# *Mission and Meaning*
## *Essays Presented to Peter Cotterell*

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# 8

# Paul's Apostolic Self-Awareness and the Occasion and Purpose of Romans

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Since F.C. Baur it has been acknowledged that the proper interpretation of Romans depends on establishing Paul's purpose in writing the letter.[1] However, 'current research concerning the purpose of Romans is in a state of confusion'.[2] The main disagreement arises (1) from the different understanding of the function of Romans 1-11 with respect to the purpose of the letter,[3] and (2) from the difficulty in establishing the situation of the Roman church. Some presuppose that Romans *must* have been based on a concrete situation in Rome *because* 'every other authentic Pauline

1 F.C. Baur, 'Über Zweck und Veranlassung des Römerbriefs und die damit zusammen-hängenden Verhältnisse der römischen Gemeinde', *Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie* (1836), Heft 3, 59-178; Baur, *Paul The Apostle of Jesus Christ, His Life and Work, His Epistles and His Doctrine* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1876 2nd edn), Vol. 1, 310-11, for his summary of the above article.

2 K.P. Donfried, 'False Presuppositions in the Study of Romans', in K.P. Donfried (ed.), *The Romans Debate: Revised and Expanded Edition* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991 2nd edn), 102; G. Bornkamm, 'The Letter to the Romans as Paul's Last Will and Testament', reprinted in Donfried (ed.), *Romans*, 16. Two recent studies by A.J.M. Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 1-6, and '"Like an Ever-rolling Stream": Some Recent Commentaries on Romans', *SJT* 44 (1991), 367-80, and N. Elliott's remark in *The Rhetoric of Romans: Argumentative Constraint and Strategy and Paul's Dialogue with Judaism*, JSNTS 45 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 9-11, confirm that Donfried's appraisal is still correct.

3 Cf. C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 Vols. ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975, 1979), 1:20, 'What is less easy to understand is why he included 1:16b-15:13 – and this precisely – in the letter.'

writing, *without exception*, is addressed to the specific situations of the churches'.[4] Others argue that any attempt to understand Romans from reference to the situation in Rome 'gets us nowhere'.[5] Thus, they assert, Romans (and 1-11 in particular) is to be understood as a comprehensive summary of his theology in the light of Paul's forthcoming debate in Jerusalem.[6]

Neither assumption is totally satisfactory. The former overlooks the fact that Paul's way of dealing with the 'situation' in Romans is significantly different from other letters,[7] and excessively interprets Romans 1-11 according to their framework.[8] On the other hand, the latter view undermines the situation described in Romans 13:1-7; 14-16, and the correlation between the Jew-Gentile problem and the exposition of the Jew-Gentile relation in Romans 1-11. A more prevailing view today (largely reflecting post-Holocaust feeling) is that Romans is written to correct the then *present* climate of *anti-semitism* exercised by the *Gentile majority* within the Roman Christian community. Thus, according to this view, Paul argues for the primacy of the Jews as he warns Gentiles not be arrogant towards the Jews (cf. 11:17-32) and highlights the privileges of Jews (3:1-2; 9:3-5; 11:16-29).

The aim of this paper is to examine this particular hypothesis and its supporting assumptions, and to propose an alternative hypothesis that the occasion and the purpose of Romans can best be understood

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4 Donfried, 'Presuppositions', 103; so also P.S. Minear, *The Obedience of Faith: The Purposes of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans*, SBT 2nd Series 19 (London: SCM, 1971), *passim*; W. Marxsen, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 92-109; W. Wiefel, 'The Jewish Community in Ancient Rome', reprinted in Donfried (ed.), *Romans*, 85-101. Similarly F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, TNTC (Leicester: IVP, 1963), 182; J.C. Beker, 'The Faithfulness of God and the Priority of Israel in Paul's Letter to the Romans', *HTR* 79 (1986), 10-12; J.C. O'Neill, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), 145-46.

5 G. Bornkamm, *Paul* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985), 93.

6 Bornkamm, *Paul*, 93; J. Jervell, 'The Letter to Jerusalem', reprinted in Donfried (ed.), *Romans*, 54-55; R.J. Karris, 'The Occasion of Romans: A Response to Prof. Donfried', in Donfried (ed.), *Romans*, 65-84; so also E.P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law and Jewish People* (London: SCM, 1983), 31, following T.W. Manson, 'St. Paul's Letter to the Romans – and Others', reprinted in Donfried (ed.), *Romans*, 3-15.

7 E.g., in Galatians and 1 Corinthians Paul deals with the situation of the respective churches right at the beginning of the letters, and offers specific instructions and argument to the readers and opponents with some very strong words.

8 Most notably Minear, *Obedience*; F. Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach*, SNTSMS 56 (Cambridge: CUP, 1986).

in the light of Paul's self-awareness of being apostle to the Gentiles. We will investigate the situation in Jerusalem as well as that of the Roman church, because both are closely connected to the occasion of the letter. Paul goes to Jerusalem yet again under a great apostolic consciousness of his obligation to defend and secure the legitimacy of the salvation of the Gentiles and the mission to them. Going to Jerusalem involves another risk. He foresees the possibility of his long imprisonment or even martyrdom at the hands of unbelieving Jews there (15:31). With such a prospect in view, and with the uncertainty of his visit to Rome, Paul felt constrained to write this letter as a *permanent substitute* for his intended apostolic presence and ministry. Forseeing the *future* trouble by the (judaising) agitators sharpened Paul's sense of his own commission as apostle to the Gentiles and drove him to prepare the Roman believers to stand in unity against them. We will show that the content and the structure of Paul's argument indicate that he establishes the legitimacy of Gentile salvation by affirming the equality of Gentiles with Jews.

## 1. Romans: A Correction of Anti-Semitism?

Paul indicates that the Roman Christian community has an internal problem of passing judgment on disputable matters between the 'weak' and the 'strong'(14:1, 4, 10, 13). The section 15:5-12 indicates that this problem was largely between Jewish and Gentile believers.[9] The prevailing view today reconstructs the problem of the Roman church as a conflict between an arrogant Gentile majority and oppressed Jewish minority.[10] Some scholars even assume that Paul 'has to' speak to the majority to protect the minority.[11] We will begin

9 Watson, *Paul*, 94-105; M.A. Seifrid, *Justification by Faith: The Origin and Development of a Central Pauline Theme* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), 205.

10 E.g. J.C. Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 75. The opposite reconstruction of the constituency of the Roman Christian community is contended by Watson, *Paul*, 88-105, following Baur, 'Zweck und Veranlassung', 149-56, 202ff.; Baur, *Paul*, 1:349-65. Those who also follow Baur (with differences) include H.W. Bartsch, 'The Historical Situation of Romans', *Encounter* 33 (1972), 335; T. Fahy, 'St. Paul's Romans Were Jewish Converts', *Irish Theological Quarterly* 26 (1959), 182ff.; W. Manson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: An Historical and Theological Reconsideration* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1951), 172ff.; Manson, 'Notes on the Argument of Romans (Chapters 1-8)', in A.J.B. Higgins (ed.), *New Testament Essays: Studies in Memory of T.W. Manson* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959), 151; Donfried, 'Presuppositions', 102-124.

11 E.g. Seifrid, *Justification*, 205-206: 'Conservative Jewish Christians were in danger of being cut off from the main body of the church.' W.G. Kümmel,

by examining two major grounds of this contention: (1) Gentiles are the majority in the Roman church, and (2) Paul shapes the content of his argument in favour of Jews so as to defend them.

*(a) The Reliability of Gentile-Majority Hypotheses*

*(i) Romans 16 and the Gentile-Majority Theory.* According to W. Marxsen and P. Lampe, the infrequency of the Jewish names in Romans 16 indicates that the Roman church is largely Gentile in origin.[12] After examining the names mentioned in the chapter, Lampe asserts that Jewish Christians are only a small minority of 15%, in spite of Paul's 'special interest in emphasising the Jewish origin of Christians',[13] by consistently applying the term *suggenēs* ('fellow countrymen') to all Jewish believers he can identify in Romans 16. However, we find such a methodological understanding perilous.

It is implausible to calculate the relative proportions of the Roman congregation on the basis of the names written in this chapter, when certainly a greater portion of the congregation is not named here. For example, Paul does not say anything about the size or the ethnic origins of those who belong to the churches that meet at the house of Aquila and Priscilla (16:5), of Aristobulus (16:10), and of Narcissus (16:11). Likewise, the phrases, 'the brothers with them' (16:14), and 'all the saints with them' (16:15) do not clearly indicate the proportion of ethnic groups. And if 'Aristobulus' is a member of the Jewish royal family, as Josephus may suggest,[14] it seems highly probable that those who belong to his household would be predominantly Jews rather than Gentiles.

Moreover, the customary use of non-Jewish names in Palestine[15] (and even more apparently in Rome)[16] among the Jews proves that

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*Introduction to the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1975), 309; K. Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 3, 132.

12 Marxsen, *Introduction*, 108; P. Lampe, 'The Roman Christians of Romans 16', reprinted in Donfried (ed.), *Romans*, 224-25; so also H.C. Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1943, reprinted 1987), 224.

13 Lampe, 'Roman Christians', 224-25.

14 According to Josephus, there are at least seven men with this name, all belonging to the Jewish royal family (*Ant.* xiii, x.2; xiii.xvi.1; xv.x.1; xx.viii.4; xviii.v.4; xv.iii.1, 3; xviii.v.4; *War* vii.vii.4.).

15 B.C. Kaganoff, 'Jewish Naming Customs in Biblical Times', in *Encyclopaedia Britanica Research Library Service R-3847*, 6; cited from Kaganoff, 'Jewish First Names Through the Ages', *Commentary* (1955), 447-50: 'The custom of using a non-Jewish name as a companion and addition to one's Hebrew name

Lampe's method is rather unsound. Aquila is a good example. He has a Latin name, but without the accounts in Acts (18:2), no one could be certain of his Jewish origin; we can't be sure with Lampe that Aquila is 'the only exception'.[17] We cannot, then, deduce the proportions of the Roman Christian community from the evidence of the names *mentioned* in Romans (on the same grounds one might assume Paul himself was a Gentile!).

*(ii) The Addressees of Romans and the Gentile-Majority Theory.* The phrase *en hois este kai humeis* ('amongst whom are you also', 1:6) is often taken to indicate Gentiles and thus the Roman Christian community as predominantly Gentile.[18] However, it could also 'refer to its geographical situation in the midst of the Gentile world', as Cranfield suggests.[19] If Paul had meant that the church was made up mostly of Gentiles, says Cranfield, he would have more naturally used *ex hōn* ('of whom', as in 9:6). This phrase, therefore, cannot be an absolute proof that Gentiles are the majority, nor that the letter is sent to Gentiles.[20] The vocative in 11:13 clearly indicates that at that

originated several centuries before the destruction of the Second Temple... At first, the non-Jewish names were used in relations with non-Jews only. One's Greek name was a direct translation of one's Hebrew name... Gradually, however, the non-Jewish name became the more important one, and finally the only name.'

16 After examining 551 names of Jews in Rome, H.J. Leon, *The Jews of Ancient Rome* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1960), 107-108, concludes: 'Apparently, then, the Roman Jews had accepted the Latin names of their Roman neighbours to a much greater extent than they had adopted the Latin language.'

17 Lampe's explanation for this exception is not convincing; Lampe, 'Roman Christians', 225, n. 36.

18 W. Sanday and A.C. Headlam, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 Vols. ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1895 and 1902), 1:12; C.K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, BNTC (London: A&C Black, 1991 2nd edn), 22; P. Stuhlmacher, 'The Purpose of Romans', reprinted in Donfried (ed.), *Romans*, 235; E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. and ed. G.W. Bromiley (London: SCM, 1980), 15, 366; Lampe, 'Roman Christians', 223; Seifrid, *Justification*, 190, 202; M. Kettunen, *Der Abfassungszweck des Römerbriefs*, Annales Academiae scientarum Fennicae: dissertationes humanarum literterum 18 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1979), 27. For the most extreme view, see J. Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, trans. F. Clarke (London: SCM, 1959), 201, 204-207. See Watson's objection, *Paul*, 211 n. 65.

19 Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:20, 67-68; U. Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 3 Vols. EKK (Zürich: Benziger/Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978, 1980, 1982), 1:67; Watson, *Paul*, 103.

20 *Pace* Stuhlmacher, 'Purpose', 235. A.J.M. Wedderburn, 'Purpose and Occasion of Romans Again', reprinted in Donfried (ed.), *Romans*, 196ff. rightly

point he addresses the Gentile Christians with specific teaching, but this cannot prove with certainty that the addressees of the whole letter are primarily Gentiles.[21]

*(iii) The Return from Expulsion and the Gentile-Majority Theory.* Most scholars agree that before the Jewish expulsion under the Claudius edict in AD 49, Jews were the majority in the Christian community in Rome.[22] However, many scholars assume that the returning Jewish believers found that the remaining Gentile Christians had increased into a large movement.[23] According to Wiefel, when the Jewish believers came back to Rome they found a new Gentile congregation, which was 'completely different in organisational structure and spiritual outlook from the old one which had existed in the synagogue'.[24] This means that while Jewish Christians were expelled from Rome, a new Gentile Christianity had grown up by itself to the point of theological confrontation with the returning Jewish believers.

Wiefel does not explain, however, why and how these God-fearers, who had not been weaned from their close connection with the synagogue,[25] could possibly have organised a distinct group. It seems probable that, during the Jewish expulsion, the Gentile Christians continued their Christian life and faith, and it also seems possible that the Gentile proselytes and God-fearers might have attempted to relax the careful observation of the law.[26] But it is improbable that they not only remained as a separate entity but also actually became a group 'theologically' opposed to the returning Jewish Christians. We do not have firm evidence for such a

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objects to Schmithals' assertion that there is no argument at all about Jewish believers, because there were no Christian Jews in Rome.

21 Cf. Sanders, *Jewish People*, 183-84.

22 F.F. Bruce, 'The Romans Debate – Continued', reprinted in Donfried (ed.), *Romans*, 179; Watson, *Paul*, 91. Wiefel, 'Jewish Community', 93, observes that Christianity expanded rapidly among the Jews in Rome by taking advantage of the absence of a central governing body and by the loose structure of the synagogues.

23 Wiefel, 'Jewish Community', 85-101, esp. 96; J.A. Crafton, 'Paul's Rhetorical Vision and the Purpose of Romans: Toward a New Understanding', *NovT* 32 (1992), 325; Bruce, 'Romans Debate', 178-80; K.P. Donfried, 'A Short Note on Romans 16', reprinted in Donfried, *Romans*, 48; J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), liii.

24 Wiefel, 'Jewish Community', 96.

25 Schmithals' stress on the Gentile believers' close attachment to Judaism is welcomed by K.P. Donfried, 'Introduction 1991', in Donfried (ed.), *Romans*, lii.

26 Elliott, *Rhetoric*, 51.

revolution in theological insight (which is 'Pauline' in character) and its remarkable establishment in such a short period (AD 49-54) amongst the former God-fearers, who had been on the edge of the synagogues.[27]

Rather, it seems more natural to suppose that when the Jewish believers returned, the Gentile believers welcomed them and probably even re-established themselves under their leadership.[28] We do not know how many Jews returned to Rome after the death of Claudius. It would take some time for them to trickle back, and some Jews preferred not to return for various reasons. Thus one cannot be certain which group was the majority when Paul wrote the letter.[29] There is, however, internal evidence that supports the idea of the existence of 'a substantial number of Jewish Christians' in the Roman church (1:16; 2:5-10, 17-29; 3:9-20; 4:1-25; 7:1-25; 9:10, 19).[30]

To this extent, it is difficult to maintain the Gentile majority hypothesis. What is important for us to discern is the *character* of the community rather than the reconstruction of a majority constituency (which cannot be established with any degree of certainty).[31] As Lampe admits, the entire content of the letter assumes it could be understood only by those who had a deep knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures and culture.[32] For example, Paul frequently uses sacrificial and priestly motifs in Romans which are familiar to Jews.[33] There is no evidence to maintain Lampe's answer to this paradox that the Gentile Christians in the church of Rome were 'sympathisers on the margins of the synagogues before they became Christians'.[34] Furthermore, if there was 'a strong flow of originally Jewish materials prevalent in the Roman church during [the first two]

27 *Pace* Seifrid, *Justification*, 190, 202, 204, n. 98.

28 *Contra* C.H. Cosgrove, 'The Justification of the Other: An Interpretation of Rom 1:18-4:25', in E.H. Lovering, Jr. (ed.), *SBL 1992 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1992), 622-24; similarly N.T. Wright, 'Romans and the Theology of Paul', in E.H. Lovering, Jr. (ed.), *SBL 1992 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1992), 187.

29 So also A.J. Guerra, 'Romans: Paul's Purpose and Audience with Special Attention to Romans 9-11', *RevBib* 97 (1990), 235, n. 63.

30 See D.A. Campbell, *The Rhetoric of Righteousness in Romans 3.21-26*, JSNTS 65 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 14-19, 132, 133, n. 1-2.

31 Though Elliott, *Rhetoric*, 51, follows Wiefel's Gentile-majority view, he correctly notes that there is no evidence of the emergence of Gentile Christianity in Rome apart from what is shown in Romans 16 (*Rhetoric*, 49).

32 Lampe, 'Roman Christians', 225.

33 Cf. Campbell, *Rhetoric*, 132, 133, n. 1-2.

34 Lampe, 'Roman Christians', 225; Wedderburn, 'Purpose', 196.

centuries', as Lampe again notes,[35] there seems little evidence to assert that the Roman church in the first century was predominantly Gentile in number as well as in influence.[36] Rather, the Roman church seems to have maintained a Judaic character, as observed by the fourth century writer Ambrosiaster.[37] He indicates that the (Jewish) believers in Rome found no conflict in believing in Christ while also keeping the law and practising Jewish rites. We have no reason to believe that this account is not based on sound tradition.[38] After all, if the Gentile believers had been able to confront the Jewish believers with theological issues (e.g. with the new place of the law and of Gentiles in the new Israel), Paul would not have needed to write in such detail as in Romans.

*(b) The Content of Paul's Argument*

According to Wiefel, Paul makes affirmative statements about the *Jewish* heritage in Romans 9-11[39] so that Christianity might not turn into an anti-Jewish movement.[40] In his Jewish-Christian dialogue with the orthodox Jewish theologian P. Lapide, P. Stuhlmacher claims that Paul's conception of his mission to the Gentiles is governed by the fundamental argument stated in 9:1-6 and 11:25-32,

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35 Lampe, 'Roman Christians', 225, n. 38.

36 Cf. J. Drane, 'Why did Paul write Romans?', in D.A. Hagner and M.J. Harris (eds.), *Pauline Studies: Essays presented to F.F. Bruce on his 70th Birthday* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1980), 218, who uniquely maintains that perhaps the Jewish believers were not a minority in number, but in influence: they found themselves 'no longer the dominant grouping among the Roman Christians. For the whole character and outlook of the church had probably changed dramatically during their absence'.

37 Ambrosiaster writes (as cited by J. Knox, 'The Epistle to the Romans', in *Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. IX (Nashville: Abingdon, 1954), 362; see also Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, xxv, ci: 'It is established that there were Jews living in Rome in the times of the apostles, and that those Jews who had believed [in Christ] passed on to the Romans the tradition that they ought to profess Christ but keep the law... One ought not to condemn the Romans, but to praise their faith; because without seeing any signs or miracles and without seeing any of the apostles, they nevertheless accepted faith in Christ, although according to a Jewish rite.'

38 So M. Black, *Romans*, NCBC (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1973), 22.

39 The reliability of Wiefel's observation is highly questionable; for a detailed discussion see Daniel J-S. Chae, 'Paul as Apostle to the Gentiles: His Apostolic Self-Awareness and its Influence on the Soteriological Argument in Romans' (dissertation submitted for the degree of PhD, London Bible College, May 1995), ch. 5.

40 Wiefel, 'Jewish Community', 100-101; so also Jervell, 'Jerusalem', 59-60.

because 'Paul conceived of himself as having been commissioned by Jesus as an apostle to the Gentiles *for Israel's sake*'.[41] It is true that Paul's intention is not to oppose Israel, but Stuhlmacher seems to have gone too far in suggesting that Paul's theology and life were shaped in favour of Israel.[42] Lapide sees Paul differently,[43] but he comes to a similar conclusion to Stuhlmacher's: 'it often appears as if the entire mission to the Gentiles is *only a roundabout way of saving all Israel*.'[44] Munck had asserted earlier that Paul's mission to the Gentiles is 'not simply a roundabout way, but is foreseen by God as the shortest way (Deut. 32:21) to turn the Jews from their unbelief'.[45]

It may be admitted that Paul makes some positive comments on the law (2:13; 3:31; 7:12, 14, 16-22, 25; 8:4), on circumcision (3:1; 9-11; 15:8; but denied in Gal. 5:6; 6:15), and on Jewish priority (as in his 'to the Jew first and also to the Greek' [1:16; 2:9-10; but denied in 3:9, 22; 10:12; Gal. 3:28]). It is essential, however, to note that while Paul in Romans assumes and mentions the salvation-historical privileges of the Jews, he hardly *expounds* them at all. If Romans was written primarily to correct anti-Jewish sentiment among the Gentile believers, why does he not offer fuller *argument* to achieve the aim? One might wish that Paul had elaborated on 11:26a, yet too much has been deduced from this short clause (especially after the Holocaust,[46] though in fact this verse evidently can have nothing to do with the Holocaust[47]).

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41 Stuhlmacher, in Lapide and Stuhlmacher, *Paul: Rabbi and Apostle*, trans. L.W. Denef (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 25-30, emphasis added. Similarly Munck, *Paul*, 42-49; Stendahl, *Paul*, vi, 3, 132.

42 Lapide, in Lapide and Stuhlmacher, *Paul*, 26; e.g. Jervell, 'Jerusalem', 59-60.

43 See Lapide, in Lapide and Stuhlmacher, *Paul*, 32, 54.

44 Lapide in Lapide and Stuhlmacher, *Paul*, 44; emphasis added.

45 Munck, *Paul*, 47, 40.

46 The Christian church as well as the Jewish community experienced an enormous shock as the result of the Holocaust. It has brought a radical reshaping in theological positions as well: R.L. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz* (London: SCM, 1960), is most notable for his bitter reaction; for a more moderate position in view of God's goodness and omnipotence, see Rabbi E. Berkovits, *Faith After the Holocaust* (New York: KTAV Publishing, 1973) and Rabbi M. Wyschograd, 'Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era?', *Tradition* (Fall 1977), 63ff. See further J. Jocz, 'Israel After Auschwitz', in D.W. Torrance (ed.), *The Witness of the Jews to God* (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1982), 58-70. The strong anti-semitism during the Second World War turned to a strong pro-semitism after the Holocaust. Both the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches have affirmed pro-semitic positions: W.M. Abbott, *The Documents of Vatican II* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967), 666-67; *Apostolic Faith Today* (Geneva: WCC, 1985), 259-65. Thus the churches in the Middle East, for example, accuse western

Rather, we contend that what Paul *argues for* at length, on the contrary, is the *equality* of Jew and Gentile in Christ.[48] A brief survey would be sufficient to reject the assertion that Paul argues for the primacy of the Jews so as to correct anti-semitism sentiment. He declares in the thematic statement that the gospel brings salvation to everyone who believes, 'to the Jew specially, but equally to the Gentile' (1:16).[49] God does not show favouritism between Jew and Gentile (2:9-11), thus there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles (3:9, 22; 10:12; cf. Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). Paul also declares, 'we [Jews] are not any better off [than Gentiles]' (3:9), and the catena of Old Testament quotations confirms their equality in sinfulness (3:10-18). He argues that God is not merely the God of Jews but the God of Gentiles too (3:29), and Abraham is equally the father of many nations (= Gentiles). Furthermore, Jews and Gentiles are equal in Adam's sin and in Christ's justification (5:12-21), and in Romans 5-8 they are treated as one 'ethnic' group, 'we'. Since God deals with Jews and Gentiles equally, he has sovereign freedom to harden or to show mercy on either of them (9:10-24). Salvation is available to whoever (without ethnic distinction) calls upon the name of the Lord (10:12-13). For both Jews and Gentiles, faith is the equal condition for being grafted into or for remaining in the olive tree (11:17-24). God has bound Jews and Gentiles over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all (11:32). Later Paul argues that Christ's service was intended for both Jews and Gentiles, and the Old Testament has predicted the equal and joint worship of Jews and Gentiles (15:8-12).

Furthermore, the way Paul *structures* his argument provides us with even firmer evidence that he is not arguing for the primacy of the Jews. His stress on the theological axiom of divine impartiality does not merely affirm that God deals with Jew and Gentile equally, but is also designed to affirm the inevitable judgment upon the (unbelieving) Jews, and to establish the legitimate inclusion of the

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theology of being a 'geo-political theology' (M. Barth, *The People of God* [Sheffield: JSOT, 1983], 29). See G. Wigoder, *Jewish-Christian Relations since the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

47 As expressed by Dr C.C. Caragounis of the University of Lund, Sweden, during our discussion in Tübingen on 22 April, 1992, in reaction to modern scholars who interpret 11:26 (and even Romans itself) through the perspective of the Holocaust.

48 For a treatment in detail, see my PhD dissertation, 'Paul as Apostle to the Gentiles', chs. 2-5.

49 The rendering is taken from *Jewish New Testament*, trans. D.H. Stern.

(believing) Gentiles in God's salvific blessing.[50] Paul's 'biased' structure of his argument towards the Gentiles is even more apparent in 2:12-29. There he repeatedly asserts that Jews break the law while Gentiles keep its requirement. So he portrays the (believing) Gentiles as 'true Jews' and 'true and inward circumcision' (2:25-29). The Old Testament quotations in 3:10-18 are not merely cited to affirm that Jews and Gentiles are sinful without exception, but more fundamentally to substantiate his claim that Jews are not any better off than Gentiles (3:9).

It is also striking that Paul attempts to exclude Jewish boasting in the law and their special relationship with God and their Abrahamic ancestry, while simultaneously arguing that Gentiles may 'boast' in these items. He constantly portrays Gentiles as having faith (9:25-26, 30; 10:20; 11:20) while he depicts Jews as disobedient and unbelieving (9:27-29; 9:31-10:3, 21; 11:7-10; 17-24). Paul's admonition to the Gentile believers not to be arrogant towards the Jews (11:17-24) does not necessarily indicate that they have already become so, nor that they are conceited *because* they are a majority. The warning could equally have been given to prevent them from *becoming* arrogant on the basis of what he has written in the letter in their favour.[51] Paul's use of Old Testament quotations is the backbone of his argument, and it is striking to note that he quotes the most severely critical passages and applies them to Jews, while he cites the most affirmative ones (or, modifies more condemnatory Old Testament texts and/or contexts into positive ones) and applies them to Gentiles.[52] Paul uses the Old Testament as an accuser of Israel[53] and as an amicable testifier on behalf of the Gentiles. Those who stress Paul's affirmative statements about Jews undermine the fact that Paul also portrays a critical picture of Jews in Romans 1-4 *and* 9-11. Therefore, the hypothesis that Paul has written Romans in order to correct anti-semitism exercised by the Gentile majority is difficult to maintain.

### 2. Paul's Defence of the Legitimacy of Gentile Salvation

What alternative purpose can we offer? We will propose that Paul writes Romans in order to defend the legitimacy of Gentile salvation

50 Cf. J. Bassler, *Divine Impartiality: Paul and a Theological Axiom*, SBLDS 59 (Chico: Scholars, 1982), who fails to point out the reason why Paul asserts divine impartiality.

51 See Chae, 'Paul as Apostle to the Gentiles', ch. 5.

52 See Chae, 'Paul as Apostle to the Gentiles', *passim*.

53 Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 520, following Michel.

by affirming the equality of Jew and Gentile in Christ. He does this to promote unity within the Roman church and equip believers against foreseeable trouble from (judaising) agitators.[54] We will show that his self-awareness as being apostle *to the Gentiles* prompted him to write this letter, especially in the light of the situations in Rome as well as in Jerusalem.

*(a) Paul's Apostolic Self-Awareness and the Situation in Jerusalem*

Paul has long prayed for and seriously purposed (*proethemēn*, 1:13) to visit Rome.[55] He indicates that (as apostle to the Gentiles) he has full right to visit the Romans and to minister among them. It is his self-understanding of his role that brings him to make claims on a church he did not found. He is also aware that he has an apostolic obligation towards the Gentiles (cf. 1:14).[56] His visit was not intended to start a new evangelistic work there (15:20-21), but to impart to the Romans some *charisma pneumatikon*[57] in order to strengthen (*stērichthēnai*) them by further exercise of his apostolic ministry (1:13; cf. 1 Thess. 3:10). Thus the *euaggelisasthai* of 1:15 conveys almost the same meaning as the *stērichthēnai* of 1:12.[58] Whenever he expresses his mandate to preach the gospel, he is conscious of his apostolic obligation (cf. 1 Cor. 9:16). Up until this time Paul was not able to go to Rome (1:13; 15:22), and now at last he

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54 Paul does not state clearly that the agitators are judaisers, but the similarities in argument between Galatians and Romans seem to suggest that Paul has judaisers in mind.

55 Paul's strong desire is expressed by the intensified compositions with *pantote* (1:10), *pollakis* (1:13), *pollōn etōn* (15:23) as well as by the phrase *ou thelō de humas agnoein* (1:13).

56 Most scholars are in general agreement that 'both pairs [in 1:14] denote the whole of Gentile humanity, but they represent different groupings of the same totality' (Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:83-85; so also Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 33; J. Ziesler, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, TPI New Testament Commentaries [London: SCM/Philadelphia: Trinity Press International], 66; Cosgrove, 'Justification', 623).

57 The phrase *charisma pneumatikon* connotes '[God's] free bestowments upon sinners' (5:15, 16; 6:23; 11:29), or 'God's endowments upon believers by the operation of the Holy Spirit in the churches' (12:6-8; 1 Cor.. 12:4, 9, 28, 30, 31). But here in 1:11, it is used 'of that which is imparted through human instruction': W.E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985), 264; cf. H.G. Liddell and Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1900), 883.

58 Seifrid, *Justification*, 189, n. 29, points to similar usage of *euaggelisasthai* in 1 Cor. 9:15-18; Gal. 1:8-9; 4:13; cf. 1 Cor. 1:17. So also Wedderburn, *Reasons*, 97; Elliott, *Rhetoric*, 84-85.

is free to visit the city (15:23-24). He realises, however, that it is more crucial for him to visit Jerusalem than Rome (15:25). As the urgent prayer request indicates (15:28-32), Paul fears the rejection of the collection by the Jerusalem believers, and also harm from unbelieving Jews there. He risks his life for this crucial visit, and knows that (as we will show) he might not be able to visit Rome at all in person. His decision to go to Jerusalem is certainly made under the influence of his self-awareness as being apostle to the Gentiles at this crucial time.

*(i) Paul and the Believing Jews in Jerusalem.* It is often contended that Paul went to Jerusalem primarily to deliver the collection, or to practise the principle of 'to the Jew first'.[59] But this seems unlikely. According to 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, Paul did not think that he himself *should* deliver the collection. Only 'if it seems advisable (*axion*) for me to go also', says Paul, 'they (i.e. Gentile representatives) will accompany me'.[60] But at the time of writing Romans, Paul recognises that it is *axion* for he himself to go to Jerusalem.[61] His decision signals intensified circumstances for such a necessity.

Paul's primary purpose for going to Jerusalem is to 'make sure (*sphragisamenos*) that they have received this fruit' (15:28, 31b). Schmithals argues that the single *hina* ('[in order] that') in 15:31 indicates that Paul fears the threat from unbelieving Jews, but *not* the rejection of the collection.[62] But Paul has already indicated that the delivery would not be that easy by saying that he should 'make sure (note the strong word *sphragisamenos*) that they receive this fruit' (15:28). Moreover, the *hina* covers two clauses with the subjunctive *euprosdektos genētai* ('might be acceptable') together with the

59 *Pace* Noack, 'Current', 164.

60 For the meaning of *axion*, K.F. Nickle, *The Collection: A Study in Paul's Strategy*, SBT 48 (London: SCM, 1966), 16, rightly rejects J. Weiss' interpretation that it denotes a sufficient amount of giving that makes it worth going for Paul himself, and suggests that we should understand it as 'propitious' or 'advisable' [RSV, NIV; cf. 'meet' (AV), 'right' (Philips), 'fitting' (NASB); but 'worthwhile' in GNB, NEB and JB] depending on the growing hostile situation in Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:3). However, it is uncertain whether or not he expresses such hostility with *axion* in 1 Corinthians 16. Thus at the time of writing 1 Corinthians in Ephesus Paul only sees the possibility but not yet the absolute necessity for himself to travel to Judea. He seems optimistic when he wrote 2 Corinthians (9:12-14) in Macedonia; cf. Kümmel, *Introduction*, 279, 293.

61 So correctly N. Taylor, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem*, JSNTS 66 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 194.

62 W. Schmithals, *Paul and James* (London: SCM, 1965), 82.

subjunctive *hrusthō* ('I might be delivered').[63] Therefore, the situation which seems likely, as F. Watson puts it, is that, 'there is every possibility that the Jerusalem church will refuse to accept the collection'.[64] On the other hand, continues Watson, Paul hopes that the acceptance of the collection 'will signify Jerusalem's acknowledgement of the Gentile churches' legitimacy', because it expresses much more than supplying the need of the Christians in Jerusalem; it will prompt them to 'praise God for the obedience that accompanies your [Gentiles'] confession of the gospel of Christ' (2 Cor. 9:12-14).[65]

The verb *sphragizō* implies 'sealing as secure transfer of responsibility or ownership',[66] or 'some formal handing over, with the giving of a receipt some sort'.[67] The Gentiles' sharing of their material blessing with the Jews is in response to the Jews' spiritual blessing and also in recognition of Jewish salvation-historical 'primacy'.[68] The Jews' acceptance of the Gentiles' material blessing signifies the recognition of the Gentiles' possession of the same spiritual blessing (cf. 2 Cor. 9:14). Thus Paul desires to make sure that the Jerusalem believers would issue the 'receipt' of this recognition of the legitimacy of the salvation of the Gentiles in response to receiving the gift from the Gentiles.[69] The apostle to the Gentiles risks his life to get this 'receipt' *for the sake of the Gentiles*.

According to Galatians 2:1-10, Paul and Barnabas had been to Jerusalem (from Antioch) in order to secure the gospel they preached among the Gentiles with a strong conviction that they should defend the salvific legitimacy of the Gentiles, and they successfully secured

63 So correctly Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 879-80, although he does not deal with Schmithals' grammatical objection syntactically.

64 Watson, *Paul*, 175.

65 Watson, *Paul*, 176.

66 Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 877.

67 Ziesler, *Romans*, 346.

68 Taylor, *Paul*, 197.

69 Cf. Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:774-75. Luke's silence about the collection, however, has led G. Lüdemann, *Paulus, der Heidenapostel, Band II. Antipaulinismus im frühen Christentum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 94ff. (similarly Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 880) to infer that it was rejected as Paul feared. But Luke is not completely silent (cf. E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1985], 568); rather he has Acts 24:17 say that Paul has come to Jerusalem precisely to bring such an offering. If Luke does not mention the matter in Acts 21 that is probably because he is more interested in Paul's arrest; and he correctly conceives Paul to be more preoccupied with the myriads of believers zealous for the law (Acts 21:20) whose like have disturbed his ministry at Antioch and Galatia.

not only their 'apostleship' to the Gentiles but also 'the gospel of the uncircumcision' (Gal. 2:7-9). Nevertheless, later judaisers came to Galatia and damaged the fruit of Paul's work there (Gal. 4:11). At that time through the letter Paul strove to bring the Galatians back to his gospel of freedom (Gal. 1:6-7; 3:1-5; 5:1-5, etc.).

For the apostle to the Gentiles, his most serious opponents had turned out to be judaising teachers whom he inevitably regards as false.[70] Similar was the situation in Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2:18; 3:5; cf. 2:14-16) and Corinth.[71] Paul wrote to the latter to defend his apostolic ministry, which was being undermined by the false teachers (2 Cor. 10:1-11:15; cf. Gal. 1:6-10), who had already been active in the city, and gained considerable success (2 Cor. 11:4: 'you put up with it easily enough'). Paul uncompromisingly labels them not only as 'false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ', but also as agents of Satan who pretend to be servants of righteousness and light (2 Cor. 11:13-15).[72] Judaisers also later carried out an energetic activity in Philippi against Paul's law-free mission to the Gentiles (Phil. 3:2-3),[73] and also in Ephesus, as Acts 20:28-31 and Revelation 2:2 indicate.

Guarding the 'converted' with the truth of the gospel is, for Paul, as important as preaching the gospel to get more new converts, because otherwise they might quickly be deceived and turn to a different gospel (Gal. 1:6-10; 2 Cor. 11:4). In the above cases, Paul has been *defensive*: usually *after* the judaisers/false teachers have made their attack on his Gentile converts. He does his best (usually by sending letters) to restore them with his gospel and apostolic authority. But seeing that the work in the east has been completed (15:23), and knowing that the threat of the judaising teachers reaches

70 See J.L. Sumney, *Identifying Paul's Opponents: The Question of Method in 2 Corinthians*, JSNTS 40 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990).

71 See F.F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1982), 63; C.A. Wanamaker, *Commentary on 1 & 2 Thessalonians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 132.

72 See R.P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1986), 328-56.

73 See P.T. O'Brien, *Commentary on Philippians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 354-57; J.J. Müller, *The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 105-108; F.W. Beare, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, BNTC (London: A&C Black, 1973 3rd edn), 103-105; cf. H. Koester, 'The Purpose of the Polemic of a Pauline Fragment (Philippians III)', *NTS* 8 (1961-62), 320; M. Silva, *Philippians*, Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1988), 172. *Pace* G.F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1983), 124-26, who denies that these opponents are judaisers; D.E. Garland, 'The Composition and Literary Unity of Philippians: Some Neglected Factors', *NovT* 27 (1985), 165-66, excludes any specific external opponents.

everywhere, including Rome (cf. 16:17-20), Paul now launches an *offensive*, or, in other words, preventive action. In a humble yet solemn way, he attempts to expose the roots from which his opponents draw their strength.

At the time of writing Romans, Paul seems to have thought that winning the Christian zealots of Jerusalem was more vital than carrying on the new missionary work in the west. So Paul had to deal with the heart of the judaising opposition, and try to neutralise its misunderstanding of his ministry. The delivery of the collection would provide him the opportunity to defend himself, his Gentile converts and the Gentile mission before the Jerusalem believers. But his journey will bring him to an encounter with the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem, and it will involve risking his own life.

*(ii) Paul and the Unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem.* Paul's request to the Roman believers to join his struggle (*sunagōnisasthai*) in prayer (15:30-31) also indicates the possible threat on his life from the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem. The verb *hruomai* (15:31) is significant, as it connotes 'to rescue or deliver from a hostile power that seeks to enslave',[74] or 'to kill by conspiracy' (cf. Matt. 27:43; 1 Macc. 2:60; Dan. 6:20; 2 Tim. 4:17-18). Such an incident would indeed be foreseeable in the light of his own previous experiences with unbelieving Jews (1 Cor. 4:8-13; 2 Cor. 1:8-11; 4:7-12; 6:4-10; 11:24-26; 12:10; Phil. 3:8b-11; 1 Thess. 2:2; 3:1-5).

If he felt such a threat from Diaspora Jews, he could expect more hostility from the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem who knew his past (cf. Gal. 1:13-14; Phil. 3:4-6; Acts 9:29-30; 22:19-20; 1 Thess. 2:14-16). The theme of suffering in Romans (5:3; 8:31-39) may also be related to the foreseeable hostile situation in Jerusalem. It is furthermore significant that Paul repeats the connotation of 'death' at least four times in 8:35-39: sword, death, slaughter, death. The narratives in Acts also portray a clear prospect of hardship (Acts 19:21; 20:22-25; 21:4-14), and the unbelieving Jews are indeed determined to kill him by any means (Acts 21:31; 22:22; 23:12, 15, 27; 25:3; 26:21).

With such a dark prospect he is determined to write a letter to Rome on the brink of his departure for Judea. Therefore, it is written not as 'a temporary substitute for his visit', as Seifrid contends,[75] but

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74 G. Hill, *The Discovery Bible* (Chicago: Moody, 1987), 529. The verb in 7:24 carries a similar connotation; cf. *ho hruomenos*, 'the deliverer', in 11:26; cf. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 878.

75 Seifrid, *Justification*, 190, 209; similarly N.A. Dahl, *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), 75, 77. Cf. L.A.

most probably as a *permanent* substitute at least *in part* because he feared he might *not* ever arrive at Rome. Thus he preaches, *in writing*, the gospel[76] which he had always wanted to preach in person (1:15). As his visit was intended to strengthen the Romans (1:11), this letter aims to provide the same effect. He seems convinced that the Roman believers' present conflict can be resolved by an understanding of the implications of the gospel, including their equal relation to God through Christ. He might also have wished that the Romans would carry on the mission to the Gentiles, especially in the west.[77] Thus G. Bornkamm's description of Romans as 'Paul's last will and testament' is not entirely misleading,[78] but his complete denial of Paul's possible death in Jerusalem and his application of this phrase as a comprehensive summary of Paul's theology, expose the shortcomings of his theory.[79]

*(b) Paul's Apostolic Self-Awareness and the Situation of the Roman Church*

Paul's departure for Jerusalem may indicate that the situation in Rome was less critical or urgent. However, the fact that he writes such a long letter at such a crucial and busy time of preparation for the journey, suggests that he has also taken the Roman situation very seriously. He makes every effort to help them with their present internal and external problems, and to prepare themselves for the troubles which foreseeably lie ahead. He is determined to leave his 'last will and testament', in the prospect of his uncertain future. This is further intensified by his self-awareness of being apostle to the

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Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans: A Comparative Letter Structure Investigation*, JSNTS 55 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 161.

76 Dahl, *Studies*, 75; Jervis, *Purpose*, 164.

77 Both H. Koester, *History and Literature of Early Christianity*, Vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 142, and W.B. Russell, III, 'An Alternative Suggestion for the Purpose of Romans', *BibSac* 145 (1988), 181-84, suggest that Paul's desire for the Romans to participate in the universal mission was a very important purpose behind the letter.

78 Bornkamm, 'Last Will', 16-28, supported by Stendahl, *Paul*, 127; Kümmel, *Introduction*, 312-14. A similar view was expressed earlier by J.B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (London: Macmillan, 1865), 49.

79 *Pace* Bornkamm, *Paul*, 96; Bornkamm, 'Last Will', 27: 'One must not at all understand the letter to the Romans in this sense [i.e. in view of Paul's possible death].' Russell, 'Alternative Suggestion', 182, n. 31, also misunderstands. But R.P. Martin, *New Testament Foundations: A Guide for Christian Students*, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986 rev. edn), 190, plausibly relates Bornkamm's phrase, 'last will and testament' with the possibility that Paul might not be able to reach Rome at all.

Gentiles in the light of the situation of the Roman church itself. We have already mentioned, though briefly, the internal trouble between the 'weak' and the 'strong'. In the following section we will examine the external problems only.

The phrase 'our present suffering' (8:18) indicates that Christians in Rome also suffered from an external source. The suffering mentioned in 5:3-5; 8:17-18, 31-39 is most probably imposed 'as a result of persecution'.[80] More crucial is the (future) trouble by the agitators.[81] Paul expresses this concern in 16:17-20: 'I urge (*parakalō*) you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them... By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naïve people' (16:17-18).[82] Since the work of C.J. Bjerkelund[83] interpreters of Romans have paid attention to the word *parakalō* (12:1; 15:30; 16:17).[84] This warning seems to be better understood in the light of the widespread judaising phenomenon we have discussed, and the language of the passage reflects his polemical language against judaising elsewhere. However, the fact that this passage seems rather isolated (unlike the sharp attack implied in Gal., Phil. 3, 1 Thess. and 2 Cor.) appears to indicate that the agitators have not yet begun their campaign in Rome.[85] Nevertheless, Paul seems to expect the imminent arrival of the (judaising) agitators there,[86] since the slanderous *report* against him has been widely circulated (3:6-8).[87] As Lampe aptly puts it, Paul

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80 Ziesler, *Romans*, 138; S.N. Olson, 'Romans 5-8 as Pastoral Theology', *Word & World* 4 (1986), 391ff.

81 Wilckens' view, *Römer*, 3:139, that Paul adds this exhortation at the end of the letter because he has just received news about the arrival of the judaisers only after he has finished the main body of the letter, seems rather unlikely.

82 See J.J. Gunther, *St. Paul's Opponents and Their Background* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973), 64-65, 98-99, 180-81, 277-78, for a fuller treatment of 16:17-20. See also H. Gamble, Jr., *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans*, Studies and Documents 42 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 36-55, for a useful survey of different views on the unity of Romans 16 with the rest of the letter.

83 *Parakalô: Form, Funktion und Sinn der parakalô-Sätze in den paulinischen Briefen* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1967).

84 Wedderburn, *Reasons*, 67-70; Seifrid, *Justification*, 187ff.

85 Similarly Munck, *Paul*, 200; Kümmel, *Introduction*, 318-19.

86 Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:750; Seifrid, *Justification*, 252; Wedderburn, *Reasons*, 99, correctly opposed to Kettunen, *Abfassungszweck*, 182-86, who has asserted that the judaisers were working in Rome. Cf. Käsemann, *Romans*, 417; Wilckens, *Römer*, 3:139; Seifrid, *Justification*, 199.

87 For two contradictory identifications of the 'slanderous reporters' of 3:8, see W.S. Campbell, 'Romans III as a Key to the Structure and Thought of the Letter', reprinted in his *Paul's Gospel in an Intercultural Context* (Frankfurt: Peter

fears that his opponents in the east might influence the Romans.[88] His apostolic self-understanding compels him to protect the Roman believers by equipping them with a teaching with which they would be able to resist the 'sooth talk and flattery' of the agitators (16:18).

Thus he seeks to equip the Romans with sound doctrine and practical instructions[89] rather than to attack the agitators directly. His strategy would make sense if he anticipates his readers might not have any idea of their concerns.[90] The Galatian believers had not been prepared for such a campaign (Gal. 1:6: they were persuaded so quickly);[91] now the apostle attempts to equip the Romans against the predictable trouble.[92] He seems assured that the Romans can 'keep away from them' (16:17) if they hold on to 'the teaching you have learned' (16:17), especially that which they have learned from Paul as written in this letter.

### 3. Paul's Stated Purpose in Writing Romans

Our contention above (that the occasion and the purpose of Romans are heavily influenced by Paul's self-awareness of being apostle to the Gentiles) is based primarily on Paul's own testimony in 15:14-21. In 15:15-16 especially he declares that he has written this letter boldly on the basis of the grace God has given him (i.e. his apostleship

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Lang, 1992), 31, n. 42, and I.J. Canales, 'Paul's Accusers in Romans 3:8 and 6:1', *EvQ* 57 (1985), 237-45. See also D.R. Hall, 'Romans 3:1-8 Reconsidered', *NTS* 29 (1983), 193-94; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 136-37, 143.

88 Lampe, 'Roman Christians', 221. The above observation leads us to reject Watson's assertion (*Paul*, 102) that the opposition in Romans 16:17-18 is particularly one against Paul's 'attempt to persuade the Jewish Christians to accept the legitimacy of the Paulinists and join with them for worship'.

89 A. Schlatter's brief remarks in *The Church in the New Testament Period* (London: SPCK, 1955), 193, are illuminating: 'In it [Romans] he [Paul] provided the young army of believers... with the equipment with which they could resolutely continue the struggle.'

90 Thiessen, *Introduction*, 226.

91 *Pace* S. Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1984), 271-72, who argues that 'the fundamental fact that the gospel – the law-free gospel – which Paul defends in Gal. is *precisely* the gospel which he already preached in his initial mission to Galatia (Gal. 1.11). *Precisely* the gospel which Paul preached in Galatia is under attack' (emphasis added). But this is unlikely. If Paul had taught them very clearly the precise content as it is written in the letter (as Kim repeatedly asserts), then the Galatians would not have been persuaded by the judaisers so quickly (cf. Gal. 1:6).

92 So Sanders, *Jewish People*, 31, seems right to say that Romans is Paul's reflection on the Galatian conflict with the judaisers.

specifically for the Gentiles: 11:13; 15:15-16; Gal. 1:15-16).[93] The apostle expresses his intention with two purpose clauses: (1) in order that he might become (*eis to einai*) a (true) minister of Christ to the *Gentiles* by fulfilling his priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel (which he has now done in writing), and (2) so that (*hina*) the Gentiles might become an acceptable offering to God. The *Gentile* focus of Paul's apostolic missionary work and writings (so also in Galatians) cannot be disputed. He indicates that he has written in the way he has in order to fulfil his apostolic calling to the Gentiles. This suggests further that Paul's argument flows primarily from his self-understanding as apostle to the Gentiles.

Admittedly 15:14-21 is a passage late in the letter. But Paul's apostolic self-awareness is also clearly indicated at its beginning (1:1-17). Here he specifies his apostleship to the Gentiles (1:5), expresses his apostolic obligation to the Gentiles (1:14-15) and emphasises the equality of Gentiles with Jews (1:16). Since 1:1-17 thematically coheres with 15:14-21 and with the key theme *ethnē* ('Gentiles') one may assume that the entire letter is influenced by Paul's consciousness of his role towards the Gentiles. Furthermore, the thematic introduction to the main body of the letter (1:16-17) also corresponds to the thematic conclusion (15:7-13) and to the very last sections of the letter (16:25-27) with their specific theme of *ethnē*. Paul has written Romans as apostle to the *Gentiles*; thus, as we have seen above, he shapes the content and the structure of his argument in favour of the Gentiles.[94]

## 4. Conclusions

The occasion for writing the letter to Rome is related to both the Roman *and* the Jerusalem situations, to the present *and* the future. The situation in Jerusalem at the time of writing Romans is even more intense than that described in Galatians 2:1-5.[95] The increase of nomistic Christian 'zealots' in number and influence directly or indirectly strengthens the work of the judaisers everywhere. Gentile converts are the most vulnerable and pro-Gentile Jewish believers in the *Diaspora* do not have answers with which to reject their

93 Cf. D.W.B. Robinson, 'The Priesthood of Paul in the Gospel of Hope', in R. Banks (ed.), *Reconciliation and Hope: New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology Presented to Leon L. Morris on His 60th Birthday* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1974), 231.

94 For a detailed discussion, see Chae, 'Paul as Apostle to the Gentiles', ch. 1.

95 Cf. Watson, *Paul*, 104.

persuasion (16:18). In response to such a situation, Paul's self-understanding as being a defender of the gospel of the Gentiles (cf. Gal. 2:7) had compelled him to go to Jerusalem on what was his first visit (cf. Gal. 2:2-5). Under even stronger apostolic consciousness the apostle goes there yet again to secure the legitimacy of the salvation of the Gentiles and the mission to them, lest his further work in the west as well as the completed work in the east be in vain. The delivery of the collection provides an ideal opportunity.

He knows, however, that going to Jerusalem means to risk his life because of the unbelieving Jews there. Just as he goes to Jerusalem to defend the legitimacy of Gentile salvation, he writes to achieve the same purpose in respect of the Roman church. Although Paul still strongly hopes to come to Rome, he has written this letter as a *permanent* substitute, just in case he is unable to come to Rome because of imprisonment or even martyrdom. That is why he writes such a long and deeply theological letter at this critical time.

In comparison with Paul's previous letters, Romans deals with the *present* situation rather generally and vaguely. An excessive attempt to reconstruct the situation will result in unjustifiable conclusions that prevent a reasonable understanding of the purpose of the letter. However, the letter certainly serves to resolve any disunity and misunderstanding existing between Jewish and Gentile believers. Paul seeks to promote their unity on the theological basis of their fundamental equality in the salvific plan of God. Furthermore, he attempts to equip the Roman church for the *future* in the light of the imminent actions of the agitators who have everywhere been attempting to ruin the results of Paul's apostolic ministry. Paul knows that the best way to prepare them for this future trouble, as well as to resolve their present disunity, is to explain the implications of the gospel in the light of the equal relation of Jews and Gentiles in Christ, a relation gained by the same means of faith apart from the law. For the Galatians, Paul explained this only *after* the judaisers had seriously damaged his work there; but, in Romans, he attempts to do so *before* their arrival or aggressive activity.

The 'Gentile theme' is so clearly expressed in key passages such as 1:1-15, 1:16-17, 15:7-13, 15:14-21 and 16:25-27. It is closely connected to the strong self-awareness of Paul's apostolic obligation towards the Gentiles. Paul's main purpose in writing Romans, therefore, is not to correct anti-semitism by affirming the primacy of the Jews, but to establish the legitimacy of Gentile salvation by affirming the equality of Jew and Gentile. We should not allow the contemporary sense of guilt for the Holocaust to influence our exegesis of this ancient text. Paul writes Romans as apostle to the

Gentiles, and he has shaped the content and the structure of his soteriological argument in order to become a true minister who carries out a priestly duty for the sake of the Gentiles (cf. 15:15-16). The letter can thus be best understood when we read it from Paul's self-awareness of being apostle to the Gentiles.