis in Chapter Nine, if it is correct, confirms that objector's interpretation of Rom 9:18, not Forster and Marston's. Accordingly,

when Paul rebukes the objector, he accuses him not of misconstruing Rom 9:18 but of presuming to question the rightness of God's dealing (Barrett, *Romans*, 187; Schlatter, *Gerechtigkeit*, 303; Gifford, *Romans*, 172; Meyer, *Romans*, II, 143). "It is precisely because the objection has the character of insolence rather than anguish that Paul responds so sharply" (Lagrange, *Romains*, 236).

To be sure, Pharaoh said *"No"* to God's command that he send the Israelites into the wilderness. This can reasonably be called "resisting" God (cf Acts 7:51). But this is so obvious to everyone that it is utterly implausible that the objector would be affirming that no one has ever resisted God in this sense. Everyone has. But Paul's point was that even this resistance is in one sense willed (θέλει, 9:18) by God as hardness. The objector sees clearly that Paul is saying: God wills that Pharaoh resist God's own commands.

This fact has compelled both exegetes and systematic theologians to speak of God's will in two different senses. These two senses have sometimes been designated as God's signified will and effectual will, or as God's revealed will and secret will, or as his will of command and will of decree. What is important for us here is to note that it is the second member of each of these pairs which the objector says cannot be resisted. And indeed this is a necessary and legitimate inference from Paul's teaching in Rom 9:14-18. Perhaps Paul chose the unusual word βούλημα in 9:19b (although he had used θέλει in 9:18) to stress that what cannot be resisted is precisely the effectual will or decree of God. Probably the will referred to is the πρόθεσις of 9:11 which stands firm because it is established "apart from works" (9:12) and before Jacob and Esau were born (9:11).

Therefore, what the objector correctly sees is that God, not man, holds final sway even in the lives of unbelievers. But his premise is that, unless man has the power of self-determination over against God, his evil acts cannot justly be faulted, i.e., he cannot be judged as a sinner (cf Rom 3:7). From this premise he opposes Paul's description of how God acted with Pharaoh and by implication the way he acts with all people in all times. In all likelihood the historical reality behind this (formally familiar) objection is the same Pharisaical standpoint countered by Paul in Rom 9:11, as described and located by Gerhard Maier (see Chapter Three, notes 16, 59).

4. The authority of the creator: Romans 9:20, 21

Paul's response to the objection raised in Rom 9:19 seems to ascribe to God the same absolute control over the destinies of individual men that we have seen in 9:11-13 and 9:16,18. "Does not the potter have authority over the clay to make from the same lump one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?" Nevertheless this is denied by some here, as it was earlier, and so it is necessary that I interact with them and thus try to demonstrate the validity of the interpretation suggested in Section 2.

E. H. Gifford (*Romans*, 173) argues that for Paul the "distinction between 'one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor' is applied, like the rest of the figure of which it forms a part, to God's absolute freedom in dealing with one nation [Israel] and another [Gentiles]. This reference of the passage to national, not individual, election is required by the whole purpose of St. Paul's argument and placed beyond doubt by vv 24-26." Similarly, J. Munck (*Christ and Israel*, 58) says, "The image [of 9:21] should not be interpreted as referring to the creator's shaping of individual human beings; it is used rather in political and *heilsgeschichtliche* context where God is dealing with the Gentiles and the chosen people. We find this most clearly expressed in Jer 18:6-10." Others are willing to admit that Paul is not dealing merely with different nations, but also is dealing with different individuals within those nations. For example, Forster and Marston (*God's Strategy*, 82) say, "The unrepentant portion of Israel has become a vessel unto dishonor and the faithful part a vessel unto honor." But they do not infer from this that God predestines individuals to their *eternal* destinies. Accordingly, Cranfield (*Romans*, II, 492 note 2) argues, "εἰς ἀτιμίαν implies menial use, not reprobation or destruction. The potter does not make ordinary, everyday pots, merely in order to destroy them." Or as Lagrange (*Romains*, 238) says: "The most modest vessel is never a vessel of wrath destined to be destroyed."

In this series of quotes three arguments emerge to support the view that Paul is dealing with nations and/ or temporal roles rather than the eternal destiny of individuals: 1) the Old Testament texts quoted in 9:20-21 deal with the nation Israel, not individuals; 2) the whole purpose of the argument in Rom 9 and

especially the verses 24-29 demand this corporate view; 3) the metaphor will not allow the view of individual reprobation since no potter makes a vessel just to destroy it. In what follows I will try to test these arguments by the text and see, as well, if there are other data which would support or contradict this corporate-historical view.

4.1 The traditions behind Romans 9:20,21

In response to the first argument we should make at least six observations about the *traditions from which Paul may be drawing.*

4.11

It is true that the image of potter and vessel in Isa 45:9-11 and Jer 18:1-6 has reference to God's dealings with Israel as a nation and that in Jer 18:7f the potter responds to the repentance of the "clay."

> Woe to him who strives with his maker [MT cf LXX: ποῖον βέλτιον κατεσκεύασα ὡς πηλὸν κεραμέως]. A vessel among vessels of earth! Shall the clay say to its maker, "What are you doing?" [LXX: μὴ ἐρεῖ ὁ πηλὸς τῷ κεραμεῖ τί ποιεῖς;] Or: "Your work has no handles!" Woe to him who says to a father: "What are you begetting?" Or to a woman: "With what are you in travail?" Thus says Yahweh the Holy One of Israel and his maker: "Do you ask me about things to come, about my sons and about my hands do you command me?" as 45:9-11)

> The word which came to Jeremiah from Yahweh saying: "Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause you to hear my words." So I went down to the potter's house and behold he was making a work on the wheel. And the vessel he was making in clay was spoiled in the potter's hand. So again he made it another vessel, as it seemed good in the eyes of the potter to make. And the word of Yahweh came to me, saying: "Am I not able to do to you, O house of Israel, as this potter did?" says Yahweh. "Behold as clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, house of Israel [LXX: ἰδοὺ ὡς ὁ πηλὸς, τοῦ κεραμέως ὑμεῖς ἐστε ἐν ταῖς χερσίν μου]. When I speak against a nation and against a kingdom to uproot or pull down or destroy, and that nation which I spoke against turns from its evil, I will repent of the evil which I intended to do to it." (Jer 18:1-8)

It is also true that Paul shares some of the terminology of these texts (e.g. κεραμεύς, πηλός) and that the rhetorical question of Isa 45:9 is similar to the question of Rom 9:20b (though not as similar as Isa 29:16, see below). Nevertheless, what would have to be shown is that the point of comparison between these Old Testament texts and Paul's similar use of language is any more than a shared metaphor and perhaps the point from Isa 45:9-11 that what is made cannot dispute with its maker. It is *possible* that Paul's allusion to the potter is intended to communicate all the aspects of the prophet's meaning; but whether or not it is *probable* must be shown on other grounds than the use of a common metaphor, especially since that metaphor is very widespread in later Jewish literature as well as elsewhere in the Old Testament.

4.12

In fact, if Paul is quoting any Old Testament text in Rom 9:20b it is Isa 29:16, for here we find the closest verbal parallel.

> Woe to those who go deep to hide their counsel from Yahweh, whose works are in the dark, and who say, Who sees us? and, Who knows us? O your perversity! Shall the potter be counted as the clay? For shall the work say of its maker, "He did not make me"? Or what is formed say of its former, "He does not understand"? [LXX: μὴ ἐρεῖ τὸ πλάσμα τῷ πλάσαντι Οὐ σύ με ἔπλασας; ἢ τὸ ποίημα τῷ ποιήσαντι Οὐ συνετῶς με ἐποίησας;] (Isa 29:15-16).

The emphasized portion is identical to Rom 9:20b but what the πλάσμα says is not the same in Paul and Isaiah. This suggests that Paul is not so much citing a text for authority as he is adapting a common metaphor for his own purpose. But should someone want to press for an Old Testament meaning behind Paul's image, then Isa 29:16 offers the most probable source. However, here Isaiah is *not* speaking of the nation as a corporate whole, but of the "perverted" wise men (cf 29:14) in Israel, who in their presuming to hide counsel from God, act as if they were God. They can no more keep secrets from God than a clay vessel can instruct its potter or deny that he made it. What is clear from the use of the potter/clay image in Isa 29:16; 45:9-11 and Jer 18:1-7 is that it is a very flexible metaphor that can be used in various contexts to imply different things. It is futile therefore to appeal to any given usage of the image as a proof of what Paul meant by it. But lest we abandon too quickly the help which the traditional

background may give, we should note the other close parallels in the Jewish literature of Paul's day.

4.13

Probably the most remarkable, yet frustrating, parallel is found in the Wisdom of Solomon 15:7.

> For when a potter kneads the soft earth he laboriously molds each vessel for our service. But from the same clay he molds (ἄλλ᾽ ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ πηλοῦ ἀνεπλάσατο) some vessels to serve clean uses (τά τε τῶν καθαρῶν ἔργων δοῦλα σκεύη), some for contrary uses, all in like manner (τά τε ἐναντία, πάντα ὁμοίως). But what shall be the use of each of these the worker in clay decides (τούτων δὲ ἑτέρου τίς ἑκάστου ἐστὶν ἡ χρῆσις, κριτὴς ὁ πηλουργός).

What is remarkable about this is that the potter's making two different sets of vessels for clean and unclean uses from the same clay is so close in thought to Rom 9:21 as to seemingly demand some sort of allusion to this text on Paul's part. But what is frustrating is that the *meaning* of Wis 15:7 has almost nothing in common with Paul's meaning. The context has to do with idolatry and the potter illustrates the idolmaker who makes a god from the same clay as all his other vessels (15:8). The point is the absurdity of idol worship because the idolmaker "is better than the object he worships" (15:17).

But there may be a link in Wis 15:8 which brought this text to Paul's mind at this point in his argument, and thus provided him with language if not with meaning. The writer comments further on the idolmaker: "With misspent toil he forms a futile god from the same clay—*this man who was made of earth a short time before* and after a little while goes to the earth from which he was taken, when he is required to return the soul that was lent him." The emphasized portion of this verse is pointed irony: the idolmaker makes of earth a god to worship, forgetting all the while that he was made of that same earth and therefore should be worshipping his maker. In retrospect then the potter/clay image of Wis 15:7 might very well raise in the careful reader's mind the question whether God, who shaped the idolmaker (15:8,11), may not also make from the same clay vessels for opposite uses. Whether Paul in fact says this of individuals cannot be proved from Wis 15:7, but at least we can say (as in the case of Isa 29:16) that this text,

which probably supplies some of the surface structures of Paul's language, does not point in the direction of a corporate, national interpretation of "vessel."

4.14

In Sir 33:7-13 the potter/clay image is used to describe God's determination of individual destinies. Moreover, 33:13 is a much closer allusion to Jer 18:6 than Rom 9:21 is. This shows that by no means can the similarity of language between Rom 9:21 and Jer 18:6 prove Paul is thinking of nations instead of individuals.

7. Why is any day better than another, when all the daylight in the year is from the sun?

8. By the Lord's decision they were distinguished, and he appointed the different seasons and feasts;

9. some of them he exalted and hallowed and some of them he made ordinary days.

10. All men are from the ground and Adam was created of dust.

11. In the fullness of his knowledge the Lord distinguished them and appointed their different ways;

12. some of them he blessed and exalted and some of them he made holy and brought near to himself; but some of them he cursed and brought low, and he turned them out of their place.

13. As clay in the hand of the potter—(ὡς πηλὸς κεραμέως ἐν χειρὶ αὐτοῦ [cf Jer 18:6] for all his ways are as he pleases—(πᾶσαι αἱ ὁδοὶ αὐτοῦ κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν αὐτοῦ) so men are in the hand of him who made them (οὕτως ἄνθρωποι ἐν χειρὶ τοῦ ποιήσαντος αὐτοὺς) to give them according to his judgment (ἀποδοῦναι αὖτοῖς κατὰ τὴν κρίσιν αὐτοῦ).

This offers a remarkable parallel in substance to Rom 9:21. Four elements in these verses have substantial counterparts in Paul. 1) There is the idea, both with respect to differing days (33:7) and differing persons (33:10), that they are all from the same *origin* (cf "from the same lump," Rom 9:21). 2) Therefore, days

and persons owe their differences not ultimately to different sources but to the sovereign decision or knowledge of God who distinguishes and appoints days and persons to different ends (33:8, 11; cf the ἐξουσία of God in Rom 9:21 and the θέλει in 9:18). 3) In the case of persons, God blesses and exalts some but curses and lowers others (33:12), and no ground for this is given in the persons themselves; but rather the explanation is given that God relates to individual persons as potter to clay (33:13; cf καραμεὺς in Rom 9:21). 4) Finally, the parenthetical comment in 33:13 gives the intended sense of the potter metaphor: "all God's ways accord with his (sovereign) good pleasure." The point is that his choices in determining which vessels or which persons serve which ends are based on his own secret wisdom, not on the free choices of men (cf Rom 9:11, κατ᾽ ἐκλογήν, as well as 9:20, 21).

Therefore, when Paul uses metaphorical language common to Jer 18:1-6 and Sir 33:13, it cannot be assumed that he intends that language to carry all the nuances of Jeremiah rather than the nuances of Sirach. He does not claim to be quoting Scripture. Thus far in our analysis, I would say (with Maier, *Mensch und freier With, 376*) that it is much more likely that Paul intends the image of the potter and clay to be understood the way Sir 33 does (individually) than the way Jer 18 does (nationally).

4.15

The only other place Paul uses the word πλάσσω (Rom 9:20b) is 1 Tim 2:13 with reference to God's creating Adam. Significantly, this confirms Luz's view (*Geschichtsverstaendnis*, 239) that *"Plassō*, on the basis of Old Testament usage, is a term referring to the action of God in creation." Genesis 2:7f uses it for Adam's creation, and it is used in this sense in 2 Macc 7:23; Philo, *Op M*, 137; Josephus, *Ant* I, 34; *Sib Or* 3, 24; 1 Clem 33:4; Diog 10:2; cf 1 Clem 38:3; Bar 19:2. It is likely therefore that when Paul uses the potter/clay metaphor he is thinking of God as creator and man as creature. Sirach had moved very naturally from God as creator of Adam (33:10) to God as "maker" (ποιήσαντος 33:13; cf ἐποίησας in Rom 9:20b) of *every* individual man. This was natural because in the Old Testament God is viewed as the one who creates and shapes the individual and his heart. For example: Job 10:9, "remember that you have made me as clay" (ὅτι πηλόν με ἔπλασας); Ps 33 (LXX 32):15, "... he who fashions the hearts of them all" (ὁ πλάσας κατὰ μόνας τὰς καρδίας αὐτῶν); Ps 119 (LXX 118):73, "Your hands made me and formed me" (αἱ χει ρές σου ἐποίησάν με καὶ

ἔπλασάν με); Ps 138:5 (LXX), "Behold, Lord, you know all things, the end and the beginning; you formed me (σὺ ἔπλασάς με) and put your hand on me." We may infer from this that there is good Old Testament and Jewish precedent for viewing God as the creator and shaper of every individual and that the use of πλάσσω and ποιέω in Rom 9:20 to refer to God's activity is what we would expect if this were Paul's intention.

4.16

In Chapter Three (pp 53f) I cited Gerhard Maier's very helpful work, *Mensch und freier Wille nach den juedischen Religionsparteien zwischen Ben Sim und Paulus.* He develops the plausible argument that, 1) Paul stands within the tradition of predestination rooted in the Old Testament, which developed through Sir 33:7-13 to its most radical form (embracing individuals and their eternal destinies) in Qumran (cf 1 QS 3:15-4:26; 11:10f) and, 2) from this position Paul formulates his argument in Rom 9 in conscious opposition to the common pharisaic insistence (expressed, e.g., in Ps Sol 9:4,5) that human free will is the prerequisite of accountability if God is to be righteous. Two minor observations now from Rom 9:20,21 add credence to this view.

First, Maier (378) observes that not only does Paul share an unconditional election of individuals with Qumran (cf Chapter Three), but also the πηλοῦ of Rom 9:21 has its counterpart in the common designation of man in Qumran as "creature of *clay"* (יֵצֶד הַחֹמֶר, cf 1 QH 1:21; 3:23; 4:29; 11:3; 12:26,32; 18:12). And the vessels made for honor and dishonor (Rom 9:21) correspond to the two groups whose end is either glory (כָּבוֹד) and honor (הָדָר) or endless reproach (חֶרְפַּת) and shame (כְּלִמַּת) (1 QS 4:7,8,12,13).

Second, Maier (376) points out that the very words which Ps Sol uses to defend man's power of self-determination Paul turns around and ascribes to God. Psalms of Solomon 9:4 says, "Our works are subject to our own choice and authority..." (τὰ ἔργα ἡμῶν ἐν ἐκλογῇ καὶ ἐξουσίᾳ). We saw in Chapter Three how Paul took the term ἐκλογή and used it in 9:11 to describe the sovereign free choice of *God*, not man, in determining the destinies of Jacob and Esau. Here in Rom 9:21 Paul does the same thing with ἐξουσία: it is the potter, *not* the clay, who has the *authority* to determine the destinies of his creatures.

We may conclude from these six observations that the argument for a

national/temporal interpretation of Rom 9:20f *on the basis of its traditional background* is not persuasive. On the contrary, our survey suggests much more strongly that Paul stands in a tradition in which the image of God as potter and man as clay implies the sovereign rights of the creator to determine the destinies of all his individual creatures. So now we must ask whether the *Pauline* context bears this out.

4.2 The context of Romans 9:20,21

The second argument for the national/temporal view of Rom 9:20f is in fact an argument from this context. For example, Gifford (*Romans*, 173) argues that the "reference of the passage to national, not individual election is required by the whole purpose of St. Paul's argument and placed beyond doubt by verses 24-26." This quote from Gifford is indicative of one of the greatest problems in discussing Rom 9—there is an amazingly widespread propensity to make vague, sweeping, general statements about "the context" with the assumption that almost any reference to a corporate entity will suffice to settle the issue of whether this chapter has a bearing on individual predestination. Therefore, over against Gifford's bald claim, I appeal to the preceding eight chapters of this book that "the whole purpose of St. Paul's argument" in Rom 9:1-18 does *not* exclude, but definitely includes God's eternal dealings with individuals, and that, if anything, the context of 9:19-23 encourages us to interpret this unit with reference to individuals and their eternal destinies.

With regard to 9:24ff the implication seems to be just the opposite of what Gifford claims. To be sure there is reference to "Jews" and "Gentiles" (9:24), but the point is that the "vessels of mercy" are identical to neither of these corporate entities but have been "called... *from* Jews and *from* Gentiles" (9:24). Since the vessels of mercy consist of Jewish individuals and Gentile individuals, there is no basis for arguing that Paul's contrast between vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath (or between vessels for honor and vessels for dishonor) is a contrast between nations. The argument from the preceding and following contexts is all in favor of the view that Rom 9:19-23 concerns individuals and their eternal destinies.

4.3 The metaphor of potter and vessels

The third argument for the national/temporal view of Rom 9:20f is that the

metaphor will not allow the view of individual reprobation, since no potter makes a vessel just to destroy it. To make a vessel "εἰς ἀτιμίαν implies menial use, not reprobation or destruction" (Cranfield, *Romans*, II, 492 note 2).

In order to make this argument stand, Lagrange, Munck and Cranfield must maintain that the pair "vessel unto honor" and "vessel unto dishonor" in 9:21 does *not* have its substantial parallel in the pair "vessel of mercy which God prepared before for glory" and "vessels of wrath prepared for destruction" in 9:22f. Cranfield (*Romans*, II, 495 note 4) argues "that σκεύη ὀργῆς and σκεύη ἐλέους are not to be taken as interpreting the vessels made εἰς τιμήν and εἰς ἀτιμίαν, respectively, of verse 21. Had Paul intended this allegorical interpretation of verse 21 he should have put the definite articles with σκεύη ὀργῆς and σκεύη ἐλέους. Σκεῦος is used in verses 22, 23 metaphorically... probably—in our view—without any special thought of the literal use of the word in verse 21." But, against Cranfield, can we really imagine that Paul did not intend his reader to see a substantial parallel between the pair of vessels in 9:21 and the pair in 9:22f? In view of the proximity of 9:21 to 9:22f, the similar vocabulary, and (apparently) similar thought, Cranfield's contention is very improbable.

Meyer (*Romans*, II, 147) is surely much closer to the mark than Cranfield when he says that the two kinds of vessels in 9:22f "are necessarily the same as those meant in verse 21,... This is shown by the retention of σκεύη as well as by the attributes κατηρτισμένα and ἃ προητοίμασεν corresponding to the ποιῆσαι of verse 21, just as εἰς ἀπώλειαν aptly corresponds to the εἰς ἀτιμίαν and εἰς δόξαν to the εἰς τιμήν, verse 21." As far as I can see there is no reason (except theological aversion) to deny that the image of two sorts of vessels in 9:21 is continued in 9:22f. Cranfield does assert that if Paul wanted the σκεύη pair of 9:22f to refer back to the pair of 9:21 he should have used definite articles with the pair in 9:22f. This argument has no force for two reasons: 1) there are no such rigorous grammatical laws governing the way one must employ a metaphor and its application; and 2) even where a noun in New Testament Greek is definite the article is often omitted if the noun has a genitive modifier (Blass-Debrunner, 259; cf Rom 2:5, ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὀργῆς; Phil 4:3, ἐν βίβλῳ ζωῆς, etc).

Therefore, it is highly probable that the vessel made for dishonor in 9:21 is the same as the vessels prepared for destruction in 9:22. If so, then "dishonor" is further illuminated by "destruction" (ἀπώλεια). Most commentators agree that "εἰς ἀπώλειαν indicates clearly the eternal perdition" (Lagrange, *Romains*, 240).

Beyschlag (*Theodicee*, 61) tries to restrict the reference of ἀπώλειαν in 9:22 to historical, rather than eternal, destruction on the basis of the parallel to Pharaoh's fate in 9:17. But Meyer (*Romans*, II, 150 note 1) is right that "the employment of εἰς δόξαν in contrast is decisive against this view." That is, in Paul's thinking the experience of the wealth of God's glory (9:23) comes at the end of the age when Christ is revealed (see Chapter Two, pp 33-34), and therefore the negative counterpart to this glory, namely "destruction," must be final eschatological judgment. This is recognized as the normal sense of ἀπώλεια in the New Testament.

Therefore, contrary to Cranfield, Lagrange and Munck, it is very probable that when Paul says in 9:21 that God has the right to make a vessel "unto dishonor," it means he has the right to fit vessels for destruction (9:22). Cranfield's objection that potters simply don't make vessels to destroy them is based on an unnecessary conception of destruction as shattering. Oepke (*TDNT*, I, 396) says concerning the concept of destruction in Paul, "In contrast to σῴζεσθαι or to ζωὴ αἰώνιος, ἀπόλλυσθαι is definitive destruction, not merely in the sense of the extinction of physical existence, but rather of an eternal plunge into Hades and a hopeless destiny of death in the depiction of which such terms as ὀργή, θυμός, θλι ψις and στενοχωρία are used (Rom 2:8f)." In other words, there is no reason to force "destruction" in Rom 9:22 to mean that the vessels are shattered. It is just as likely that we should picture a vessel placed outside the house and used, say, as an incinerator ("where the worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched," Mk 9:48). Destruction is not the opposite of existence; it is the opposite of *glorious* existence (9:22f). And that is all that the metaphor of 9:21 requires. If ἀπώλεια means an eternal, inglorious existence in hell, then the objection that God could not make persons for such ἀπώλεια, since potters do not do that sort of thing, is not true. For potters do make vessels which are fit for inglorious uses outside the house. I conclude, therefore, that the arguments against interpreting Rom 9:21 as a reference to the predestining of individuals to their respective eternal destinies are not compelling. The evidence points the other way.

4.4 Summary

What, in sum then, are the pointers that lead the reader to construe Rom 9:20f as a reference, not merely to nations and historical roles, but to individuals and eternal destinies?

4.41

First of all, the flow of the argument from Rom 9:1-18 requires that the issue of individual destiny be addressed. This is the issue raised in Rom 9:1-5 (where it is implied that many of Paul's kinsmen are accursed and cut off from Christ) and it is the issue that Paul has been addressing all along. The support for this contention is Chapters Two-Nine of this book.

4.42

The objection in 9:19, to which 9:20f is addressed, is formulated with reference to an individual: "Who (τίς) can resist his will?" The objector perceives rightly that individual accountability is at stake when he asks, "Why does God still find fault?" Moreover, Paul's response to the objection in 9:20 deals apparently with the individual objector: "Will the thing formed say to its maker, why did you make me thus?" Even though this rhetorical question implies a general principle, it probably has immediate reference to the individual objector. If so, then it is even more clear that the πλάσμα in 9:20 and the σκεῦος in 9:21 refer, in Paul's mind, to individuals in their relation to God.

4.43

The parallels between 9:21 and 9:22f, as we have just seen, suggest that the image of the vessels in 9:21 is being continued and applied in 9:22. Romans 9:24, then, makes it clear that the "vessels of mercy" in 9:23 are not any one nation but are those individuals *"from* Jews and *from* Gentiles" who are called. The thought is similar to the thought in 1 Cor 1:24 where "the called" are distinguished from Jews and Greeks and are distinguished as "those who are being saved," as opposed to "those who are perishing" (1 Cor 1:18). Therefore, both the "vessels of mercy" in 9:23 and its parallel in 9:21 ("vessel for honor") have reference not to ethnic or national groups but to those individuals from all ethnic groups who are called (in the sense of Rom 8:30) and thus saved.

4.44

In Section 4.3 we saw that the "destruction" mentioned in 9:22 refers to eternal perdition, not historical defeat. This conclusion was based on the normal New

Testament usage of ἀπώλεια and its particular usage in 9:22 as the opposite of (eschatological) glory. If, then, the image of 9:21 is illuminated by its application in 9:22f, it is very probable that the dishonorable use of the vessel in 9:21 and the destruction (= eternal perdition) of the vessels in 9:22 are in reality the same event. This, then, is another reason not to construe 9:20ff as though it were dealing with nations and their *historical* roles. Rather, the meaning of ἀπώλεια and its parallel in 9:21 suggest that the issue at stake is the eternal destinies of individuals.

4.45

"Does not the potter have authority over the clay to make from *the same lump* one vessel for honor and another vessel for dishonor?" The various types of vessels which the potter chooses to make are not at all determined by what the clay itself is, apart from the potter's shaping. Had the vessel for honor and the vessel for dishonor been made from different lumps of clay one might argue that it was some distinctive quality in the different lumps which caused the potter to appoint one vessel for dishonorable use and another for honorable use. But Paul rules that out with the phrase "from the same lump."

With this phrase Paul recalls the example of Rebecca and her two sons in 9:10-13. In distinction from the Sarah-Isaac example in 9:9, the stress in 9:10-13 falls on the fact that Rebecca conceived her two sons "by *one man*, Isaac" (ἐξ ἑνὸς κοίτην ἔχουσα). In the case of Isaac and Ishmael the parents were not the same: Isaac was born to Sarah and Ishmael was born to Hagar the Egyptian. So it was not perfectly clear in this case that the distinction God made between these two was due only to his "purpose according to election." So Paul gives the better example of Jacob and Esau who had exactly the same parents, occupied the same womb at the same time and were appointed for their respected destinies before they were born. In other words from *"the same lump"* God made one vessel for honor and another for dishonor.

It is clear therefore that in 9:21 Paul still has in mind the issue of unconditional election raised in 9:6-13. For those who remain unconvinced that Paul was concerned with the predestination of individuals to salvation and perdition in 9:6-13, this observation will not strengthen the case for seeing predestination of individuals in 9:21. But if our argument in Chapter Three was sound, then the link between 9:21 and 9:10 is another argument in favor of construing 9:21 as a

reference to the eternal destiny of individuals.

4.46

Though it is of little help in interpreting Rom 9:21 we should probably discuss briefly the significance of 2 Tim 2:20 which has very similar language.

Paul warns Timothy of

> Hymenaeus and Philetus 18) who have swerved from the truth by holding that the resurrection is past already. They are upsetting the faith of some. 19) But God's firm foundation stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." 20) In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also wooden and clay ones, *and some for honor and some for dishonor* (ἃ μὲν εἰς τιμὴν ἃ δὲ εἰς ἀτιμίαν). 21) Therefore, if someone cleanses himself of these, he will be a *vessel for honor*, sanctified, pleasing to the Lord, prepared for every good work.

It might be possible to argue that since the vessels in 2 Tim 2:20 refer to individuals, the vessels in Rom 9:21 do too. But the differences in context and in the metaphor itself make such an argument unwarranted. In 2 Tim the vessels are not of "the same lump." They are not even all of clay; some are silver and gold. The different vessels refer probably to the faithful in the church ("the Lord knows those who are his!") and to the unfaithful false teachers like Hymenaeus and Philetus. Alford (III, 386), Ellicott (*Pastoral Epistles*, 146) and Schlatter (*Erlaeuterungen*, VIII, 220) are probably right that Paul's point is the same one Jesus was making in the parable of the dragnet (Mt 13:47-50). There are "genuine" (1 Cor 11:19) and false brethren in the visible church. Most commentators are therefore right in leaving 2 Tim 2:20 out of account when trying to explain Rom 9:21.

5. Four problems in Romans 9:22,23

> 22) And if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, bore in much long-suffering vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, 23) and that he might make known the wealth of his glory on vessels of mercy which he prepared before for glory...

In discussing now Rom 9:22,23, my purpose is not to deal with every exegetical ambiguity, but rather to show as clearly and briefly as I can why I think the interpretation offered above in Section 2 is the most probable. Only the grammatical and lexical difficulties necessary to that end will be treated. The key questions are these: 1) How does God's "desire" to show his wrath relate to his enduring the vessels of wrath (concessively or causally)? 2) How can God be said to endure "in much long-suffering" those whom he has hardened for destruction? 3) If God has prepared both vessels of wrath for destruction and vessels of mercy for glory, why is a passive verb (κατηρτισμένα) used to describe the preparation of vessels of wrath and an active verb (προητοίμασεν) used to describe the preparation of vessels of mercy? 4) What is God's chief aim in his sovereign work, and how does this answer the objection of Rom 9:19, "Why does he still find fault?"

5.1 The logical relationships of the clauses

Generally it is assumed that Rom 9:22,23 is an if-clause for which the then-clause is unstated. The then-clause usually supplied is a rhetorical question like "Will you still dispute with Him?" (Bornkamm, "Anakoluthe," 90). As Cranfield (*Romans*, II, 493) says, "The point here is that to reckon with the truth... expressed in verses 22-24 will make a big difference to our understanding of God's right to act in the way indicated in verse 18, going beyond what has already been established by verses 20b-21." That is, in 9:22,23, Paul goes on "to justify the actual course of [God's] dealing" with man (Gifford, *Romans*, 173).

But not all scholars agree that 9:22,23 is an if-clause without a then-clause. G. Staehlin (*TDNT*, V, 426), T. Zahn (*Roemer*, 461), C. Plag (*Weg*, 15) and A. Nygren (*Romans*, 372) are among those who construe 9:23 as the then-clause. Thus the sentence would read (following Staehlin):

> 22) But if God tolerated in great long-suffering the vessels of wrath which were made for destruction, because he willed to manifest his wrath and declare his power in them, 23) [*he did it*] also in order that he might make known the riches of his glory in the vessels of mercy, which he had prepared long before for glory.

So instead of adding a then-clause after 9:23, this verse is itself made the then-clause by adding the words "he did it."

The arguments against this construction, however, are weighty. First, the sense is very awkward: "if he endured them to show wrath and power then he also endured them to show glory." The then-clause of this construction does not seem to follow from the if-clause. Second, as Cranfield (*Romans*, II, 492) says, the "ellipsis of the apodosis of a conditional sentence is fairly common in classical Greek and occurs several times in the NT" (cf Jn 6:62; Acts 23:9; Blass-Debrunner, 482). Third, Murray (*Romans*, II, 35) makes the very plausible suggestion that the ἵνα clause of 9:23 is coordinate with the two infinitive phrases of 9:22 and thus the ἵνα clause is dependent on θέλων. Hence: εἰ δὲ θέλων ὁ θεὸς ἐνδείξασθαι... καὶ γνωρίσαι... καὶ ἵνα γνωρίσῃ.... In support of this construction Murray points out that ἵνα does introduce the object of verbs of willing (Mt 7:12; Mk 9:30; 10:35; Jn 17:24, etc; cf Bauer, 378). But even more persuasive is the analogy in 1 Cor 14:5 where Paul says, θέλω δὲ πάντας ὑμᾶς λαλεῖν γλώσσαις, μᾶλλον δὲ ἵνα προφητεύητε: "I desire you all to speak in tongues, and even more that you prophesy." Here θέλω is followed by an infinitive phrase and a ἵνα clause in a way similar to the infinitive phrases and ἵνα clause following θέλων in Rom 9:22-23.

Probably then, Calvin (*Romans*, 211), Cranfield (*Romans*, II, 496) and others are right in saying that the two infinitive phrases of 9:22 and the ἵνα clause of 9:23 give three purposes which God "desires" (θέλων) to achieve in sustaining and enduring the vessels of wrath. If this is correct, then the participle θέλων almost certainly should be construed as the *cause* of God's enduring vessels of wrath rather than as a *concession* in spite of which he endures them. That is, you cannot say, *"Although* God desires... he endured..." if part of what he desires is "to make known the wealth of his glory on vessels of mercy" which he achieves precisely in enduring vessels of wrath. This desire to reveal glory to vessels of mercy is not *adversative* to God's enduring vessels of wrath but *causal.* Therefore if the θέλων governs not only the two infinitive phrases of 9:22, but also the ἵνα clause of 9:23 it can scarcely be given a concessive meaning

("although he desired..."). Rather, the three things God "desires" constitute his *goals* in enduring vessels of wrath, and so his desire to achieve those goals is the motive or *cause* for the endurance.

Most commentators (not all, see note 24) do construe θέλων as a causal clause, and the most compelling reason is the parallel in thought and language between 9:22 and 9:17.

Rom 9:17	Rom 9:22
εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο ἐξήγειρά σε	εἰ δὲ θέλων ὁ θεὸς
ὅπως **ἐνδείξωμαι** ἐν σοι	**ἐνδείξασθαι τὴν ὀργὴν**
τὴν **δύναμίν μου**	καὶ γνωρίσαι τ**ὸ δυνατὸν αὐτοῦ**

Though Paul is now speaking more generally about "vessels of wrath," the words of God to Pharaoh in Ex 9:16 are still serving as the pattern for the way God acts. God's raising up Pharaoh and enduring him through a tenfold recalcitrance was not *in spite of* his desire to show his power but *because of* his desire to show it. God could have destroyed Pharaoh after any one of his acts of disobedience, and the reason he did not was that he might "multiply his wonders in the land of Egypt" (Ex 11:9). By "sustaining and tolerating" Pharaoh again and again God accomplished his purpose to show his power in the plagues and finally to win renown in Pharaoh's overthrow at the Red Sea (cf the purpose mentioned in Ex 7:3-5; 9:14-16; 10:1; 11:9; 14:4,17-18). Therefore, since Rom 9:22 uses the same language as 9:17, it is more probable that God's desire to show his wrath and make known his power is the *cause* of his sustaining and tolerating vessels of wrath than that this sustaining and tolerating are *in spite of* that desire.

5.2 God's patience with the vessels of wrath

The strongest argument against saying that God sustains and tolerates vessels of wrath *in order to* show his wrath and power is that this seems to contradict the fact that God is sustaining and tolerating these vessels "in much long-suffering" (ἐν πολλῇ μακροθυμίᾳ). This argument gains force also from Rom 2:4,5: "Or do you despise the wealth of his kindness and forbearance and long-suffering (μακροθυμίας), not knowing that the kindness of God is leading you to

repentance? But according to your hardness and unrepentant heart you are storing up for yourself wrath on the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." From this text it appears that God's long-suffering is an expression of his kindness and has the purpose of leading men to repentance.

The problem encountered here is the same as the one we encountered in connection with the hardening of Pharaoh and discussed in Section 3 (pp 192). God addresses Pharaoh through Moses: "Let my people go." This corresponds to the kindness and long-suffering of pointing the way to repentance (Rom 2:4). Nevertheless, God has already told Moses that he is going to harden Pharaoh's heart so that he will not let the people go. This corresponds to the intention of God expressed in 9:22 to show his wrath precisely by means of enduring in much long-suffering vessels of wrath. If God's command to Pharaoh can be thwarted by God's own decree to harden Pharaoh's heart, then in the same way God's command to men to repent and the time he gives them to obey (Rom 2:4) can also be thwarted in the case of the vessels of wrath by God's decree to harden whom he wills and thus show his wrath on the day of judgment.

One could argue as Beyschlag (*Theodicee*, 63) does that Rom 2:4,5 constitute "an acknowledgment of the real freedom men have—a freedom whose highest decision cannot be predicted even by God." But if Rom 9:14-23 is taken seriously and if Paul has not contradicted himself, then such an inference from Rom 2:4,5 is premature. Is it not possible that what Paul means in Rom 2:4 is that in the interval of life given to men and nations, everything in nature (Rom 1:18-23; Acts 14:17) and history (Acts 17:26f) and the human conscience (Rom 2:15) is pointing (i.e. "leading") men to repentance and faith? God has not left himself without a witness and has not left man without an occasion to respond. No man will ever be able to say that God did not provide an opportunity for him to repent, nor that God did not give evidence that should have led him to do so. That God should then act, as he did with Pharaoh, so that some are hardened and do not come to repentance and are yet held to be blameworthy is not an idea forced onto Paul by Calvinistic exegetes. Rather, it is precisely what the spokesman in Rom 9:19 saw in Paul's theology and so strongly objected to. Therefore, the summons to repentance in Rom 2:4 (even more pointedly expressed in 10:21) must not be used to silence the absoluteness of God's sovereignty expressed in Rom 9:21-23. Such a procedure (followed by Beyschlag) is based on a philosophical conception of the prerequisites of human accountability which Paul evidently did not share. In its haste to preserve the

free will of the creature, it fails to perceive the complexity (and far deeper unity) of the will of the creator.

But we have yet to answer the question why Paul says the vessels of wrath are endured "in much patience" if he does not mean that they are being given time for repentance (which the context seems to rule out), but that they are only storing up wrath for themselves (as 2:5 says) in order that God's "desire to show his wrath" (9:22) might be fulfilled in them. Is there any evidence that μακροθυμία could mean patiently holding back judgment with a view to a greater display of wrath and power?

There are several analogies of "patience" being exercised in this way. From IV Ezra (probably first century) we read,

> For this reason, therefore, shall all the sojourners in the earth suffer torture, because having understanding they yet wrought iniquity, and receiving precepts they yet kept them not, and having obtained the law they set at naught that which they received. What then will they have to say in the judgment, or how shall they answer in the last times? For how long a time hath the Most High been long-suffering with the inhabitants of the world—not for their sakes indeed, but for the sake of the times which he has ordained! (7:72-74)

The least this passage shows is that among Jews of the first century it was not unheard of to speak of God being patient with man for some reason other than man's good.

Another helpful analogy comes from 2 Macc 6:12-14. In this context the Jews had been brutally treated by the Seleucids and the writer says,

> Now I urge those who read this book not to be depressed by such calamities but to recognize that these punishments were designed not to destroy but to discipline our people. In fact, not to let the impious alone for long, but to punish them immediately is a sign of great kindness (εὐεργεσίας). For in the case of other nations *the Lord waits patiently to punish them until they have reached the full measure of their sins;* but he does not deal this way with us (οὐ γὰρ καθάπερ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἐθνῶν ἀναμένει μακροθυμῶν ὁ δεσπότης μέχρι τοῦ καταντήσαντος αὐτοὺς πρὸς ἐκπλήρωσιν ἁμαρτιῶν κολάσαι).

Here the *patience* of God with the nations has a view to giving them an occasion to fill up their sins and make their judgment worse.

Finally, we may look at an example of human patience used in a similar way. From 1 Macc 8:1-4 we read:

> Now Judas heard of the fame of the Romans that they were very strong and were well disposed toward all who made an alliance with them.... Men told him of their wars and of the brave deeds which they were doing among the Gauls, how they had defeated them and forced them to pay tribute, and what they had done in the land of Spain to get control of the silver and gold mines there, and how they had gained control of the whole region by their planning and patience (τῇ βουλῇ αὐτῶν καὶ τῇ μακροθυμίᾳ), even though the place was far distant from them.

Here we see expressed what is commonly known: that in a conflict, a measure of patience and restraint at one point in the battle may secure a greater victory later.

This insight into the patience of a military commander may help explain how it is that God's "desire to show his wrath and make known his power" motivates him not immediately to overthrow the enemy but rather to patiently sustain and tolerate him. The glory and power of a commander are more remarkably displayed in a combination of calm, patient restraint and swift, decisive advance than they would be if he were capable of only one or the other. And when one reads Ex 4-14, this is just the impression one gets. God endures the repeated insults of Pharaoh's disobedience, yet turns every moment of patient restraint into an occasion to display his power. Finally in Ex 14:1-4 God maneuvers his people into an impossible position and incites Pharaoh to pursue. God tells Moses why: "I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them and I will get glory over Pharaoh and over all his host; and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord" (14:4). So Moses says to the fearful people, "The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be still" (14:14). And thus by his patient restraint the great Warrior of Israel draws Pharaoh and his hosts into an awesome display of wrath and power which had been long in coming.

Since the language of Rom 9:22 is so clearly reminiscent of 9:17, where God's dealings with Pharaoh are in view, there is good reason, therefore, to infer that the divine action of 9:22 is indeed the action of a mighty commander who wills to display his power and wrath in defeating his enemies (the "vessels of wrath")

for the sake of his people, the "vessels of mercy." Against this contextual backdrop the idea of sustaining and tolerating the enemy *in much patience* is not inconsistent with, but conducive to, God's "desire to show his wrath and make known his power."

5.3 "Fitted for destruction"

The next question raised against the interpretation put forward above in Section 2 is this: does not the use of the passive voice in the phrase "vessels of wrath *fitted* (κατηρτισμένα) for destruction" suggest that Paul does not attribute their condition to God's doing especially since he uses the active voice in the phrase "vessels of mercy which *he prepared* before for glory"?

Elsewhere in Paul (1 Cor 1:10; 2 Cor 13:11; Gal 6:1; 1 Thess 3:10), and indeed in the whole New Testament, καταρτίζω has the positive meaning of repair, prepare, equip or complete. It refers once to the divine act of creation—Heb 11:3. In Ps 16:5 (LXX) it probably means ordain. Delling (*TDNT*, I, 476) suggests the meaning "foreordain" in Rom 9:22. That is quite uncertain. In view of the day/potter analogy in 9:21 "created" or "prepared" would seem most natural. But to settle the question of the meaning of κατηρτισμένα one must first address the question of agency: who is doing the action?

There are at least four views: 1) *God* is the one who fits (or creates) the vessels of wrath for destruction; 2) the voice is middle not passive and thus means that the vessels of wrath have fitted themselves for destruction (Bengel, *Gnomon*, II, 86; Beyschlag, *Theodicee* 65); 3) the participle is to be construed adjectivally as "fit for destruction" with no implication intended about who did the fitting (Lagrange, *Romains*, 240; Cranfield, *Romans*, II, 495f; Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 261; Schlier, *Roemerbrief*, 301); 4) the passive is intended to express a mystery no human can break through.

The least likely of these is the second, according to which κατηρτισμένα is construed as "having fitted themselves." In a context where the sovereignty of God as a potter over clay has been stressed, Paul would have had to use a clearer grammatical construction to signify all of a sudden that man's destiny is *self*-determined. And indeed the well-known reflexive use of ἑτοιμάζειν ἑαυτόν (Rev 8:6; 19:7) lay ready for such use if Paul had intended such.

The third and fourth views are similar, in that both assert that Paul did not intend

to inform the reader about who did the "fitting for destruction." The fourth view says this is because he did not know the answer to that question; the third view says it is because, though he may have known the answer, it was beside the point in Rom 9:22 to give it. The point was only to say that those who are ultimately judged are in a condition that makes this judgment fitting or appropriate. That the fourth view contradicts the context of what Paul claims to know in Rom 9 and that the third view is true but does not go far enough, I will try to show by the following observations.

It seems to me that, after the clear and powerful statements of double predestination in Rom 9, it is grasping at a straw to argue that the passive voice κατηρτισμένα proves that Paul denied divine agency in fitting men for destruction. "Jacob I loved and Esau I hated" (9:13). "He has mercy on whom he wills and he hardens whom he wills" (9:18). "He makes from the same lump a vessel for honor and a vessel for dishonor" (9:21). Is it really plausible after such assertions to argue that the differences between "vessels of wrath fitted for destruction" and "vessels of mercy which he prepared before for glory" are such that Paul is now denying or even trying to conceal the divine agency in the former? Paul has just stated unabashedly that God makes from *the same lump* vessels for dishonor (9:21). I cannot escape the implication that anti-Calvinistic apologetic is in control when in the next verse we are forbidden to suggest that the divine Potter is at work in the phrase "vessels of wrath fitted for destruction." Moreover, in view of the parallels between Rom 9:22 and 9:17 (see above p 207), a most natural suggestion is that Pharaoh serves as an example of a "vessel of wrath fitted for destruction." And since Paul's inference from the Pharaoh story is that "God hardens whom he wills" (9:18), the most natural suggestion from the context is that "fitted for destruction" (9:22) refers precisely to this divine hardening.

Besides these contextual considerations we may also recall how closely related Paul's thought has proved to be to the apocalyptic tradition reaching its climax in the double predestination of Qumran. (See Section 4.16 and Chapter Three, p 71, and Maier, *Mensch und freier Wille*, 381.) The word καταρτίζω (cf Rom 9:2a) translates the Hebrew כּוּן three times in the LXX (Ps 67:9; 73:16; 88:37). This lends even greater credence to the suggestion that Paul is at home with the Essene doctrine of predestination for we find the word כּוּן used in predestinarian contexts which resemble the thought of Rom 9:22f. For example, 1 QH 15:12-22 (translation from Dupont-Sommer):

And I, because of Thine understanding, I know

that [the righteousness of man] is not in the hand of flesh

[and] that man [is not] master of (13) his way

and that mankind cannot strengthen his step (לְהָכִיו עַצָּדוֹ).

And I know that the inclination of every spirit is in Thy hand

(14) [and that] Thou hast ordained [the way of every man]

before creating him (הֲכִינוֹתָה בְּטֶרֶם בְּרָאתוֹ).

And how can any man change Thy words?

Thou alone hast created (15) the just

and established him (הֲכִינוֹתוֹ) from his mother's womb

unto the time of good-will (cf Rom 9:23)

that he may be preserved in Thy covenant

and walk in all Thy way...

And Thou hast raised up (17) his glory from among flesh

whereas Thou hast created (בָּרָאתָה) the wicked [for the time of] Thy [wr]ath

and hast set them apart from their mother's womb for the Day of Massacre...

(19) Thou hast created all [them that despise] Thy [will]

to execute judgment against them (הֲכִינוֹתָם לַעֲשׂוֹת בָּם שִׁפְטֵי גְדוֹלִים)

(20) in the eyes of all Thy works

that they may serve as a sign, and wo[nder unto] everlasting [generations]

> that [all] may know Thy glory [cf Rom 9:23] and awful might [cf Rom 9:22].

This use of כּוּן (which can be rendered by καταρτίζω) in a context so much like Paul's (cf also 1 QS 11:10,11) increases the probability that with κατηρτισμένα Paul has in view the divine agency.

To the Qumran analogies may also be added at least one example of a rabbinic conception of predestination which, though late (about 340), may reflect early tradition. According to Midrash Esther 1,1 (829) a rabbi said,

> From the beginning of the creation of the world God *prepared* (הִתקִין) what he chose: Adam (he prepared) to be the first creature, Cain to be the first murderer, Abel to be the first one murdered, Noah to be the first one saved, etc. [cf Strack-Billerbeck, 1, 982].

I conclude, therefore, primarily from the context of Rom 9 (but also with some corroboration from Paul's Jewish milieu; cf also Apoc Abr 22) that it accords best with Paul's intention to see the divine agency behind the passive κατηρτισμένα in Rom 9:22.

We can only guess why Paul used this passive verb in reference to vessels of wrath and an active verb (προητοίμασεν) in reference to vessels of mercy. Since the grammar of Rom 9:22,23 is awkward, it is not unreasonable to suggest that a shift occurred in Paul's thought as he was writing the sentence. Thus at first he may have intended to express the divine action in both cases with the passive voice. But then as he began to formulate 9:23 he also conceived how he would continue it in 9:24 ("whom he also called..."). This continuation may have been suggested to him by the earlier sequence in Rom 8:30 (οὓς δὲ προώρισεν, τούτους καὶ ἐκάλεσεν)—a sequence which commended not only the active voice for προητοίμασεν but also the relative clause and the prefix προ-.

Another possible explanation for the passive κατηρτισμένα, if we assume a good bit more grammatical reflection on Paul's part, is that he really does want to make a statement about the way God works: though God does accomplish all things by the counsel of his will, he does not bring about all things in the same way. In the accomplishment of some things he employs intermediary agents perhaps. Or to put it another way, his heart is engaged differently in different acts, loving some deeds in themselves and inclining to others only as they are

preferable in relation to greater ends (cf Lam 3:33). If this is the case, Paul would be implying that not wrath but mercy is the greater, overarching goal for which God does all things.

5.4 The justification of God in his ultimate purpose

With that suggestion we have arrived at our final question, namely, What is God's chief aim in his sovereign activity over man and how, at last, does this aim answer the objection raised at Rom 9:19 (Why does he still find fault?)? I have already cited above on p 188 the excellent quote from Cranfield to the effect that among the three purposes of God mentioned in Rom 9:22,23, the purpose to "make known the wealth of his glory on the vessels of mercy" is primary. As K. Mueller puts it, "God's wrath is put into the service of his mercy" (*Zuvorersehung*, 16). This ordering of God's aims is generally recognized. Cranfield (*Romans*, II, 496) sums up the arguments for this position as follows:

> We now turn to the three statements of purpose contained in this passage. That the last of these (ἵνα γνωρίση κ.τ.λ.) is dominant is clear. It alone is introduced by ἵνα; and it is given special emphasis by its position in the sentence, by the fact that it is extended by means of the two relative clauses which follow, and by the fact that verses 25-29 focus further attention on it. Above all its content marks it off from the others; for the manifestation of the wealth of the divine glory is nothing less than the ultimate purpose of God.

This purpose statement (9:23) probably has its closest parallel in Eph 2:7 where God's purpose in redemption is "that he might show (ἐνδείξηται) in the coming ages the surpassing wealth of his grace in kindness on us (ἐφ᾽ ἡμᾶς; cf ἐπί in Rom 9:23) in Christ Jesus." God's chief end in creation and redemption is to display for the benefit of his elect the fulness of his glory, especially his mercy.

Now what about the objection raised in Rom 9:19, namely, If God sovereignly "has mercy on whom he wills and hardens whom he wills" (9:18), why does he still find fault? Has Paul really answered it? To see that he has requires a remarkable degree of openness to the text and freedom from inherited notions about the righteousness of God. I know of no one who has labored to open himself to Paul's way of thinking more than Prof. Daniel Fuller, from whom so much of the stimulus for this book has come. Therefore, I would like to quote at

length his effort to understand the integrity of Paul's answer to the objector in Rom 9:19.

> Paul counters that people have no more right to call God in question for His dealings with them than clay has in telling a potter into what shape it should be formed (vv. 20-21). Not surprisingly, many find Paul's reply here unacceptable. James Denney in his commentary on Romans in the *Expositor's Greek Testament* says (ad loc), "To this objection [of v. 19] there is really no answer, and it ought to be frankly admitted that the apostle does not answer it." Likewise C.H. Dodd argues in *The Moffatt New Testament Commentary* (ad loc): "The objector is right. Paul has driven himself into a position in which he has to deny that God's freedom of action is limited by moral considerations. 'Has the potter no right over the clay?' It is a well-worn illustration. But the trouble is that a man is not a pot; he will ask, Why did you make me like this?' and he will not be bludgeoned into silence. It is the weakest point in the whole Epistle."
>
> The trouble with these commentators however is that they construe Paul's reply to mean that people have no right to question God but must blindly accede to what He does without seeing any reason for it. But it should be observed that in verses 22-24 Paul does set forth the purpose controlling God's exercise of His sovereignty. To be sure, people have no right to ask God to cease to be God by surrendering any of His sovereignty. But humankind is not asked to submit blindly, for God's exercise of His sovereignty is as purposeful and nonarbitrary as the way potters use clay. Just as it is altogether right for potters to use clay so that they may make evident the full range of their skill, so it can only be right for God to deal with people in such a way that the full range of His glory becomes externalized. A consideration of these crucial verses, with the ellipses in the NIV filled in with the words in brackets, provides clarification: "What [objection can be made] if God, choosing to show His wrath and make His power known, bore with great patience the objects of wrath—prepared for destruction? [And] what [objection can be made] if He did this to make the riches of His glory known to the objects of His mercy, whom He prepared in advance for glory—even us, whom He also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?" When these rhetorical questions are restated decoratively, they assert that it is perfectly fitting for God to work with His creation so that it will externalize *all* aspects of His glory: On the one hand, His wrath and power; on the other hand, His mercy.

But He has a greater purpose than simply to show the full range of His glory, for He would not be showing Himself as He really is if He set forth His wrath and power as coordinate and equal to His love and mercy. God delights far more in His mercy than in His wrath. So in order to show the priority of His mercy, He must place it against the backdrop of wrath. How could God's mercy appear fully as His great mercy unless it was extended to people who were under His wrath and therefore could only ask for mercy? It would be impossible for them to share with God the delight He has in His mercy unless they saw clearly the awfulness of the almighty wrath from which His mercy delivers them. Thus to show the full range of His glory God prepares beforehand not only vessels of mercy but also vessels of wrath, in order that the riches of His glory in connection with the vessels of mercy might thereby become more clearly manifest.... Thus it is surely right for God to prepare vessels of wrath, for it is only by so doing that He is able to show the exceeding riches of His glory, the capstone of which is His mercy. For God not to prepare vessels of wrath would mean that He could not fully reveal Himself as the merciful God. Thus creation could not honor Him for what He really is, and God would then have been unrighteous, for in the act of creation He would have done something inconsistent with the full delight He has in His own glory.

But He is indeed righteous, not only in preparing vessels of wrath, but also in finding fault with such vessels and visiting wrath upon them. To prepare such vessels but then to fail to visit wrath upon them would be to act with complete disregard for His own glory. God acts consistently with His love for His glory only as He opposes all who disdain finding delight in His glory. If He did not act this way in the world He freely created, He would cease to be God. Hence the objection of verse 19 that God should not blame those whom He hardens is shown to be without substance.

11.
Conclusion

I have attempted in this book to do objective, historical-grammatical exegesis of Rom 9:1-23. Objectivity does not mean for me disinterested detachment. It means that I have tried to submit my preconceptions to what Matthew Arnold called the "severe discipline" of following another person's line of thought on its own terms. I do not regard the work as a theology of election nor as a fully rounded justification of the sovereign decrees of God. But I do consider it a needed foundation stone of such a theology and such a justification. In conclusion, then, I will try to sketch briefly the contours of that stone discovered in the course of the study.

The roots of this study go back to my perplexity about how Rom 9:15 ("For God says to Moses: I will have mercy on whomever I have mercy and I will be gracious to whomever I will be gracious") could be an *argument* (γάρ) for Rom 9:14 ("There is no unrighteousness with God, is there? No indeed!"). How could this quote from Ex 33:19 support Paul's assertion of God's righteousness? What is Paul's *justification of God?*

To answer this question it was necessary to clarify as precisely as I could just what had called God's righteousness into question. This required an exegesis of Rom 9:6b-13 (Chapter Three). But this unit is Paul's support for his assertion in 9:6a that "It is not as though the word of God has fallen." In order to accurately understand Paul's defense of the fidelity of God's word, it was also necessary to inquire from Rom 9:1-5 what had called God's word into question (Chapter Two).

The upshot of this ground-laying in Chapters Two and Three was this: the painful fact that had called God's word into question was that many Israelites, having rejected their Messiah, are accursed and cut off from Christ. How could this be, if they are the people to whom irrevocable divine promises were made? Can God's word of promise fall? All of Rom 9-11 is written with a view to showing that God has not been and will not be unfaithful to his word. Romans 9 alone is only part of Paul's demonstration of the truth of God. Romans 11 on the future salvation of "all Israel," is an essential part of the demonstration. But this

part of his response lay outside our immediate concern.

Paul's preliminary defense (Rom 9:6-13) of the truthfulness of God's promise is to argue from the Old Testament that the promises of God never were intended to guarantee the salvation of every individual Israelite. His promise gave expression to an "electing purpose" (9:11) by which God aims to preserve his complete freedom in determining who will be the beneficiaries of his *saving* promises, who will be the "Israel" within Israel (9:6b). His purpose is thus maintained by means of the predestination of individuals to their respective eternal destinies. I tried to assess as fully and fairly as I could the view which sees only *national* election in these verses, but found the view exegetically (not dogmatically) untenable. Paul's solution, then, to the problem posed in 9:1-5 is that "all those from Israel are not Israel" (9:6b). Within the context of Rom 9 this means that God maintains his sovereign "purpose of election" by determining, before they are born, who will belong to the "saved" among Israel. And this determination is, therefore, not based on what a person wills or does (9:11,12,16), but solely on God whose "call" effects what he purposes (9:12). For this reason Paul is confident that God's word has not fallen but is in fact working out God's sovereign purpose even in the unbelief of Paul's kinsmen.

Between Rom 9:13 and 14 we may imagine an objection being raised. It apparently sounded like this: if God, in determining who will be the beneficiaries of his mercy, does not base his decisions on any human distinctives that a person may claim by birth or effort, then he is unrighteous. The assumption seems to be that divine righteousness would require that God elect persons on the basis of their real and valuable distinctives, whether racial (Jewishness) or moral (keepers of the law).

Paul denied in Rom 9:14 that God is unrighteous. I argued, therefore, that evidently Paul does not share this conception of divine righteousness. How Paul does conceive of God's righteousness we begin to see as we struggle to understand its defense in Rom 9:15ff. The defense begins with the puzzling quotation of Ex 33:19 ("I will have mercy on whomever I have mercy..."). Therefore I devoted Chapter Four to an effort to understand Ex 33:19 in its Old Testament context as Paul may have understood it.

From the Old Testament context I concluded that Ex 33:19, as a brief, preliminary declaration of the verbal theophany which follows in Ex 34:6,7, constitutes a manifestation of God's *glory* (Ex 33:18), a "passing by" of his

goodness (33:19a) and a proclamation of his *name* (33:19b). These three realities overlap in the Exodus context so that we can say God's glory and his name consist fundamentally in his propensity to show mercy and his sovereign freedom in its distribution. Or to put it more precisely, it is the glory of God and his essential nature mainly to dispense mercy (but also wrath, Ex 34:7) on whomever he pleases, apart from any constraint originating outside his own will. This is the essence of what it means to be God. This is his name.

If this is the meaning that Ex 33:19 had for Paul when he quoted it in Rom 9:15, the question then arises: How does an affirmation that God's *glory* (or name) consists largely in his sovereign freedom to show mercy on whom he wills function as an argument for the *righteousness* of God in election? The thesis that I formulate in Chapter Five in answer to this question is that for Paul *the righteousness of God must be his unswerving commitment always to preserve the honor of his name and display his glory.* If this is what it means for God to be righteous, and if his glory (or name) consists mainly in his sovereign freedom to have mercy on whom he wills, then the quotation of Ex 33:19 as an argument for the righteousness of God in unconditional election does in fact make good sense.

So the crucial question became: Does Paul really have this view of the divine righteousness? To answer this question I first inquired in Chapter Six whether there is an Old Testament precedent for such an understanding of the righteousness of God. This was a crucial step because so much of Paul's theology has its roots in the Old Testament. The conclusion I reached was that there is indeed a broad basis for understanding the righteousness of God as his unswerving commitment to preserve the honor of his name and display his glory. So the next step was to test whether in the crucial Pauline texts this understanding of God's righteousness is evident. My investigation both of Rom 3:1-8 (Chapter Seven) and Rom 3:25,26 (Chapter Eight) confirmed that Paul does share this view of the righteousness of God.

With that conclusion I returned in Chapter Nine to complete my treatment of Rom 9:14-18. Here the scope of God's freedom to show mercy and to harden was described in more detail and the reference in Rom 9:17 to God's purposes in dealing with Pharaoh was found to cohere remarkably with our interpretation of Ex 33:19. In 9:17 Paul cites Ex 9:16: "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: For this very thing I raised you up, that I might show in you my power and that I might proclaim my *name* in all the earth." It can scarcely be overemphasized, for the sake of Paul's justification of God, that in Rom 9:15 and 17 Paul employs Old

Testament texts in which the exercise of God's sovereign freedom, in mercy (Ex 33:19) and in hardening (Ex 9:16), is the means by which he declares the glory of his name! This is the heart of Paul's defense: in choosing unconditionally those on whom he will have mercy and those whom he will harden God is not unrighteous, for in this "electing purpose" he is acting out of a full allegiance to his name and esteem for his glory.

Paul's justification of God does not end at Rom 9:18, because someone registers another objection in 9:19: "Why does God still find fault since no one can successfully resist his sovereign will?" That is, if God is in absolute control of whether men are hardened or not, then he has no right to condemn them for their hardness. How Paul responds to this final objection is the subject of Chapter Ten and the climax of our study. God is our creator and as such has as much right to make of us what he wills as a potter has over his clay to make from the same lump a vessel for honor and a vessel for dishonor (9:21). We have no right to dispute with God our maker. Yet Paul does not stop with a reprimand, for man is not asked to submit to God's sovereignty without seeing some justification for why he does what he does.

The final statement of this justification of God's ways is given in Rom 9:22,23. God's desire is "to show wrath and make known his power." But even more he desires "to make known the wealth of his glory on his people, the vessels of mercy." The ultimate aim of God is to show mercy. But to do this he must place it against a backdrop of wrath. For

> how could God's mercy appear fully as his great mercy unless it was extended to people who were under his wrath and therefore could only ask for mercy? It would be impossible for them to share with God the delight he has in his mercy unless they saw clearly the awfulness of the almighty wrath from which his mercy delivers them. Thus to show the full range of his glory [and thus be righteous] God prepares beforehand not only vessels of mercy but also vessels of wrath, in order that the riches of his glory in connection with the vessels of mercy might thereby become more clearly manifest.

For those who, like myself, confess Rom 9 as Holy Scripture and accord it an authority over our lives, the implications of this exegesis are profound. We will surely not fall prey to the naive and usually polemical suggestions that we cease to pray or that we abandon evangelism. If we did that, we would only betray our

failure to be grasped by this theology as Paul was who "prayed without ceasing" (1 Thess 5:17) and who labored in evangelism "harder than any of the other apostles" (1 Cor 15:10). On the contrary, we will be deeply sobered by the awful severity of God, humbled to the dust by the absoluteness of our dependence on his unconditional mercy, and irresistibly allured by the infinite treasury of his glory ready to be revealed to the vessels of glory. Thus we will be moved to forsake all confidence in human distinctives or achievements and we will entrust ourselves to mercy alone. In the hope of glory we will extend this mercy to others that they may see our good deeds and give glory to our Father in heaven.

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