

Paul's Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9:1-9: An Intertextual and Theological Exegesis

by

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Brian J. Abasciano, declare that I have composed this thesis and done the work for it. It has not been accepted in any previous application for a degree. All quotations have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of information have been specifically acknowledged.

Signature of the Candidate

Date

Abstract

The first chapter of this investigation finds that, as with many passages in the Pauline corpus, Romans 9 is in need of what may be called an intertextual exegesis, emphasizing the ability of quotation and allusion to refer to broad original contexts and to suggest additional associations. The intertextual exegesis of this study involves: (1) detailed attention to the broad original contexts of Paul's quotations and allusions to the OT; (2) a comparison of the wording of Paul's quotations and allusions to the wording of the source text(s) in the textual tradition; (3) an examination of relevant interpretive traditions surrounding the OT passages Paul quotes or alludes to; and (4) an exegesis of the Pauline context that incorporates the insights gained from the previous three analytical foci, yielding an exegesis of Paul's rhetoric that is thoroughly informed by his use of the OT.

Chapter one also defines key terms for the investigation. We then go on to consider the place of intertextuality in NT studies and this investigation, essentially concluding that there are different types of intertextuality and that a minimal intertextual theory is compatible with and beneficial for historical biblical criticism. The primary contribution of intertextuality to the study of Paul's use of the OT is found to be its approach to quotation and allusion and its stress on the interpretive significance of allusions. We adopt Richard Hays' criteria for detecting and interpreting allusions with some expansions indicated in the notes. And finally, we argue that it is plausible to investigate Paul's scriptural allusions as intentional pointers to their original contexts.

Chapter two covers introductory issues related to Romans 9-11. We argue that Paul addressed a concrete situation in Rome, writing to a mixed church of a minority of Jews and a majority of Gentiles that was marked by some tension and conflict between the two groups. As for Paul himself, he was preparing to take his mission to Spain, for which he desired support from Rome. He had been embroiled in conflict over Jew/Gentile issues throughout his career and criticism of him seems to have reached Rome. Moreover, his gospel mission, which prioritized Jews, had been generally rejected by Jews. Paul had multiple purposes in Romans 9-11, but his main ones were to (1) procure support for his gospel and upcoming mission to Spain by (2)

unifying the Jews and Gentiles of the Roman church with one another behind that gospel and accompanying missionary practice. The main theme of Romans 9-11 is the faithfulness of God to his word/promises to Israel. Moreover, the chapters are an authentic unity that form the climax of the epistle's theological argument (chs. 1-11). The chapters are found to have a basic threefold logical structure that is also chiasmic, while their literary character has been fashioned by Paul's Jewish-Christian-prophetic-apocalyptic orientation yielding an oscillating argumentation, the structure of an OT lament psalm, and a presentation in the manner of Jewish homiletic-midrashic tradition. Romans 9 itself also has its own complementary logical, chiasmic, and midrashic structures. We have also considered some important hermeneutical issues relevant to Romans 9-11 that often have not been addressed directly. Furthermore, we have argued that Paul's argument in Romans 9-11 is consistent. Finally, we have selectively reviewed literature relevant to Paul's use of the OT in Romans 9-11 and found that 9:1-9 has never been exposed to the type of investigation we provide in this study.

Chapter three examines Paul's use of the OT in Romans 9:1-5. Paul alludes to Exodus 32:32 in Romans 9:3, an allusion that has been recognized by most interpreters but never before fully explored for its relevance to Paul's argument in Romans 9-11. The allusion functions as a pointer to Exodus 32:32 and its context, Exodus 32-34, providing a foundational orientation in Paul's introductory section for approaching the argument of Romans 9-11. Paul's use of Exodus 32-34 is of enormous weight for his argument, holding significance for a number of exegetical details as well as broader themes and rhetorical movements. The similarity in theme and subject matter between the old and new contexts is striking. Both are concerned with the apostasy and hard-heartedness of Israel, the resulting divine judgment and loss of election along with all its promises, the ensuing tremendous grief, the faithfulness of God to his covenant word and his great mercy, and the restoration of Israel to election and blessing in a "new" covenant established primarily with the Covenant Mediator and mediated to the people only through connection with him and the glory of God shining through him. Indeed, it appears that Paul has gone to the scriptural paradigm of the fall and restoration of Israel to typologically understand and express the present stage of salvation history and the outworking of the eschatological

fulfillment of the covenant promises of God. Thus, Romans 9-11 should be understood in terms of the mediation of the election-bestowing glory of God through Paul's gospel and ministry. We have also discovered that Jewish and Christian interpretive traditions surrounding Exodus 32:32 and its broader context treat themes that are highly relevant to Paul's argument in Romans 9-11. His scriptural allusion in 9:3 is the main point of 9:1-5, an intense expression of grief over the accursed state of ethnic Israel which introduces the problem he must address in Romans 9-11.

Chapter four examines Paul's use of the OT in Romans 9:6-9. Paul quotes Genesis 21:12 as the primary text of the sustained scriptural argument of 9:6-29, and a conflated form of Genesis 18:10, 14, which functions as the secondary text. Thus, Genesis 18-21 is the centerpiece of Paul's argument. Genesis 21:12 stands out as the main ground for Paul's assertion of God's faithfulness in 9:6a, and Romans 9:6-29 may legitimately be called a midrash on Gen 21:12 directed toward the faithfulness of God's word in the face of the rejection of ethnic Israel and calling of the Church vis-à-vis the Abrahamic covenant and the fulfillment of its promises. Paul's main argument in Romans 9 in support of the thesis statement of 9:6a is summed up succinctly by Genesis 21:12 and may be stated thus: the word of God to Israel has not failed because the true Israel is not constituted by ethnicity, but by faith in Christ.

Our investigation has discovered that Genesis 21 and 18-19 are far more significant for Paul's argument in Romans 9-11 than has been previously recognized. Through them, Paul draws his audience into the Scriptures of Israel and casts their eschatological present into the biblical story of Abraham, Isaac, and Ishmael. Provoked to overwhelming grief at the accursed state of Israel and faced with a challenge to the faithfulness of God's word, Paul has gone to the Scriptures and found there the pattern for his own response and the content of his own teaching. Indeed, the broad contours of Paul's argument in Romans 9-11 are anticipated by the story of Abraham in Gen 18-21. We have also found that many of the themes Paul deals with in Romans 9 are also present in ancient Jewish interpretive traditions surrounding Genesis 18 and 21.

The final chapter (ch. five) seeks to draw conclusions concerning the significance of Paul's use of the OT in Romans 9:1-9 for the exegesis and theology of Romans and for Pauline intertextuality. We argue that Paul's interpretive activity

reveals that the issue of who are the true people of God is central to chapters 9-11 and helps us to see that the same issue lies behind the previous chapters of the epistle. Paul argues from Scripture that God's covenant people are none other than the Church of Jews and Gentiles, identified by God's call in his free mercy on the basis of promise and faith.

We have also found that covenant is central to Paul's argument in Romans 9-11 as well as to Romans and Pauline theology in general. Relatedly, Paul has a fundamental corporate perspective in Romans 9-11. Moreover, his argument concerns both Jews and Gentiles from the very beginning, and he considered unbelieving ethnic Israel to be anathema.

Recognizing the limited data we have to work with, chapter five further considers implications of our investigation for understanding Paul's use of the OT in general. We have found that Paul's citations generally use the LXX, and that he can communicate his understanding of the biblical text by intentional conflation.

We have found Paul's interpretive practices to be at home in a first century Jewish context. But for the most part, Paul breaks new ground in his bold and brilliant interpretive activity. We have seen concepts of corporate solidarity and covenant at work in Paul's approach to Scripture, and this supports the contention that Paul's hermeneutic was ecclesiocentric. Typology appears to be the most fundamental interpretive strategy Paul employed, and to a degree that has seldom been fathomed. Additionally, analogy plays a role in his utilization of sacred texts. Moreover, Paul views the OT from an eschatological perspective that also escalates the significance of its application. Furthermore, Paul was concerned for the larger story of the narratives he alluded to, and was inclined to make Pentateuchal narratives foundational to his argumentation. He also was given to anticipating the next or otherwise later stage of an argument through his allusions to the OT.

Finally, chapter five argues that Paul generally used the OT contextually and in accordance with its original intention. His OT quotations and allusions function as pointers to their broad original contexts. It is now time for standard exegetical procedure to include substantial attention to intertextuality. Indeed, it remains for a study of the sort we have conducted to be done in the rest of Romans 9, and then beyond that, for Romans 9-11 as a whole and the Pauline corpus.

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Contents

Declaration of Authorship	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	vii
References and Abbreviationsxiii
1. Introduction	1
Orientation to the Investigation	1
Methodology	8
Introduction and Emphasis	8
Procedure	13
Definitions	19
The Place of Intertextuality in New Testament Studies and This Investigation	23
Criteria for Detecting and Interpreting Scriptural Allusions	28
The Possibility of Paul Intending His Scriptural Allusions As Pointers to Their Broad Old Testament Contexts	33
2. Introduction to Romans 9-11 With Special Attention to Paul's Use of the Old Testament	50
The Historical Background of Romans 9-11	51
The Situation of the Church in Rome	51
Paul's Own Situation	60
The Purpose of Romans 9-11	63
The Theme of Romans 9-11	71
The Integrity, Authenticity, and Literary Placement of Romans 9-11	79
The Structure and Literary Character of Romans 9-11	88
Some Hermeneutical Considerations Relating to Romans 9-11	105
Should We Read Romans 9-11 Forward or Backward?	105
The Interpretive Significance of Paul's Other Epistles	107
Individual and Corporate Perspectives in Romans 9-11	108
The Consistency of Romans 9-11	112
A Review of Literature Related to the Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9-11	117
3. Paul's Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9:1-5	138
The Old Testament Context of Exodus 32:32	139
Exodus 32:1-6	142
Exodus 32:7-14	144
Exodus 32:15-29	148
Exodus 32:30-33:6	149

Excursus: Individual and Corporate Perspectives in Exodus 32-34.	154
Exodus 33:7-11.	158
Exodus 33:12-23.	159
Exodus 34:1-9.	171
Exodus 34:10-28.	172
Exodus 34:29-35.	173
Textual Comparison of Romans 9:3 and Exodus 32:32.	175
Interpretive Traditions Surrounding Exodus 32:32.	177
Pseudo-Philo/ <i>Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum</i>	177
Testament of Moses.	181
1 Enoch.	183
Martyrdom of Isaiah	184
4 Ezra	186
Philo.	188
Targums and other Rabbinic Literature.	190
Acts	192
John	194
The New Testament Context of Exodus 32:32.	195
Paul's Sincere Grief (Romans 9:1-2).	196
The Allusion: Paul's Willingness to Be Accursed for His Kinsmen (Romans 9:3).	200
Preliminary Observations.	200
The Basic Meaning of Romans 9:3 in Intertextual Perspective.	202
Intertextual Motifs of Idolatry, Grief, Loss of Election, Merciful Judgment, the Faithfulness of God, Divine Sovereignty, and Human Free Will.	210
Moses, Paul's Ministry, the Restoration of Israel, and the Remnant.	218
The Privileges of Israel in Intertextual Perspective (Romans 9:4-5).	226
The First and Basic Privilege with an Orientation to the Entire Catalog.	226
The Rest of the Privileges.	234
Summary/Conclusion.	259
4. Paul's Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9:6-9.	264
The Old Testament Context of Genesis 18:10, 14.	264
Textual Comparison of Romans 9:9 and Genesis 18:10, 14.	273
Interpretive Traditions Surrounding Genesis 18:10, 14.	276
4 Ezra	277
Philo.	281
4Q180.	282
Targums and other Rabbinic Literature.	283
Luke	285
Hebrews	285
The Old Testament Context of Genesis 21:12.	286

Textual Comparison of Romans 9:7 and Genesis 21:12.	292
Interpretive Traditions Surrounding Genesis 21:12.	293
Jubilees	293
Philo.	298
Targums and other Rabbinic Literature.	298
Hebrews	300
The New Testament Context of Genesis 21:12 and 18:10, 14.	301
The Faithful Word of God and the True Israel (Romans 9:6).	302
Excursus: The Translation of Romans 9:6b and the Corporate Nature of Election.	310
The Naming of Abraham's Covenant Seed: The Children of the Promise (Romans 9:7-8/Genesis 21:12)	317
Excursus: The Implications of Calling in Genesis 21:12 and Romans 9 for Understanding the Concept in the Rest of the New Testament.	332
The Word of Promise: Genesis 18:10, 14 (Romans 9:9).	339
Summary/Conclusion.	345
5. The Significance of Paul's Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9:1-9 for the Exegesis and Theology of Romans and for Pauline Intertextuality.	349
The Exegesis and Theology of Romans 9-11 and the Epistle as a Whole.	349
Broad Exegetical Insights.	349
Theological Insights.	352
Some Specific Exegetical Insights Elsewhere in Romans 9-11.	357
Exegetical Insights into the Epistle as a Whole.	361
Paul's Use of the Old Testament.	362
Textual Issues.	362
Paul's Hermeneutic.	364
Intertextual Quotation/Allusion, the Legitimacy of Paul's Hermeneutic, and Pauline Scholarship.	369
Bibliography.	376

References and Abbreviations

Translations from ancient literature are by the author unless otherwise noted. The first footnote reference to a work (other than a commentary) in any chapter provides the name of the author(s), the full title of the work, and if applicable, the page number(s) referred to. Subsequent references to the same work in the same chapter generally provide the author's/authors' last name(s), an abbreviated form of the title, and if applicable, the page number(s) referred to. References to dictionary articles may either follow this same pattern of reference or give the dictionary abbreviation in place of the title of the article. Commentaries are referred to by the author's last name (except in cases where fuller reference is necessary to identify a specific author), and if applicable, page number(s). When an author's name is in possessive form, the location of the reference is included in parentheses. Full details of all references may be found in the bibliography. Abbreviations of Philo's works follow those given in C. D. Yonge, trans., *The Works of Philo: New Updated Edition Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*. Other abbreviations follow those given in Patrick H. Alexander et al., eds, *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies*, published in 1999. The following abbreviations are either not found in this source or are to replace the corresponding abbreviations it provides:

CBSC	Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges
ConNT	<i>Coniectanea neotestamentica</i>
corr.	corrected
DNTB	<i>Dictionary of New Testament Background</i>
ed(s).	editor(s), edited by, edition
enl.	enlarged
JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplement Series
LAB	<i>Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum</i> / Pseudo Philo