

The Jews, the Future, and God

(Romans 9-11)

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In an address delivered to the Confessing Church at the height of Nazi terror (16 March 1942), K. L. Schmidt appealed to Romans 9-11 as the key to faith for such perilous times. Paul's hope for Israel in these chapters was proclaimed a light in foreboding darkness, not a twinkle of revelation but a disclosure of God's presence. From beginning to end, Schmidt said, the divine glory rings 9-11; God is involved in the tragedy of Israel. His climactic point reads: "The God question, the future question, and the Jewish question are the same question."¹ This statement, which sounds strange at first hearing, qualifies as a carefully-balanced summary of Romans 9-11. Indeed, when Paul contemplates the question of Jewish unbelief, his eye finally turns to future hope for the salvation of Israel. But the entire reasoning proceeds from a standpoint well within history: the present situation of hardened Israel genuinely magnifies the faithfulness of God, a faithfulness revealed in the preaching of the gospel. For Paul, the future of the Jews is ruled by the prior question of what God is now doing through the gospel.

This introductory stance assumes that 9-11 needs a new hearing. The bulk of interpreters have treated the passage as a curiosity piece, a warmhearted excursus on the Jews without serious connection to the rest of Romans. Consequently, 9-11 plays a diacritical role in relation to the history of Pauline exegesis.² It has been dominated too long by tedious, slanted questions ranging from doubled-edged predestination to full-fledged universalism. With a hodgepodge of Zionism and dispensationalism mixed in, little wonder that many prefer to skip it when reading Romans.³ The present study attempts to do two things: (1) to retrieve the passage from the backwaters of Paul's theology and put it in the mainstream of Romans, and (2) to interpret the key verses as part of a sustained, consistent argument. We hope to ease the grip of controversy that besets this portion of God's word.

Crucial Issues

To get hold of the issues surrounding 9-11 we must recognize a double difficulty: "Beside the difficulty of seeing the place of this part in the total message

¹K. L. Schmidt, *Die Judenfrage in Lichte der Kapitel 9-11 des Römerbriefes*, Theologische Studien, vol. 13, 2d ed. (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1942), p. 37.

²Ernst Käsemann, *An die Römer*, Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, vol. 8a (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1973), p. 294.

³A typical attitude betrays itself "if when we read Romans we end it with ch. 8:39" as was Morton Scott Enslin's "unhappy experience as a student, now fifty years ago" (*Reapproaching Paul* [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1972], p. 156, n. 20).

of the letter has been the difficulty in deciding what these chapters are.”⁴ Needless to say, if one misconstrues the thrust of the passage, he can hardly expect it to cohere with the rest of the letter. So we will begin with the immediate theme and expand the argument to the overall structure of Romans.

The Major Interpretations

What is the primary question that Paul engages? The history of interpretation, which cautions us to avoid a ready-made solution, leaves the matter up in the air. For the sake of brevity, we can divide the interpreters into four camps whose interests somewhat overlap but clearly approach chapters 9-11 from a controlling viewpoint.⁵

1. Eternal predestination—the question is how the eternal destiny of individuals is determined. This traditional debate is an overriding concern among the early fathers, medieval scholastics, and the reformers. The Augustinian view (infralapsarianism) wins out and informs the influential commentaries of Aquinas and Calvin.⁶ Post-reformation thinkers in this camp rally to three competing banners: (1) “God is absolutely sovereign” (predestinarian Calvinists), (2) “man is free to choose” (indeterminate Arminians), and (3) “divine sovereignty and human freedom cannot be reconciled” (mediating rationalists).⁷ The impasse culminates with a christological solution of 9-11 in Barth's *Church Dogmatics* (II/2), penned in 1942.

2. Salvation history—the question is how the divine purpose works out in history. In reaction to predestinarian exegesis, this group confines 9-11 to temporal history and corporate election. Without reference to eternal decrees and the fate of individuals, Paul describes the corporate roles of Israel and the Gentiles in

⁴Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1949), p. 354.

⁵See the history of exegesis from the patristic era up to the present in Bruce Corley, “The Significance of Romans 9-11: A Study in Pauline Theology” (Th.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1975), pp. 1-62. The best works for major periods are: (1) patristic—K. H. Schelkle, *Paulus Lehrer der Väter: Die altkirchliche Auslegung vom Rom 1-11*, 2d ed. (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1959), pp. 346-421; (2) reformed—Willibald Beyschlag, *Die paulinische Theodizee, Römer IX-XI: Ein Beitrag zur biblischen Theologie* (Halle: Verlag von Eugen Strien, [1868]); Emil Weber, *Das Problem der Heilsgeschichte nach Rom 9-11: Ein Beitrag zur historisch-theologischen Würdigung der paulinischen Theodizee* (Leipzig: A Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1911); and (3) modern—Christian Müller, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit und Gottes Volk: Eine Untersuchung zu Römer 9-11*, *Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments*, vol. 86 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964); Ulrich Luz, *Das Geschichtsverständnis des Paulus*, *Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie*, vol. 49 (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1968).

⁶William Sanday and A. C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, *International Critical Commentary*, 5th ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), pp. 271-74.

⁷Weber, *Heilsgeschichte*, pp. 10-36. Popular examples of these viewpoints are the commentaries of Charles Hodge (Calvinist), F.A.G. Tholuck (Arminian), and H.A.W. Meyer (mediating).

salvation history.⁸ In the mid-nineteenth century, the *heilsgeschichtlich* interpretation of 9-11 is defined by Beck and Von Hofmann. Recently, after a thorough overhaul, the weighty commentaries of Munck and Käsemann reaffirm valuable insights of salvation history.⁹

3. Jewish unbelief—the question is how the church as the new people of God relates to Israel as the old people of God. As an apologetic tract, 9-11 is focused on Jewish-Christian dialogue, becoming Paul's normative explanation of why the Jews remain in unbelief.¹⁰ The church and Israel stand, on the one hand, in discontinuity concerning faith in Christ, yet on the other hand, in continuity concerning election as the people of God. This approach to 9-11 enlists vast literature written in response to the Nazi holocaust (the "Jewish question"), resurgent Zionism, and convocations at Evanston (1954), the Berlin *Kirchentag* (1961), and Vatican II.¹¹

4. Divine faithfulness — the question is how the gospel, having been rejected by the Jews, upholds the faithfulness of God to his promise. The fact of Jewish unbelief occasions a question, not about Israel's fate, but about God: "Since God has so clearly given Israel a position of unique privilege, does not Israel's defection mean that God's intention has broken down?"¹² Although philosophical overtures of theodicy are disclaimed by Nygren and Gaugler, 9-11 from this perspective is a vindication of God's ways in dealing with men through the gospel. Notwithstanding an apparent failure with regard to Israel, God's promise and eternal purpose still retain their force.¹³

The Basic Theme

Without slighting important features of the other three approaches, we prefer the theme of divine faithfulness on two grounds. First, it emerges in Paul's initial proposition: "But it is not as though the word of God has failed" (9:6a, NASB). Paul quickly denies that his introductory lament for Israel (9:1-5) infers a lapse in the declared purpose of God. This rejoinder, which undoubtedly pinpoints Jewish opposition to Paul's gospel, echoes a question that the apostle must have frequently

⁸Beyschlag, *Theodicee*, pp. 24-27.

⁹Johannes Munck, *Christ and Israel: An Interpretation of Romans 9-11*, trans. Ingeborg Nixon (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967). Käsemann connects 9-11 to the main theme of Romans by understanding salvation history as the cosmic dimension of God's righteousness which stands at its center (*Römer*, p. 244).

¹⁰Leonhard Goppelt, "Israel and the Church in Today's Discussion and in Paul," *Lutheran World* 10 (October 1963): 352-72.

¹¹On the *Judenfrage* literature, see Luz, *Geschichtsverständnis*, p. 23; and Ernst Gaugler, *Der Römerbrief*, 2 vols. (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1952), 2:424-25.

¹²C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Harper's New Testament Commentaries (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1957), p. 180.

¹³Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer*, Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament, vol. 4, 13th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), pp. 221-22.

heard. Does not rejection by the people entrusted with the “oracles of God” (3:2) imply that the gospel is false because it revokes Israel's promise and nullifies the covenant faithfulness of God? Or, as Schrenk puts it, “does this [Jewish unbelief] not signify a failure of God's word?”¹⁴ This is the “crucial question,”¹⁵ the one that “formulates the problem of the entire three chapters.”¹⁶ From this viewpoint, 9-11 is the reconciliation of the gospel doctrine laid down in chapters 1-8 to a great and pressing difficulty arising from Jewish unbelief.¹⁷

Second, the key concept in 9-11 is God's mercy which again focuses on the question of divine faithfulness. The noun *eleos* (“mercy”) and cognate verb *eleein* (“to show mercy”) occur eight times in 9-11 and elsewhere in Romans only twice: “It is striking that Paul speaks of God's *eleos* only in the passages in Rom. 9; 11; 15 which are concerned with the history of salvation.”¹⁸ Among the commentators, only Barrett emphasizes this point; he calls mercy “the key-note of chs. ix-xi.”¹⁹ In Paul's distinctive usage, *eleos* constitutes the saving relationship of Christ to Jew and Gentile purposed in the divine election (cf. 11:28-32). It connotes the idea of God's unmerited favor and also God's unswerving loyalty to his redemptive purpose. The Pauline component of divine faithfulness in *eleos* derives from the equivalent term in the LXX, the Hebrew substantive *hesed* (“steadfast love,” RSV).²⁰ When Israel breaks the covenant, bringing wrath and judgment, divine *hesed* holds a promise of future restoration (cf. Is. 54:7-8; Hos. 2:19-20; Jer. 3:12).²¹ The juxtaposition of God's electing love (8:29), prophetic grief (9:1), and Israel's disobedience (9:3), so awkward to modern readers of Romans, would not

¹⁴Gottlob Schrenk, *Die Weissagung über Israel in Neuen Testament* (Zürich: Gotthelf Verlag, 1951), p. 25.

¹⁵Luz, *Geschichtsverständnis*, p. 28.

¹⁶Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 249; cf. Leonhard Goppelt, *Christentum und Judentum im ersten und zweiten Jahrhundert*, Beiträge zur Förderung christlichen Theologie, vol. 55 (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1954), p. 113.

¹⁷E. H. Gifford, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans* (London: John Murray, 1886), p. 38. The mainstream of English commentary develops this approach, including the works of H.C.G. Moule, James Denney, Sanday and Headlam, F. F. Bruce, and Barrett.

¹⁸Rudolf Bultmann, “*Eleos*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. G. W. Bromiley, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), p. 484. See *eleein*—9:15, 16, 18; 11:30, 31, 32; 12:8; and *eleos*—9:23; 11:31; 15:9. The reference in 12:8 is human deeds of kindness; whereas the context of 15:9, divine mercy to the Gentiles, is parallel to 9-11.

¹⁹Barrett, *Romans*, p. 185.

²⁰See Walter Zimmerli, “*Charis*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. G. W. Bromiley, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), pp. 379-81; Nelson Glueck, “*Hesed*” in *the Bible*, trans. Alfred Gottschalk, with an Introduction by Gerald A. Larue (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1967); and C. H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1954), p. 61.

²¹Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. J. A. Baker, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), 1:238-39; cf. Norman H. Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (London: The Epworth Press, 144), pp. 98-106.

have seemed strange to Isaiah, Hosea, or Jeremiah. Romans 9-11 is a prophetic scene: having abrogated the covenant, Israel stands under judgment, but God's faithfulness has not lapsed. The over-plus of *eleos* prepares a new covenant in Christ for Jew and Gentile.

The Argument and Context

Paul's primary thesis (9:6a) is developed by showing that God's activity in Israel has been consistent from the very beginning.²² In the history of the nation, a plan of salvation has been at work (9:11); therefore, not all the physical descendants of Abraham were spiritual heirs of promise (9:8). This paragraph is the exordium, setting the parameters of the subsequent discussion. The principle elucidated here, "God's purpose based on election" (9:11), is the theological mainspring of the entire argument.²³ Paul elaborates and defends this viewpoint of God's saving purpose in three successive rebuttals to objections, thus forming three sequential parts in the argument.²⁴

First, the objection that God has acted unjustly: "Is God to be charged with injustice?" (9:14, NEB) The complaint infers that God's election is arbitrary, a capricious sifting of men without purposeful end.²⁵ The accusation is not allowed to stand; Paul insists on (1) the freedom of God's mercy apart from human merit (9:14-23) and (2) the revealed goal of God's electing purpose (9:24-29). The formula "what shall we say then?" (9:30) introduces a second objection: why has Israel failed to attain the righteousness of God?²⁶ The stone *testimonium* (9:32-33) adduces the christological aspect of God's purpose which is developed in 10:1-21 as a righteousness to all who believe in Christ. From the perspective of human responsibility, the guilt of Israel is sealed by its defiance of God's love.²⁷ Finally, the argument reverts to the divine perspective; the third objection takes up the dialogue of chapter 9: "Has God rejected his people?" (11:1). The answer is clear;

²²F. W. Maier, "Israel in der Heilsgeschichte nach Röm. 9-11," *Biblische Zeitfragen* ser. 12, 11/12 (1929): 402.

²³Cf. Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, p. 244; Michel, *Römer*, p. 235; Barrett, *Romans*, p. 182; Käsemann, *Römer*, pp. 251-52.

²⁴With few exceptions the commentators follow the three divisions, 9:6-29, 9:30-10:21, and 11:1-32 (viz., Sanday and Headlam, Lagrange, Nygren, Dodd, Schlatter, Althaus, Michel, Knox, Barrett, Munck, Bruce, and Käsemann), making 9:1-5 an introduction and 11:33-36 a closing doxology.

²⁵Dupont argues that 9:14 reveals the central question, making vv. 1-13 a preliminary unit (Jacques Dupont, "Le problème de la structure littéraire de l'épître aux Romains," *Revue Biblique* 62 [July 1955]: 388, n. 3). However, the objection at 9:14 is intelligible only as a response to 9:6-13 and the emphatic break at 9:6a cannot be overlooked (cf. Munck, *Christ and Israel*, p. 43).

²⁶The question stands as a clear parallel to the leading thought of the preceding section at 9:14 (Michel, *Römer*, p. 249). The objection surfaces in the question "Why was this?" (9:32, NEB).

²⁷Corley, "Significance of Romans 9-11," pp. 166-82.

the election of God has not displaced Israel. Its rejection is partial (11:1-10) and temporary (11:11-27).²⁸ The divine purpose will run its full course; God has not wavered from his first intention (11:28-32).

A characteristic mode of Pauline antithesis appears in this logic. An extended chiasm pervades the whole of 9-11; a pattern that can be stated in two equivalent propositions framing an antithetical one:²⁹

[A] God has not revoked his promise (9:6-29)

[B] Israel has not believed the gospel (9:30-10:21)

[A'] God has not rejected his people (11:1-32)

This ABA' scheme is similar to 1 Corinthians 12-14 where the problem of spiritual gifts (12:1-31 [A]; 14:1-40 [A']) is settled by the antithetical appeal to love (13:1-13 [B]).³⁰ By analogy, the antithetical section here (9:30-10:21) assumes crucial importance, providing the core of Paul's argument. Indeed, the declaration that God will save all who believe, Jew and Greek (10:11-14), provides the kerygmatic, missionary key of election and eschatology.³¹

Far from being an appendix, 9-11 should be viewed from this midpoint perspective as the apex of the doctrinal argument in Romans. In the course of chapters 1-8, there are glimpses of a third element of Paul's theme, "to everyone who believes" (1:16), which is finally expounded in 9-11. This wideness of the gospel is qualified by a temporal and functional priority in salvation history: "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (1:16). There is a reciprocity between the two ideas which emerges in Romans as a tension between the priority of the Jews (cf. 2:9-10; 3:1-2, 9; 9:1-4) and the availability of righteousness to all, without

²⁸Chapter 11 represents a transition from the theme of chapter 10 and a renewal of the theme in chapter 9. Munck (*Christ and Israel*, pp. 105-106) notes that "Paul returns in 11:1 to the train of thought found at the end of 9:6-29, especially the idea of the remnant; he returns, however, to that point in such a way that he is able, by virtue of the intervening passage, 9:30-10:21, to solve the problem posed without being misunderstood by the readers."

²⁹The antithesis is phrased in slightly different terms by André Feuillet, "Le plan salvifique de Dieu d'après l'épître aux Romains: Essai sur la structure littéraire de l'épître et sa signification théologique," *Revue Biblique* 57 July-October 1950): 491, but he develops the ABA' pattern in his exposition of 9-11. On extended chiasm, see R.C.M. Ruijs, *De Struktur van de Brief aan de Romeinen: Een stilistische, vormhistorische en thematische Analyse van Rom 1,16-3,23* (Utrecht-Nijmegen: Dekker & Van de Vegt, 1964), pp. 1-61.

³⁰Other examples include 1 Cor. 1:18-3:9; 8:1-11:1; cf. Dupont, "Problème," p. 372, n. 2.

³¹Chapter 10 is Paul's solution. As a corollary of election the gospel message enacts the divine call (10:14, 17); as a corollary of eschatology, missionary preaching is the harbinger of the end time (11:13-14, 23). This is the strength of Munck's exegesis (*Christ and Israel*, pp. 78-79).

distinction (*pas* and *diastole* in 3:22; 10:11-13; 11:32).³² The resolution of this tension is explained in chapters 9-11: The priority assigned to Israel has resulted in salvation for the world (11:11-12).³³ In other words, the “all who believe” of Paul’s thesis *is* directly dependent upon “to the Jew first,” which describes the soteriological function of Israel in God’s purpose.³⁴ Since the duality of the Jew-Gentile formula interlaces the entire structure of the letter, the content of the preceding chapters is presupposed in the thrust of 9-11. The connecting links are abundant: (1) without distinction, Jew and Gentile alike under sin are justified by faith (cf. 3:3, 31 with 9:30; 10:4, 12; 11:32); (2) the divine working has not failed because of Jewish unbelief (cf. 3:3, 31 with 9:6, 14; 11:1, 29); and (3) the true children of Abraham are those who receive the promise (cf. 2:28-29; 4:13-16 with 9:7-13; 11:5-7).³⁵

These overtures of argument weigh heavily against Dodd’s opinion that the three chapters “represent a somewhat earlier piece of work, incorporated here wholesale to save a busy man’s time and trouble in writing on the subject afresh.”³⁶ Those who follow such excursive approaches (popularized in the nineteenth century)³⁷ must deal with the following points:

1. In the exposition of common motifs 9-11 and 1-8 share significant words and phrases which bind together the two sections. These include the rare appearances of “long-suffering” (2:4; 9:22) and “distinction” (3:22; 10:12), the interchange of “Jew” in chapters 1-8 for “Israel” in 9-11, and the immediate context of God’s “purpose” (8:28; 9:11) and “foreknowledge” (8:29; 11:2).³⁸

2. Transitional dialogue which punctuates chapters 1-8 also occurs in 9-11. These objections, marked by a common stylistic convention, can be identified by

³²“The priority of the Jew, to which Marcion objected [omitted *prōton*], is asserted at the very beginning of Romans, but is held in tension with the new universalism of the gospel” (Peter Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church*, Society for New Testament Studies: Monograph Series, no. 10 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969], p. 136). Cf. Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans. J. R. De Witt (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), pp. 333-41.

³³Müller, *Gottes Volk*, pp. 49-57.

³⁴Michel, *Römer*, p. 53; Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 20.

³⁵Richardson correctly states that “chs. 2-4 are the theoretical basis of chs. 9-11 . . . Chs. 9-11 must be read in the light of chs. 2-4 to understand the grounds for Paul’s opinion about what God is doing in his work” (*Apostolic Church*, p. 143, n. 2).

³⁶C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, Moffatt New Testament Commentary (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1932), p. 150.

³⁷“Most regard it little more than an ‘appendix,’ an ‘excursus,’ a ‘digression,’ an ‘interlude,’ let alone those who see only an interpolation” (Stanislas Lyonnet, “Note sur de plan l’épître aux Romains,” *Recherches de science religieuse* 39 [1951-52]: 301). For the nineteenth-century research, see the note of Bernhard Weiss, *Brief des Paulus an die Römer*, Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament, vol. 4, 7th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht’s Verlag, 1886), p. 435.

³⁸Corley, “Significance of Romans 9-11,” pp. 121-23.

the presence of rhetorical interrogation, “What then?” (3:1, 5; 4:1; 6:1, 15; 7:7; 8:31; 9:14, 30; 11:7), and corresponding rejoinder, “God forbid” (3:6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14; 11:1, 11).³⁹

3. Epistolary-form analysis of Romans reveals common transitional formulas that occur throughout chapters 1-11, signaling shifts in the body-middle. The principal constructions are *ou gar* (1:16; 2:13; 3:22; 7:15, 19; 8:15; 9:6; 10:12; 11:25) and *ara oun* (5:18; 7:3, 21, 25; 8:1, 12; 9:16, 18; 10:17).⁴⁰

We can summarize the investigation to this point as follows: (1) vocabulary and grammatical transitions reveal a dialogical pattern which unifies chapters 1-11 and thus the entire letter; and (2) the theological question of God's righteousness without distinction, which underlies the argument of 1-8, is answered and expanded in 9-11.⁴¹

Key Verses

An obvious danger lies in isolating verses from their context, especially in a closely-reasoned passage, but we will now look at the *crux interpretum* of 9-11. The concluding section brings the exposition to its goal in the revelation of a “mystery,” a divine secret made known to rebuke Gentile conceit (11:25) and to proclaim divine mercy (11:32). Paul turns from historical probabilities, visible to the human eye, and takes up a prophecy of salvation for Israel, based on a disclosure from God (11:25-26).⁴² The crucial factors, the hardening of Israel (11:7-10) and the calling of the Gentiles (11:11-15), have already been propounded, but the new disclosure is that the “hardening” will subside after the “fullness” of the Gentiles. The mystery reveals the paradoxical way in which Israel will be saved.⁴³

It must be emphasized that nothing in chapter 11 contests the freedom of divine election (9:6-29) or the necessity of righteousness by faith in Christ (9:30-10:21). The election theme is preserved in the remnant of Jewish Christians, a renewal of the motif from 9:27-29, who have believed in Christ (11:5). The gospel theme is represented in the Gentile reception of salvation which becomes the means of

³⁹Joachim Jeremias, “Zur Gedankenführung in den paulinischen Briefen,” in *Abba: Studien zur neutestamentlichen Theologie und Zeitgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), p. 269.

⁴⁰See the analysis in John Lee White, *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter: A Study of the Letter-Body in the Non-Literary Papyri and in Paul the Apostle*, Dissertation Series, no. 2 (n.p.: Society of Biblical Literature, 1972), pp. 92-97.

⁴¹Jew and Gentile in relationship to the righteousness of God comprises the basic structure of the doctrinal section, chapters 1-11 (cf. M.-J. Lagrange, *Saint Paul Épître aux Romains*, Études bibliques [Paris: J. Gabalda, 1950], p. xxxix).

⁴²Adolf Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit: Ein Kommentar zum Römerbrief*, 2d ed. (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1952), pp. 326-27.

⁴³Ridderbos, *Paul*, p. 359; Luz, *Geschichtsverständnis*, p. 288.

recovery for hardened Israel (11:14). Even the hope for the salvation of “all Israel” (11:26) is in the fullest sense a new covenant prophecy, standing under the condition of saving faith. It is unthinkable that Paul would contemplate the salvation of Israel by any other means than faith in Christ (11:23).⁴⁴ This prophecy does not mean that warmhearted patriotism or universal optimism has the last word on the fate of Israel.⁴⁵ Paul does not switch horses in the middle of the stream; his last word is his first word—mercy. It is the faithfulness of God to his purpose in Christ that assures a way of salvation for the Jews.

This unprecedented prophecy has three formal parts, connected in the grammatical pattern *hoti . . . achrīs ou . . . kai houtōs* (11:25-26a), and a scriptural confirmation introduced by *kathōs* (11:26b-27). The following analysis of the prophecy offers a preliminary summary which will be developed in the discussion below:⁴⁶

1. The judgment of God upon disobedient Israel is a limited hardening, encompassing only a part of the people.
2. When the full complement of the Gentile world has received the gospel, then the hardening of Israel will disappear.
3. As a consequence, the whole of Israel will be saved by believing in Jesus the Messiah.

The Hardening of Israel

The initial proposition is that the “hardening” of Israel has distinct limitations. First, whether we read the prepositional phrase *apo merous* adverbially, “hardened to some extent,”⁴⁷ or adjectively, “part of Israel hardened,”⁴⁸ it clearly indicates that a portion of Israel, the “rest” (11:7), has been blinded in unbelief. Second, a temporal limit is imposed by *achrīs ou*; when joined to the aorist subjunctive

⁴⁴The condition of faith is not to be missed; in 9-11, faith arises in the context of gospel preaching (10:17). The question to be put to dispensationalists is how will Israel be saved? Are we to wait for an apocalyptic miracle to happen seven years after the “fullness of the Gentiles” has been raptured out of the world? Will the Jews come by preferential treatment or through justification by faith? The former option cuts the heart out of the Pauline gospel; in spite of impassioned disclaimers, the vexing error of dispensationalism is its inability to connect eschatological hope for Israel with the missionary preaching of the cross of Christ (*contra* C. C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1965], pp. 110-31).

⁴⁵When treated as solemn speculation on the part of a “warmherzigen Patrioten” (Jülicher) or a “great optimist” (Dodd), 9-11 usually ends up in the theological wastebasket.

⁴⁶Cf. the three-point summary by Theodor Zahn, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer*, Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, vol. 6, 2d ed. (Leipzig: A Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1910), p. 523; followed by Michel, *Römer*, p. 280.

⁴⁷If connected to *gegonen*, the adverbial reading would mean “partially” but would not specify in what way the hardening is limited: (so Calvin, Weiss, Robertson, Michel).

⁴⁸It more naturally modifies *pōrōsis* and indicates a quantitative limit, only a part of Israel (so Zahn, Godet, Maier, Barrett, Käsemann). The adverbial sense could bear this meaning.

eiselthē (Gentiles “come in”), it must be translated “until the time which.”⁴⁹ The condition will remain until a crucial event in salvation history has transpired, “until the full number of the Gentiles comes in.”

The Fullness of the Gentiles

The eschatological character of this event can be fixed by two observations: (1) the verb “come in” has a technical sense, “entering the kingdom of God” (cf. Mt. 7:13; Lk. 13:24) and therefore refers to the Gentile reception of salvation; and (2) the phrase “fullness of the Gentiles” means the full complement of converts from the Gentile world, a corporate perspective parallel to the “fullness” of Israel (11:12).⁵⁰ It signifies an eschatological condition, the completion of the gospel mission among the nations of the world whose fulfillment would coincide with the lifting of blindness from Israel. This missionary sign means that the presage of the end time is gospel preaching to the nations, not the course of Israel in salvation history. Paul expects Israel to remain in unbelief until the end of this era; then, as a result of the gospel strategy already at work (11:11-15), the veil of spiritual blindness will be removed.⁵¹

The Salvation of All Israel

What condition is implied in the connective *kai houtōs* (“and so,” 11:26a)? The adverbial particle *houtōs* is the syntactical key because it governs the primary force of the clause “all Israel shall be saved.” There are three possible views of *kai houtōs* that fit the requirements of grammar and context: modal, correlative, and temporal.

1. In deference to the fact that Paul did not write *kai tote* (“and then”), the modal view stresses the logical sense of *houtōs* and connects it to the immediately preceding clause. The sense would be: “The hardening will subside when the Gentiles are all saved, and in this manner, all Israel will be saved.” A modal

⁴⁹Cf. Lk. 21:24; 1 Cor. 15:25; and see A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1914), p. 975; W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 128.

⁵⁰Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, p. 335. The uses of *pleroma* in v. 12 and v. 25 both denote coming to “full strength” of numbers in the eschatological consummation (see Gerhard Delling, “*Pleroma*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. G. W. Bromiley, vol. 6 [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968], pp. 299, 305).

⁵¹This eschatological viewpoint is defended in Weiss, *Römer*, p. 556; Gifford, *Romans*, p. 198; Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, p. 335; Lagrange, *Romains*, p. 284; Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit*, p. 327; Gaugler, *Römerbrief*, 2:200; Michel, *Römer*, p. 280; Barrett, *Romans*, p. 223; Munck, *Christ and Israel*, p. 134; and Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 300.

rendering emphasizes that “by the whole Gentile world coming into the kingdom and thus rousing the Jews to jealousy,” the conversion of Israel becomes a reality.⁵²

2. The correlative view notes the common use of *houtōs* to introduce a following statement; in this case, it corresponds to *kathōs*. The correlative “so . . . as” would predicate the salvation of Israel upon the event described in the scriptural quotation (11:26b-27). A correlative translation would read: “In the following manner, all Israel will be saved, just as it is written, the Redeemer will come from Zion.”⁵³

3. The temporal view understands *houtōs* in the sense “when that has happened” (NEB), making the fullness of the Gentiles a chronological and necessary prerequisite to Israel's salvation. Temporal *houtōs* is a well-attested classical idiom,⁵⁴ used in the New Testament to summarize a preceding sequence of events (Acts 17:33; 20:11).⁵⁵ A temporal meaning is preferable because it leaves room for the other two meanings and preserves a future tension that characterizes the entire chapter.

What is the scope of the phrase *pas Israel* (“all Israel”)? The designation must be understood in a collective sense, “Israel as a whole,” an Old Testament formula indicating the totality of the people, as when Rehoboam “forsook the law of the Lord, and all Israel [*kōl Yisrael*] with him” (2 Chr. 12:1, RSV).⁵⁶ Gifford correctly notes that “all Israel” in the collective sense indicates “a future conversion of the Jews, so universal that the separation into an ‘elect remnant’ and ‘the rest who were hardened’ shall disappear.”⁵⁷ We must reject three widely-held views of *pas Israel*.

⁵²Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, p. 335; cf. Gifford, *Romans*, p. 199; Lagrange, *Romains*, p. 284; Maier, “Heilsgeschichte,” p. 525. It should be noted that a modal translation does not exclude the temporal sequence; an appeal to grammar does not justify the radical historicizing of the passage (as Lenski, Franzmann, and Hendriksen propose).

⁵³Cf. Arndt and Gingrich, *Lexicon*, p. 602; Müller, *Gottes Volk*, p. 43, n. 88; Hans Lietzmann, *An die Römer*, Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, vol. 8, 5th ed. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1971), p. 104.

⁵⁴For the unambiguous use of *kai houtōs* to introduce a temporal apodosis, see Xenophon *Anabasis* 3. 4. 8; Epictetus *Dissertationes* 4. 8. 13 (cf. H. G. Liddell, Robert Scott, and H. S. Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon: A Supplement*, ed. E. A. Barber [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968], p. 112). Peter Stuhlmacher's criticism of the temporal view should be reappraised in light of this evidence (“Zur Interpretation von Römer 11, 25-32,” in *Probleme biblischer Theologie: Gerhard von Rad zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. H. W. Wolff [Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1971], p. 559). See P. van Horst, Talbert, and Kruse, *pace* Fitzmyer.

⁵⁵Cf. 1 Cor. 11:28; 14:25; 1 Th. 4:17. Among others, the temporal view is held by Zahn, *Römer*, p. 523; Michel, *Römer*, pp. 280-81; Bruce, *Romans*, p. 222; and Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 300.

⁵⁶Cf. 1 Sam. 7:5; 1 Kg. 8:65; Dan. 9:11; 1 Esd. 1:21; Jth. 16:1 (Arndt and Gingrich, *Lexicon*, p. 637).

⁵⁷Gifford, *Romans*, p. 199. For a list of thirty-four interpreters who hold the collective viewpoint, see Corley, “Significance of Romans 9-11,” pp. 226-30.

1. Numerical *pas*, meaning “every Jew”—“all Israel” no more means the salvation of every Israelite than “fullness of the Gentiles” means the salvation of every Gentile.⁵⁸

2. Restrictive *pas*, meaning “the sum total of elect Jews who believe Christ during the gospel era”—if the eschatological dimension is removed by this reductionism, the whole chapter is tautological.⁵⁹ What would excite Paul about the evident fact that the present “remnant” will be saved?

3. Spiritual *pas*, meaning the “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16) which is the church of Jews and Gentiles—the sustained contrast between Israel and the Gentiles forbids this identification. It is impossible to give “Israel” a meaning here that does not belong to it throughout the rest of the chapter.⁶⁰

The Redeemer from Zion

When all Israel is saved, there may yet be unbelieving Jews, but the historical entity called Judaism will become subject to the gospel so that the church will incorporate the synagogue and Jews everywhere will be recognized as true Christians.⁶¹ The deliverance that Israel will experience is described by a conflated quotation from Is. 59:20-21 and 27:9; it is a spiritual restoration in the new covenant granting forgiveness of sins (11:26b-27). The phrase “from Zion” probably refers to the heavenly Jerusalem (Gal. 4:26) and alludes to the redeeming work of Christ which will be consummated at the second advent.⁶² The hope of

⁵⁸Schrenk, *Weissagung*, p. 35. “It should be noted that this does not imply that *pantes hoi Ioudaioi sōthēsontai*; for Israel is not just the totality of its individual members; it is the bearer of the promise and the recipient of its fulfillment” (Walter Gutbrod, “Israel,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. G. W. Bromiley, vol. 3 [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965], p. 387).

⁵⁹Most of the fathers restrict the phrase to the elect remnant of Jews who will come in by faith (so Origen, Cyril of Alexandria, Diodore, Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Theodoret [Schelkle, *Väter*, pp. 400-401]). According to Irenaeus, 11:26 cannot be used as an excuse for Jewish unbelief (*Adversus haereses* [Migne PG 7] 4. 2. 7). Coming nearer the proper meaning, Ambrosiaster says the spiritual blindness which haunts the Jews will be removed, “so that they have the possibility to believe” (*Commentariorum in Epistolam ad Romanos* [Migne PL 17] 160). The Lutheran and Reformed traditions espouse the restrictive view (see Lenski, Franzmann, and Hendriksen).

⁶⁰Bruce, *Romans*, pp. 221-22. The spiritual view appears in Augustine (who was not consistent [Schelkle, *Väter*, p. 402], Calvin, and Barth).

⁶²Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, p. 336; against Munck, *Christ and Israel*, p. 137. One need not refer the quotation to either the incarnation (so Gifford, *Romans*, p. 199; Weiss, *Römer*, p. 559; and Lagrange, *Romains*, p. 286) or the *parousia* (so Gaugler, *Römerbrief*, 2:205; Bruce, *Romans*, p. 222; and Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 301) as strict alternatives. The background of 9-11 presupposes the entire interim period associated with the preaching of the gospel.

⁶¹Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit*, p. 327.

⁶²Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, p. 336; against Munck, *Christ and Israel*, p. 137. Paul’s reading “from Zion” (*ek* has no parallel in the OT versions which read “for the sake of,” or “to” Zion) is deliberate (*contra* Dunn and Fitzmyer). One need not refer the quotation to either the incarnation (so

Israel resides in the covenant mercy revealed in Jesus the Messiah, “the Deliverer” whose saving work extends from the incarnation to the *parousia* (cf. 1 Th. 1:10). One must beware of reading particularism, or dispensationalism, or universalism into this promise. Paul says nothing of a restored theocracy in the land of Palestine or the automatic salvation of every Jew, living and dead! In contrast to such blatant denials of justification by faith, he views the conversion of Israel under the sign of the cross, connecting it with the here and now of the gospel. They will come in as we have—by the way of the cross.

We are constrained to exclude all post-historical thinking (particularly millennialism) from 9-11 because an imminent expectation, an eschatological “now” (*nun*, 11:31), pervades the entire formulation.⁶³ It is this gospel era, the interim period before the *parousia*, that manifests the faithfulness of God to show mercy, and in a climactic episode of salvation history, that faithfulness will be demonstrated by Israel coming under God's righteousness in Christ. It cannot be stated with precision whether this episode culminates in the *parousia* or merely precedes it in time; however, the time period for the fulfillment of the prophecy has its *modus operandi* in gospel proclamation and its *terminus ad quem* at the return of Christ.⁶⁴

Gifford, *Romans*, p. 199; Weiss, *Römer*, p. 559; and Lagrange, *Romains*, p. 286) or the *parousia* (so Gaugler, *Römerbrief*, 2:205; Bruce, *Romans*, p. 222; and Käsemann, *Römer*, p. 301) as strict alternatives. The background of 9-11 presupposes the entire interim period associated with the preaching of the gospel.

⁶³The significance of the “now” with regard to Israel must be that the events preceding the *parousia* are being fulfilled in the gospel mission (Munck, *Christ and Israel*, p. 124). The reading *nun* is preferred on two grounds: (1) strong manuscript evidence and (2) discourse parallelism with 11:15 and 11:26 (see Cranfield and Fitzmyer).

⁶⁴Since the phrases “life from the dead” (11:15) and “all Israel” (11:26) infer a revolutionary turnabout, the contrast and future tension show that Paul anticipates a future conversion of the Jews in a proportion not presently happening. Is this event “the last act of salvation history” at the *parousia* (Käsemann, Munck) or the resurrection (Sanday and Headlam, Lagrange, Lietzmann, Michel, Barrett)? Or, is it a spiritual renewal and worldwide revival preceding the *parousia* (Calvin, Godet, Gifford, Zahn, Moule, Maier, Gaugler, Murray)? Of necessity, the event lies at the boundary of history (Ridderbos, *Paul*, p. 359).