‘And so all Israel will be saved’: Competing Interpretations of Romans 11.26 in Pauline Scholarship

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Abstract
Paul’s claim in Rom. 11.26 that ‘all Israel will be saved’ has often perplexed New Testament scholars. Whereas the classic view in Reformed theology treats ‘all Israel’ as a reference to the church, which replaces historical Israel, some contemporary scholars hold to a two-covenant view whereby Israel is saved irrespective of Christ faith. In contrast to these, Mark D. Nanos has proposed his own unique reading of the passage. The dominant trend today, however, is for scholars to understand Paul to teach the future salvation of historical Israel at the parousia. Nevertheless, there are still others who understand ‘all Israel’ to mean the total elect from the nation. This article will explore Paul’s argument in Rom. 11 in dialogue with these approaches. It will be demonstrated that this last reading represents the most plausible interpretation of the biblical text.

Key Words
Elect, Israel, parousia, Paul, saved

Introduction
Paul writes in Rom. 11.25-26:

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved. (NASB)

It is perhaps quite ironic that while Paul clearly intends here to remove a certain ambiguity for his audience in regard to God’s redemptive plan for Jew and Gentile, this passage has nevertheless proven to be puzzling for

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Pauline scholars. There have in fact been several interpretations proposed for the statement ‘And so all Israel will be saved’. And while much of this scholarship has raised important questions for consideration, I would suggest that most interpreters have in the end rejected what I believe to be the most plausible reading.

The following will survey five views of Rom. 11.26 that have been advanced in contemporary scholarship to date. I have entitled these interpretations: (1) eschatological miracle, (2) ecclesiological, (3) Roman mission, (4) two-covenant and (5) total national elect. It will be demonstrated that (5), the ‘total national elect’ interpretation, represents the most exegetically sound understanding of the passage in the context of both the larger argument of chs. 9–11 (uniformly treated as a single unit of Paul’s thought) and the letter in its entirety.

**Eschatological Miracle**

First is the prevailing opinion among contemporary scholars, which I have called the ‘eschatological miracle’ interpretation. Here, ‘all Israel’ represents the historical nation that will turn to Christ after the ingathering of the Gentiles and, as also generally held, at the parousia. It is frequently noted that the idiom ‘all Israel’ is well established in the Old Testament and relevant Jewish literature as referring to the people as a corporate whole. As James D.G. Dunn (1988: 681) explains, its function here is to contrast with both the ‘remnant’ referred to in 11.5 as well as those hardened in 11.25. This partial hardening of Israel recalls Paul’s earlier statement in 11.7 concerning the division of the nation between the ‘elect’ and the ‘rest’.

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1. I have borrowed this title from Nanos (1996: 257).
3. E.g. Josh. 7.25; 1 Sam. 7.5; 25.1; 2 Sam. 16.22; 1 Kgs 12.1; 2 Chron. 12.1; Dan. 9.11; Jub. 50.9; T. Levi 17.5; T. Jos. 20.5; T. Ben. 10.11; Ps. Philo 22.1; 23.1; m. Sanh. 10.1.
4. Cranfield (1979: 575), Fitzmyer (1993: 621), Dunn (1988: 679) and Moo (1996: 717) understand πάντος ἃπαξ μιᾶς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ γίγνεται to refer to a partial hardening experienced by all the people of Israel (so also Gaston 1987; see below). Others such as Barrett (1991: 206) and Käsemann (1980: 313) hold it to mean that a part of Israel has experienced a hardening. While ἃπαξ μιᾶς should probably be understood
According to this view, Israel’s hardening will terminate once the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. The fullness of the Gentiles is understood as either the completion of the Gentile mission (Munck 1967: 135) or the coming to faith of the total number of elect Gentiles, as held by most scholars. The phrase καὶ οὕτως in 11.26 is taken by some, notably Reidar Hvalvik (1990: 97), Otfried Hofius (1986: 315; 1990: 35) and Richard H Bell (1994: 136), in a logical sense, such that it points to what precedes as ‘the factual and temporal presuppositions of what follows’ (Hvalvik 1990: 97). Understood in this way, Paul is claiming that Israel’s final salvation is predicated upon the prior salvation of the Gentiles. However, despite the difficulty it presents, Dunn, Douglas J. Moo, Brendan Byrne, Robert Jewett and most commentators who hold this view read οὕτως in the usual modal sense, indicating the manner of Israel’s salvation.

Though a temporal sense to οὕτως scarcely occurs in the Greek of the period, these same scholars still read a temporal reference behind Paul’s usage of the term here that points to the eventual removal of Israel’s partial hardening as the way in which all Israel is saved (Dunn 1988: 681; Moo 1996: 719-20; Byrne 1996: 349-50, 354; Jewett 2007: 701).

adverbially and taken with πόρον or γέγονεν rather than adjectivally and taken with ἵσταν (contra Käsemann), the latter meaning is still more plausible given the greater context. The reading ‘a hardening has partly come upon Israel’ or ‘a partial hardening has come upon Israel’ can in either case still bear this quantitative sense provided by the RSV and NRSV of something that affects a portion of the nation and thus reflect the division Paul refers to in v. 7. For this understanding cf. Nanos 1996: 263-64, Byrne 1996: 354, Wright 2001: 688 and Jewett 2007: 699-700.

5. While not particularly holding this position, Cranfield (1979: 575-76) notes its plausibility. Also see Wright 2001: 688.


7. It is frequently pointed out that LSI, BAGD and TDNT do not indicate a temporal meaning for οὕτως. However, as Van der Horst (2000: 521-25) has demonstrated, Fitzmyer (1993: 622) and Wright (2001: 691) may overstate the case in asserting the complete absence of this meaning in Greek.

8. Another possibility is to connect οὕτως, understood modally, with what follows, καθοδε γέγονεν, rather than the preceding. However, it is rare that Paul employs the order οὕτως... καθοδε (Phil. 3.17 being the only instance), and he never pairs οὕτως with the formulaic phrase ‘just as it is written’, rendering this reading highly unlikely; contra Stuhlmacher 1971: 560.
In vv. 26b-27 Paul quotes Isa. 59.20-21 and 27.9:

'Out of Zion will come the Deliverer; he will banish ungodliness from Jacob'. 'And this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins' (NRSV).

Most follow Ernst Käsemann (1980: 314) and Dunn (1988: 682) in understanding this as a reference to the parousia at which time Israel will experience its promised eschatological salvation (cf. Moo 1996: 727; Jewett 2007: 704). While the parousia is seen then as responsible for Israel's salvation, both Dunn (1988: 683) and Hofius (1990: 37) argue that this in no way indicates a so-called Sonderweg or special way for Israel that bypasses the gospel and faith in Christ. It demonstrates only that Israel will come to such faith in the same manner as Paul himself, through a direct revelation of Christ.

It has been questioned here as to whether Paul has in mind the whole nation, but not every single member---as held by the great majority of commentators, or if in fact he is positing the salvation of every Jew, as Bell (1994: 137-40) and Jewett (2007: 702) have suggested. Further, there is disagreement as to whether 'all Israel' should be understood diachronically or synchronically. In other words, does it refer only to the nation at one moment in time, such as the generation of Jews alive at the time of the parousia (the majority position), or does it also include faithful Jews of all time, as Joseph A. Fitzmyer (1993: 623), Franz Mussner (1976: 241-45) and Hofius (1990: 35-36) propose? In either case, this

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9. Paul's quotation of Isa. 59.20 basically follows the LXX, but ἠμαρτία is replaced by εἰς; for explanations of this modification, see Hvalvik 1990: 91-95, Dunn 1988: 682, Moo 1996: 727, Jewett 2007: 703-704, also Stanley 1993. I find Stanley's proposal regarding the origin of Paul's citation here to be convincing (see below).

10. Byrne (1996: 355) is an exception among those who hold to the eschatological miracle reading, noting that Paul understands this prophecy 'as speaking out of its proper time reference, pointing to a "coming" (of a "deliverer") which for Isaiah lies in the future but which for Paul has already been realized in the original appearance and saving work of Christ'.

11. E.g., every scholar listed in n. 2 with the exception of Bell and Jewett, though Sanders (1991: 126-28) seems to have modified his view from his earlier work, suggesting a universal image of salvation operative in 11.26-36 (i.e. everyone will inevitably be saved; cf. Dodd 1932: 184), despite the tension this presents with Paul's other statements denoting a contrary perspective.

12. See Mal. 3.22 (4.4 MT) as the only instance in the Old Testament where 'all Israel' bears this sense; also cf. m. Sanh. 10.1; T. Ben. 10.11.

13. See also Bell 1994: 141. Fitzmyer notes: 'For Paul, pas israel means Israel in the ethnic sense and diachronically, because of the eschatological sense of the future
view suggests that the content of Paul’s mystery is twofold: (1) Israel’s hardening is temporally limited and (2) the salvation of all Israel will follow rather than precede that of the Gentiles. Paul is here then reversing the traditional Jewish apocalyptic expectation that the ingathering of the Gentiles would follow the restoration of Israel—the very order of salvation history he affirms in Rom. 11.16 (on this point, see Cranfield 1979: 576; Dunn 1988: 682; Jewett 2007: 698; Käsemann 1980: 313-14).

Despite this view’s current scholarly and lay popularity, I would suggest that there is a more plausible way in which to read Rom. 11.26. Furthermore, although it may not be the role of critical scholarship to allow such a matter to influence exegetical conclusions, it should be noted that if this is what Paul intends to say here, we must judge either his vision of the future and/or overall argument a failure. For after so many generations of Jews have come and gone without this miraculous redemptive event having taken place, one must ask how or why such a salvific plan would be the defining demonstration of God’s ultimate faithfulness to historical Israel.15

Ecclesiological

A second view, which I have called the ‘ecclesiological’ interpretation, is one that finds notable proponents in John Calvin (1961: 254-56), Karl Barth (1968: 412-17) and N.T. Wright (1991: 249-51, 2001: 687-93). Here ‘all Israel’ represents the church of Jew and Gentile. This reading has very little support in contemporary scholarship, being frequently mentioned only to be quickly dismissed. But that Paul is capable of such a redefinition of Israel can be demonstrated. This is perhaps most clearly seen in Gal. 6.16, where Paul refers to the ‘Israel of God’, which scholars

οκοσιοποιούν: The Jewish people as a whole, both the “remnant” (11.5) or “chosen ones” (11.7) and “the others” (11.7), will be saved.

14. The term πνευτρικός is used by Paul to indicate a hidden aspect of God’s redemptive plan that has now been revealed through the gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom. 16.25; 1 Cor. 2.1, 7; 4.1; 15.51-52; 1 Thess. 4.1; also Col. 1.26-27; 2:2; 4:3; Eph. 1.9-10; 3:3-9; 6.19). For a discussion on Paul’s use of this term, see Cranfield 1979: 573-74, Dunn 1988: 677-79 and Moo 1996: 714-15.

15. Of course Paul could be wrong about the future, and the historical outcome of what may be predicated in this passage should not be the ruling criterion of the text’s meaning or even its ultimate value. However, most seemingly overlook the fact that, if indeed this is the way Rom. 11.26 should be read, Paul’s entire premise falls apart in the absence of a parousia within his own generation.


Additionally, there is the redefinition of ‘circumcision’ in Phil. 3.3 (cf. Col. 2.11-12), the ‘seed of Abraham’ in Gal. 3 and Rom. 4, and the name ‘Jew’ in Rom. 2.27-29. Included here should also be 1 Cor. 10.18, where Paul refers to Ἰσραὴλ κατὰ φάσαρ, suggesting that there exists for him another category of Israel, which, it may be argued, cannot in that context be merely a subset of the historical nation.  

Indeed, it is asserted by Wright (1991: 238; 2001: 635-36) that Paul’s appeal to a true Israel in Rom. 9.6-8 is not merely a smaller group within the historical nation but is inclusive of Gentile believers as well. He further proposes that the quotation of Joel 2.32 in Rom. 10.13 and there applied equally to both Jew and Gentile represents the functional equivalent of 11.26, as ‘those who call upon the name of the Yahweh’ is a regular designation for Israel in the Old Testament (Wright 2001: 665-66).

Moreover, Wright (1991: 251; 2001: 691-93) suggests that the quotation from Isaiah in vv. 26b-27 is a reference not to the parousia nor any other particular future point in time at which the historical nation will be saved. Rather, it represents the inauguration of the new covenant that has for Paul already taken place by virtue of Christ’s resurrection and on the basis of which both Jew and Gentile receive salvation.

Finally, despite the frequent criticism of this point, Wright (1991: 250; 2001: 690) argues that Israel can justifiably have two different meanings in vv. 25-26, as Paul has already drawn such a distinction between two ‘Israel’ in 9.6 (contra Cranfield 1979: 576).

But while this view, in which Paul differentiates ‘Israel’ as a ‘religious’


18. See also 1 Cor. 10.1 where Paul refers to the ancient Israelites as οἱ πατριάς Ἰσραήλ while clearly addressing Gentile Christ believers, and 1 Cor. 12.2 where he refers to the past life of this audience as the time when they were Gentiles. It should be noted, however, that Paul nowhere refers to an Ἰσραήλ κατὰ φάσαρ.

19. That the ‘covenant’ referred to here is for Paul the ‘Jeremianic new covenant’, which he believes is fulfilled in his gospel, is widely agreed upon (cf. Fitzmyer 1993: 625; see, however, Gaston 1987 below; also cf. Jewett 2007: 705), but the implication of such in the present context is a point of departure. In Wright’s understanding it is the covenant in which God has finally dealt with the sin of the entire world, not the basis for a special provision to be made for ‘Jews and Jews alone’ such that ‘national righteousness’ is suddenly affirmed.'
entity from ‘Israel’ as one of the many ethnic groups of which the former by virtue of Christ now equally consists,\(^{20}\) may be more plausible than most commentators are willing to admit, it nevertheless remains for me untenable. The main difficulty with this reading is that it is seemingly inconsistent with Paul’s rhetorical purpose in this section of the letter, namely, to undercut a ‘Gentile supersessionism’ taking hold in the church at Rome and to demonstrate that God’s redemptive activity continues among the Jews, irrespective of appearances. Further, as will be developed below, many of the exegetical reasons that lead to this interpretation over the prevailing eschatological miracle view may be accounted for without having to resort to a redefinition of Israel that does not suit the greater context. One should observe that throughout chs. 9–11, outside perhaps 9.6 and 11.26, ‘Israel’ unquestionably refers to the historical nation as distinct from the Gentiles (9.[4], 27, 31; 10.19, 21; 11.[1], 2, 7, 11, 23, 25; cf. 15.8-12).

**Roman Mission**

A third view, which I have called the ‘Roman mission’ interpretation, is one proposed by Mark D. Nanos (1996: 239-88). Here ‘all Israel’ represents Jews in Rome who have initially responded to the gospel as well as those who are at present hardened but, upon the beginning of Paul’s apostolic mission to the Gentiles in Rome, will be moved to jealousy by his success and consequently believe (pp. 247-55; 259-61). Nanos first suggests that the context from which to properly read 11.25-26 is what Paul understands to be an anomaly taking place in Rome of the divine two-step pattern that is apparent in Luke’s portrayal of Paul in the book of Acts (pp. 268-72). The pattern consists of the restoration of Israel in each new location, as Paul first preaches in the synagogue, before the gospel proclamation can then fully turn to the Gentiles, incorporating them into the people of God. It is this anomaly that is responsible for the false assumption among Gentile believers in Rome that they have replaced Israel in God’s redemptive plan; a notion Paul sets out to correct (pp. 273-74).

There are two central and interconnected aspects to Nanos’s thesis. First, the division of Israel between the Christ-believing remnant and

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\(^{20}\) Cf. Wright 2001: 693-94: ‘There will always be ethnic Jews among the “true Jews” of [Rom.] 2:29; there will always be physically circumcised people among the “true circumcision” of Phil 3:3; there will always be some from “Israel according to the flesh”...among “all Israel”.'
those who are at present hardened signals the beginning of Israel’s restoration and thus the beginning of the Gentile mission (pp. 259-60). Second, Nanos reads the phrase in v. 25: ἐξῆς αὐτὸ τῶν ἑσυχῶν ἔσχάλης as a reference to the commencement of Paul’s Gentile mission in Rome (pp. 264-67). He argues that the temporal sequence and future sense of time indicated by ἐξῆς αὐτὸ renders the sense of ἔσχάλης along the lines of an event that is coming or beginning. Additionally, Paul’s employment of the term ἔσχάλης in Rom. 15.19 to refer to the completion of his mission in the east and his stated intention in 15.29 to eventually come to Rome in the ἔσχάλης of the blessing of Christ’ suggest that Paul’s reference here to the ἔσχάλης of the Gentiles should similarly be understood in the context of Paul’s missionary activity.

Thus, what may appear here to be a reversal of the order of salvation history affirmed in Rom. 1.16 is not the case. Nanos concludes that Paul’s purpose is to demonstrate to the Gentile believers that Jews are vicariously suffering a hardening in order that salvation can come to them. And this hardening upon a part of Israel will cease once the Gentile mission begins. At this time some Jews formerly hardened will be made jealous by Paul’s missionary success and believe (pp. 260, 285).21

This view, while intriguing and in my mind superior to the eschatological miracle reading, does however beg an important objection in that it relies on a very speculative notion that Paul understood an anomaly of sorts taking place in Rome. Could he really have thought that the Gentile mission would only fully begin in Rome upon his arrival? Despite the correlations to his reading that Nanos attempts to draw from Paul’s travel plans in Rom. 15, I do not at all see there Paul suggesting such a thing. In

21. Though Nanos’s overall reading of 11.25-26 is not necessarily dependent on such, the notion that the content of Israel’s jealousy (παραξενότης) is to be found in Paul’s missionary success among the Gentiles is in my opinion doubtful. Ester (2003: 288-93) demonstrates that the concept of jealousy refers, rather, to ‘the emotional intensity and chagrin with which [Israel] should view the blessings bestowed on Christ-followers and desire to regain her rightful position in God’s favor’. This is the ‘point of the expressions “provoked to jealousy” and “provoked to anger” in Deuteronomy 32’, which Paul quotes in 10.19. It is not that Israel responded in wrath against her enemies, for Israel took not a step against them, but rather her anger is closely aligned with her jealousy as a way of describing the passion with which Israel should regard the successes being achieved by her enemies as a stimulus impelling her to return to God’ (p. 292). Ester further comments with respect to 11.13b-14: ‘Paul says he is glorifying his ministry, meaning making much of it and showing how good it is, to stir up the passions of the Israelites to reacquire what is really theirs when confronted with others who have laid hold on it instead’ (p. 297).
fact, his assertion that he has chosen not to preach 'where Christ has already been named', so as not to 'build on someone else's foundation' (15.20; cf. 2 Cor. 10.15-16), suggests that, though he expresses hope to come soon to Rome and preach the gospel (1.15), Paul would not think (or at least claim) his presence critical for the advent of a mission to the Gentiles. Moreover, Nanos's proposal that this anomalous state of affairs for the church in Rome meant that 'their faith lacked a proper foundation', and Paul must set them right (p. 239), does not seem to be warranted. Karl Paul Donfried's (1991: 45) remarks bear mentioning:

Paul in no way indicates a weakness in the foundation [of the church in Rome]. Quite the contrary, in 15.14 we hear, 'I myself am satisfied about you, my brethren, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another'. Then in the next verse he explicitly indicates that what he has just written is 'by way of reminder'—hardly a situation which would indicate 'that for Paul, Christianity in Rome still needed an apostolic foundation...'. Further, one would hardly expect Paul to do such a rebuilding job simply 'in passing' (15.24) as he goes to Spain [cf. Jewett 2007: 916].

For these reasons I am unconvinced by the Roman mission reading.22

Two-Covenant

A fourth view is the so-called 'two-covenant' interpretation, which holds that 'all Israel' represents the historical nation that is saved irrespective of Christ faith. This is the perspective prominently shared by Krister Stendahl (1976a: 1-5; 1976b: 48-53),23 Lloyd Gaston (1987: 135-50), Stanley Stowers (1994: 285-316) and John G. Gager (2000: 128-42). Fundamental to this position is that Paul's soteriology is best understood in terms of a two-covenant approach in which the Sinai Covenant ever

22. One could perhaps merge aspects of Nanos's interpretation with the eschatological miracle reading such that it would not be necessary to understand the 'fullness of the gentiles' as indicating the commencement of Paul's mission in Rome. Instead, Paul could be predicating the salvation of 'all Israel'—understood as Jews who received the gospel at the first, as well as some formerly hardened—upon the prior salvation of the Gentiles. But, rather than a 'world-wide' phenomenon as it were, this would have to do with events in Rome in particular, along the lines of Nanos's reading. This would seem to be a more plausible alternative to the eschatological miracle view, but it nevertheless suffers from many of the same exegetical difficulties raised below.

23. Stendahl has since distanced himself from this reading (cf. Stendahl 1995: x-xi).
remains the means of Israel's salvation, and it is the Gentiles alone who are in need of the salvation that comes through Jesus Christ. Thus Paul's apostolic mission has as its goal, according to Gaston, 'a gentile church that is an equal, co-partner alongside of Israel' (1987: 149).

Stendahl (1976a: 4) observes that, once Paul has directed his attention to the future of Israel beginning in Rom. 10.18, there is no mention of Jesus Christ through to the distinct doxology absent a Christological element that concludes the section in 11.33-36. He argues that this is consistent with the rhetorical purpose of the entire section—to check Gentile arrogance directed towards Jews that may express itself in an impulse to evangelize them (1976b: 53). In Gaston's analysis, the partial hardening of Israel does not refer to a division within Israel between Christ believers and non-believers but to Israel's failure to understand that a way of salvation for Gentiles was made available through Christ (1987: 143). Yet that a faithful remnant of Jews like Paul have responded to this missionary task is grounds for God to act graciously in saving 'all Israel' (p. 148).

However intertwined Israel's salvation may be with that of the Gentiles, it is nevertheless on different terms. It is brought about by the 'Deliverer', according to Paul's quotation of Isa. 59.20-21, who is in this reading God and not the returning Christ. Gaston concedes that, while Paul may have had Christ in mind here, it is Christ precisely as an agent of a special way of salvation for Israel (pp. 147-48). The quotation of Isa. 27.9 affirms God's commitment to the Sinai Covenant that applies only to Israel and, according to which, God faithfully forgives Israel's sins (pp. 143-44). Gaston suggests that 11.28-29 makes this quite explicit. Israel's election is irrevocable and thus their final salvation is sure (p. 148).

It is my opinion that this is the least plausible of the five interpretations examined here. That Christ is not explicitly mentioned from 10.18 through to the end of the section fails to demonstrate that Paul has in mind a parallel means of salvation. Paul knows of only one people of God, one (covenant) community of salvation that is composed of both Jew and Gentile, as his olive tree analogy in 11.17-24 clearly illustrates. 24 As it is

24. Interestingly (and perhaps tellingly), Gaston (1987: 147) finds this section to be inconsistent with the rest of ch. 11. Nanos (2005: 32) holds the interpretation of the olive tree metaphor as the 'family of God' to be misguided and suggests that it should be read exclusively as a vehicle by which Paul can elaborate upon his prohibition against Gentile supersessionism—Gentiles have been made acceptable to God only by God's grace, and there are no grounds then for boasting (vv. 17-21). He notes Paul's reference to Jews who have 'fallen' and thus been 'cut off' (v. 22), which

for Gentiles to enter anew, Jews remain or are brought back into this community solely on the basis of Christ faith, a premise that Paul thoroughly establishes from the very beginning of the letter and explicitly asserts in 11.23: ‘And even those of Israel, if they do not persist in unbelief, will be grafted in’.

Gaston does make several exegetical attempts throughout Romans to argue for a dual redemptive track, including: (1) reading πασι, ἀνθρωποις and Paul’s ‘Adam–Christ’ typology as referring exclusively to the Gentile world (1987: 116; implicit in his reading [cf. pp. 64–79] and explicitly held by Stowers 1994: 255–82 and Gager 2000: 122–27 is that the first person plurals in chs. 5–8 should be interpreted similarly), (2) understanding the condemning function of the law and its inability to justify as only applicable to Gentiles who stand outside Israel’s covenant and (3) interpreting the ‘righteousness of God’ as God’s inclusion of Gentiles in the people of God but apart from God’s covenant with Israel (pp. 119–22). Yet his reading remains unpersuasive because it does not subverts his earlier assertion regarding Israel’s ‘anomalous state’—their present ‘stumbling’ but not ‘so as to fall’ (v. 11). However, unlike v. 22, Paul in v. 11 is referring to Israel as a whole. Further, ‘we’ is better read here as purposive (‘in order to’) indicating the divine intention behind Israel’s stumbling, and not resultant (‘so as to’) (cf. Jewett 2007: 673). Wright (2001: 686) affirms: ‘Paul does not ignore the fact that some have indeed fallen, nor does he rule out the possibility that some individuals may remain in that condition’.

25. Cf. Donaldson’s critique of the ‘righteousness of God’ as the equivalent of God’s inclusion of the Gentiles, according to the promise made to Abraham (1997: 95–100). He notes three reasons against this reading. (1) Nowhere in Romans is the salvation of the Gentiles seen as the result of God’s faithfulness to a promise made to Abraham. Though 4.16 connects promise, Abraham and Gentiles, the point here is that ‘believing Gentiles are eligible to share in the promised inheritance, not that the promise was that Gentiles would be included among the heirs’ (p. 98). (2) Nowhere in Romans is the righteousness of God directly linked to the salvation of Gentiles. In 15.8–9 (where Paul refers to the ‘truthfulness of God’ that in 3.3–7 is used in a parallel fashion with the ‘righteousness of God’, thus demonstrating itself to be another way that he speaks of God’s righteousness (p. 96)) the two purpose clauses referring to the Jews (v. 8b) and the Gentiles (v. 9) are separated by ἀλλά and are in parallel, suggesting that they are distinct. Paul’s point here, as throughout Romans, is that ‘Christ’s ministry to Israel has two goals or intended results’: ‘confirmation of God’s covenantal promises’ and ‘the creation of a situation where the Gentiles, too, can give glory to God’. (3) God’s truthfulness and God’s mercy in 15.8–9 are set in distinction from one another, similarly suggesting ‘that Christ’s ministry represents both a demonstration of God’s truthfulness (faithfulness to promises already made to Israel) and God’s mercy (unexpected inclusion of the Gentiles in Christ on equal terms with the Jews)’ (p. 99).
adequately explain: (1) Israel’s failure (9.31; 11.7) 'stumbling'/rejection' and its resulting benefit for Gentiles in 11.11-15 nor (2) the existence of Jewish Christ believers such as Paul himself. Both of these problems have been addressed in a recent article by Donaldson (2006: 27-54).

With respect to the first, Gaston’s attempt to correlate Israel’s ‘stumbling’ with a rejection of Paul’s gospel of righteousness for Gentiles (1987: 33, 146) makes little sense. How can Israel’s rejection of Christ as a means of salvation for the Gentiles be the very thing that allows such to be possible? (11.11; Donaldson 2006: 34-35, 41-42). A secondary notion in Gaston’s reading (clearly made necessary by the logical difficulty inherent in the first), which is more directly proposed by Stowers (1994: 286), is that Israel’s ‘stumbling’ lay in their failure to fulfill the missionary task. But if it be assumed that Paul continued to hold to the Torah alone and not Christ for the Jew, how does this explanation account for the very real possibility of proselytism as a means by which Gentiles could then participate in Israel’s covenant?26

Given that the number of proselytes to Judaism most certainly outnumbered Gentile converts to his gospel, how could Paul, understood in terms of a two-covenant approach, reasonably suggest a systemic error on Israel’s part to adequately address the Gentile problem, which only in turn made necessary Christ?27 As Donaldson (2006: 42) affirms, it is difficult to imagine that Paul would argue as he did on such fundamentally flawed grounds. I would suggest that Paul did believe Israel to have failed

26. Outside the Christ movement Donaldson (2006: 37) notes the absence in Jewish literature of a categorical rejection of proselytism in favor of some other form of universalism. Paul’s argument from the Shema that Gentiles qua Gentiles have an equal share with Jews qua Jews in salvation (Rom. 3.29-30) is a direct result of and subordinate to the notion that God has provided the single means of salvation for all through Christ (Gal. 2.15-16; cf. Hays 2005: 69-74; see further on this point below). Independent of this conviction there is no justification for holding that Paul would have believed necessary a means of salvation for Gentiles qua Gentiles.

27. Donaldson (2006: 36-39) points out that proselytism is ignored altogether by Stowers, who focuses instead on Paul’s objection to the ‘righteous gentile’ approach to Gentile salvation over against his Christ gospel, as supposedly demonstrated in 2.17-29. This ‘alternative’ approach consisted in an attempt to convince Gentiles to obey only certain laws of the Torah. Gaston (1987: 139), however, finds Paul’s critique in 2.17-29 directed towards the attempt of Jewish teachers to proselytize Gentiles. While the text can clearly be viewed as a criticism of Jewish hypocrisy, Gaston fails to explain why Paul would have found the approach illegitimate and thus the need for another means by which Gentiles could be saved. In fact, proselytes could have been deemed full members of Israel’s covenant and therefore removed from the law’s condemnation in accordance with his reading.
at being a ‘light to the nations’, as indicated in 2.17-24. But the thrust of the passage is to precisely demonstrate that, despite the possession of Torah, the Jewish people, like the Gentile world (1.18-2.16), have been ‘imprisoned’ by God in disobedience (Rom. 11.32; cf. 3.9-20; 5.12-14; 7.7-13; see also Gal. 3.21-22). It seems apparent that Israel’s failure in 11.11-15 possesses explanatory power only to the extent that Christ is seen as integral to both those historically outside Israel’s covenant and to the very fulfillment of the covenant itself (cf. 2.25-29; 3.21-31; 5.18-21; 8.1-4; 9.30-10.4).

Regarding the second problem, Gaston (1987: 77) and Stowers (1994: 156) understand Paul to be an anomalous figure who sought to identify fully with his Gentile converts in Christ but who nevertheless did not advocate other Jews to follow this example. Yet Paul’s (1) expression of sorrow and anguish for Israel in 9.1-5, (2) quotation of Isa. 10.22 that speaks of the remnant of Israel who will be saved in 9.27, (3) prayer for Israel’s salvation in 10.1 and (4) desire to make Israel jealous that they may be saved in 11.14 strongly suggest in light of 10.9 that he indeed expected other ‘Israelites’ (9.4), according to which Paul describes himself (11.1), to believe in Christ for salvation as he did (Donaldson 2006: 47, 50). Gaston’s proposal, that the remnant of which Paul claims to be representative in 11.1-5 should be understood not as Jewish Christ believers but as those who have engaged the Gentile mission (1987: 142), further begs the question as to why Paul would have believed it necessary for himself to submit to God’s righteousness in Christ (3.21-22; 10.3-4) but not for other Jews, of which he was thus an example, to do the same (Donaldson 2006: 50).

28. The notion of God ‘imprisoning’ (σωκλαίω) in disobedience, as Moo (1996: 736) suggests, ‘involves God’s decision to “confine” people in the state they have chosen for themselves’ (cf. Rom. 1.24, 26, 28; see also n. 41 below). Though the Jewish disobedience envisaged in vv. 30-32 refers in the first place to Israel’s refusal to accept the gospel of Christ (cf. 10.16-21), it is nevertheless likely that all Paul has had to say with respect to universal sinfulness comes to its climax here, as also God’s mercy; cf. Dunn 1988: 689, Wright 2001: 694-95 and Jewett 2007: 711-12.

29. Jewett (2007: 680) comments on 11.14: ‘The verb σώζω (“to save”) reflects early Christian missionary language as 1 Cor 7.16; 9.22; and 1 Thess 2.16, and takes up the theme of “salvation” from 11.11. In the light of Rom 10.8-10, it is clear that Paul functions as an agency in this charismatic process, which involves proclamation of the gospel, a response of faith, a public confession, and becoming part of a house or tenement church.’

30. If Israel’s ‘stumbling’ lay in their past failure to fulfill the Gentile mission, would not Paul see it incumbent upon all Israel to now join him as he sought to fulfill
Moreover, it is unlikely that Paul in Romans, as Gaston (1987: 13, 135) asserts, could have simply ignored the contradiction posed by the actual existence of Jewish Christ believers if he did not hold this to be normative. Paul does make mention of the church in Jerusalem, and hopes to enlist the support of the Roman believers in the successful delivery of his collection to them (15.25-31). It must be asked then if Paul would not have been compelled to offer some explanation of this phenomenon to avoid what would seem to cause certain confusion among his non-Jewish audience given Gaston’s thesis (Donaldson 2006: 48-49).

In connection to this, much of the two-covenant interpretation, particularly that the first person plurals in chs. 5–8 (where Paul explicates the implications of Christ belief) should be read as ‘we/us Gentiles’, rests on the notion that the implied or encoded audience of the letter to the Romans (irrespective of the original empirical audience) is exclusively Gentile (cf. Stowers 1994: 21-33). But Philip F. Esler (2003: 119), in agreement with the current majority opinion that Rom. 16 is an original part of the letter, has cast considerable doubt on this conclusion, asserting that ‘of the twenty-six people greeted by Paul [in 16.3-16] the most prominent four were Judeans, while overall the proportion of Judeans may have reached 50 percent’. He points out therefore the high improbability that Paul would not have also addressed the letter to Jews (cf. 1.7), particularly given the fact that to deliberately ignore this group would have been a cause for shame to them, something that the content of the letter suggests he would have avoided at all cost.

Though 1.1-15 is frequently cited as evidence for a Gentile audience, as Paul refers here to his apostolic mission among the Gentiles (vv. 5-6; vv. 13-15; cf. 16.4), Esler (2003: 113) argues that such a view ‘depend[s] on both an insensitivity to the ethnic implications of Paul’s language... and a faulty grasp of the meaning of his mission in its socioreligious context’. While it is reasonable to suggest that Paul’s primary concern was to bring non-Jews to faith in Christ, one cannot ‘exclude a geographic dimension from Paul’s mission. His apostleship entailed preaching the gospel outside Judea in the lands inhabited by idolatrous non-Judean peoples (but which also contained a minority population of Judeans).’

Gaston fails to adequately address the implications here, resulting in this thoroughly idiosyncratic portrait of Paul.


32. ‘Judeans’ is Esler’s preferred translation of ‘Ἰουδαῖοι’.
When Paul speaks, first, in 1.5-6, of his mission being 'among all the foreigners, among whom are you also', he is referring to his work among the non-Judean peoples of the region, now extending to Rome. Nothing in this excludes the fact that Judeans regularly formed part of this congregation. Nor would any Judean or non-Judean Christ-followers in Rome listening to the letter as it was read deduce from this expression that the Judean members were excluded... Similarly, when in v. 13 Paul explains that he wants to come to them 'in order that he might reap some fruit also among you just as also among the rest of the foreigners', this simply constitutes an acknowledgment that he wants to have a successful mission in Rome, just as he has had elsewhere, even though his congregations were often composed of Judeans as well as non-Judeans (cf. 1.16; 1 Cor. 9.19-23) (Esler 2003: 114-15).

**Total National Elect**

A fifth view, which I have called the 'total national elect' interpretation, holds that 'all Israel' refers to the complete number of elect from the historical/empirical nation. I am convinced that even though it has minority acceptance among contemporary scholars this represents the most plausible understanding of the passage. There are four key arguments in this reading's favor.

**Argument 1: Coherence of Chapters 9–11**

The first argument concerns the coherence of Paul's argument in chs. 9–11—the relationship between Paul's statement here and what he has affirmed in chs. 9 and 10. In 9.6-8 he explains that God's promise to


34. To be considered is William S. Campbell's caution (2000: 189) that one not 'seek anachronistically to judge Paul by our standards of logic and inconsistency', but 'maintain an awareness that Paul was operating in a culture very different from ours, where somewhat different standards of consistency—perhaps even rationality—and methods of argument applied'. Nevertheless, the perceived contradictions and inconsistencies between chs. 9–10 and 11, as suggested by Dodd (1932: 183), Watson (1986: 168-74), Räisänen (1988: 182, 192-96), Beker (1990: 48), Bell (1994: 140) and others, are in my view more apparent than real, though interpreting Rom. 11 differently than proposed here, see on this matter Campbell 2000: 187-211 and Fitzmyer 1993: 609-10. While Paul was not a systematic western thinker, he was undoubtedly a coherent one, and such coherence can and should be expected in his
Abraham never extended to all of Abraham's physical descendants, and therefore God has been faithful to the promise irrespective of the rejection of Jesus Christ by many within Israel. This does not necessarily rule out that Paul could later advance a notion in which at some point in time the 'elect' would encompass the nation in its near entirety. However, it does suggest that Paul assumes the saved of empirical Israel would comprise a smaller group from within the people as a whole.

Still further, in 10.12 Paul asserts that there is no distinction between Jew and Greek (cf. 3.22). Paul's premise (which he is at pains to demonstrate throughout Romans and also Galatians) is not that ethnic distinctions are erased in Christ (cf. Campbell 1995: 272-73; 2004: 79-82; 2006: 1-175) but that (1) there is now equality between these two groups and (2) the Christ event represents the single means by which Jew and Gentile participate in God's redemptive activity—'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved' (10.13). On the basis then of both 9.6 and 10.12 it must be asked if Paul would nevertheless propose either an alternative means by which 'all Israel' is saved or some sort of miraculous salvific event (e.g. a direct revelation of Christ at the parousia) for Israel alone. It seems unlikely he would.

Additionally, there is the matter again of Paul's expression of sorrow and anguish for Israel in 9.1-5 and his prayer for their salvation in 10.1. There is little question that Paul believes the parousia to be imminent (Rom. 13.11-12; 16.20; 1 Thess. 4.15-17; 1 Cor. 15.51-52). If he is then envisaging in 11.26 either the salvation of all Jews or some sort of definitive large-scale salvific event for the nation prior to or at the parousia, '9.1-5 is a sham and 10.1 a mere formality' (Wright 2001: 689; cf. Hvalvik 1990: 100).

### Footnotes

35. It might be suggested that Paul's stress on God's freedom in election throughout ch. 9 anticipates this very thing in ch. 11. But see n. 48 below.

36. Esler's analysis in terms of social identity theory (Esler 2003) demonstrates by means of the common ingroup identity model, also known as recategorization, how Paul, confronted with the 'problem of persisting subgroup loyalties', could not realistically 'suggest that his addressees abandon them; nor does he do so, but rather he self-consciously preserves the two social categories, as in the programmatic affirmation of 1.16'. Paul's solution 'to the problem of building and maintaining a common group identity' lay in 'establishing "a common superordinate identity while simultaneously maintaining the salience of subgroup identities"' (pp. 142-43; cf. Nanos 2000: 221-22).

37. This second point is of course contrary to the two-covenant reading discussed above.
Argument 2: The Nature of Paul’s Rhetorical Questions Regarding Israel’s Salvation

A second argument is that the critical questions posed in 11.1 and 11.11 ask only whether Israel has completely forfeited their privilege as God’s people (Merkle 2000: 713). Paul’s single concern is if God’s redemptive activity will continue among the Jews. This would indeed be an important question to address for a Gentile audience that had apparently begun to presume God’s attention was wholly redirected from Israel to non-Jews, especially in light of both the historic tension between Jews and Greeks in the Graeco-Roman world surrounding the turn of the era (see Stanley 1996: 101-24 for an analysis of this interethnic conflict in the cities of the eastern Mediterranean basin during this period; cf. Esler 2003: 357-59) and that between unbelieving Jews and the Christ-believing movement (cf. 11.28a). But while often read as such, there is simply nothing here to indicate that Paul has in mind a special salvific plan for Israel as the necessary corollary to his insistence that God has not cast off his people.

Argument 3: The Timing of Paul’s Expectations Concerning Israel’s Salvation

Third, throughout ch. 11 the present outworking of Israel’s salvation remains the focus and direction of Paul’s thought (Merkle 2000: 713). The evidence that God has not rejected his people is, according to v. 5, that ‘in the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace’. In vv. 13-14, Paul’s hope for Israel’s eventual ‘fullness’ is expressed in terms of his contribution in saving more Jews, however many this may be,38 by provoking them to jealousy through his own mission to the Gentiles (cf. 10.14-21).39 Finally, v. 31 states that εἰκόνισμα is the time in which Israel is the recipient of God’s mercy.40 The salvation of all Israel can hardly then be

38. As Munck (1967: 124) points out, τίνις need not necessarily imply a small number, but only less than πάντας. See my remarks on Rom. 9.6-8 above.

39. Though Paul assuredly did not think that he alone would be the agent responsible for Israel’s ‘fullness’, there is no real contextual evidence to suggest that he is deliberately contrasting the ‘limited’ result of his own mission with a supposed future salvific event for the nation; contra Hafemann 1988: 51-52, Johnson 1984: 97-98 and Moo 1996: 692.

40. This second εἰκόνισμα in v. 31 is included in several mss and followed by most commentators. Moo (1996: 711) notes that ‘the arguments in favor of its inclusion slightly outweigh those for omitting it’. But that εἰκόνισμα expresses here eschatological imminence, as suggested by Dunn (1988: 687), Moo (1996: 735), Köstenmann (1980: 316) and Bell (1994: 150-51), or that Paul understands that the entire time between the Christ event and the parousia (i.e. the present age) is the ‘eschatological now’, as proposed by
predicated upon some particular future point in time, whether a period after the ingathering of the Gentiles or the parousia.

**Argument 4: The Substance of Paul’s ‘Mystery’ in Verses 25b-26**

A fourth argument for this view concerns the very content of vv. 25b-26. First is the stress that should be placed upon ‘until’ in v. 25b (Merkle 2000: 715). Both the eschatological miracle and Roman mission readings understand ἐκκλησία to indicate a temporal sequence resulting in a change of circumstances. Yet it must be asked whether this presumed change of circumstances to take place after the event in question has been completed is contextually relevant. For example, in 1 Cor. 11:26 Paul writes concerning the continual observance of the Lord’s Supper ἐκκλησία ὁ Κύριος comes. Clearly, Paul is not stressing to the church at Corinth that there will come a time when the Lord’s Supper will lose its significance. Rather, the point is that this practice continues to function as such as Paul explains until the end of the age. In the same way, the point here is not that Israel’s hardening will be reversed after the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, but that at this time Israel’s hardening will be eschatologically fulfilled (Merkle 2000: 716).

But moreover, a second matter is that the notion of hardening itself Cranfield (1979: 586), Barrett (1991: 209) and Jewett (2007: 711), is unconvincing and unnecessary. Wright’s comments on this verse (2001: 694) are instructive: ‘Even if this “now” were missing… the earlier occurrence of the same word in v. 31, together with the hint that this mercy comes about “because of the mercy shown to you”, would be enough to tell us what Paul thinks is going on. The mercy that is shown to Israel according to the flesh is not something for which they will have to wait until some putative final day; it is not, therefore, something that can get the church off the hook by postponing a serious reckoning with contemporary Judaism until a conveniently delayed eschaton—as the laissez-faire thought of the Enlightenment might urge. It is available “now”.

41. See the discussion of ‘hardening’ (παρεκκλησία) in Nanos 1996: 261-64. Though Nanos (wrongly in my view) holds that the hardening envisaged here is temporary, he rightly explains that hardening is ‘a strengthening in the course [unbelieving Israel has] chosen for themselves… [W]hile God may “strengthen” them in their chosen course to accomplish his purpose for his people, he does not choose their course for them. They have chosen not to believe; God has “strengthened” them in this course so that “salvation [can come] to the Gentiles, to make them jealous”.’ This is an important recognition however inexplicable the question of the relationship between human responsibility and divine sovereignty—to the extent that Israel’s unbelief is in the first place an integral part of God’s redemptive plan—remains to be (cf. 11:33-36). As with Pharaoh, God’s imposition is not upon Israel as tabula rasa, but upon (like all humanity) a sinful and rebellious people through whom God will freely and
seemingly belies the insistence that it will be at some point in time reversed. Wright (2001: 639, 677-78; 1992: 271) argues that in an apocalyptic context hardening is understood as befalling those who do not accept God's forbearance as an opportunity to repent (cf. Rom. 2.1-11). As a result, once judgment finally does come upon them it will be seen as just (cf. 2 Thess. 2.14-16; 2 Macc. 6.12-16; see also Wisd. 12.9-26; 19.4-5). This period of hardening happens then 'during a temporary suspension of God's judgment that would have otherwise fallen', allowing time for some to escape. This is further suggested by Paul's Pharaoh analogy in 9.17-18. It is not something that occurs for a period of time only then to be removed, 'except in the context of a coming to faith' (Wright 2001: 677). Paul's quotation of Ps. 69.22-23 in 11.9-10 makes this quite explicit. Instead it is allowing time for Gentiles to enter the covenant community (cf. 11.19-20), as well as for Jews like Paul himself to recognize Jesus as Israel's Messiah through whom the promises are affirmed unconditionally bring about the greatest good (cf. 9.14-16)—salvation not only for Israel but also the Gentiles. It is according to which that Paul evokes in 11.20-21 the pottery imagery of Jer. 18.1-6, Isa. 29.16 and 45.9 (cf. Wisd. 15.7; Sir. 33.13); see Wright 2001: 640.

42. For the pervasiveness of apocalyptic material in Rom. 9-11, see Johnson 1989: 124-31.

43. According to Wright, God 'raised up' Pharaoh 'rather than cutting him off instantly' for the purpose of both 'rescuing Israel' and 'declaring God's name to the world'. This is what Paul understands God to be now doing through Israel. Note Wright's understanding here of ἱτέρασεν, contra Fitzmyer (1993: 597), Moo (1996: 594-95) and Dunn (1988: 554) who, drawing parallels with Hab. 1.6, Zech. 11.16 and Jer. 50.41 (27.41 LXX), understand the term in the sense of 'introduce into (salvation) history'.

44. Wright notes that Moo (1996: 681) 'gets this exactly the wrong way around', as do seemingly all who hold to the eschatological miracle interpretation.

45. Of dispute here is the meaning of διὰ ἀνανόησις; following Wright (2001: 678) I hold the RSV, NRSV, NASB and NIV correct to translate the phrase 'forever', and not 'continually', as Fitzmyer (1993: 607) suggests. But the same basic point is made in either reading. Wright (2001: 677) comments: 'This judgment is simply the other side of the coin of ethnic Israel's rejection of the crucified Messiah. The judgment, moreover, will not be reversed; as long as ethnic Israel refuses to see the crucified one as Messiah and Lord, their eyes will be darkened (v. 10) and their backs bent (cf. 2 Cor. 3.14-15).'

46. Donaldson (1997: 222-23) similarly points out this purpose that lay behind Israel's unbelief. Contrary to the two-covenant reading, it is only in this way that Israel's 'stumbling means riches for the world' and 'their defeat...riches for the gentiles' (11.12).
(cf. 11.23; 9.4-5; see also 4.16; 15.8-9). This is precisely what is proposed in 9.22-24, the notion of which underlies the entire section—by the paradoxical means of Israel’s hardening God is effectually calling both Jew and Gentile through the gospel of Christ (cf. 10.14-21; 11.11-15).

47. It is apparent that Paul did not view the hardening of unbelieving Israel as insurmountable, otherwise he could not hold out the hope that some from this group (the ‘rest’ of v. 7) would be saved (and thereby numbered among the ‘elect’) by means of his own Gentile mission (11.13-14; cf. 10.19-20; see also n. 21 above) (except in the case of the Roman mission reading that is otherwise problematic). But while the logic of Paul’s premise might require as much, Wright (2001: 678) is likely correct when he remarks: ‘Paul does not suppose that any particular ethnic Jews are subject to this condemnation; there is always room for them to come to faith. The perpetual condemnation, as far as this passage is concerned, lies upon the rejection of the crucified Messiah, not upon this or that person who acquiesced in that rejection.’

48. The notion of ‘call’ (καλέω) (cf. 8.28-30; Gal. 1.6; 5.8, 13; Phil. 3.14; 1 Thess. 2.12; 4.7; 5.24; 2 Thess. 1.11-12; 2.13-14; see also Rom. 1.1; Gal. 1.15), as Wright (2001: 642) explains, ‘is one of the regular ways of describing the process whereby the gospel’s sovereign summons evokes the obedience of faith’. It seems that for Paul, as probably consistent with Pharisaic thought (cf. Josephus, J.W. 2.162-63; Josephus, Ant. 13.172; 18.13; but also note in the Qumran literature: 1QH 6.5-10; 15.13-19; 16.10; 1QpHab 7; see Sanders 1977: 261-70; 1992: 373-74, 418-19), divine and human action work together, representing two sides of this same salvific process; cf. Witherington 2004: 246-49. Inextricably connected are thus God’s freedom, initiative and sovereign purpose and ‘human freedom, responsibility [and] obedience’ (Wright 2001: 603). And he perhaps presupposed the former in light of the latter (cf. 1 Thess. 1.4-10). Paul has established in ch. 9 that the basis for membership in God’s people has always been preeminently the free exercise of God’s grace and mercy rather than the works of Torah (9.12), which, according to ‘the regular rabbinic exegesis...the patriarchs were already obeying...even before it was given to Moses’ (Wright 2001: 637; cf., e.g., m. Kid. 4.14; 2 Bar. 57.1-2; Jub. 24.11; Sir. 44.20). And there is therefore no natural right to such (cf. 4.1-8), whether for the Jew or Gentile (cf. 11.21-22). In the culmination of God’s sovereign redemptive plan, which began with the promise to Abraham (cf. 4.13-22) and worked its way through the story of Israel (9.4-13), God’s grace and mercy has been manifested in the gospel of Christ (cf. 3.21-26), faith in which being then the evidence of membership in God’s called/elect people (9.25-26; cf. 11.5-6; 3.28-30). Barrett (1991: 171) explains: ‘It is important to recall here that the seed of Abraham...became ultimately Christ (Gal. iii. 16), and was subsequently expanded to include those who were in Christ... This means that election does not take place (as might first appear from Paul’s examples) arbitrarily or fortuitously; it takes place always and only in Christ. They are elect who are in him; they who are elect are in him (cf. Gal. iii. 29).’

49. To be especially noted is the ambiguity in 9.22-23 concerning the agent responsible for the ὁσίος ὑπογίς, as compared with the ὁσίος ἀλέους of whom God is
A third aspect of vv. 25b-26 is the proper sense of οὐτῶς. Paul consistently uses this term in a modal sense (e.g. Rom. 1.15; 4.18; 5.12, 15, 18-19, 21; 6.4, 11, 19; 9.20; 10.6; 11.5, 31; 12.5; 15.20) and, as the majority of scholars confirm, it should be understood in this way here. But, contrary to Dunn, Moo and Jewett, there is no real contextual support for understanding any temporal weight behind οὐτῶς. Thus the mystery that Paul reveals is not the limited nature of Israel’s partial hardening after which time all Israel will be saved. If Paul really wanted to say this one would suspect he would have written καὶ τότε, not καὶ οὐτῶς. The mystery is rather how Israel’s salvation is interdependent with that of the Gentiles, as 11.11-24 establish and vv. 30-32 confirm.

the express agent. Concerning such Bryan (2000: 163) suggests: ‘There is, of course, no implication that [the vessels of wrath] need to remain so. Indeed, the divine patience that has endured them is by its nature a constant sign they need not remain as they are, and an invitation to repent... Similarly with ripe for destruction—it is significant that Paul does not say prokataírismena (“prepared in advance”)—a word he certainly knows, for he uses it at 2 Corinthians 9.5—but merely kataírismena (“prepare”, “ready”, or, as I suggest, ripe): the whole point being, again, that those of whom Paul speaks are in a state where they are begging for destruction at this point in the story. By whom, then, have they been thus made ripe? Even in Koiné Greek written by a Jew, we should not simply assume that all passives are “divine”. In this case Chrysostom was surely on the mark when he suggested that Paul’s meaning is that the vessels have prepared themselves—that Pharaoh, for example, was “fully ripe indeed, but to be sure, from his own resources and by himself” (Homilies on Romans 16.8). What matters, in any case, is that the divine patience surrounds Pharaoh and all those others of whom Paul speaks. Thus the entire phraseology with which he describes their sin is really only a foil whereby he may make clear the miracle of that patience, and the grace that follows it.’ See also Wright 2001: 641-42, Cranfield 1979: 495-97, Barrett 1991: 177-78, Witherington 2004: 257-59 and Jewett 2007: 596-97, contra Moo 1996: 597-600, 607 and Byrne 1996: 302.

50. Contra Käsemann 1980: 313, Van der Horst 2000: 521-25 and Witherington 2004: 274. Though Rom. 1.15, 6.11, 1 Cor. 14.25 and 1 Thess. 4.17 have been claimed to demonstrate the so-called ‘logical’ meaning, they arguably bear the same sense of manner as every other occurrence of οὐτῶς in Paul.

51. This reading corresponds quite well with Paul’s hortatory purpose in the section to quell ethnic pride and arrogance over Jews. Further, it is worth pointing out that this is the only understanding of Israel’s salvation presented here, save perhaps the ecclesiological reading, that could be reasonably arrived at if vv. 25-27 were absent from the section. The omission of these verses has no prima facie effect on the larger argument; the logic of Paul’s thought flows seamlessly from v. 24 directly to v. 28. This begs the question as to whether it is hermeneutically appropriate to interpret Paul’s clearer and more extensive discourse through the lens of three enigmatic verses, or if the reverse would be more advisable.
Objections to the 'Total National Elect' Interpretation

In addition to the arguments in support of this interpretation, I believe it firmly holds up against the four common objections to it.

Objection 1: The Role of the 'Remnant' and the Anticipation of Israel's 'Fullness'

Scholars such as Cranfield (1979: 576-77) have criticized this reading as then rendering 11.26 anti-climactic.52 But perhaps this is merely a case of anticipating a certain conclusion Paul himself never reached. And so, for example, many rightly note that the remnant motif in 11.1-5 functions as a sign of hope for the future of Israel and not as a substitute for the whole nation (Johnson 1984: 96; Hafemann 1988: 49; cf. Wright 2001: 676). But this only suggests that Paul expects more, perhaps many more, Jews to be saved.

As mentioned above, the same can be said for Paul’s reference to Israel’s ‘fullness’ in 11.12. It need not at all imply a future mass salvific event. It seems far more likely that it simply denotes all those of Israel who will eventually believe (cf. Jewett 2007: 677-78).53 It is thus roughly parallel to Paul’s reference to the fullness of the Gentiles, which, against Nanos, most scholars understand along these same lines. It should not be taken as incidental to the point that Paul explicates in vv. 11-15 a process through which God is saving both Jew and Gentile.

Objection 2: The Eschatological Character of 11.15

Another objection is that Paul’s association of Israel’s acceptance with resurrection in 11.15 indicates that all Israel’s salvation awaits the parousia

52. See also Nanos 1996: 256. Moo (1996: 722) notes the faulty notion behind the criticism that this reading turns 11.26 into a ‘purposeless truism’: ‘Paul’s focus is not so much on the fact that all Israel will be saved as on the manner in which it will be saved’.

53. Wright (2001: 680-81) comments on 11.12: ‘This is the first moment that Paul has suggested an increase in the number of Jews who come to be not merely Abraham’s physical descendants but his “seed” in the full sense of 9.7-8. Up until 10.21 the number seemed to be diminishing, whittled down to a remnant. Even in 11.1-10 this “remnant” seemed to consist simply of the small number who, like Paul, had through God’s electing grace abandoned the status based on “works” and embraced the messianic faith focused on Jesus. Now for the first time he begins to say something further may yet happen. Israel according to the flesh has been [ὑπόθεν] “diminished”; now it will be brought to fullness.’
when the final events of the age will ensue. But such an understanding, if it be accepted, does not suggest anything other than the time when all of the elect from Israel will have come in (cf. 4 Ezra 4.35-37; 2 Bar. 23.4-5; Rev. 6.11; 7.4; 14.1). And this would be consistent with the apparent widespread belief in Second Temple Judaism that the eschaton would follow Israel’s repentance (Allison 1985: 23-30). However, it is also likely that Paul, intending to humble and inspire among his Gentile audience a desire to see more Jews be saved, interprets here Israel’s role Christologically (Wright 2001: 682-83; also see esp. Hays 1989: 61-62). He is saying that because Israel’s rejection functioned like the death of the Messiah in bringing salvation to the Gentiles, whenever a Jew is saved it carries the significance of resurrection. It should be celebrated then, in the words of Wright, as a ‘little Easter’.

Objection 3: The Language of Paul’s Quotation of Isaiah 59.20 and 27.9
A third objection concerns Paul’s quotation from Isaiah, but, as already indicated, there is no reason to understand 11.26-27 as a reference to the parousia. It is likely that Paul is quoting not directly from Scripture, but, as Christopher D. Stanley (1993: 126) explains, ‘from a Jewish oral tradition in which Isaiah 59.20 and Isaiah 27.9 had already been conflated and adapted to give voice to a particular interpretation of Yahweh’s

55. Cf. T. Dan 6.4; T. Sib. 6.2-7; T. Jud. 23.5; T. Mos. 1.18; 2 Bar. 78.6-7; Apoc. Abr. 23.5; 4 Ezra 4.38-39; b. Sanh. 97b, 98a; b. Sabbath. 118b; Sifre Deut. 41; see also Acts 3.19-20.
56. Cf. Wright 1991: 248. That 11.15 connotes both a Christological and eschatological meaning is probable, particularly given the eschatological framework in which Paul views his own apostolic mission—this mission being the context of vv. 11-15.
57. Cf. Hvalvik 1990: 93: ‘Another argument in favour of an eschatological interpretation is the more or less clear eschatological ring of the quotation and the context (cf. v. 25). This is, however, seldom spelled out... It is, of course, a prophetic future within the framework of Isaiah, but does Paul understand it as future? Probably not. As in the case of Isa. 11.10 quoted in Rom. 15.12 the future tense in 11.26 should be regarded "als schon realisierte Prophezie". For Paul the Deliverer has already come from Zion (cf. 9.33). This is clearly seen if one compares Rom. 11.28 with 15.8. In 11.26-28 the salvation of "all Israel" is linked with the promises to the fathers (cf. also 9.5), and in 15.8 Paul tells how these promises have been confirmed when “Christ became a servant to the circumcised”. This means that God’s truthfulness toward his promises are seen in Christ’s first coming.'
coming intervention on behalf of his oppressed people Israel. The purpose of the citation would seem then to simply underscore Paul’s assertion throughout the entire section: God is fulfilling through Christ his promise to save Israel. As Wright (2001: 693) notes: ‘God said that Abraham’s family would be the bearers, as well as the recipients, of salvation, and this is what will happen’ (cf. 3.1-4). The word of God has not failed (9.6a). In spite of the resistance to the gospel on the part of many within Israel (11.28a), Jews have been and will continue to be saved (cf. 11.24; see also 5.6-11), because “they are beloved, for the sake of the ancestors; for the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable,”58 (11.28b-29; cf. 9.7-13; 10.2139; see also argument 2 above). It is thus fully consistent with this reading.

**Objection 4: ‘All Israel’ Must Mean the Whole Nation and not Merely the Elect**

A final objection is that interpreting ‘all Israel’ in such a qualified way

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58. The adjective ἀνυφανείατος means literally ‘without regret’; cf. 2 Cor. 7.10, which is the only other instance of this term in the Old or New Testament. Jewett (2007: 708-709) explains: ‘The formulation thus relates to the rhetorical question in 11.1, whether God has “rejected his people”, and reaffirms the continued status of “beloved [by God] on account of the fathers” in 11.28. That the God of biblical faith was in fact frequently depicted as changing his mind [Jewett notes: Gen. 6.6-7; Exod. 32.14; Deut. 32.26; 1 Sam. 15.11, 35; Jer. 18.8, 10; 26.13; Jonah 3.10] provides the background for this denial that she had done so with regard to Israel’s distinctive gifts and calling. Although God was free to withdraw such privileges, while humans often come to regret and then to renounce their commitments, God’s faithfulness remains firm.’

59. Cf. Jewett 2007: 648-49: ‘The final citation in the chain is drawn verbatim from Isa 65.2, with a transposition of the expression at the beginning of the sentence… The transposition seems to resonate with the poignant question that opens the next pericope, whether God has rejected Israel, The entire argument [of Rom. 9-11] aims at denying this prejudicial possibility. The transposition reinforces the idea that God’s patient mercy remains “continually” in force with regard to his beloved Israel. The expression of reaching out hands also points in this direction: the New Testament hapax legomenon ἐκπέμπων τοῖς χρήσις... is “a gesture of appealing welcome and fellowship” [Cranfield 1979: 541]. The expression ἀλήθεια τῆς ἡμέρας…is a semiticism meaning “uninterruptedly” or “without pause”, thus accentuating the extraordinary steadfastness of God’s mercy… The function of the citation is to draw the final consequence from [10.14-21], namely, that while they remain a “disobedient and disputatious people”, God continues to reach out his hands imploringly to Israel… [A]s the subsequent pericopes will go on to show, divine mercy will in the end rule the day (11.32).’
does not do justice to the phrase. Can πᾶς Ἰσραήλ truly indicate anything other than the great majority of Jews or even every Jew? First, as noted above, the phrase is overwhelmingly used in the Old Testament and Jewish sources in a corporate sense without referring to every single member (see n. 3). This understanding, especially given what Paul has already claimed in 9.6-8, is also consistent with the often cited parallel rabbinic expression in m. Sanh. 10.1, ‘all Israel has a share in the age to come’, which is then followed with a list of exceptions (cf. Käsemann 1980: 313; Barrett 1991: 206; Wright 2001: 689-90; see Sanders 1977: 147-82 for a full discussion surrounding this text).\textsuperscript{60}

Second, Moo’s contention (1996: 722), developed apparently from Cranfield’s objection to the ecclesiastical interpretation (1979: 576), that ‘Israel’ in v. 26a must have the same referent as in v. 25b (where the nation collectively is in view) and therefore should not be understood in terms of the elect alone is simply illogical. Strictly speaking, it is an unavoidable conclusion that ‘all Israel’ is the elect from the nation.\textsuperscript{61} By definition, those who are ultimately saved must be the elect, even if this would mean the nation of Israel in its near entirety (after the partial hardening is supposedly removed) at the parousia, as per his reading.

That the ‘elect’ and ‘rest’ of v. 7 represent for Paul fixed memberships, as seemingly presupposed by the eschatological miracle interpretation, cannot be maintained in the scope of ch. 11 (see nn. 47, 48 and 49 above). Again, there is at the time of Paul’s writing a remnant of Jewish believers, and he firmly believes that more Jews will be saved via the paradoxical means of hardening that has come upon a part of the nation. This is ‘all Israel’—the ‘elect’ as distinguished from the ‘rest’ who remain in unbelief. Thus, while Paul’s hope is for the elect to eventually include a large number from the historical nation, he makes no definitive predictions here, or in any of his other letters, that such will actually be the case.

\textsuperscript{60} As pointed out above, Jewett (2007: 702) holds 11.26 to mean every member of ‘the house of Israel, who, without exception, would be saved’. He notes that πᾶς ‘does not lend itself to expression of exceptions’, and suggests that nothing in the immediate context suggests any exceptions, ‘because v. 27 goes on to argue that “all” of Israel’s sins will be taken away and v. 32 concludes that God will show mercy “to all”’. However, this is to ignore Paul’s premise regarding the true identity of Israel. All who truly are Israel will be saved, having all their sins forgiven (cf. n. 52 above). With respect to v. 32, the ‘all’ is not a reference to every individual, but to people groups. God has shown mercy to both the Jew and Gentile, and thus to all humanity, by means of the Christ event.

\textsuperscript{61} Except in the case of the ecclesiastical interpretation whereby ‘all Israel’ would constitute not just those from empirical Israel but Gentiles as well.
There is every reason to believe that Paul understood a number of individual Jews would in the end be disqualified from the future age (as would also be clearly the case among the Gentiles).

**Conclusion**

On the basis of the overall exegetical integrity of this view in contrast to the others that have been offered to date, I conclude that the salvation of 'all Israel' in Rom. 11.26 should indeed be interpreted as the total elect from the historical nation. It not only makes sense of the immediate context, but also stands in agreement with Paul's teaching throughout the entire letter and elsewhere.\(^\text{62}\)

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\(^{62}\) Of particular interest here is 1 Thess. 2.14-16. Much has been made of its apparent theological disparity with Rom. 11, leading some to postulate that it is an interpolation; e.g. B.A. Pearson (1971) (note that Pearson articulates several other objections to authenticity as well). However, as the above analysis has demonstrated, the passages are in fact quite consistent with one another. Concerning the contemporary theological implications that arise from this reading, I would suggest that any understanding that holds Israel's partial hardening as a phenomenon extending beyond the first century to be wholly inappropriate. I believe that the divine hardening and judgment proposed here were fulfilled in the events of 70 CE.
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