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No Salvation without the Other: Peace and Eschatological Patience in Romans

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ABSTRACT: The world is in urgent need of prayers for peace and reconciliation. This essay explores one way in which Paul's gospel addresses that need, through a pattern of solidarity and exchange between Christ and all humanity in Rom 1–8, and between Israel and the gentiles in Rom 9–11. Following Paul's lead in Rom 8 and 12, the paper frames the interdependent redemption of Israel and the gentiles in Rom 9–11 with Paul's hope and prayer for what is not yet seen, in Rom 8:18–25, and his practical instructions for countercultural generosity toward strangers and enemies, in Rom 12:14–21. By tracing the pattern of solidarity and exchange between Christ and all humanity, and specifically between Christ and Israel, in Rom 1–8, the paper also highlights connections between Rom 1–8 and 9–11.

KEYWORDS: solidarity, exchange, interdependent redemption, prayer, patience, countercultural gift

The writings of the apostle Paul are often occasions for disagreement, not only between Christians and Jews but also among New Testament scholars. Yet Paul's hope and expectation is one of final peace and reconciliation that encompasses all humanity. For this very reason, his letters may provide guidance for how to pray for peace in our present situation of disastrous conflicts verging on annihilation.[1]

The deep division that structured Paul's social cosmos was between gentiles and Jews. As the Jewish apostle to the gentiles, Paul faced that division directly; he encountered gentile conversions and founded largely gentile churches that worshipped Jesus, the Messiah. Paul's gospel vision was that all people – gentiles and Jews – will join in glorifying God, whom he names as 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' (Rom 15:6). This is a Christ-centred vision of unity, which finds its climactic expression in Rom 15:1–13. At the same time, this Christocentric focus does not mean the church replaces Israel. Rather, in my view, in Paul's letters 'Israel' always refers to the

1 Because this essay was originally a talk for a gathering of Jewish and Christian biblical scholars, theologians, and practitioners, it offers a 'wide angle' interpretation of Rom 8–12, focused tightly on the question of how Paul's gospel proclamation speaks to the promise of redemption of enemies, and the resulting implications for peace and patience in prayer. New Testament scholars will recognise the places where I take a particular position regarding contested texts, but I will not defend every exegetical move taken along the way.

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Jewish people – not the nation of Israel, and not the church, but God's elect and beloved people Israel.[2]

Nonetheless, God's enduring election of Israel does not mean that God cannot elect anyone else. Nor does it mean that the election of gentiles as well as Jews creates a unified humanity at the present time. Rather, the intriguing thing about Paul is that, in his distinctively Christ-centred eschatological vision, present division has a role to play in God's purposes of redemption for all. It is the role of present division that is my focus here, as we consider prayers for peace in the face of the horrifying conflicts plaguing the Holy Land today. My modest hope is that Paul's particular angle of vision might highlight aspects of prayer, hope, and patience that speak to the challenges of praying for the peace of Jerusalem here and now.

I begin with the subtitle – peace and eschatological patience – before moving to the theme, 'no salvation without the other'. My text is chapters 8–12 of Paul's letter to the Romans, focused on a few key passages.

1. Peace and Eschatological Patience

Patience is a key ingredient in prayers for peace, and very difficult indeed. In Rom 8:24–25 Paul names the conundrum of patient hope: 'Hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.' What Paul hopes and waits for here is bodily redemption, a redemption that will encompass

2 For extensive defence of this view, see my article "Israel and the Mercy of God: A Re-reading of Galatians 6.16 and Romans 9–11," *NTS* 65/3 (2010) 367–395. This is a disputed claim, centred on the meaning of 'the Israel of God' in Gal 6:16, which the majority of scholars interpret as signifying either the church composed of Jews and gentiles, or Jewish followers of Christ. For the first view, see, e.g., N.A. Dahl, "Der Name Israel: Zur Auslegung von Gal 6,16," *Jud* 6 (1950) 161–170; U. Luz, *Das Geschichtsverständnis des Paulus* (BEvT 49; München: Kaiser 1968); E.P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress 1983) 173–174; J.M.G. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians* (SNTW; Edinburgh: Clark 1988) 98, n. 54; H.D. Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letters to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress 1979) 323; K.W. Clark, "The Israel of God," *Studies in New Testament and Early Christian Literature: Essays in Honor of Allen P. Wikgren* (ed. D.E. Aune) (Leiden: Brill 1972) 161–169; J.L. Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 33A; New York: Doubleday 1997) 574–577; R.N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC 41; Dallas: Word Books 1990) 297–298; W. Kraus, *Das Volk Gottes: Zur Grundlegung der Ecclesiologie bei Paulus* (WUNT 85; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1996) 247–252. For the view that 'the Israel of God' signifies Christ-believing Jews, see, e.g., G. Schrenk, "Was bedeutet 'Israel Gottes'?," *Jud* 5 (1949) 18–94; P. Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church* (SNTSMS 10; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1969) 80–81; E.D. Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (ICC; Edinburgh: Clark 1921; reprint 1971) 357–359; M.C. de Boer, *Galatians: A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox 2011) 407–408. For arguments that 'the Israel of God' refers to the Jewish people, see F. Mußner, *Der Galaterbrief*, 5 ed. (HThKNT 9; Freiburg: Herder 1988) 417; F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1982) 274–275; M. Bachmann, *Antijudaismus im Galaterbrief? Exegetische Studien zu einem polemischen Schreiben und zur Theologie des Apostels Paulus* (NTOA 40; Freiburg – Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz – Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1999).

the entire created order (κτίσις), both human and non-human, and set it free from its bondage to decay (8:20–23).[3] Such redemption is not yet visible – 'we hope for what we do not see.' Furthermore, such hope takes place in a situation of solidarity with the groaning of all creation:

> The whole creation has been groaning together and suffering labor pains together until now, and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our body (Rom 8:22–23).

Groaning together with all creation, Paul turns to prayer:

> In the same way, the Spirit comes to our aid in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit itself intercedes for us with unspeakable groanings. And God who searches the hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to [the will of] God (Rom 8:26–27).

The conjunction of creation's groanings, the groaning of the faithful in prayer, and the Spirit's unspeakable groanings, expresses not only believers' solidarity with the suffering of all, but the solidarity of God's Spirit with that same suffering. Prayer arises in this situation of divine-human solidarity, 'not knowing' but trusting in God who does know. Paul tells his listeners, 'We do not know what or even how to pray, but God knows.'

This is the human context of praying for the peace of Jerusalem. We pray and hope for what we do not see; we do not even know what to pray for, but our prayer expresses the present anguished suffering of everyone in the Holy Land, in confidence that God joins in solidarity with that anguish.

In Rom 8:35–39, Paul assures his listeners that nothing can separate them from the love of God, even and especially severe conflict and violent threats. In Rom 8:35, a series of hypothetical questions lists potential threats to their bond with God's love, but then in 8:36, Paul suddenly interrupts that list with a quotation from Ps 44:22, directly addressed to God: 'For your sake we are being put to death the whole day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.'

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3 Many scholars take the view that κτίσις here refers only to non-human nature. See, e.g., J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8* (WBC 38A; Dallas, TX: Word Books 1998) 469–473; C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; Edinburgh: Clark 1975) I, 411–412; J.A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 33; New York – London – Toronto: Doubleday 1993) 506; B. Byrne, *Romans* (SP 6; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press 1996) 255–257. For extended discussion, with a similar conclusion, see J. Bolt, "The Relation between Creation and Redemption in Romans 8:18–27," *CTJ* 30 (1995) 34–51. E. Käsemann, however, concludes that 'κτίσις is all creation including mankind, with no sharp line of differentiation' (*Commentary on Romans* [trans. G.W. Bromiley] [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1980; reprint 2022] 232–236). See also U. Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*. II. *Röm 6–11* (EKKNT 6; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener 1978–1982) 157–158; A. Schlatter, *Romans: The Righteousness of God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson 1995) 184; B.R. Gaventa, *Romans: A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox 2024) 396–401. I set forth my arguments for a more cosmic and inclusive view of κτίσις in "Whose Apocalypse? The Identity of the Sons of God in Romans 8:19," *JBL* 121/2 (2002) 273–276, https://doi.org/10.2307/3268356.

The word translated 'considered' or 'regarded' is ἐλογίσθημεν. It means 'to evaluate, estimate, look upon as, consider.'[4] To be 'reckoned as sheep to be slaughtered' is to be assessed, labelled, and put into a certain class of animals – those set aside for the butcher block. It is difficult to imagine a more vivid metaphor for the brutal calculus of war, in which people become collateral damage, or even worse, the amount and brutality of human suffering, the number of those killed and maimed, becomes part of a strategic calculus for determining victory – a victory understood as vanquishing, even annihilating, the other, the enemy.

Psalm 44 is both a 'prayer of lament' for those who suffer unjustly, and a complaint directed to God for that suffering. A few verses earlier the psalmist cries out:

> **In God we have boasted all day long,** and we will give thanks to your name forever. But *you* have rejected us and brought us to dishonor. [...] *You* give us as sheep to be eaten, and have scattered us among the nations. (Ps 44:8, 11)

And in the immediate context of our verse, we hear this:

> If we had forgotten the name of our God, or extended our hands to a strange god, would not God find this out? For *he knows the secrets of the heart*. But *for your sake we are being killed all day long*; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. Arouse yourself! Why do you sleep, O Lord? Awake! Do not reject us forever. (Ps 44:20–23)

All day long we boast in God, and simultaneously, for God's sake, all day long we are being put to death. O Lord, who is responsible for this if not you? By focusing on God's agency, the psalm emphasises God's power to intervene and change this terrible situation. By focusing on God's agency, the psalm also short-circuits the all-too-human rush to judgment and blame, which circles around and lands on the wrong people. By addressing God directly with both the lament and the complaint, the psalmist also trusts God as the only source of hope.[5] So also Paul redirects prayer away from human understanding and towards God who knows all: 'We do not know how to pray as we ought, but God, who searches the hearts, knows the mind of the Spirit.' The psalmist intercedes with God on behalf of God's people Israel. Paul puts these words on the lips of his listeners in the nascent Roman house churches, small communities of Christ-followers who included Jews but were primarily gentile.

The citation presents a bit of a puzzle just at this point in the letter, as it stylistically interrupts a series of questions with a first-person prayer to God. By vividly expressing present affliction, the prayer intensifies the impact of the following affirmation: 'In all these

4 *BAGD*, 597.

5 See especially D. Bertschmann, "'The Silence of the Lambs': Suffering, Meaning-Making, and Lament in Romans 8,18–39," *Dying With Christ – New Life in Hope: Romans 5,12–8,39* (ed. J.M.G. Barclay) (COP 24; Louvain: Peeters 2021) 209–235. See also the discussion in Gaventa, *Romans*, 260–261. Gaventa argues that 'Paul suppresses the accusations against God' (260). It is true that Paul does not highlight God's agency here, but, as we shall see, the focus on God's agency in the psalm is picked up in Paul's discussion of God's agency in Israel's unbelief, in Rom 11:7–10. R.B. Hays rightly notes the links between the psalm citation in 8:36 and Paul's wrestling with the question whether God has abandoned Israel, in chapters 9–11 (see *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1989] 57–63).

things we are super victors through the one who loved us (ἐν τούτοις πᾶσιν ὑπερνικῶμεν διὰ τοῦ ἀγάπησαντος ἡμᾶς).' Yet it would be a mistake to let the assurance of victory silence the reality of suffering. Rather, the psalmist's anguished lament creates space for naming **present** affliction conjoined with the assurance of God's presence: things are not well; to the contrary, there is immense suffering and death.[6] In solidarity with God's Spirit, the psalm expresses the anguish of those who are killed all day long and their groaning for redemption. Inarticulate prayer, groaning in solidarity with all creation and all humanity, and hope in God for a future yet to be revealed, find expression in Ps 44:22 and Rom 8:36. This also is a prayer for peace.

What then is the 'victory' Paul so confidently asserts? Named at the beginning and end of the passage, it is that nothing can separate the faithful from their Lord's love, even in the midst of destruction. This is an odd sort of victory. It is not the destruction of opponents, but somehow, quite differently, the power of an indissoluble bond with God who is present with and for those who are under the threat of the sword.

As beautifully articulated by Abraham Heschel, such divine solidarity with the suffering of God's people has deep roots in Israel's prophetic tradition. As Heschel put it in comments on the prophetic sign-acts in Hosea and Jeremiah,

> The prophet must learn to feel for himself God's intimate attachment to Israel; he must not only know about it, but experience it from within [...] Like Hosea in his marriage experience, Jeremiah must learn the grief of God in having to spoil what is intimately precious to him.[7]

In Paul's interpretation of the death of Jesus, he draws on this prophetic picture of God's unbreakable *nexus* with God's people. In view of his experience of gentile conversions, however, he extends this divine solidarity to all humanity, including gentile as well as Jewish followers of Christ, so that they too may share in the psalmist's lament.

Through Paul's Christocentric lens, such divine-human solidarity takes on a pattern of exchange in the first eight chapters of Romans, focused on Christ's entrance into the realm of human sin and death, and redemptive death for sinners.[8] Key texts in Romans highlight this theme of a divine-human exchange between God and sin-dominated humanity, through Christ: 'He (Jesus) was handed over (παρεδόθη) for our trespasses and was raised for our justification (4:25).' And again: 'God, who did not spare his own son but handed him over (παρέδωκεν) for all of us, will he not also give us all things with him (8:32)?' Here Christ enters into the situation of humanity under God's judgement: God handed

6 Bertschmann, "'Silence of the Lambs'," 232–235. See also S. Eastman, "Christian Experience and Paul's Logic of Solidarity: The Spiral Structure of Romans 5–8," *BA* 12/2 (2022) 233–253, https://doi.org/10.31743/biban.13513; reprint *Oneself in Another: Participation and Personhood in Pauline Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock 2023) 236–258.

7 A.J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Harper & Row 1969) I, 117–118.

8 The following discussion of the themes of divine-human solidarity and exchange in Rom 1–8 summarises my more extensive discussion in "The Son of God, the Flesh of Sin, and the Cosmic Horizon of Salvation: Romans 8:3 in the Structure of Romans 1–11," *Romans 8 through the Lens(es) of Pauline Research Past and Present* (ed. M. Oehler) (BZNW; Berlin: De Gruyter) (forthcoming).

rebellious humanity over (παρέδωκεν) to destructive passions (Rom 1:24, 26, 28); with and for that sinful humanity, Christ was handed over for all humanity.[9]

> While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly [...] God shows his love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. [...] For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved through his life (5:6, 8, 10).
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> God, sending his own Son in the likeness of flesh in the grip of sin, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, so that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (8:3).

Here again there is a logic of solidarity between Christ and humanity, so that Christ has assumed the situation of the person in the grip of sin, and in that place has become the *locus* where sin itself is condemned.

In these passages, in and through Christ God enters into the situation of sinful humanity under the power of sin and death. Paul sees this acted out in history in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, in a pattern of not only solidarity, but exchange – a kind of trading places. The most startling statement of this pattern is in 2 Cor 5:21: 'God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God' Christ entered into the place of condemnation so that humanity can be free from condemnation; into the place of separation and death, so that humanity may be liberated into life in union with God. This is the deep logic of solidarity and exchange that threads through Paul's gospel proclamation in Rom 1–8.

Furthermore, not only does Paul see Christ as representing and sharing in the universal human situation of sin and death; Paul also (uniquely in Romans) emphasises Jesus's fleshly solidarity with Israel. He is God's Son, descended from the seed of David according to the flesh (1:3); and as the Messiah, he comes from the Jewish people according to the flesh (9:5). This fleshly Christ, both particularly Jewish and universally human, was handed over to sin and death on behalf of all humanity, both Jew and gentile (8:3). Thus, when Paul quotes Ps 44 in Rom 8:36, the Jewish Christ who was handed over to death for the sake of both Jews and gentiles stands in union with the Jewish and gentile faithful who are being put to death for God's sake, but also in union with all humanity.

2. No Salvation without the Other: The Interdependent Redemption of Israel and the Nations

I turn now to the main title and theme of this paper: no salvation without the other. That title refers to the interdependent redemption of Israel and the gentiles, a redemption that Paul declares in Rom 9–11. Paul arrives at this vision of interdependent redemption

9 A full exposition of this interpretation is found in B.R. Gaventa, "'God Handed Them Over'," *Our Mother Saint Paul* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox 2007) 113–123, 194–198.

precisely in the face of present division. As noted earlier, the intrusive cry, '**all day long** we are being put to death; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter,' compels the naming of present affliction. Conflict, not peace, is the norm – in Paul's day, and in ours, in the Middle East and around the world. This is the context of hope and prayer for what we do not yet see – peace. What Paul ultimately hopes for is a community of gentiles and Jews together worshipping God, but he does not yet see this. Instead, he sees division. Thus, the promise that kindles hope – that nothing can separate all God's people from God's love – is unfulfilled apart from the redemption of both the gentiles and Israel. Romans 8 may end with an affirmation of victory through the assurance of God's love, but it also ends with unfinished business.[10] Hinted at by the quotation from Ps 44, the question comes to the fore: has God abandoned God's people?

As Paul wrestles with this question in Rom 9–11, he finds his way forward through the pattern of solidarity and trading places that he has discerned in the first section of the letter, coupled with a firm trust in God's power, mercy, enduring faithfulness to Israel, and ultimate will for the redemption of all. This pattern first comes to the fore in Paul's own prayer for his Jewish kinsfolk, in 9:1–3:

> I am speaking the truth in Christ, I am not lying. My conscience confirms me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I have earnestly prayed to be accursed and cut off (ἀναθήμα) from Christ, for the sake of my brothers and sisters, my kinsfolk according to the flesh.

The tone of these verses contrasts sharply with the immediately preceding victory cry in Rom 8:39: 'nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.' What is implied, but not yet spoken, is that Israel's rejection of Jesus has cut Israel off from Christ. Paul, however, does not yet name this. Rather, he emphasises his fleshly solidarity with his estranged kin, and that solidarity drives his desire to enter into the place of separation from Christ, if in turn his relatives would be 'in Christ'.[11]

This impulse toward trading places is ancient. Paul's prayer recalls Moses's plea for God to forgive Israel after its apostasy at Sinai: 'If you will only forgive their sin,' Moses begs the Lord, 'and if not, blot *me*, I pray you, out of your book which you have written' (Ex 32:31–33). In other words, let me take the punishment and be cut off from you. Like Moses, Paul wants to change places with Israel.[12] But Paul also has more immediately at hand

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10 As Gaventa points out, the ending of Rom 8 'logically anticipates the vision of victory over God's enemies that Paul offers in 1 Thess 4:13–18 and especially in 1 Cor 15:23–28, but in Rom 8 there is no such vision of Christ's return and God's final triumph. Instead, Paul takes up the questions of God and Israel in 9–11 and of community life in 12:1–15:13' (B.R. Gaventa, "On the Calling-Into-Being of Israel: Romans 9:6–29," *Between Gospel and Election: Explorations in the Interpretation of Romans 9–11* [eds. F. Wilk – J.R. Wagner – F. Schleritt] [WUNT 1/257; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2010] 255).

11 See the perceptive discussion by S. Gathercole, "Locating Christ and Israel in Romans 9–11," *God and Israel: Providence and Purpose in Romans 9–11* (ed. T.D. Still) (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press 2017) 117–118.

12 See R. Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress 2007) 560–561; J.R. Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul in Concert in the Letter to the Romans* (NovTSup 101;

the story of Christ's own gracious union and interchange with sinful humanity in the place of condemnation and separation from God. This is the 'truth' that Paul speaks 'in Christ'. This relational dynamic operates throughout Rom 1–8; here that same divine *modus operandi* comes to expression in Paul's intensely personal attitude toward his Jewish relatives. Paul, that is, yearns to enact in human interaction the pattern of gracious interchange that God has enacted with all humanity, in and through Christ. His stance toward others is permeated and guided by his own experience of God's boundary-crossing grace and love.

At the same time, Paul's desire to trade places with Israel, his yearning for the redemption of Israel 'in Christ', in no way calls into question Israel's on-going status as God's chosen and beloved people. To the contrary, speaking in the present tense, Paul immediately continues:

> They are Israelites, and to them belong the sonship by adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and from them is the Christ according to the flesh (9:4–5).

So why is Paul so anguished? The problem for Paul is not simply a concern for the inclusion of Israel in salvation through Christ, although Israel's destiny is certainly of crucial importance; the problem is the trustworthiness of God. If Jesus is indeed the fulfilment of God's promises, as Paul is convinced, then Israel's disinterest in Jesus suggests that God's word of promise has failed (9:6). Israel's Messiah has come but the majority of Jews do not trust in him. Furthermore, God has worked salvation for all humanity through Christ; Israel's unbelief thus threatens to exclude them from that universal salvation.

As Paul ponders the success of his gentile mission and the relatively low numbers of Jewish followers of Jesus, he turns again to the Christological pattern of solidarity and trading places as a pointer to God's way of redemption.[13] Without becoming entangled in all the complexities of Rom 9–11, we may observe this divine *modus operandi* at two key points.

First, in 9:25–26, Paul quotes a collection of verses from the prophet Hosea, whose disastrous marriage signifies God's dealings with Israel. For a while, Israel is named 'not my people', but ultimately,

> I will call those 'not my people,' 'my people,'
> and the one who is 'not my beloved' will be 'my beloved' [...].
> And in the very place (τόπος) where it was said to them, 'you are not my people,'
> they will be called, 'Sons of the living God.'

In the immediate context of Rom 9:23–24, Paul quotes these verses with reference to 'vessels of mercy, whom God has prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only, but also from the gentiles.' In other words, he includes gentile Christ

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Leiden: Brill 2002) 52. Whether or not Paul has Moses in mind here, his subsequent evocation of the theophany at Sinai (9:15/Ex 33:19) surely would bring Moses to mind for his listeners.

13 See Eastman, "The Son of God" (forthcoming).

followers in the place of God's people, and gives them the names: 'my people', 'beloved', and 'sons of the living God'. Their place of exclusion has become the place of adoption and inclusion. But in the larger context of Paul's overarching concern for his Jewish kin, the original meaning of Hosea echoes in Paul's quotation, anticipating the future salvation of 'all Israel' as well (11:26). The prophetic text thus does double duty in the progression of Paul's argument: it depicts the movement of gentiles from a place of exclusion to a place of belonging, through Christ, and it names Israel's present exclusion (as Paul sees it), but also anticipates Israel's future inclusion in salvation.[14]

Paul picks up on this double depiction of Israel as both 'enemies' and yet 'beloved' in 11:25–32. Here the motif of trading places becomes explicit, leading up to the climax of Rom 9–11. Paul begins by directly addressing his gentile listeners in Rome, rebuking their arrogance toward Jews who do not believe in Jesus as the Messiah:

> I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers and sisters, of this mystery, lest you think too highly of yourselves: a hardening has come upon a part of Israel, until the fullness of the gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written:
>
> 'The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness (ἀσεβεία) from Jacob,
> and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins (ἁμαρτία).'
>
> As regards the gospel they are enemies of God, for your sake,
>
> but as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.
>
> Just as you were once disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, so they now have been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may receive mercy.
>
> For God has consigned all to disobedience, in order that he may have mercy upon
>
> all.

For my purposes here, I briefly note three aspects of this crucial passage. First, warning the gentile believers in Rome against arrogance towards Jews, Paul puts the focus on God's agency.[15] If gentile believers have an issue with Israel's rejection of Jesus, their argument is really with God, not the Jews. Paul contextualises Israel's unbelief by God's dual action in 'hardening' hearts in the present, and in promising a future redemption through 'the deliverer' who will come 'from Zion' – that is, through Christ who was descended from David according to the flesh (1:3) and comes from Israel according to the flesh (9:5).[16] Thus in Paul's eschatological vision, Israel's present indifference toward Jesus as the messiah is not an aberration or a failure, nor is it the final word on Israel's destiny. Rather, it is part of

14 Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 66–68.

15 R. Wagner, "'Enemies' Yet 'Beloved' Still: Election and the Love of God in Romans 9–11," *God and Israel: Providence and Purpose in Romans 9–11* (ed. T.D. Still) (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press 2017) 99–100.

16 The language of 'hardening' picks up on Paul's discussion of God's freedom to harden hearts and to have mercy, in 9:18, and the hardening of unbelieving Israel, in 11:5–7. The references to Israel's ἀσεβεία and ἁμαρτία recall the depictions of Abraham and David in 4:1–8, as well as all humanity after Adam (5:6–8).

the divine plan for the redemption of all humanity. That divine plan involves a pattern of trading places that enacts the relational dynamics of grace, as both Jew and gentile take turns in the place of disobedience, the place of 'the other', in order that both may become the place where God's mercy is made known. They take turns as 'outsiders' so that ultimately all will be 'insiders'.[17]

Second, therefore, although for the gentiles the Jews are temporarily 'enemies', they are enemies who belong to God and are always God's beloved, for the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. Here is a subtle reminder to Paul's audience that they also were once 'enemies', reconciled to God by the death of God's Son (Rom 5:10). Paul wants his gentile listeners to turn away from arrogance and judgment toward those they consider 'enemies' and recognise them as God's elect. Indeed, he prays and eagerly hopes that Jewish and gentile believers will finally discover each other as God's beloved and welcome one another as God has welcomed them (15:7–13).

Third, this mutual welcome remains future and shrouded in mystery; it depends on God's action and cannot be manipulated or coerced in the present time. It requires eschatological patience. Paul's hope and prayer for mutual welcome is hope and prayer for a peace that he does not presently see. This language of mystery creates space for naming present division and conflict, and for both patience and hope, which are two sides of the same coin. At the same time, the *telos* of final reconciliation rather than mutual annihilation may shape actions in the present. In Rom 12 Paul demonstrates what such actions might look like, precisely in light of God's mercy upon all.

3. The Ethical Outworking of Solidarity and Exchange

In Rom 8:35–39, the victory promised to those reckoned as sheep to be slaughtered is not the destruction of opponents, but the presence of God's enduring love, even in the midst of extreme affliction and death. This language of victory resurfaces in Rom 12:21, where Paul sums up his instructions for responding to hostility and persecution: 'Do not be conquered by evil, but rather, conquer evil with good!'

But what does such 'victory' look like in practice? It looks like the extension of God's undeserved grace even to enemies. In short, as believers have received undeserved mercy from God, so they are to give: 'Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them' (12:14; cf. Luke 6:28; Mt 5:44; *Didaché* 1:3b). Furthermore, refusing to pay back one's enemies extends even to solidarity with them: 'Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep' (12:15; cf. Sir 7:34). Nothing in the text limits such practical sympathy to those within the community of faith. Rather, 'Repay **no one** evil for evil but take thought for what is noble in the sight of **all**' (12:17).

17 Eastman, "Israel and the Mercy of God," 227. See also K. Haacker, *The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Romans* (NTT; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003) 95.

Such is the practical extension of gracious reciprocity in human interactions. On the other hand, Paul does clearly leave a place for retribution – that is, for non-gracious reciprocity – but solely as God's prerogative! He adds, citing Dt 32:35, 'beloved, never avenge yourselves, but give place (τόπος) to the wrath [of God]; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord".' Precisely because God will repay their oppressors, human beings are to forego such retribution.[18] This logic is in line with Prov 20:9, which states: 'Do not say, "I shall take vengeance on the enemy," but wait for the Lord, so he may help you.' Indeed, quoting Prov 25:21, Paul adds, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink.' The faithful are to respond to evil with a mismatching gift of succour and generosity. This mismatching gift is how one conquers evil with good.

But what about heaping 'burning coals' on one's enemies' heads, precisely through acts of undeserved generosity?[19] Is this some kind of Schadenfreude? Or does the metaphor signify an experience of grace that moves the enemy to repentance?[20] If so, that would be victory indeed. The alternative, to repay evil with evil, would mean that evil had the last word. It would mean, finally, mutual annihilation. As Peter Stuhlmacher put it, 'Only where the demonic circle of "as you do to me, so will I do to you" is broken can life flourish in peace.'[21]

But is this humanly possible? In verse 18, Paul injects a note of realism: 'If possible (ἐι δυνατόν), as far as it depends on you, be at peace with all people.' To pray for the peace of Jerusalem is to pray for what may seem humanly unimaginable, yet by God's grace to allow one's imagination to be shaped by solidarity, by putting oneself in the other's place, and practicing patience. Ultimately this depends on God, who alone has the possibility – in Greek, the word is 'power' (δύναμις) – to create peace.

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18 For perceptive treatment of the theme of divine retribution here, see D.H. Bertschmann, "'Revenge Is Mine, I Will Pay Back' – Has Mercy Not the Last Word, After All? Reading Romans 12:19 as Part of an Implicit Discourse of Justice and Mercy," *Biblical Ethics: Tensions Between Justice and Mercy, Law and Love* (eds. M. Zehnder – P. Wick) (GBS 70; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press 2019) 290. She observes the importance of the promise of divine justice for those who are oppressed: 'God does not treat the suffering of his children with indifference. Here at last we have an important though dangerous reminiscence of the salvific, the liberating, the partisan wrath of God' (290–291).

19 For discussion, see J.W. Martens, "Burning Questions in Romans 12:20: What Is the Meaning and Purpose of 'Coals of Fire'?," *CBQ* 76/2 (2014) 291–305. 'Fire' is a common metaphor for judgment; the question is whether such judgment signifies a process of purification, or final condemnation. In 1 Cor 3:10–15 Paul clearly uses the metaphor to denote purifying judgment, not final condemnation.

20 This second view is taken by many of the church fathers. Origen puts it this way: 'Perhaps the wild and barbarous souls of the enemies will be moved to compunction of heart by experiencing our help, by being treated with humanity, affection, and piety.' Origen, "Commentary 9.22–24," *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series graeca* (ed. J.-P. Migne) (Paris: Imprimerie Catholique 1857–1866) XIV, 1224–1225. J.P.Burns Jr. (ed. and trans.), *Romans: Interpreted by Early Christian Commentators* (CB; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2012) 311.

21 P. Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (trans. S.J. Hafemann) (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox 1994) 197.

Conclusion

In Paul's vision of God's inclusive salvation, there is no salvation without the other, because the full redemption of Israel awaits the redemption of the gentiles; the full redemption of the gentiles awaits the redemption of Israel. Their destinies are intertwined. In such a context, might this trading places – this movement from one place or *topos* into the place, the *topos*, of the other – create a topography of hope right in the place of a topography of despair? Rather than attempting to create a *utopia* – an *eutopos*, a 'perfect' place devoid of difference, in which the enemy is consigned to a *heterotopos*, a place of otherness – in Paul's vision the *heterotopos* has become a *theotopos*, the place where God wills to be known in the face of enemies as well as friends, even and perhaps especially wherever people are reckoned as sheep to be slaughtered.[22]

If so, then may prayers and actions for the peace of Jerusalem be shaped by that eschatological hope and expectation – that in Jerusalem the *heterotopos* may become the *theotopos*, the place where we meet God in the most unexpected places.[23]

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22 This wordplay on *topos* draws on C. Schwöbel's essay, "Changing Places: Understanding Sin in Relation to a Graceful God," *Sin, Forgiveness, and Reconciliation: Christian and Muslim Perspectives* (eds. L. Mosher – D. Marshall) (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press 2016) 34–36.

23 This paper was written and delivered in the fall of 2024, before the increasingly brutal escalation of the war in Gaza and the West Bank. That escalation makes Paul's hope for unity even more countercultural and humanly evanescent, yet even more urgent. To act 'as if' the *telos* of human relations is unity, not mutual annihilation, is to act in a truly radical way, and perhaps the only possible hopeful way.

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