

## ABSTRACT

Romans 11.26 appears to affirm unequivocally the universal and eschatological salvation of Israel:

καὶ οὕτως πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ σωθήσεται

The history of the interpretation of this verse reveals considerable divergence of interpretation.

The debate is not simply the purview of New Testament scholars but is of concern to theologians engaged in Jewish-Christian dialogue. The two most principal issues of exegetical contention are, on the one hand, the referent of πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ and, on the other hand, whether or not St. Paul envisages Israel's salvation as a unique path for ethnic Israel independent of faith in Christ. The dissertation aims to resolve both issues. These contentious issues are not in the least arcane ivory tower debates. They are matters of significance for Jewish-Christian relations. A Christian theological perspective on the Jewish-Christian reality, informed by sound exegesis, is vitally important for every Christian.

The referent of πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ in Romans 11.26 is variously understood as: the elect, the nation of Israel or the vast company of ethnic Israelites of all time. Uppermost in the discussion, brought to prominence by the word *sonderweg*, is the issue of the special path, initially associated as a special path for Israel. But does the *sonderweg* denote a special path for Israel or a special path for the Gentiles? Does St. Paul actually countenance the idea of a special path?

The subject matter of this thesis is relevant to Jewish-Christian dialogue not least of all because Romans 11.26 has a parallel in the Oral Torah of Judaism. The Mishnah in Tractate Sanhedrin 10.1 has a very similar affirmation to that of Romans 11.26:

כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ לָהֶם חֵלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא

The saying may be translated as: “All Israel has a share with respect to the eternity that is to come”. While New Testament scholars do cite Sanhedrin 10.1 in connection with Romans 11.26, there is, however, a noticeable lack in the scholarly literature of a comparison between the two texts. Citations and quotations of Sanhedrin 10.1 by New Testament scholars are often perfunctory. The saying too often appears disembodied from its literary setting in the Mishnah or its likely provenance in the oral tradition. While New Testament scholars do acknowledge that a parallel exists, the significance of the parallel is hardly explored. Relatively speaking, in comparison with Romans, there is still very little research, in the historical critical tradition, of Tractate Sanhedrin. The distinctive contribution of this thesis will be to rectify the lacuna in scholarship by comparing, after thorough exegesis, Sanhedrin 10.1 with Romans 11.26.

Exegesis of Sanhedrin 10.1 demonstrates that כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל refers to the vast company of ethnic Israelites throughout history. The saying in Sanhedrin 10.1 encapsulates the pervasive view of the entire Tannaitic corpus. It is the leitmotif of Second Temple Judaism and the defining statement of Pharisaic orthodoxy. The saying has an impressive history and prominence in Pharisaic theology.

The conclusion of the dissertation is that St. Paul's theological proposition in Romans 11.26 is thoroughly consistent with his Jewish heritage. He affirms unequivocally the universal and eschatological salvation of Israel. In concert with Pharisaic orthodoxy, "all Israel" (πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ), refers to the vast company of ethnic Israelites throughout history. This vast company includes those contemporary with the Apostle (many of whom he regards as enemies of the Gospel) and those yet to be born. St. Paul's response to the arrogance of the Gentile contingent within the Church of Rome is uncompromisingly Jewish. His theological conclusion to the literary unit of Romans chapters 9-11 echoes the defining formula of Pharisaic orthodoxy. If St. Paul's intention is to say something very different from what Sanhedrin 10.1 clearly does say, then it is hard to imagine why he chooses a form of words so closely aligned with it.

The evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls places the salvation of "all Israel" firmly within messianic expectations. This evidence does not support the modern notion of a special path (either for Jews or gentiles) leading to salvation. The salvation of "all Israel" at the coming of the Messiah will usher in the millennial kingdom.